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論文名稱 : Moralism Subsistence Ethic and Commercial Agriculture:
Qianlong's Attempt to Ban Distilled Alcohol

期刊名稱 : Papers on Chinese History

出版期數 : Volume 3

出版時間 : Spring 1994

出 版 者 : The Fairbank Center

Harvard University

1737 Cambridge St.

Cambridge, MA 02138

U. S. A.

Papers on Chinese History, Volume 3, Spring 1994

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Special Thanks to James L. Watson, Robert E. Murowchick, and the entire staff at the Fairbank Center for their financial assistance and administrative support.

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1737 Cambridge St.
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Coverpiece: seal and handwriting of Cixi, the Empress Dowager

PAPERS ON
CHINESE
HISTORY

Volume 3 • Spring 1994

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摘要

西元1736年清高宗(乾隆)登基，禮部侍郎方苞奏請於江北數省嚴禁燒鍋(燒酒)，以裕民食，備不時之需。次年(1737)六月高宗令朝臣議奏，刑部尚書孫嘉淦力陳此舉無益，康熙、雍正兩朝雖曾屢下禁令，均告無疾而終，因此奏請「燒鍋之禁，或宜於歉歲，而必不宜於豐年。」其他諸臣及各省督撫亦認難以驟禁，建議禁止躑躅，以收間接禁酒之效。高宗再度廣徵內外諸臣意見，孫嘉淦仍持異議，然各省督撫多願遵行，高宗遂決意實行，除民家自用外，凡囤積糧食造麴販賣者，皆應查拿嚴處，並將江南數省亦納入查禁範圍。

本文主要利用大陸出版之《歷史檔案》所刊〈乾隆年間行禁躑躅燒酒史料〉、台北故宮博物院軍機處檔案、清人文集，及中、英、日文相關研究成果，進行研究。

前言部分略述歷代及清初禁止燒鍋措施。第一節分析朝臣與各省督撫針對乾隆禁令之反應，特別著重方苞與孫嘉淦兩人之間的辯論，及其如何影響乾隆之決策。方苞以積穀養民為念，力主嚴禁。然孫嘉淦指出禁酒擾民生計，主張弛禁。雙方均有其道德理念為依據，是故乾隆折衷兩者意見，以禁躑躅為主，並允許部分督撫得以因地制宜或因時制宜。第二節分就華北及江南各省，探討各地在1740年前後如何執行禁令。除甘肅省因氣候酷寒，未便執行禁令，其餘各省均積極查拿。尤以直隸、河南、江蘇等省為最。新任直隸總督孫嘉淦雖遵旨查拿，但仍不時建議取消禁令。河南巡撫尹會一則大力執行，成效甚著。第三節除繼續探討乾隆年間的執行禁令情形，並從另一角度觀察，此項禁令對蓬勃發展的燒酒業所造成的衝擊，使得此種農村經濟陷於兩難局面。

本文認為乾隆以聖君自許，養民為念，運用國家干預的措施，直接介入百姓生計，僅是消極地面對人口激增、耕地有限的經濟問題。執行禁令最初十餘年間，各省查獲違禁事例多起，似乎頗具成效。但燒酒價格低廉，製作容易，市場廣大，民間因有利可圖，依然大開燒鍋，並發展跨省商業網路。其實這也是面對前述經濟問題，民間本身所採行的一種調適方式。禁令雖收一時之效，然行之既久，若無朝廷時加督促，地方官吏自然逐漸視為具文。清仁宗(嘉慶)以後，此項禁令遂未受重視。

Moralist Subsistence Ethic and Commercial Agriculture: Qianlong's Attempt to Ban Distilled Alcohol

CHANG LI

On June 6, 1737 the Qianlong Emperor (1711-1799, r. 1736-1795) issued an edict to his princes and ministers announcing that he had decided to ban distilled alcohol for good in five provinces in northern China. He based his decision on two moral considerations. First, he felt that the most important policy for "nourishing the people" (*yangmin*) was to teach them to store up enough grain for times of urgent need. Second, because of easy access to cheap distilled alcohol, people tended to indulge themselves in drinking, which often led to quarreling and fighting. Since distilling alcohol consumed so much grain and drinking was of little benefit to the people, he felt it should be completely banned. Qianlong estimated that if this ban were carried out, over ten million *shi*¹ of grain could be stored up and used to relieve the people in poor harvest areas. He contended that the ban would do no harm to the poor. On the contrary, only the wealthy who engaged in the distilling business would be adversely affected. Qianlong thought that similar bans had been unfeasible during his grandfather's and father's reigns mainly because government officials had been reluctant to carry them out. Therefore, he ordered the princes and ministers to let the Nine Chief Ministries of State deliberate and memorialize speedily about how to punish such lawless people and irresponsible officials.²

This edict illustrates Qianlong's "concern for properly Confucian signs of benevolent rule."³ After the Manchus conquered China, the early Qing emperors and their bureaucrats pursued a series of policies to revitalize the agrarian economy. They imposed law and order, restored water-control systems, encouraged new settlements and agricultural rehabilitation, and opened up frontier regions. All these measures laid the foundations for rapid expansion of agricultural production and general population. By Qianlong's reign the commercialization of agriculture was well under way. Despite the economic prosperity of the early Qing, grain-farming remained the basis of the Chinese economy and of the stable socio-political order. Therefore, the government not only made every effort to deal with grain storage and distribution but was extremely attentive to the larger social effects of economic activity.⁴ In the eighteenth-century the state was active in stimulating production and guiding circulation in order to ensure grain supply.⁵ In contrast to these measures, Qianlong believed that distilling would result in food

¹*Shi* and *dou* were grain volume measures. One *shi* of milled rice weighed approximately 175-195 pounds. Ten *dou* were equal to one *shi*. See Thomas G. Rawski and Lillian M. Li, *Chinese History in Economic Perspective*, xiii; Han-sheng Chuan and Richard A. Kraus, *Mid-Ch'ing Rice Markets and Trade: An Essay in Price History*, 79.

²*Da Qing gaozong chun* (Qianlong) *huangdi shilu* (hereafter *QLSL*), 42:12a-3b.

³Pierre-Etienne Will and R. Bin Wong, eds., *Nourish the People: The State Civilian Granary System in China, 1650-1850*, 14.

⁴Susan Naquin and Evelyn S. Rawski, *Chinese Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 21-7. Will and Wong, 4.

⁵R. Bin Wong, "The Political Economy of Food Supplies in Qing China," 120.

shortages, which would lead to instability. He felt compelled to adopt an effective policy to look after the material well-being of the people.

Earlier Chinese governments had often either taxed alcohol consumption or monopolized alcoholic beverages with a view to increasing national income and discouraging alcohol abuse. Bans on consumption were also not uncommon in imperial China but most of them were only temporarily effective.⁶ At the outset of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Hongwu (1328-1398, r. 1368-1398) abolished the monopoly policy of the Yuan (1271-1368) and banned alcohol drinking in the hope of inducing the people to lead a frugal life. As political and economic conditions gradually improved, Hongwu adopted a new policy of taxing alcohol.⁷ The early Qing government continued to levy taxes on alcohol consumption. In addition, special bans on distilled alcohol (*shaojiu* or *shaoguo*) were issued repeatedly.

Although scholars do not agree on the exact time when alcohol distillation methods began to develop in China, they generally believe that alcohol had already become popular in the Yuan dynasty.⁸ With well-developed techniques and easy access to grain, people in the countryside had little difficulty making distilled alcohol. In the early Qing, both Kangxi (1654-1722, r. 1662-1722) and Yongzheng (1678-1735, r. 1723-1735) banned it, on the grounds that it consumed too much grain and may have resulted in high grain prices. However, these bans were never really put into effect.⁹

Only one year after he took the throne, Qianlong repeated his predecessors' ban. This decision soon gave rise to heated debates among central and provincial government officials. The issue is discussed briefly by Kawakubo Teiro in his two articles on the increasing popularity of distilled alcohol during the Qing period.¹⁰ The first section of this paper will probe the interactions between Qianlong and his officials in terms of his policy formulation. The second section will investigate the local realities that provincial officials were confronted with who tried to implement the imperial policy during the first decade of the Qianlong reign. In the third section I will examine the emperor's continuing efforts and the impact of the ban on the local agricultural economy. This case study of Qianlong's attempt to ban distilled liquor suggests that he was unable to ease what Peter C. Perdue has described as the "tension between the survival of a moralist subsistence ethic and the realities of commercial agriculture."¹¹

⁶For example, in the Former Han dynasty the making of alcohol was once prohibited because of poor harvest and famine. In the Northern Wei dynasty the Wencheng emperor ordered the execution of producers and sellers of alcohol because he believed that alcohol consumption would lead people to become involved in lawsuits or to criticize national affairs. In the early Song strict punishments were also imposed on the producers of alcohol and yeast. See Julia A. Lee, "Chinese, Alcohol and Flushing: Sociohistorical and Biobehavioral Considerations," 321-2; He Nan, "Zhongguo jiulei zhuanmai shihua," 47-79; Huang Qinglian, *Jiu yu Zhongguo wenhua*, 34-41.

⁷Yu Zhengxie, "Quegu shuo," in *Huangchao jingshiwen siban*, 18: 4a.

⁸Meng Naichang, "Zhongguo zhengliujiu niandai kao," 31-6.

⁹Kawakubo Teiro, "Shindai ni okeru shochu no seiko ni tsuite," 24-5.

¹⁰Kawakubo, "Shindai ni okeru shochu," 25-8; Kawakubo Teiro, "Shindai Manshu ni okeru shoka no zokusei ni tsuite," 306-8.

¹¹Peter C. Perdue, *Exhausting the Earth: State and Peasant in Hunan, 1500-1850*, 13.

Debate on the Bans

Qianlong's attempt to ban distilled alcohol can be roughly divided into two phases. During the first five months after the issuance of his edict on June 6, 1737, the emperor stressed a ban on distilling. From late 1737 on, at the suggestion of his subordinates, he put more emphasis on banning yeast-making than on alcohol-making.

The imperial edict of June 6 was mainly inspired by a memorial from the senior scholar-official Fang Bao (1668-1749). Fang, then vice-president of the Board of Rites, had memorialized the previous winter, when Qianlong had been on the throne for less than one year. Fang pleaded with the young emperor to reform five economic "irregularities" that had resulted in shortages of natural resources. He reminded the emperor of the increase in population and the limit of arable land. At that time, grain prices had risen sharply in Beijing. Fang Bao believed that this was because distilling alcohol consumed so much grain.¹² Thus, he listed this as the first problem to be tackled. The substantial measures he suggested included banning the making of yeast, abolishing the alcohol tax, and destruction of the utensils for making alcohol. In addition, he recommended that a schedule be set up for the sale of the alcohol and yeast that had already been produced. Local officials would be required to carry out the ban without hesitation.¹³

Fang Bao's memorial not only urged the emperor to ban distilling, but also provided him with a rough estimate of distilled alcohol consumption in the empire. Fang pointed out that fifty percent of the inhabitants of rich, populous areas and twenty-five percent in poor and sparsely populated areas were alcohol drinkers. On an average day, a man might drink two days worth of grain. In some counties of the five provinces in northern China, there were over one hundred distilleries. Every year the larger distilleries consumed two or three thousand *shi* of grain, and smaller ones consumed two or three hundred *shi*. Even a household distillery consumed several *dou* of grain. In total, Fang concluded that more than ten million *shi* of grain were consumed annually in the distillation of alcohol. Furthermore, people often tended to quarrel or fight after drinking, which, according to Fang, constituted twenty to thirty percent of all criminal cases. He also made some concrete suggestions to defend the ban against possible criticisms. He insisted that it would not cause a significant loss to government revenue or of the people's livelihood.¹⁴ Fang Bao's arguments

¹²Chen Zhaolun, *Zizhushanfang shiwenji*, 13:4.

¹³Dai Junheng, ed., *Fang Wangxi xiansheng quanji (jiwudiwen)*, 1:2a-3b.

¹⁴Fang Bao refuted four possible criticisms. The first focused on the decrease of revenue from the loss of alcohol taxes. Fang insisted that the loss of revenue would not be as significant as expected. Second, some might argue that alcohol was indispensable for frontier guards to protect themselves against cold. Fang suggested that a special allowance could be made for frontier needs. Third, some criticism might concern the unemployment caused by the ban. Fang argued that those people could adjust themselves to new jobs easily. Fourth, some might say that the making of other alcoholic beverages also consumed grain. Fang pointed out that because the making of those beverages required much capital and advanced skill, few people could afford to make them. See Dai, 1:3b-4a.

for the ban on distilled alcohol were fully reflected in the imperial edict of June 6.

Only ten days later, Sun Jiagan (1683-1753), minister of the Board of Punishments, presented a memorial challenging Fang Bao's opinions. Sun argued that the ban on distilled alcohol would not only make trouble for the people but would endanger their livelihood as well. He explained that distilled alcohol was made primarily from barley and sorghum, which were less valuable than wheat and were not fit for daily consumption. In fact, peasants could earn extra income by selling sorghum to alcohol producers. With this income, they were able to pay taxes, buy clothes, or finance social activities such as weddings and funerals. Furthermore, Sun pointed out that the making of yellow wine (*huangjiu*) consumed much more rice and wheat than did the distillation of alcohol. If distilled alcohol were banned, drinkers would only consume yellow wine. In addition, malpractice would be unavoidable as local officials carried out investigations of alcohol production. But instead of totally opposing Qianlong's attempt, Sun Jiagan proposed an alternative to the prohibition: to ban distilling in years of poor harvest and lift the ban in bumper years.¹⁵

Other than Sun Jiagan, only one local official memorialized immediately in response to the imperial edict of June 6. Li Wei (?-1738), governor-general of Zhili, memorialized his proposal to Qianlong in July. He suggested that people be allowed to make distilled alcohol and yeast only for personal consumption, but sales and large-scale yeast-making should be strictly prohibited. Anyone who intended to sell distilled alcohol and yeast would be punished.¹⁶

After reading Sun Jiagan's memorial, Qianlong ordered the princes, ministers, and Nine Chief Ministries of State to deliberate Sun's suggestions and memorialize in reply. He told his subordinates frankly that, "You need not defer to my edict; on the other hand, you should not take sides with Sun Jiagan.... If the strict prohibition of distilled alcohol does no good to the people, or even puts them at a disadvantage, I will be willing to withdraw my order."¹⁷

At this time Qianlong was not very satisfied with the tardy response of the Nine Chief Ministries of State to other important national issues. On June 29 he summoned them to a meeting at the Yangxin Hall. Qianlong complained that he had to deliberate on important affairs by himself because his high ranking subordinates had not contributed any suggestions. Taking the case of the ban on distilled alcohol as an example, he noted that most of them still hesitated to express their opinions. The emperor encouraged his subordinates to give their opinions freely, expressing the hope that there would be sincere communication between them.¹⁸

Eventually, all his top advisors presented their opinions, but Qianlong interpreted them as ambiguous support for the ban. In his view, they had tried to follow what they thought were his intentions and had not contributed anything original. He argued that it was meaningless for the government to

¹⁵Sun Zhu, ed., *Sun wendinggong zoushu*, 8:17a-21a.

¹⁶QLSL, 45:12a-b.

¹⁷QLSL, 43:2a.

¹⁸QLSL, 44:1b-4b.

reiterate a regulation that had already failed before. Qianlong intended to find out whether his policy was good for the people or not. If his policy was reasonable, the officials should deliberate on measures for effectively investigating transgression.¹⁹ On July 10 Qianlong put further pressure on his chief advisors by ordering them to make a policy decision. Meanwhile, he ordered that all his edicts and the memorials from Sun Jiagan and other high ranking officials in the court be sent to governor-generals and governors in Zhili, Shandong, Shanxi, Henan, and Shaanxi. Each provincial official was to deliberate this matter individually and memorialize in reply.²⁰

Despite Qianlong's request for an open discussion, Sun Jiagan's proposal was regarded by most central government officials as a challenge to Qianlong's policy. However, Chen Zhaolun (1701-1771), a corrector of the Hanlin Academy, went even further than Sun. Believing that Sun had only foreseen the long-term disadvantages of such a ban, Chen predicted that there would be immediate, short-term problems as well. He pointed out that there were numerous poor people in Zhili and Shandong who earned their living by selling distilled alcohol. If the ban were carried out, these people would definitely oppose it bitterly. He argued that people, having enjoyed prosperity for a certain time, were unable to realize the dangers of excessive grain consumption. It would be better to carry out the ban only when conditions became unbearable.²¹ In addition to Chen Zhaolun, Naqin (?-1748), the minister of the Board of War, thought the ban would produce nothing but trouble for the people. He urged the government to stick to its original policy and to abolish alcohol taxes.²²

Among the few available memorials responding to the imperial order of July 10, a proposal presented by Yin Huiyi (1691-1748), governor of Henan, is worthy of our attention. Yin was an admirer of Fang Bao and shared many of Fang's views on banning distilled alcohol.²³ Shortly before the issuance of the imperial ban of June 6, he had already banned the making of yeast within his jurisdiction in order to conserve barley and wheat.²⁴ In his memorial of August 12 Yin explained that most drinkers in Henan consumed *mingliu*, a beer made from sorghum. Only twenty to thirty percent of them drank distilled alcohol. *Mingliu* could be made in any household or purchased easily. If both distilled alcohol and *mingliu* were banned, Yin feared that more and more people would break the regulations. Yin argued that "The law should be carried out in accordance with local conditions and that eliminating the source of the problem should come before issuing the ban." Thus he argued that stopping yeast-making was a higher priority than banning distillation.²⁵ Because Yin's memorial was the only one that emphasized the importance of banning yeast-

¹⁹QLSL, 44: 9b-11b.

²⁰QLSL, 44: 18b-9a.

²¹Chen, 12:3a-4b.

²²QLSL, 45:4b-5a.

²³Zhang Shouchang, ed., *Jianyu chidu*, 2:1b-2a.

²⁴Zhang Shouchang, ed., *Yin shaozai zouyi*, 2:17b.

²⁵Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'an'guan, "Qianlong nianjian jiangbei shusheng xingjin caiqu shaojiu shiliao" (hereafter "Jiangbei shiliao"), 1:27.

making, his suggestions probably convinced Qianlong to make a new decision in early November.

At least two provincial officials opposed the ban on distilled alcohol. A memorial from Shaanxi insisted that it was inappropriate to force people to drink yellow wine rather than distilled alcohol. Moreover, soldiers and people in border areas needed to drink distilled alcohol to protect themselves against the cold.²⁶ Governor Depei (1688-1752) of Gansu admitted that alcohol could be harmful to people. However, according to him, it was not a serious problem in Gansu. In addition, he believed that the ban could never be carried out effectively because it ran contrary to the needs of the common people. Thus he supported Sun Jiagan's proposal to lift the ban.²⁷

Fang Bao learned that these provincial officials were inclined to accept Sun Jiagan's alternative and in their meeting of October 17 most members of the Nine Chief Ministries of State did not agree to ban distilling. Even so, Fang continued to argue for a complete ban and to refute the opinions of Sun and the others. He further warned that people stored up grain for distilling, resulting in increased grain prices even in years of good crops. If the ban were only carried out in years of poor crops, as Sun suggested, no grain would be saved up in bumper years. If famine occurred, the people would be forced to rebel. Fang argued that those central and provincial officials who opposed the ban were misled by irresponsible local clerks and powerful gentry. They failed to understand the true situation of the people.²⁸

On November 3, 1737, all the princes, ministers, and Nine Chief Ministries of State held a meeting. After an exhaustive study of different opinions presented by the provincial officials of northern China, they suggested that the emperor make a slight revision of his original order. On the one hand, provincial officials should be allowed to "adapt measures to the times" (*yinshi zhiyi*) in banning distilling. On the other hand, a ban on the making of yeast should be strictly carried out, because distilled alcohol could not be made without yeast. Anyone who made or sold yeast would be flogged one hundred strokes and confined to a cangue for two months.²⁹ These suggestions were approved by Qianlong. Moreover, whenever a local official failed to report illegal practices, he would be reduced one grade but would still keep his post. After being reduced three grades, he would be transferred.³⁰

Fang Bao's moral arguments for the ban were still appreciated by Qianlong. Both Fang and the emperor hoped to tackle the problem of rapid population growth by attempting to limit the diversion of grain to uses other than food. However, other central and provincial officials with practical considerations called Qianlong's attention to the unfeasibility of the ban. Though Qianlong revised his policy, he never resigned himself to Sun Jiagan's compromise of "banning distilling in years of poor harvest and lifting the ban in

²⁶Wang Qingyun, *Shiqu yuji*, 5:65b.

²⁷"Jiangbei shiliao," 1:28-9.

²⁸Dai, 1:20a-4a.

²⁹The ban does not seem to have included yeast produced for household use. See note 36 below.

³⁰See *QLSL*, 52:14; *Huangchao wenxian tongkao*, 1:5125; *Qinding da Qing huidian zeli*, 18:35b-6b.

bumper years." In fact, Qianlong only allowed some provincial officials to deal with the ban on distilling in flexible terms. Instead of retreating from his original plan, Qianlong hoped that his ban on yeast-making might meet less opposition.

In the first half of 1738 Qianlong's edicts repeatedly showed his new determination to ban the making of yeast. The situation in the five provinces in northern China where barley and wheat were grown was still his primary concern. He also noticed that yeast production was prosperous in the lower Yangzi areas and required local officials there to implement his new policy.³¹

However, the policy was challenged by a case in lower Yangzi area. On July 24, 1738, Qianlong reproved Governor Yang Yongbin (?-1740) of Jiangsu in an edict, explaining that Yang's confiscation of all yeast-manufacturing utensils did not show consideration for the people. Yang also mentioned in his memorial that he had seized yeast produced prior to the issuance of the ban. Qianlong suspected that much of the confiscated yeast was produced after the ban was put into effect. He therefore doubted that Yang had been consistently enforcing the ban. Because he suspected that local officials were not complying with his policy, Qianlong appeared ready to reconsider it. He reiterated that he was willing to withdraw his order if local officials found it was not beneficial to the people; otherwise, every local official should carry it out without hesitation.³² Seizing the opportunity that the Yang case offered, Sun Jiagan presented a memorial arguing for the removal of the ban on yeast-making.

Sun based his argument on three factors. First, wheat and barley could not be stored for a long time. For this reason, peasants were eager to sell them quickly for cash. In a bumper year, rich merchants purchased wheat and barley from peasants at a low price and made them into yeast, which could be transported easily. Both peasants and merchants had long benefited from this business. A ban on yeast-making not only deprived merchants of their investments but also deprived peasants of extra income. If the yeast-makers were not allowed to buy barley and wheat from peasants, the latter could hardly get enough money to pay taxes and meet their daily needs. This would harm both the people's livelihood and the national income. Second, yeast was mostly made in Henan and Jiangsu and supplied to extra-provincial buyers. If the ban were implemented, grain prices in the two provinces would fall. Moreover, the ban would raise grain prices elsewhere because merchants would still try to produce illegal yeast outside Henan and Jiangsu. Third, the prohibition on selling barley and wheat would necessitate investigating the stores of grain. In this case, malpractice by local officials would probably victimize rich households and peasants. Sun Jiagan concluded that all bans on distilling alcohol, making yeast, and selling crops should be abolished.³³

This time Qianlong ordered provincial officials of the five provinces in northern China and Jiangnan in central China to evaluate Sun's opinions. All, except Governor Yuan Zhancheng (?-1744) of Gansu replied that those who

³¹QLSL, 65:2, 67:21, 68:6.

³²QLSL, 70:15b-7a.

³³Sun, 8:24b-8a.

made a profit on producing and selling yeast should be punished, but small-scale manufacturing by the common people should not be banned.³⁴ Nevertheless, Fang Bao continued to pursue a complete ban on distilling. He explained that central government officials might have been overly concerned to protect the merchants, and provincial officials had probably been misled by their subordinates. Because there was a famine south of the Yangzi and grain prices had risen in several provinces, it would be appropriate for the emperor to issue a complete ban on distilling. Fang further pointed out that Sun Jiagan's proposal to lift the ban on yeast-making had won little support from provincial officials. In addition, distilled alcohol was already strictly banned in Zhili and Shandong, and did not trouble people there.³⁵

Qianlong seemed to think that the ban on making yeast would indirectly lead to an end of the distilling of alcohol. Although Fang Bao and Sun Jiagan still maintained their opposing opinions, Qianlong no longer took their arguments seriously. The support of most central and local officials for this alternative made Qianlong believe that the ban on yeast making would be carried out. A further investigation of the real conditions of local areas will help us better understand whether or not Qianlong was overly optimistic.

Implementation of the Ban

In early November 1737, Qianlong decided to allow some provincial officials the flexibility to "adapt measures to the times" in implementing the distillation ban. But the ban on the production and sale of yeast was to be implemented strictly. Although the government had issued punishments for irresponsible officials and unlawful people, new penalty clauses were added in subsequent years. People who made small quantities of yeast for household consumption were exempted from punishments.³⁶ Below I will examine the reactions of provincial officials in both northern and central China to the imperial order.

North China

As noted earlier, the ban on distilled alcohol stemmed from Fang Bao's awareness of the increase of grain prices in the capital. Because the strategic importance of Beijing dictated that the court pay close attention to the grain supply,³⁷ it is not surprising that the governor-general of Zhili was repeatedly

³⁴QLSL, 71:6b-7a.

³⁵Dai, 1: 25a-6a.

³⁶The earliest statement of an exemption for household yeast that I have been able to locate was in an imperial grant of 1738. See *Qinding da Qing huidian zeli*, 18:36a. More specifically, people who produced less than 300 jin of yeast would be exempted from punishment. In late 1740 Yaertu, governor of Hunan, suggested that the maximum be extended to 600 jin, but Qianlong declined his proposal. See QLSL, 127:32b. Normally one jin was equal to 1.3 pounds, with local variation. See Rawski and Li, xiii.

³⁷Lillian M. Li, "Grain Prices in Zhili Province, 1736-1911: A Preliminary Study," in Thomas G. Rawski and Lillian M. Li, eds., *Chinese History in Economic Perspective*, 70.

urged by certain central government officials to deal with this problem. The principle of "adapting measures to the times" was not adopted in Zhili except in Xuanhua prefecture in the north.³⁸ In other words, the governor-general was required to ban the production of yeast and distilled alcohol at all times. In November 1738 Sun Jiagan succeeded Li Wei as governor-general. He soon found that his predecessor had concluded 364 cases and sent 1,448 violators to jail within a year. Although Fang Bao claimed that the ban had been successfully implemented in Zhili during Li Wei's tenure, Sun Jiagan disagreed with Fang and called the emperor's attention to the people's sufferings in his memorial.³⁹ Despite his consistent opposition to the ban, Sun had no choice but to carry out the imperial order. Within his first month in office, Sun concluded 78 cases of illegal sales of yeast, sent 355 violators to jail, and confiscated over 400,000 *jin* of distilled alcohol and over 300,000 pieces of finished yeast. In addition, numerous carts, horses, and utensils were also seized. Based on these results Sun believed that more cases might have been concluded at the prefecture and county levels than at the provincial level and that there must have been official corruption occurring below. Learning from his personal experience in implementing the ban, Sun Jiagan reemphasized his old plea to lift the ban in a memorial in early February 1739. He pointed out that ancient sage kings Yao and Shun would not have sent hundreds of thousands of people to jail simply for violating the regulations for drinking. The ban had left many people unemployed. Yet, other people still continued to engage in this business. Since Sun had experience in dealing with these cases in person, he felt that the ban would eventually amount to little more than empty words. He also pointed out that once people were deprived of their capital and business, they became emboldened, doing whatever they wanted. For this reason, Sun claimed that even his plan of banning in poor harvest years was unfeasible. This time Qianlong seemed to feel that further deliberation with his ministers was unnecessary.⁴⁰

In 1739, when the harvest was good, Sun Jiagan was ordered repeatedly to implement the ban on distilled alcohol. Since alcohol was made from sorghum, Sun ordered the officials at lower levels to buy up sorghum for fear that it would be used for making alcohol.⁴¹ However, Censor Qi Shi observed that in Beijing distilled alcohol became cheaper and more popular in the good harvest year of 1740 than in the previous years. Qi contended that the ban had not been strictly carried out in the neighboring counties around Beijing. Qianlong agreed with Qi Shi's observation. He regarded Governor-general Sun Jiagan as a hard-working official, but he admitted that Sun had been too lax in carrying out the ban on distilled alcohol.⁴² In addition, because Sun was a native of Shanxi, some officials indicated that Sun might be protecting the interests of the

³⁸People in Xuanhua Prefecture were allowed to make distilled alcohol in the bumper years at the suggestions of Li Wei. See Dai, 1:26b.

³⁹Sun, 8:11b-3b. In 1740 Li Wei was criticized by Censor Shen Shifeng for his hard-line measures. Qianlong, however, thought that Li Wei had done a good job. See *QLSL*, 123: 11b-2b.

⁴⁰Sun, 8:12a-4b.

⁴¹Sun, 8:10.

⁴²*QLSL*, 127:18b.

merchants from Shanxi. Qianlong told Sun that he trusted his diligence and loyalty, but urged him to make a greater effort in carrying out the ban.⁴³

In Henan, Governor Yin Huiyi actively carried out the ban on yeast-making. He pointed out that the yeast produced within his domain had been purchased by distillers in Zhili, Shanxi, and Shaanxi. Every year numerous local and extra-provincial rich merchants gathered at certain market towns to purchase wheat and barley there and to produce yeast for the market. When Yin assumed his office in mid-1737, he forbade the merchants to produce and sell the yeast and punished irresponsible local officials according to the imperial order.⁴⁴ To reduce the supply of finished yeast gradually, he proclaimed that if the people reported the quantity of the finished yeast they owned, they would be granted licenses and would be allowed to sell it off within six months. If the finished yeast was not sold within six months, he would consider granting an extension. Yin believed that his measure would prevent the people from making new yeast.⁴⁵ In May 1738 when peasants were prepared to harvest wheat and barley, Yin expected that merchants would gather again to make yeast. In order to deter yeast production and trade effectively, he requested that the emperor issue regulations by which he could punish anyone who failed to report cases of yeast-production or assisted in transporting the finished yeast. Those who helped the government confiscate the merchants' yeast would receive substantial rewards.⁴⁶ His suggestions were approved by the court.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, in a proclamation Yin warned local people not to violate the regulations. County and prefectural governments were strictly to investigate yeast-making at strategic market towns and passes.⁴⁸

Yin Huiyi assured the emperor in September 1738 that his implementation of the ban had evoked no complaints and had not harmed social and commercial activities in Henan.⁴⁹ Furthermore, he believed the surplus grain resulting from the ban in 1738 had not only helped the people of two counties in Henan survive the crisis of famine, but provided plenty of grain to the people in Zhili and Jiangnan, where the harvest had been poor. Nonetheless, reported Yin, the merchant community was very dissatisfied because his grace-period policy only allowed for previously manufactured yeast to be sold in Henan. For this reason, he explained, there were false and unfair accusations by some merchants that he had confiscated their finished yeast. Undoubtedly, these merchants were trying to prevent officials from investigating their secret production of new yeast for illegal sale.⁵⁰

In spite of Yin Huiyi's commitment to the ban, the production of yeast for

⁴³QLSL, 81:29b-30b.

⁴⁴"Jiangbei shiliao," 1:27. In another memorial he mentioned that the merchants mainly came from Shanxi. See "Jiangbei shiliao," 2:16.

⁴⁵"Jiangbei shiliao," 1:29. Subsequently, Yin granted extensions to his grace period. See "Jiangbei shiliao," 2:16.

⁴⁶"Jiangbei shiliao," 1:30.

⁴⁷*Qinding da Qing huidian zeli*, 18:36a.

⁴⁸Zhang Shouchang, ed., *Fu Yu tiaojiao*, 3:5.

⁴⁹"Jiangbei shiliao," 1:31.

⁵⁰"Jiangbei shiliao," 2:16-7.

sale never completely disappeared. For example, at the beginning of the ban, about 6,000 cubes of finished yeast were reported and were allowed to be sold. In June 1740 Yin's successor Yaertu (?-1767) was surprised to find that about 5,600 cubes had been sold in 1738, but only 400 cubes were sold in 1739. Yaertu soon discovered that merchants were still producing yeast and selling it as yeast that was produced before the ban because local officials had been remiss in their duties. Yaertu thought this resurgence of yeast production also resulted in grain shortages, though Henan had enjoyed a bumper harvest the previous year. Thus, he ordered that all the finished yeast should be sold out by the end of May and sent clerks to investigate illegal production. Despite his successful measure in totally banning the sale of finished yeast, his successor, Shuose (?-1759), found out in 1744 that some merchants in the prefectures of Guide and Nanyang were exporting wheat for producing yeast.⁵¹

The implementation of the ban by Governor Famin (?-1742) in Shandong was once regarded as a model for other provinces. When Fang Bao argued his case in early 1738, he mentioned that people in Shandong had no complaints, though the production of both distilled alcohol and yeast were strictly banned.⁵² The grand secretaries also praised the achievements in Shandong and suggested that other provinces adopt the same ban. Based on his personal experiences in dealing with the ban in Zhili, Sun Jiagan contended that the optimism of Fang Bao and the grand secretaries was groundless.⁵³ Qianlong was also suspicious and wanted to determine the truth.⁵⁴ According to a memorial from Zhu Dingyuan (?-1770), governor of Shandong, from September 1741 to January 1742 he had prosecuted 62 cases related to yeast production and confiscated over 820,000 *jin* of yeast. He also dealt with dozens of illegal cases of alcohol distillation. In late 1743 Governor Ke'erjishan memorialized that illegal distilleries had been discovered at several market towns in Shandong.⁵⁵

Provincial officials in Shanxi followed the principle of "adapting measures to the times" so that people were allowed to produce distilled alcohol in bumper years for the sake of consumption in winter. In 1738 Provincial Judge Sahaliang found that local officials were still collecting taxes from alcohol production and were thus reluctant to ban it. Accordingly, Sahaliang pleaded with the emperor to abolish this kind of tax.⁵⁶ Moreover, one kind of liquor called *fenjiu* was a renowned beverage in China and many people of Shanxi engaged in its production. Provincial officials seemed to be very hesitant to apply the ban to *fenjiu*.⁵⁷

Distilling was not a prosperous business in Shaanxi. Nevertheless, Chalang'a (?-1747), governor-general of Sichuan-Shaanxi, and Zhang Kai (?-1744), governor of Shaanxi, noticed that every year the merchants of Shanxi and Henan came to the counties of Xianyang and Zhaoyi in central Shaanxi to buy

⁵¹"Jiangbei shiliao," 2:17.

⁵²Dai, 1:25a-6a.

⁵³"Jiangbei shiliao," 2:16.

⁵⁴Sun, 8:11b-3b.

⁵⁵"Jiangbei shiliao," 2:18, 21.

⁵⁶"Jiangbei shiliao," 1:32-3.

⁵⁷"Jiangbei shiliao," 2:19.

grain and make yeast there for export. In this fashion, over 100,000 *shi* of grain were consumed. The two provincial officials preferred to deal with these merchants rather than ban production for household use.⁵⁸

Two successive governors of Gansu, Depei and Yuan Zhancheng, showed little interest in carrying out the ban. Because the production of distilled alcohol there was insignificant compared to other provinces, and because the poor needed cheap alcohol for protection against the cold, Depei and Yuan preferred to "adapt measures to suit the locality" (*yindi zhiyi*). In fact, their measures were approved by the emperor.⁵⁹

Central China

Jiangsu, Anhui, and Jiangxi usually enjoyed good harvests of wheat, barley, and rice. Distilling developed prosperously in certain areas. Zhenjiang, Huaian, Xuzhou, Fengyang, and Yingzhou were noted for the making of yeast.⁶⁰ This yeast was sold in Zhili and Shanxi.⁶¹ In southern Jiangsu, governor-general Nasutu (?-1749) of Liangjiang memorialized in mid-1738 that in Dantu county of Zhenjiang prefecture over ten thousand workers engaged in the making of two kinds of yeast. If the ban were carried out, all of these workers would lose their jobs. Nasutu pleaded with the emperor to let some of the workers continue making yeast for local consumption, but Qianlong rejected his suggestion. Thus Nasutu had no choice but to ban the making of these kinds of yeast and to order the manufacturers to change their profession.⁶² In November he reported that the ban had been effectively carried out.⁶³

Although local people were allowed to make small quantities of yeast, sometimes local officials found it hard to follow this principle faithfully. In the summer of 1740 when Zhang Qu (?-1740), governor of Jiangsu, investigated the cases of yeast production, he found that the illegal export of grain by ship was not the major reason for the rising grain prices. People in Jiangsu were allowed to make alcohol by using the dregs of yellow wine, but using wheat to make distilled alcohol was strictly banned. Zhang was surprised to discover that in the town of Mudu in Wu county over two thousand households were engaged in the distillation of alcohol. Each household-maker used five *shi* of rice every day to make about 80 *jin* of distilled alcohol. It was estimated that over one million *shi* of rice was consumed per year at this small town and several million *jin* of alcohol were exported. In addition, there were numerous producers in the neighboring towns.⁶⁴ Late this year Yang Chaozen (?-1742) reported that the water transportation system in southern Jiangsu was extremely convenient for exporting contraband yeast. In many areas, local officials found it difficult to

⁵⁸"Jiangbei shiliao," 2:31.

⁵⁹"Jiangbei shiliao," 1:28-9,33.

⁶⁰Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'an'guan, "Qianlong nianjian Jiangnan shusheng xingjin caiqu shaojiu shiliao" (hereafter "Jiangnan shiliao"), 13.

⁶¹"Jiangnan shiliao," 15.

⁶²QLSL, 69: 30b-1a. "Jiangnan shiliao," 15-6.

⁶³"Jiangnan shiliao," 16.

⁶⁴"Jiangnan shiliao," 17.

intercept shipments. Qianlong's response to their reports was only to encourage them to "adapt measures to the times and local situations."⁶⁵

In Anhui, Governor Sun Guoxi (?-1739) found that the yeast-making was prosperous in some places in northwestern Anhui near Henan, where wheat and barley grew. Extra-provincial merchants came there to produce yeast and sold it outside the province. In addition to enforcing the ban, Sun suggested that the yeast tax be abolished at the customs houses of Wuhu and Fengyang because yeast had been labeled as an illegal commodity.⁶⁶

In Hubei, the large-scale production of yeast was centered in some counties of the prefectures of Xiangyang and Hanyang. In 1739 Governor Fan Can (?-1766) found nineteen manufacturers engaged in this business at Fancheng county of Xiangyang and confiscated over one hundred thousand cubes of yeast. Because Xiangyang was adjacent to Henan, Fan thought that his implementation of the ban would benefit people in both Hubei and Henan.⁶⁷ Fan's successor, Antu (?-1754), went even further, withdrawing the licenses that had been issued to the yeast brokers. This measure made selling yeast illegal.⁶⁸

One interesting case shows that excessive consumption of grain in making alcohol resulted in a temporary institutional change. In late 1739 Fujian provincial authorities planned to store up one million *shi* of grain by selling the *jiansheng* degrees to native Fujianese. However, the government had only received thirty thousand *shi* of grain. Since Fujian enjoyed good harvest in 1739, it was assumed that native Fujianese would rather use grain to make alcohol and yeast than to buy *jiansheng* degrees. To get more grain that year, provincial authorities allowed outsiders to buy the degrees in Fujian.⁶⁹

Commercial Agriculture in a Dilemma

So far, we have examined the provincial officials' efforts around 1740 when the imperial orders gained momentum. Although some had difficulty implementing the ban, they tried to comply with it. We can imagine that Qianlong might have felt satisfied with the memorials from local officials reporting the fall of grain prices or the increase of grain storage, proving his policy to be beneficial to the material well-being of the people.

From these provincial officials' reports, we learn that they conceded the realities of yeast-making and alcohol distillation within their domains. However, provincial officials in Zhili, Henan, and Jiangsu always claimed that these businesses were mainly managed by the merchants from other provinces, especially those from Shanxi. They implied that the merchants carried large amounts of finished yeast to neighboring provinces for the making of distilled alcohol, but they failed to point out exactly where the yeast was sold. They tried to stress that production and consumption of distilled alcohol caused no

⁶⁵"Jiangnan shiliao," 18.

⁶⁶"Jiangnan shiliao," 14.

⁶⁷"Jiangnan shiliao," 18-9.

⁶⁸"Jiangnan shiliao," 20.

⁶⁹QLSL, 104: 17b-8b.

serious problems in their own administrations. In addition, they implied that the production of yeast would decline if outside incentives disappeared.

Apparently, two kinds of merchants were engaged in the business of distilled alcohol, equipping themselves with sufficient capital and actively searching for resources. Some merchants bought grain at favorable prices from peasants and hired workers to produce yeast. Others used the finished yeast to make distilled alcohol, either in local areas or in neighboring provinces. In Henan, Zhili, central Shaanxi, northern Hubei, and southern Jiangsu the distillation industry grew rapidly. A market system of distilled alcohol had gradually formed.

However, Qianlong denounced those who engaged in alcohol distillation as "unscrupulous people" (*jianmin*) or "unscrupulous merchants" (*jianshang*). To his mind, these people sought only their own profits. They paid no attention to the suffering of the common people and they dared to violate imperial laws. Qianlong was not hostile to the merchants, but he expected them to make profits by supplying grain to areas with food shortages. He also took pity on peasants because they were so ignorant that they only coveted short-term benefits.⁷⁰

During the remaining years of his reign Qianlong never changed his attitude towards this issue, though the ban gradually lost momentum. He occasionally reminded local officials to implement the ban. By the same token, some of his provincial chiefs kept assuring him that they supported the policy, especially when grain shortages became a serious problem in local areas. In 1748 Qianlong wanted to know why the grain prices were so high in certain areas. Many central and provincial officials mentioned the rapid growth of population, the prevalence of cash crops such as tobacco, excessive amounts of grain set aside in ever-normal granaries, and the hoarding of grain by merchants.⁷¹ At least five officials admitted that production of yeast and alcohol was still a major factor. Among them, Shi Jiqi (?-1750), censor overseeing the Yunnan circuit, pointed out that the imperial order of the ban on making yeast was almost neglected because local wealthy people often colluded with county clerks and yamen runners to seek profit from making yeast and alcohol. He suggested that the ban should be reemphasized by the emperor and be strictly implemented in local areas.⁷² And in fact, there was evidence to indicate that Qianlong reiterated his order in the immediate aftermath of this investigation.⁷³

The ban regained momentum in Zhili in March 1752 when Qianlong

⁷⁰ QLSL, 48: 17b-8a; 65:1b-2b.

⁷¹ R. Bin Wong, "The Political Economy of Food Supplies in Qing China," 124-36. Quan Hansheng, "Qianlong shishannian di migui wenti," in *Zhongguo jingjishi luncong*, 563-5. Another important factor in the rise of grain prices, as pointed out by Quan Hansheng, was the influx of silver. Grand Council Archives (hereafter GCA), 002612, 002632, 002961, 002692; 002784.

⁷² The other officials were Tuerbing'a (?-1765), Yin Jishan (1696-1771), Pan Siqu (1695-1752), and Aliqun (?-1770). Shi Jiqi was concurrently assigned to assist in conducting surveillance in the Jiangnan Circuit, so his reports were mainly about his observations in the Lower Yangzi areas.

⁷³ For example, Erong'an (?-1765), acting governor of Henan, was ordered to prohibit the people from making and selling yeast at harvest time. See his memorial in GCA, 004663.

instructed his subordinates to investigate the case of grain shortages in the Tongzhou Granary. To reduce the volume in the granary for accounting purposes, Qianlong granted a twenty-month salary in grain (*fengmi*) to central government officials. In order to prevent merchants from buying grain from these officials, Qianlong issued a special order that required local officials in Zhili to report illegal cases of yeast and distilled alcohol production every month to provincial officials. Every three months the emperor wanted to review all the reports submitted to him by provincial officials. This special order was to be effective until March 1753. Any official who failed to implement the ban during this period would be deprived of his post instead of merely being reduced one grade.⁷⁴

Since Qianlong never lifted the ban during his reign, it had a major impact on alcohol production. Moreover, the ban on distilling alcohol had consequences for certain local products. As mentioned earlier, provincial officials in Shanxi hesitated to deal with the production of the *fenjiu*. In addition, two kinds of locally distilled alcohol in Jiangsi had enjoyed great fame for many years. Although their annual production was limited, they were banned and the makers had to change their profession.⁷⁵

In fact, Qianlong was ambiguous about his ban. On the one hand, he hoped that local officials could faithfully implement his order but permitted some of them to "adapt measures to the times." On the other hand, he condemned their strict measures in confiscating merchants' utensils and he allowed people to produce yeast for household consumption. Moreover, taxes on yeast and distilled alcohol were still levied at twenty-one customs houses around the empire, though the income was insignificant and local officials repeatedly suggested that they be abolished.⁷⁶ As a result, the implementation of the ban could be manipulated by local officials.

Conclusion

Qianlong's attempt to ban distilled alcohol represented a strong state intervention in the agrarian economy. In late imperial China, households adapted to the increase in population and the shortage of arable land by developing various forms of commercial activities. Among these, distilling was a way of converting grain to a commodity of high value and low bulk. Committed to Confucian ideas, Qianlong believed that distilling would diminish the food supply, and that it was his responsibility to dissuade his people from diverting so much grain to non-food use.

When Qianlong tried to formulate his policy, he relied heavily on the responses from his subordinates, especially the debates between Fang Bao and Sun Jiagan. Fang's arguments revealed his moral considerations and immediately attracted the emperor's attention. Their primary concern was to prevent higher grain prices and to provide the people with enough grain in case

⁷⁴QLSL, 408: 16b-8b.

⁷⁵"Jiangnan shilliao," 20.

⁷⁶Kawakubo Teiro, "Shindai ni okeru shochu no seiko ni tsuite," 32.

of famine, so that the well-being of the people could be assured. Strictly speaking, although Sun Jiagan always suggested lifting the ban, his arguments also did not go beyond moral concerns.⁷⁷ To his mind, the ban would only encourage official malpractice and would cause trouble to the people. He believed that the ban was not easily enforceable and that the government should not make fruitless efforts as its predecessors had done. To Qianlong, Sun's arguments did not suggest an effective way to deal with the proliferation of distillation and the dwindling grain supply. Hence, Sun's advocacy of permitting the household economy to survive only partially succeeded in persuading the emperor.

The ineffective implementation of the ban during the Qianlong reign inevitably discouraged his successors from adopting similar policies. In the nineteenth century the state set this issue aside; except for a few provincial officials who temporarily banned distilling in years of poor harvest. Generally, taxes were imposed on the making and selling of alcohol. Although a similar debate recurred around 1860, the late Qing government did not reimpose the ban on distilling.⁷⁸

Perhaps Qianlong never expected that the practice of making yeast and alcohol would completely cease to exist because of the ban. Although he hoped that local officials could effectively carry out his order at all times, he was more concerned about the grain supply in the populous areas of north China and the lower Yangzi region. By ordering his provincial chiefs to implement the ban, Qianlong kept himself well informed of local realities. He adopted this conservative way to assure the livelihood of the people, but his main purpose was to maintain the stability of his empire.

Glossary

Aligun	阿 里 袁
Antu	安 圖
Chalang'a	查 郎 阿
Chen Zhaolun	陳 兆 崙
Dantu	丹 徒
Depei	德 沛
Erong'an	鄂 容 安
Famin	法 敏
Fan Can	范 燦
Fancheng	樊 城
Fang Bao	方 苞
fenjiu	汾 酒
fengmi	俸 米
Fengxiang	鳳 翔

⁷⁷My view is different from that of Kawakubo, who labels Sun as a "realist." See his "Shindai Manshu ni okeru shoka no zokusei ni tsuite," 307.

⁷⁸*Huangchao xu wenxian tongkao*, 1: 7955-59.

Fengyang	鳳陽
Hanyang	漢陽
Huaian	淮安
huangjiu	黃酒
jianmin	奸民
jiangshang	奸商
jiangsheng	監生
Keerjishan	喀爾吉善
Li Wei	李衛
mingliu	明流
Mudu	木瀆
Nanyang	南陽
Naqin	訥親
Nasutu	那蘇圖
Pan Siqu	潘思渠
Qi Shi	齊軾
Sahaliang	薩哈諒
shaoguo	燒鍋
shaojiu	燒酒
Shen Shifeng	沈世楓
Shi Jiqi	史積琦
Shuose	碩色
Sun Guoxi	孫國璽
Sun Jiagan	孫嘉淦
Tongzhou	通州
Tuerbing'a	圖爾炳阿
Wu	吳
Wuhu	蕪湖
Xianyang	襄陽
Xuanhua	宣化
Xuzhou	徐州
Yaertu	雅爾圖
Yang Chaozeng	楊超曾
Yang Yongbin	楊永斌
yangmin	養民
Yangxin	養心
Yin Huiyi	尹會一
Yin Jishan	尹繼善
yindi zhiyi	因地利宜
Yingzhou	穎州
yinshi zhiyi	因時制宜
Yuan Zhancheng	元展成
Zhang Kai	張楷
Zhang Qu	張渠
Zhaoyi	朝邑

Zhengzhou

Zhenjiang

Zhu Dingyuan

鄭州

鎮江

朱定元

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