

## ***Chapter Two: The Grain Tribute And The Imperial Budget***

From 1500 onwards, as the market developed and the use of silver became more common, many taxes that previously had been collected in kind were collected in silver. This reform, known as the Single Whip Method of tax collection, was implemented in stages through the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries. It had the effect not only of commuting all taxes to silver, but of simplifying taxes: a household's multiple tax burdens became a single, all-encompassing item. By the Qing dynasty, most taxes were paid in silver.

But because the grain tribute was needed to guarantee a basic food supply for officials and soldiers in the capital, the Qing government continued to collect this particular tax in kind. William Rowe's study on Hu Linyi's fiscal administration in Hubei province was evidence that, at least until the great rebellion in the mid-nineteenth century, the court was able to insist on the grain tribute.<sup>1</sup> During a time of rapid market development, the court intended to protect this critical sector from market fluctuations.

The Qing government's insistence on the grain tribute, and the shipment of substantial amounts of it along the canal route, resulted in the particular development of the grain trade discussed in Chapter One. In this chapter we will see that the central government used the excess grain amassed in Beijing and Tongzhou as a tool for stabilizing grain prices. Lillian Li and

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<sup>1</sup> In 1853 the Taiping rebels cut river transport lines to the north. The court had to suspend grain shipments from the Yangzi provinces and accept fully commuted payments in their stead. After suppressing the rebellion, in the late 1860s, the court sought to return to payment in grain, but provincial governments (like Hubei, which had benefited financially from its commutation rate) opposed the reversion, and were powerful enough to insist on the new policy. See William T. Rowe, "Hu Lin-i's reform of the Grain Tribute System in Hupeh, 1855-1858," *Ch'ing-Shih Wen-T'i*, 4, No. 10 (December 1983), pp. 33-86.

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Alison Dray-Novey showed that through reduced-price sales, and the distribution of grain salaries and free grain soup, the Qing government was able to keep the price of grain in Beijing very low throughout the century.<sup>2</sup> The wealth of stored grain was also used for famine relief to the provinces.

### *Bureaucratic Administration for the Grain Tribute*

To secure a continuous grain supply for officials and soldiers in the capital, an effective bureaucratic administration was necessary.<sup>3</sup> To aid its administration, the government set up a transport schedule, stating the times by which the grain boats had to leave their riverside depots (*shuici*) in order to reach the granaries at Tongzhou, 50 *li* (28 kilometers) south of Beijing. (See Table 2.1.) Regulations also stated how the grain should be transported. First, local officials transferred the grain to bannermen at riverside depots, then bannermen took it up the canal to Tongzhou, where they handed it over to officials from the Capital Granaries (*Cangchang*). Approximately 16 per cent of the grain was stored in the imperial granaries in Tongzhou, and the rest sent on to Beijing in small lighters on the shallow Tonghui Canal between Tongzhou and Beijing. Brokers (*jingji*) appointed by the Capital Granaries were responsible for the haulage on this last leg of the journey.<sup>4</sup> The transport schedule, if adhered to, guaranteed that all the grain boats would reach Tongzhou and Beijing in time to pay the wages of soldiers and officials.

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<sup>2</sup> Lillian M. Li and Alison Dray-Novey, "Guarding Beijing's food security," pp. 992-1027. For more information on the food supply in Beijing in the Qing, see Wu Jianyong, "Qingdai Beijing de liangshi gongying," in *Beijing lishi yu xianshi yanjiu* (Beijing: Beijing Yanshan chubanshe, 1989), pp. 167-86.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed description of the regional managers of the Grand Canal as well as the grain transport system, see Jane Kate Leonard, *Controlling from Afar*, pp. 86-108.

<sup>4</sup> The grain tribute tax quota in 1735 was 4,458,000 *shi* of husked grain including wastage. Of this amount, 679,000 *shi* was stored at Tongzhou. See Table 2.1. With regard to the reference of lighters (*bochuan*) and brokers (*jingji*), see *Caoyun quanshu* (1736), p. 404.

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This delivery schedule was made effective by a “journey certificate” (*xiandan*),<sup>5</sup> designed to prevent grain boats from lingering too long in one place. Once a bannerman had loaded the grain onto his boat, the local magistrate would give him a certificate with his departure date on it. Along the way, the bannerman had to present this journey certificate to magistrates in every county he passed through, so they could record the dates of his arrival and departure on it. When the bannerman reached Tongzhou, he had to submit this certificate to the Capital Granaries.<sup>6</sup>

High officials at different points on the Grand Canal kept close watch on the quantity and quality of the grain tribute. At Huaian, the midpoint of the Grand Canal, the Director-general of Grain Transport made an initial inspection of the grain tribute from the Yangzi provinces. He checked the total amount of grain to be sure it tallied, and withdrew one *shi* of rice from each boat to sample for quality. If the grain tribute on the boat ran short or was of inferior quality, the Director-general allowed the boat to continue only if one of the bannerman’s assistants remained at Huaian to buy enough grain to replace it. Then the assistant had to rent a boat and catch up to his own grain tribute boat.<sup>7</sup>

From Huaian on to Tongzhou, checkpoints were set up along the canal to report on the number of grain boats and the amount of grain they carried. The Director-general of Grain Transport was in charge of the checkpoints between Huaian and Dezhou,<sup>8</sup> while the Director-general of Capital Granaries was in charge between Tianjin and Tongzhou. The officials of the Capital Granaries had to submit these reports every five days.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The “journey certificate” was introduced in 1711. See *Caoyun quanshu* (1736), p. 260.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 256-7.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, the reports in 1754, in GZD-QL, vol. 7, pp. 615-6 (QL 19.2.19), pp. 831-2 (QL 19.3.26); vol. 8, p. 134 (QL 19.4.27), p. 342 (QL 19.4\*.23), pp. 413-4 (QL 19.5.3), pp. 486-7 (QL 19.5.13), p. 674 (QL 19.6.4), pp. 744-5 (QL 19.6.10).

<sup>9</sup> See *Caoyun quanshu* (1736), p. 403. Scattered reports from the Capital Granaries can be found in the year of 1766 (QL 31) recorded in *Ming-Qing dang'an* (Taipei: Institute for History and Phonology,



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At Tongzhou, the Capital Granaries carried out a thorough inspection of all the grain tribute as the bannermen brought it in and unloaded it.<sup>10</sup> The Capital Granaries could refuse to accept inferior-quality grain, or punish bannermen for a grain tribute that was below quota. Bannermen were flogged and fined for a discrepancy of less than 10 per cent. If the grain on a boat was under quota by 60 per cent or more, the bannerman was beheaded and his property, including his wives, confiscated.<sup>11</sup>

With the above measures, the Qing government ensured that the grain tribute, including the extra portion collected to cover losses in transit and called "wastage grain", arrived at the metropolitan granaries. In the eighteenth century this method of administration was so successful that the government was able to store more grain than it needed.

### *Surplus Grain*

In 1719, the grain surplus was so substantial that the Kangxi emperor worried about it. He noted: "The grain tribute from the provinces has not fallen into arrears and is now piled up in the granaries. I am afraid that it will be rotten."<sup>12</sup> According to a 1722 investigation, the Beijing granaries had accumulated 3,690,000 *shi* of grain and the Tongzhou granaries 5,130,000 *shi*.<sup>13</sup>

Jiang Tingxi, the Vice Minister of the Board of Revenue in the Yongzheng period (1723-35), pointed out that the surplus was structural, in that each year the quota of tax grain for Beijing was 2,760,000 *shi*, while disbursement was only 2,440,000 *shi*; and the Tongzhou granaries quota was 540,000 *shi*, but disbursement only 190,000 *shi*. Thus after the annual payment,

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Academia Sinica, 1986-95), A205-90 (QL 31.3.16), A205-92 (QL 31.3.21), A205-94 (QL 31.4.19), A205-95 (QL 31.4.26), A205-97 (QL 31.4.29), A205-98 (QL 31.4.29), A205-100 (QL 31.4.29), A205-103 (QL 31.6.15), A205-104 (QL 31.6.20), A205-105 (QL 31.6.20), A205-106 (QL 31.6.20), A205-110 (QL 31.8.4), A205-185 (QL 31).

<sup>10</sup> *Shengzu shilu*, 229/20-22 (KX 46), 243/13-14 (KX 49); *Gaozong shilu*, 203/14a-b (QL 8.10).

<sup>11</sup> *Caoyun Quanshu* (1736), pp. 823-4.

<sup>12</sup> *Shengzu shilu*, 283/6a-7a (KX 58.1).

<sup>13</sup> *Shengzu shilu*, 299/13a-16a (KX 61), 300/1b-3b (KX 61.11).

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the metropolitan granaries had a surplus of 670,000 *shi* of grain.<sup>14</sup> This surplus did not even include the wastage grain. In another memorial, Jiang claimed that with the wastage rice accounted for, the metropolitan granaries had a grain surplus of more than 1,000,000 *shi* a year.<sup>15</sup>

An annual excess of 1,000,000 *shi* of grain posed a serious storage problem. In 1731, the imperial grain reserves had reached 13,500,000 *shi*. According to Jiang, even if the grain tribute was suspended, the excess would pay for the stipends of metropolitan officials and soldiers for more than four years. He warned that all the granaries in Beijing and Tongzhou were full. Unless alternative arrangements were made, future surplus would have to be stored in the open. He suggested that the Board of Revenue sell part of the reserves to provide storage space for new grain.

Acting on Jiang's suggestion, the Board of Revenue sold 1,000,000 *shi* of grain for silver on the local markets (880,000 *shi* and 120,000 *shi* of grain from the granaries in Beijing and Tongzhou respectively). Forty per cent of this grain was old rice (*laomi*), 40 per cent shuttle rice (*suomi*), and 20 per cent millet (*cangmi*). Old rice was sold for 1 tael of silver per *shi*, shuttle rice 0.8 tael per *shi*, and millet 0.6 tael per *shi*.<sup>16</sup> From this measure the Board of Revenue received 840,000 taels of silver, but even more importantly, the storage problem in Beijing and Tongzhou was eased.

Two years later, in response to a request from Xu Tianxiang, the Superintendent of the Capital Granaries (*Zongdu Cangchang*), the imperial court arranged for another grain sale of 1,000,000 *shi* at Beijing and Tongzhou. According to Xu, old rice and shuttle rice had been accumulating in Tongzhou, to a total of 3,700,000 *shi*, much of which had been stored for over ten years and was rotting. To avoid further deterioration, he suggested that

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<sup>14</sup> GZD-YZ, vol. 27, pp. 725-6 (n.d.). This memorial was presented by Jiang Tingxi between 1726 and 1732 when he was serving in the Board of Revenue.

<sup>15</sup> *Caoyun quanshu* (1736), p. 545. This memorial was presented in 1731.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

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the Board of Revenue withdraw 1,000,000 *shi* of rice from the granaries in Tongzhou for sale as had been done in 1731.<sup>17</sup> In this case, the sale of imperial grain was aimed not only at providing more storage space, but at releasing decade-old grain before it became unfit to eat.

The sale of grain in the 1730s was prompted by an excessive surplus, but sometimes grain reserves were sold to stabilize prices. In the early Qing, whenever grain prices increased in the capital, the imperial government released some of the grain tribute to sell below market price. In the fourth lunar month of 1737, for instance, to counter a general rise in grain prices in Beijing due to drought, the government permitted a grain sale of 10,000 *shi*.<sup>18</sup>

Providing famine or price relief in Beijing alone did not alleviate the surplus of grain; even during a famine the grain tribute arrived, and the granaries were full. As shown earlier, the imperial court paid soldiers in the Eight Banners in Beijing 2,440,000 *shi* of grain a year, to be portioned out four times a year. Thus 610,000 *shi* of grain arrived in Beijing every three months for the soldiers' wages. The grain tribute made Beijing immune to the famines. Table 2.2, compiled from the *Caoyun quanshu* (Complete Record of the Grain Tribute Transport) and from memorials, lists the amounts taken from the imperial granaries for relief in Beijing. While the list is incomplete, it probably includes all the major instances of famine relief in Beijing in the eighteenth century. In each case, the amount of surplus grain sold to the Beijing population rarely exceeded 80,000 *shi*.

Another way to reduce the grain surplus was to distribute grain to famine victims outside of Beijing. In this way the grain tribute became the major element of social stabilization during famines.

### *Financial Aid To Provincial Governments*

Because of the excessive amount of grain stored at Tongzhou and Beijing, the central government was able to be generous when providing aid for famines in the provinces. In general, the practice

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 548.

<sup>18</sup> *Gaozong shilu*, 40/3a-4a (QL 2.4).



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known as “*jieliu*” (to stop and retain) was observed during famine in the provinces: the central government either diverted grain to, or allowed its retention in the famine provinces. This portion of the grain tribute, along with government grain stored in local granaries, was sold to famine victims at a reduced price. The local government returned the proceeds of the sale to the Board of Revenue in Beijing.<sup>19</sup> During famines, large amounts of the grain tribute remained in the provinces, as can be seen in Table 2.3.<sup>20</sup> As well, many provinces were able to obtain additional grain, ranging from 100,000 to 400,000 *shi*.

Such substantial amounts of grain meant that local governments could rely on the grain tribute in times of famine. Table 2.4, compiled from the data in Table 2.3, ranks the provinces according to the total amount of grain tribute diverted or retained, and shows that Zhili province received the most grain in times of famine. The fact certainly reflects the relatively poor agricultural development of Zhili, but it also indicates its geographical proximity to the court at Beijing. As Pierre-Etienne Will has shown, during the drought in 1743-44 central and local governments provided about 1,400,000 *shi* of grain to drought-stricken counties in Zhili for reduced-price sales. Part of this grain was wheat, millet, and sorghum that the Zhili provincial government had purchased from Shandong, Henan, and even Fengtian, but most of it, amounting to 800,000 *shi*, was the grain tribute, 640,000 *shi* of millet and rice directly taken from the reserve at the Tongzhou granaries, and 160,000 *shi* of grain tribute (millet) diverted from Henan and Shandong.<sup>21</sup>

As Table 2.4 shows, Jiangsu province was second in the total amount of grain tribute retained or diverted for famine relief. Northern Jiangsu was in the ecologically unstable Yellow River-Huai River basin area, where famines were frequent. It is

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<sup>19</sup> *Caoyun quanshu* (1736), p. 421.

<sup>20</sup> The table is not exhaustive, but is compiled from various important contemporary sources, and includes all the major cases of the diversion to or retention of grain in the famine-ridden provinces.

<sup>21</sup> Will, *Bureaucracy and Famine*, pp. 153-70. Will lists ten famine-relief operations undertaken by the Qing government. The first, sixth, and seventh allocations were those in which the famine-relief grain was allotted from the grain tribute tax.

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also likely that southern Jiangsu, which included the most urbanized parts of China, was very sensitive to grain price changes from food shortages and the presence of famine victims from the north. But the high priority of Zhili and Jiangsu for famine relief was as much a statement of their political importance as of their vulnerability to famine.

In any case, throughout the eighteenth century the amounts of tribute grain retained in the provinces were not only large, but increased yearly. A 1758 memorial from Jiqing, the Vice Minister of the Board of Revenue, drew attention to this through a comparison of the total amounts of grain retained in the provinces in the Kangxi reign, the Yongzheng reign, and the Qianlong reign. According to him, the Kangxi emperor allowed only 2,140,000 *shi* of the grain tribute to be retained in the 61 years of his reign, while the Yongzheng emperor permitted 2,900,000 *shi* of grain to be retained in the (relatively brief) 13 years of his reign. But in the first 23 years of his reign, from 1736 to 1758, the Qianlong emperor allowed 13,200,000 *shi* of the grain tribute to remain in the provinces.<sup>22</sup> On average, the annual amount of grain tribute retained was 35,000 *shi* during the Kangxi reign, rising to 223,000 *shi* during the Yongzheng reign, and 573,000 *shi* from 1736 to 1758 in the Qianlong reign.

The increase in retained grain tribute did not reflect a parallel increase in famine. In a 1748 memorial, Shulu, the Provincial Administration Commissioner of Anhui, criticized the Lower Yangzi region for relying too heavily on the central government for grain. He wrote:

Now, the relief for famine is the most sizable in Jiangnan, followed by Zhejiang, Shandong, Henan, and then Hunan and Hubei, and finally Yunnan and Guizhou. Would it be true that those [latter] provinces

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<sup>22</sup> Yang Xifu, *Caoyun zeli zuan* (1769; repr. Yangzhou: Jiangsu Guangling guji keyin she, 1990), 18/80b-81b. Yang Xifu was the Governor-general of Grain Transport between 1757 and 1768. He compiled the *Caoyun zeli zuan* one year after he had left the post. The book is a compendium of rules and regulations on grain tribute transport, but gives a detailed account of the grain tribute diversion and retention allowed before that year.



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do not have poor harvests? The fact is that they are not accustomed to [bountiful crops] and therefore dare not request [relief]. However, in Jiangnan, people are accustomed to bountiful crops [*chengshu*]. [Therefore,] whenever there is flood or drought, they immediately beg for relief.

Shulu was condemning Jiangnan<sup>23</sup> (and other provinces) for requesting grain tribute relief for any shortfalls in the harvest, whether or not famine had resulted. He went on to suggest that the central government be less generous in granting grain-tribute relief to them.<sup>24</sup>

In response to Jiqing's 1758 memorial concerning the amount of tribute grain retained in the provinces as compared to earlier reigns (see above), the Qianlong emperor commented: "When I discover people starving to death in natural calamities, I cannot help [ordering the diversion and retention of the grain tribute]." <sup>25</sup> Although the emperor saw this as a sign of his own benevolence, it must be noted that provinces receiving famine relief ultimately paid for the diverted grain. As noted previously, when local officials received grain diverted from the tribute they organized reduced-price sales, after which they were required by law to return the proceeds to the Board of Revenue in Beijing.<sup>26</sup>

In short, the grain tribute provided a source of government revenue that was collected in kind, and therefore was free from price fluctuations. The diversion and retention of the grain tribute helped provincial governments, tiding them over in times

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<sup>23</sup> Jiangnan, literally meaning southern districts of the Yangzi River, commonly referred to the Yangzi delta (or the lower Yangzi) or Lake Tai basin. Bozhong Li considered Jiangnan to be comprised of the prefectures of Suzhou, Songjiang, Changzhou, Zhenjiang, and Jiangning in southern Jiangsu, and Hangzhou, Jiaking and Huzhou in western Zhejiang. See Bozhong Li, *Agricultural Development in Jiangnan, 1620-1850* (Great Britain: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998), p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Gaozong shilu*, 311/28a-29a (QL 13.3).

<sup>25</sup> Yang, *Caoyun zeli zuan*, 18/80b-81b.

<sup>26</sup> The regulation does not specify a deadline for returning the proceeds, but it is reasonable to assume that officials were required to do so immediately after the reduced-price sales. For a detailed discussion of reduced-price sales, see Chapter Five.

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of famine. Although local officials ultimately had to send the proceeds of its sale to the Board of Revenue, the grain tribute acted as a short-term loan during natural calamities.

The benefits of the grain tribute to the imperial government were substantial but were realized at a cost: the expense involved in the maintenance of the Grand Canal, and, as Chapter One shows, the bannermen's allowance of duty-free goods on grain boats. As well as these direct costs, there were hidden costs that often have gone unnoticed in conjunction with the grain tribute. In the following section I shall investigate the state revenue lost in customs duties, and in salt in particular, and show how they were related to the grain tribute.

### *Hidden Costs: Customs Duty And The Salt Revenue*

As has been mentioned, grain tribute boats were allowed to carry private goods for sale in the capital. By the eighteenth century, the amount of private goods shipped on imperial grain boats far exceeded the quota granted, especially on boats from Hubei, Hunan, and Jiangxi. According to a 1709 memorial from the Supervisor of the Wuhu Customs, grain boats from those provinces smuggled goods from the middle to the lower Yangzi in three ways: they illegally enlarged the small boats (lighters) that traveled with them;<sup>27</sup> they allowed private boats into their grain-transport fleets; and they tied wooden rafts to their boats, smuggling the timber the rafts were made of.<sup>28</sup>

Bannermen were able to smuggle goods so openly because their grain boats were free from customs inspection on the Yangzi. No one, not even the supervisors of customs houses, was allowed to obstruct boats carrying the imperial grain tribute. In 1709, the Wuhu Customs, which received its revenue mostly from the long-distance trade on the Yangzi, attempted to change the rule, wanting to stop the grain boats, search them, and collect duties. The imperial court rejected the request, as that would slow

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<sup>27</sup> In times of drought, when the canal became too shallow for the larger grain boats, the grain tribute was transferred to lighters; the government allowed each grain boat from Hubei, Hunan, and Jiangxi to travel with a lighter with a hundred *shi* of capacity. See Chapter One.

<sup>28</sup> *Caoyun quanshu* (1736), p. 872.

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the grain transportation.<sup>29</sup> In 1711, the Wuhu Customs asked the imperial court to allow its clerks to patrol the lower Yangzi and levy duties on the goods unloaded by the middle Yangzi grain boats. This would prevent the drain on customs revenue without slowing down the grain transport. This proposal was rejected as it violated the rule that a customs station could only collect duties within its own jurisdiction, and the jurisdiction of the Wuhu Customs was confined to the middle Yangzi.<sup>30</sup>

As there was no way to alleviate it, smuggling continued to be rampant on the Yangzi River. In 1719, the Supervisor of the Wuhu Customs presented the following report:

The tax arrears of the Wuhu Customs are due to the following fact. Every year, more than 2,000 grain boats from the provinces of Jiangxi, Hunan, and Hubei go past the customs house. The banner men load the goods fully [on their boats] at their discretion. They tie rafts of timber to the back of the boats and refuse an inspection [for tax].<sup>31</sup>

Thus by using the protection of the grain boats, merchants could smuggle even bulky goods like timber without paying duties.

Smuggling caused heavy losses in customs revenues. While the revenue quota of the Wuhu Customs was set at 227,000 taels annually, in reality the customs rarely collected this amount.<sup>32</sup> In 1721, for instance, after three seasons, the customs reported that it had collected only a little more than half of this quota. In reply, the Board of Revenue ordered the Customs Supervisor to make up for the shortage, and reminded local officials to fight against grain boat smuggling, reflecting that the deficit was caused, at least in part, by this.<sup>33</sup> But the Board of Revenue had no suggestions for how to go about such an undertaking.

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<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 379.

<sup>30</sup> *Caoyun quanshu* (1736), pp. 872-3.

<sup>31</sup> *Shengzu shilu*, 285/6a (KX 58.7).

<sup>32</sup> *Caoyun quanshu* (1736), pp. 872-3.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 874-5.



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Most goods carried on the grain boats were unloaded and sold in the Yangzi delta, but smuggling continued on the Grand Canal. In 1731 the Director-general of the Grand Canal, who had the authority to search the grain boats passing by Huaian, discovered two fleets of boats carrying goods over the legal quota of 126 *shi* per boat. A Haining fleet from Zhejiang, which consisted of 46 boats and was allowed a maximum of 5,796 *shi* of private goods, exceeded this amount by 398 *shi*. A Xuanzhou fleet of 45 boats from Jiangnan also exceeded its transport volume, by 488 *shi*. The Director-general of the Grand Canal ordered both fleets to unload all of their illegal cargoes locally.<sup>34</sup>

In the above report, boats coming from the Yangzi smuggled barely 10 per cent more than their quota. This amount was trivial compared to what they carried legally on their return journey, when, having completed their delivery, they no longer were free from customs inspection or customs duties. As Kōsaka Masanori documented, on this journey government grain boats participated in the flourishing bean-cake trade from north China to the south.<sup>35</sup> From this trade the Huaian Customs made a considerable annual income. In 1753, the customs office collected 330,000 taels, mostly from the bean-cake on the grain boats.<sup>36</sup> What income the government derived from the bean-cake trade, though, did not make up for what was lost through salt smuggling.

In the Qing the salt trade operated under a state monopoly. The government granted salt-trading rights to merchant syndicates under strict regulations: the salt bought in a producing region had to be sold in a designated consuming region. On their return from the north, grain boats passed through two salt-producing regions on the Grand Canal: the Changlu salt district near Tianjin and the Liang-Huai salt district near Huaian. Salt from the Changlu district was supposed to be sold in Zhili and

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 881-2.

<sup>35</sup> Bean-cake was the residue of soybeans after the oil was extracted. It was a nitrogenous fertilizer for the booming cotton cultivation in the Yangzi delta. See Katō Shigeru, *Shina keizai shi kōshō* (Tokyo: Tōyō bunko, 1953), pp. 694-8.

<sup>36</sup> Kōsaka Masanori, "Shindai ni okeru daiunga no bushi ryūtsū," p. 9. For more on the Huaian customs in the Qing, see Takino Shojiro, "Shindai Waiankan no kōsei to kinō nitsuite".

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a part of Henan, while salt from the Liang-Huai region was supposed to be sold in the Yangzi valley.<sup>37</sup> This profitable monopoly was disrupted by smuggling across designated consumption regions, and the illegal trade in salt was connected to the grain boats.

Court memorials show that many grain boats returning down the canal from Tongzhou bought illegal Changlu salt at Tianjin, Cangzhou, or Sangyuan (a town at the northern border of Shandong).<sup>38</sup> The salt must have been sold in Jiangsu, in the southernmost section of the Grand Canal, for the northern salt was rarely transported along the Yangzi River. A 1729 memorial shows that many grain boats, having disposed of their Changlu salt, then bought and loaded salt in the Huai river region to sell on their return journey to the middle Yangzi:

Powerful rogues called “wind merchants” (*fengke*), rely on their connections with grain boats for the transport of their goods. The goods are transported to Huaian and Yangzhou and entrusted to the local evil people, who purchase salt [on the wind merchants’ behalf] after selling the goods. The salt is stored at the riverside depots in advance. When the grain boats return to the south, the salt is loaded onto them and transported on the same route along the Yangzi River. The profit derived from the sale of salt is shared between wind merchant and bannermen, helmsmen, and sailors at a ratio of 30 to 70. The grain boats are greedy for the little benefit given by the wind merchants; the wind merchants rely on grain boats as a sort of protective talisman (*hufu*). As a consequence, substantial amounts [of the illegal salt] are smuggled to Jiangxi, Hunan, and Hubei.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> For a detailed description of the salt administration in the Qing, see Saeki Tomi, *Shindai ensei no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Tōyōshi kenkyukai, 1956).

<sup>38</sup> *Caoyun quanshu* (1736), pp. 865, 873-5; *Da Qing Shizong Xianhuangdi* (*Yongzheng Emperor*) *shilu* (repr. Taipei: Hualian Chubanshe, 1964), 9/15a-b (YZ 1), (hereafter cited as *Shizong shilu*); GZD-QL, vol. 26, pp. 248-51 (QL 30.10.4).

<sup>39</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 81/22a-24a (YZ 7). See also *Caoyun quanshu* (1736), p. 881.

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This memorial shows that Liang-Huai salt played an important role in the bilateral trade between the middle and lower Yangzi conducted by grain tribute boats. Merchants sent their goods from the middle Yangzi to the delta and on to Beijing on the grain boats, and evaded customs duties. On the grain boats' return journey, at the delta, the same merchants loaded the salt they had bought nearby onto the grain boats for the trip back to the middle Yangzi.

The extent of the illegal salt trade is shown in a 1765 memorial. Yang Xifu, the Director-general of the Grain Transport, listed the places where bannermen could buy illegal Huai salt easily:

Although Qinghe and Shanyang [Huaian] in the northern Huai region of Jiangnan are not salt-producing areas, they are the major market centres of illegal salt...

In the south of the Huai River, such places as Baoying, Gaoyou, Ganquan, and Jiangdu [Yangzhou] are also places where illegal salt is sold...

Yizheng is the place where illegal salt leaves the [Yangzi] River [for the up-river region]...

Guazhou is the place where illegal salt is taken south of the [Yangzi] River.<sup>40</sup>

Map 3 shows these centers of the illegal salt trade. That these markets were widely dispersed between the lower Huai River and the lower Yangzi River made it even more difficult for the government to control salt smuggling; even though grain boats were subject to search on their return journey, enough salt remained hidden to erode the salt monopoly and weaken state finances. The above memorial from Yang Xifu was actually in response to a glut in government salt in the Yangzi valley in the previous year, when much of the legal Huai salt could not be sold. The Supervisor of the Liang-Huai Salt District claimed that the

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<sup>40</sup> GZD-QL, vol. 26, pp. 248-51 (QL 30.10.4).



## *Grain Tribute and Imperial Budget*

salt smuggling on grain boats was the major reason for the problem.<sup>41</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Throughout the eighteenth century, the abundance of grain in the capital allowed the Qing government flexibility in dealing with grain prices in the capital, and in giving aid to the provinces in times of famine. The bureaucratic administration collected the grain tribute so successfully that each year the central government had a surplus of about 1,000,000 *shi* of grain. To reduce these reserves, which were in danger of rotting, and to stabilize prices during famines, the central government allowed a portion of the stored grain to be sold below market rate in Beijing. As well, the government allowed the grain tribute to be retained by or diverted to provinces suffering from famine. By retaining a portion of its taxation in kind, as with the grain tribute, the Qing government protected its finances from fluctuating prices, as well as aiding provincial governments in times of need.

The costs for these benefits were substantial. Quite apart from the price of building and maintaining both the Grand Canal and the bureaucracy that administered the grain tribute, the central government provided bannermen with an allowance for the duty-free transportation of private goods, giving them an edge over regular, non-government transport. Along with the allowance went freedom from official interference. Taking advantage of this, grain boats carried more goods than the bannermen's quota allowed, depriving the government of customs duties. On their return journey, bannermen collaborated with wind merchants to smuggle salt back down the Yangzi river, undercutting the government's salt monopoly. In consequence, the government sacrificed much of its revenue on both duty collection and salt revenue, as indirect costs of the grain tribute.

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<sup>41</sup> See GZD-QL, vol. 22, p. 422 (QL 29.8.16).