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Guarding Beijing's Food Security in the Qing Dynasty: State, Market, and Police

LILLIAN M. LI and ALISON DRAY-NOVEY

AN ESSENTIAL FEATURE OF BEIJING'S long history as China's imperial capital was the ability to feed its population despite a geographical location distinctly unfavorable to agriculture. For all ancient and modern states, provisioning the capital is not only a matter of pride and prestige but a question of survival. The failure to feed civil officials, military supporters, and the urban population that serves them is a visible sign of a government's inadequacy and easily leads to political unrest. For these

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This article grows out of Lillian M. Li's book manuscript in preparation, *Fighting Famine in North China: State, Market and Ecological Crisis, 1698–1998*, which focuses on the natural, economic, and political contexts for food supply and food crises in the Zhili-Hebei region. Susan Naquin, Princeton University, whose book on Beijing will soon be published, has a vast knowledge about Beijing's history; she has generously shared many sources and insights with us. We also thank James Lee, California Institute of Technology for providing some key references, and Helen Dunstan, University of Sydney, for sharing unpublished materials. Pierre-Étienne Will, Collège de France, has given us valuable guidance. Mark Elliott, University of California at Santa Barbara, has provided a key reference. Han Guanghui of Beijing University has shared his rich knowledge of the population history of Beijing. Ke Yan, a recent Ph.D. recipient from the Department of History, Georgetown University, Huang Jia-wan, and Liman Lievens, SAIS, The Johns Hopkins University, have contributed research assistance. Librarians Timothy Connor and Mi Chu Wiens have helped us obtain materials. Joelle G. Novey provided technical assistance for the map. This article was written with research support from the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, Swarthmore College, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Earlier versions were presented by Lillian M. Li at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, The Johns Hopkins University, Georgetown University, George Washington University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Swarthmore College; she is grateful for the comments from these seminars.

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reasons, all states have tended to favor the food security of their cities, and especially their capital cities. In this China has no claim to uniqueness.

The remarkable aspect of the Chinese record is rather the success with which food security for an extraordinarily populous capital was maintained over so many centuries. The achievement of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) in maintaining Beijing's food supply, at least in the eighteenth century, stands in sharp contrast to the fate of then-contemporary Paris, where grain prices became the most visible focus of political contention. Parisians habitually convinced themselves that every food crisis was the result of a government plot. As Steven Kaplan has written:

The famine plot persuasion received its most striking expression in the Revolution. . . . But like many attitudes and practices associated with the Revolution, the famine plot persuasion was a way of making sense of the world that was deeply rooted in the collective consciousness and the material, moral, and political environment of the old regime. During each of the major subsistence crises of the eighteenth century, a considerable number of Frenchmen believed that they were victims of a terrible conspiracy.

(Kaplan 1982, 1–2)

As if they had known about the plight of Paris under the Bourbon kings, but in fact following long-established Chinese practice, the Qing emperors and their officials planned assiduously to protect Beijing from any popular unrest. It was not simply that they were heirs to the Confucian/Mencian ideological claim that the failure of the ruler to prevent famine was just cause for rebellion—although this was a compelling political legacy. It was not simply that Beijing had its own grain supply from the south—although this supply was immense, and the Grand Canal that transported it was one of the wonders of Chinese civilization. Nor was it only that—and this is less well known than the preceding circumstances—regional and local sources of grain complemented the grain tribute and helped to support the capital region as a whole. In addition, the Qing state controlled and policed the storage and distribution of grain with regulations that were strict and even coercive, and yet at the same time reflected a subtle understanding of market mechanisms.

In controlling Beijing's food supply, the state's objective was not only to feed the rulers; it sought to provision the entire population in order to preserve the security of the capital. To this end, the direct economic interests of the bannermen, an important part of the ruling elite, were critical but secondary to the long-term political interests of the dynasty itself. Reduced-price sales of grain and soup kitchens were not only or even primarily acts of charity, but rather measures to preserve social, and hence political, stability. There was supposed to be no subsistence-related reason for the residents of Beijing to find fault with the government. Until the end of the eighteenth century, these expectations were largely fulfilled; even in the more troubled and less prosperous nineteenth century, food never became the focus of political action in Beijing. The food riot, an important part of the popular repertoire in Paris and elsewhere, was virtually unknown in Beijing. The strengths of the Chinese capital's food security system, advanced by world standards in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were considerable even in decline.

The Qing emperors did not sacrifice the interests of the rest of China to enrich the capital. Indeed, especially during the eighteenth century, the "high Qing," they actively promoted agricultural development and population resettlement throughout the empire, retained an impressive state granary system, engaged in river control, and effectively dispensed famine relief (Ho 1959, Perdue 1987, Will and Wong 1991,

Will 1990, Rawski and Li 1992). The role of the state was paramount, but almost from the beginning of the eighteenth century, statesmen-theorists expressed serious reservations about the extent to which the state should intervene in the market (Dunstan 1996, Dunstan forthcoming, Rowe 1993, Will 1999, Wong 1997). Beijing, however, was exceptional because of its incomparable strategic importance. The need for direct and sometimes forceful intervention in the market there was less often questioned. Resilient flexibility and multiplicity of bureaucratic means and agencies were characteristic of the Qing rule of Beijing. In food security the state had a variety of measures at its disposal: direct control of supply, indirect controls over marketing, reduced-price sales, policing of supplies, and direct relief. Over the course of the Qing period, increasing pressure on food security because of population growth and declining resources led in Beijing to a greater reliance on policing and direct relief than on provisioning and controlling the market—another tendency not found in the rest of the empire.

Beijing in the Qing Period

Beijing was only partly a creation of the Manchus; the magnificent physical plan of the city, based on nested walled areas, had been inherited from the early Ming dynasty (1368–1644). The innermost core was the Forbidden City (*Zijin cheng*), which housed the emperor and court. Surrounding it was the Imperial City (*Huang cheng*), which contained the palaces of the imperial clan, government offices, and residences of high officials. Outside the Imperial City was the extensive remainder of the Inner City (*Nei cheng*), where the banner forces, the main military support of the dynasty, and their families lived.

The banners were a form of social and military organization. Before the conquest of China that had been completed in 1644, eight Mongol and eight Chinese (*banjun*) banners had been added to the original Manchu eight, resulting in a total of twenty-four military units. Residential areas in the Inner City were assigned according to banner, but men of different banners served together in various military divisions in the capital. One of these was the Bujun ying (banner gendarmerie) of about 23,000 men that along with the nonbanner Chinese police (*Wu ying*) of about 10,000 men conducted many activities related to food security in both Inner and Outer Cities. The *Wu ying* (Five Battalions) belonged to the Chinese Army of the Green Standard (*Lü ying*) but served with the banner gendarmerie under a common head. During the Qing, the Inner City was dominated by the Manchu conquerors and their Mongol and Chinese adherents. It was because Manchus and Mongols were so numerous in the Inner City that it was called the “Tartar City” by Westerners. Outside the front three gates of the Inner City on the south lay the Outer City (*Wai cheng*), where most of the nonbanner Chinese population lived (Dray-Novey 1993, 890–91).

Governance of Beijing was carried on by several overlapping and sometimes competing jurisdictions. In the eyes of the rulers, the potential for administrative confusion in this arrangement was outweighed by the benefits of having several offices watch not only the same territory but also each other's performance. The Court and Imperial City were managed mainly by the Imperial Household Department (*Neiwu fu*) and units (other than the gendarmerie) of the metropolitan divisions of the banners. The rest of the Inner City was policed by the above-mentioned joint banner and Chinese force under the Captain-General of Gendarmerie (*Bujun tongling*). In

Table 1. Population of Beijing and Suburbs in the Qing Period

Location	1647	1781	1882	1909
Inner City	395,000	541,000	479,400	468,970*
Outer City	144,000	235,142	296,711	316,472*
<i>Chengshu</i> Suburb	120,000	210,736	309,044	343,366
TOTAL	659,000	986,878	1,085,155	1,128,808

Source: Han 1996b, 128.

*Han's total for the Inner and Outer Cities in 1909 (785,442) closely matches Beijing police census data showing the same figure as rising from 727,863 in 1913 to 811,556 in 1917 (Gamble and Burgess 1921, 412–13).

addition, the Inner and Outer Cities as well as suburbs just outside their thirteen external gates also were specially administered by the Censorate in Five Districts (Wu cheng). Censors and police attached to the Five Districts focused on the nonbanner population and therefore on the Outer City and on suburbs around the capital. (While the term “Wu cheng” referring to the entire capital went back to the Ming period, in the Qing dynasty the same term also was used to refer to five sections of the Outer City. Only context reveals which definition is intended in particular references during the Qing.) With Beijing's territory divided yet another way, however, the Inner and Outer Cities formed part of the two *xian* (counties) of Daxing and Wanping, in the Shuntian prefecture of Zhili province. Although the prefecture connected Beijing to the empire's civil administrative hierarchy, matters relating to the capital were not included in the Zhili governor-general's or the Shuntian prefect's reports.¹ Because of Beijing's political centrality, the authorities treated the city as unique, as *sui generis*.

Qing-era Beijing in its time was one of the world's most populous cities. The greatest differences from the Ming period were the forcible introduction of the Manchus among the Han Chinese and the high proportion of bannermen and their families in the overall population of the capital. In extensive recent studies based on Qing household registration data and other primary evidence, Han Guanghui concludes that gradual growth in the number of inhabitants in the walled cities and their immediate extramural suburbs (*chengshu*) raised Beijing's total population from about 660,000 at the beginning of the Qing dynasty to well over a million at its end.

Specifically, Han estimates the Beijing population of 1647 at 659,000 (395,000 in the Inner City; 144,000 in the Outer City; and 120,000 in the *chengshu* areas; see Table 1). By 1781, however, these figures had increased to 541,000 in the Inner City; 235,142 in the Outer City; and 210,736 in the *chengshu*. Thus the total city population in 1781 was 986,878. A century later in 1882 total population exceeded one million, although the Inner City figure had declined (479,400 in the Inner City; 296,711 in the Outer City; and 309,044 in the *chengshu*; total 1,085,155). Finally, at the end of the Qing period in 1909, Inner City population had declined even further but the metropolitan total continued to increase (468,970 in the Inner City; 316,472 in the Outer City; 343,366 in the *chengshu*; total 1,128,808) (Han 1996b, 128). For almost all of the dynasty the banner (Manchu, Mongol, and *hanjun*) population, including families, constituted more than 60 percent of the people of Beijing, defined as the

¹In the monthly report of grain prices for Zhili province, for example, Shuntian prefecture prices regularly exclude Daxing and Wanping counties.

Table 2. Banner and Han Population of Beijing, 1882

Location	Banner	Han	Total
Inner City	444,400	35,000	479,400
Outer City	11,900*	(284,811)	296,711
<i>Chengshu</i> Suburb	225,644	83,400	309,044
TOTAL	681,944	403,211	1,085,155**

Source: Han 1996b, 114, 118, 120, 126, 128 (Tables 3–17, 18, 20, 21, 22).

*Han 1996b, 114.

**Banner population was about 63 percent of the total. For the region, however, the banner percentage represented a much smaller proportion, about 28 percent, because almost no bannermen lived beyond the suburbs (Han 1996b, 302). For 1882–83, Han (Table 3–17, 118) shows a population of 1,364,397 living in the eighteen *zhou* and *xian* beyond the suburbs but within the Beijing region, forming a grand total of 2,449,552 (1,085,155 plus 1,364,397), but this regional population was entirely Han Chinese.

two walled cities and their immediate suburbs, but a much smaller percentage if the larger metropolitan region is considered. Although concentrated in the Inner City and found in small numbers in the Outer City, bannermen also increasingly resided in the nearby *chengshu* (Han 1996b, 126, 129; see Table 2).

While Han's figures are in accord with previous estimates for the Inner City (including the drop in population there in the later Qing period, when the government became poorer), they are generally somewhat lower for the Outer City (Dray-Novey 1993, 889). One reason for this discrepancy may be that the Outer City in all periods contained far more transient visitors and a greater "floating population" than were found in the more strictly controlled Inner City. Therefore, it normally may have held many people who were missed in the official enumerations upon which Han relies.

Han's inclusion of the population of the closest suburbs in the overall Beijing figures points to another reason for discrepancies with past estimates and among those estimates themselves: the area for which population was being measured was not always the same. Early Qing foreign visitors who guessed that Beijing's population was two to three million probably did not confine themselves to the area within the gates of the two walled cities. For example, Father Ripa reported in the early eighteenth century that there was a large suburb outside every gate, with those on the west side of the Inner City especially populous (Ripa 1846, 47). Nineteenth-century travel accounts, however, suggest an abrupt transition between city and country along the city walls on the north (Ellis 1818, 140; Kovalevsky 1853, I:141) and south (Kovalevsky 1853, II:47–48; Fortune 1863, 366–69). The increasing population that Han shows in the suburban areas may have distributed itself differently over time. The presence of at least some populous suburbs just outside the city gates is important because certain governmental restrictions (such as regulation of merchants' grain supplies) were enforced only inside the walls of the Inner and Outer Cities. Beijing's food security must be considered with reference to the two walled cities, their immediate suburbs, and the surrounding region.

Beijing's Food Supply and the Grain Tribute System

Located in the unstable, drought- and flood-prone agricultural environment of north China, Beijing was largely, but not completely, dependent on grain tribute

delivered via the Grand Canal from the south. Following the practices and precedents of earlier dynasties, the Qing emperors looked to the agriculturally richest provinces of the empire to provision the capital. The importance of the grain tribute system (*caoyun*) in Chinese imperial history and the immense quantity of its supplies during the Ming and Qing periods are well known. Yet the variety of grains available and the range of instruments by which the court and bureaucracy manipulated them to maintain the food security and stability of the entire metropolitan region have not received the attention they deserve.

The grain tribute system originated in the sixth and seventh centuries when the Sui dynasty (A.D. 581–617) built the first Grand Canal linking the lower Yangzi valley to its capital at Chang'an near the Yellow River. In the thirteenth century, when the Mongols placed their capital at Beijing (which they called Khanbaliq), the canal was extended in its second or modern form to reach near the city. In the Ming and Qing periods, the grain tribute achieved a scale much larger than that of the Sui and Tang. The mature grain tribute system allowed the Manchu conquerors to enjoy the products of south and central Chinese agriculture while maintaining their center of political power in the north, near the Great Wall and their homeland.

Grain tribute was a form of tax due from the lower Yangzi and southeastern provinces of Jiangsu, Anhui, Zhejiang, and Jiangxi; the central Yangzi provinces of Hunan and Hubei; and the northern provinces of Henan and Shandong, adjacent to Zhili (Hinton 1956, 7, 9a). Of these, the lower Yangzi and southeastern provinces contributed the largest share.

The broad base from which tribute grain was drawn ensured a constant supply; a poor harvest in one region could be offset by agricultural bounty from another. It also ensured a diversity of grain types. Although tribute grain consisted fundamentally of various grades of rice from the south, Henan and Shandong also had a small quota for beans and millet, and, in the late eighteenth century, wheat. The principal categories of rice were *baimi*, *gengmi*, *xianmi*, and *suomi*. *Baimi*, sometimes also called *bailiang* or *bailiangmi*, was superior white rice. It was intended for the court's consumption and also was given as stipends to imperial princes.² *Gengmi* was ordinary, nonglutinous rice, and it constituted the bulk of the rice from Jiang-Zhe (Jiangsu and Zhejiang). Apparently, glutinous rice or *nuomi* sometimes was included with it. At times *xianmi* was allowed to be substituted for *gengmi* or mixed with it, but *xianmi* was considered inferior.³ *Suomi*, never well defined in any source, clearly was considered inferior to *baimi*, *gengmi*, and *xianmi*. In fact, it is implied in some references that *suomi* was not even considered a type of paddy rice (*daomi*).⁴ Millet or *sumi* always was considered inferior to any grade of rice, but definitely was included in the tribute system.

²The emperor and the court actually ate rice that was produced locally, the excellent rice that was grown west of the capital. Thanks to Evelyn Rawski for pointing this out from an article by Xu Qixian, "Qingdai huangdi de yongshan," *Zijincheng* 1980, 4:10. See also E. Rawski 1998, 47.

³According to Bray, *gengmi* was japonica rice, which was higher priced, while *xianmi* was indica or Champa rice, associated with early growing types (1984, 490–94). Both types were from Zhejiang province.

⁴For example: "Tongzhou each year is allowed to store *suomi* 130,000 *shi*. In 1739 (QL 4) there was insufficient rice (*daomi*), so it was decided to substitute *suomi* for *daomi* 20,000 *shi*" (CYQS 55:18b–19). Playfair defines *suomi* as "upland rice" from the Jiang-Zhe region (1875, 356). Will misprints the character, but gives the reading *suomi* and calls it an inferior grade of rice (1990, 352).

Figure 1. Approximate locations of Beijing granaries and reduced-price (*pingtiao*) stations in the Qing period.

Notes: (a) The number of capital granaries varied slightly during the Qing period but the overall pattern of their placement did not. We have not found information on the location of the two northwestern granaries other than that they were “outside the Desheng gate” (Li and Jiang 1995, 170) and probably between that gate and the Xizhi gate (JWSL 4:64a-66b). (b) The Nei cang or “inner” granary is not usually listed as one of the capital granaries. It was located outside the main gate of the Board of Revenue (Hu bu) (HDSL 184:26ab). (c) *Pingtiao* stations (in 1738) are placed roughly with reference to the nearest gate (e.g. “outside Zhengyang Gate”), not in precise geographical locations. Mayers et al. (1867, opposite 498) show two soup kitchens at or near Outer City locations where *pingtiao* stations had been found in 1738. (d) After tribute grain reached Beijing from Tongzhou, it was transported either by land or by canal. A special canal entered the wall of the Inner City through the “Water” Gate (*shuimen*) between the Chongwen and Zhengyang (Qian) Gates. According to Rennie (1865, I:68–69), the channel existed but was not in use in the early 1860s. *Other sources:* *Qing Neiwufu cang Jingcheng quantu* (1750); JWSL 7:47ab; Bredon 1922, Bichurin map; Hou 1985, 41–42; Han 1996a, 21.

Wheat or *mai* was not formally listed as part of the grain tribute. From the late eighteenth century, however, wheat that had previously been shipped from the provincial granaries for relief sales but had remained unused was allowed to be substituted for millet or inferior rice (*sumi* or *suomi*) in stipend grain. Beans, mainly black beans, were allotted for horses. In theory, one *shi* of black beans was allotted monthly per horse.

Not only were there diverse types and sources of grain tribute, but each year the timing of their arrival at the capital area was deliberately staggered. Tribute boats—part of the grain tribute fleet that has been estimated at about ten thousand vessels (Bell 1966, 167; Davis 1836, 1:380)—arrived from various embarkation points at specified times in the year. At the outset of Qing rule in the mid-seventeenth century, boats from the south would cross the Huai River annually during the winter in the twelfth, first, or second lunar months. They would arrive at Tongzhou—the terminus of the Grand Canal—between the third and sixth lunar months. For example, from the Jiangnan region, the boats would cross the Huai annually in the first month and arrive in Tongzhou in the fifth lunar month (HDSL 102:7a, SZ1 [1644]). In 1753, the regulations were altered to say that henceforth tribute grain might arrive between the fourth and eighth months (HDSL 185:4a, QL 18 [1753]). Wheat from Henan and Shandong, nearer to the capital, arrived in the third month (oblique reference in CYQS 61:22ab, DG 4 [1824]; this passage also appears in HDSL 1139:16b–17a).

The tribute grain arrived at Tongzhou, about twelve miles from the capital, where it either was unloaded and transferred to boats bound by canal for the Beijing metropolitan granaries or retained for the Tongzhou granaries. In Qing-period Beijing there were, at various times, ten to fourteen granaries with a total of 956 buildings (ao). All capital granaries and transfers among them were guarded by gendarmerie—granaries inside the walls of the Inner City by the Gendarmerie Division and those outside by the Five Battalions (JWSL 4:40a–41b [1826], 4:47a–49b [1822], 4:50ab [1822], 4:51a–52b [1802], 4:53a–54a [1811], 4:55a–58b [1851] 7:47ab [nd], 4:28a–29a [1809], 4:45a–46a [1801]; Wade 1851, 305). (See Figure 1.)

Tongzhou with only two granaries containing 222 buildings had less than one quarter the storage capacity of the capital. With an average capacity of 10,000 *shi*⁵ per building, the combined capacity of Beijing and Tongzhou granaries was 11,780,000 *shi* in 1,178 buildings.⁶ In addition the Bei cang (Northern granary) at Tianjin stored tribute grain in transit to or intended for the Zhili provincial granaries. The Bei cang had been established in 1724 and had 48 buildings. In the eighteenth century, tribute grain that was to be diverted for relief in Zhili was kept at the Bei cang (Will 1990, 154; Will and Wong 1991, 118, 133).⁷

Robert Fortune, the observant nineteenth-century English botanist and author, describes the Bei cang and other government granaries:

The greater part of the rice used in these districts is brought up in junks from the south. Large Imperial granaries have been built in different parts of the country,

⁵*Shi* was a measure of volume of grain. The same character is read *dan* when used as a measure of weight. A *shi* of milled rice weighed approximately 175–195 pounds (Chuan and Kraus 1975, 79–98).

⁶HBZL 1874 ed., 18:1–2. The 1791 ed., 24: front, has the same information with printing errors. Both editions report thirteen Beijing granaries. HDSL 1143:15b–16a says there were ten; JWSL 7:47ab says fourteen. Li and Jiang (1995, 170) has a table showing names and locations of thirteen granaries in Beijing and two in Tongzhou, with a total capacity of 1,206 buildings.

⁷In 1754, however, 28 of 48 buildings at the Bei cang were unfit for use. *Tianjin fuzhi* (1898, 29:24–34) records grain diverted to storage in the Bei cang.

where the rice is laid up in store. I visited one of these at a place named Pae-tsang, situated on the left bank of the Pei-ho, some six miles from Tien-tsin. It consisted of sixteen large buildings or barns, three hundred feet in length, and about forty or fifty feet high. . . . At Peking I afterwards saw a number of Imperial granaries built upon the same plan, and presenting the same appearance.

(1863, 339)

The difference in functions between the Beijing and Tongzhou granaries is nowhere, to our knowledge, explicitly stated, and the balance between them seems to have changed frequently during the Qing period. The Nei cang in Beijing under the overall supervision of the Board of Revenue (Hu bu), had the special function of provisioning the Imperial Household Department and certain related agencies within the Imperial City (HDSL 184:26a). The other Beijing granaries also functioned under the Board of Revenue, but their activities were supervised directly by the Army of the Eight Banners (Baqi), which controlled the distribution of banner stipends. The Hu bu, however, managed the stocks at Tongzhou that were given out as salary stipends to both civilian and military officials, and possibly also to imperial princes. The Hu bu also played a role in diverting relief grain to the state civilian granary system within Zhili province. The Bei cang at Tianjin was controlled by the governor-general of Zhili. Although regulations for grain tribute specified the types and amounts of grain to be stored in each of the metropolitan granaries,⁸ actual practice allowed for considerable flexibility among the granaries in the allocation and distribution of types of grain.

Because the granaries at Tongzhou could not be as stringently monitored as those at the capital, they frequently presented difficulties. Particularly in the 1790s, officials repeatedly suggested moving distribution of officials' stipend grain away from Tongzhou to the Beijing granaries (HDSL 185:26a, 186:18a, QL 59, JQ 1, JQ 3—1794, 1796, 1798). Documents stated that formerly the tribute grain shipped to Beijing was all stored at Tongzhou, but this was expensive for officials who had to travel there from Beijing to get their grain. To facilitate more convenient access to grain, adjustments were made in the different mix of kinds of grain to be stored at the Beijing and Tongzhou granaries.⁹

The amount of the grain tribute that arrived at its destination changed over time. In the Ming period, the target amount was four million *shi* per year, but in the later fifteenth century, it may have reached 5.2 million *shi* (Wu 1989, 172). Under the Qing, the annual quota for the grain tribute was 4,372,614 *shi* (HCSHZ 5/cangchu 1). This total probably applies to the early Qing, at least through the first part of the Qianlong reign (1730s–50s). In 1753, 2,750,000 *shi* of grain were received for the capital granaries and 500,000 for the Tongzhou granaries, a total of 3.25 million *shi* (*Shilu*; cited in Wu 1989, 172). Again, in the early nineteenth century, the total

⁸HDSL 186 *passim* lists types of grains, uses, and storage. The original principle was “*Bailiang* is exclusively stored in the Tongzhou granaries. Wheat, black beans, and barley are at the Beijing granaries. All the *geng*, *suo*, and *sumi* (*san se*) are allocated equally among the granaries” (HCSHZ 5/cangchu, 1). *Bailiang* was sent to the Nei cang (in Beijing) as well (HDSL 184:26ab, 185:13b).

⁹Stipends for officials that were Jiang-Zhe *baimi* would still be stored at Tongzhou, but other types of stipendiary rice might go to either Beijing or Tongzhou. Some officials could get their grain at Beijing (HDSL 186:8a, 12b, 14b, 17a). In 1798 (JQ 3), in an attempt to simplify the stipend distribution system, it was decided that the Beijing granaries would store only *gengmi* or *suomi*, while Tongzhou would hold four other categories (CYQS 62:17b–18b).

amount of grain tribute levied was 5.5 million *shi*, but the amount expected to reach the metropolitan granaries was only 3.5 million *shi* per year.¹⁰

The quantity of grain stored at Beijing and Tongzhou from the early Qing through the eighteenth century was staggering. In 1721, at the end of the Kangxi reign, all granaries together held 5.8 million *shi* in reserve. There was so much grain at the Tongzhou granaries around this time that shipments were diverted or temporarily suspended (Will 1990, 284, n. 26). In 1729–30, in the Yongzheng reign, 13–15 million *shi* were in storage. Through most of the long Qianlong reign, even until the end of the eighteenth century, 6–10 million *shi* were stored. Even in the early nineteenth century, during the Jiaqing reign (1796–1820), reserves of 3–6 million *shi* still were maintained. Only in the Daoguang reign (1821–1850) did inventories begin to fall to 3 million and under. Following many mid-nineteenth century disruptions—the gradual disuse of the Grand Canal due to silting, the use of sea transport, the Taiping rebellion, poor harvests in the lower Yangzi region and tax resistance—grain tribute storage in the capital area fell precipitously to amounts under a million *shi* in the Xianfeng and Tongzhi periods (1851–1874). Some of the metropolitan granaries were reported to be in terrible disrepair in the early nineteenth century (Will and Wong 1991, 134). In the late nineteenth century, commercial purchases boosted grain stocks once again to over a million, but for all practical purposes, grain tribute was a shadow of its former self after mid-century.¹¹ The decline in so central a government function was a significant indicator of dynastic crisis.

Grain Tribute and the Regional Market

Had the Beijing food security system been a simple and closed one, there is no question that grain tribute received would have been more than sufficient to feed the million or more people in Beijing and its environs during most of the Qing period. Even in the first half of the nineteenth century, a supply of 3.5 million *shi* a year would have been sufficient to feed the capital population.¹² No other grain supply

¹⁰Hinton (1956, 7; 9a–b) has a table of grain tribute quotas from various provinces for 1829.

¹¹Li and Jiang (1995, 54–58) contains a comprehensive table based on registers held at the Qing archives. (See also, pp. 405–6 and ch. 9–10 on mid-nineteenth century problems.) Commercial purchases in late Qianlong and Jiaqing periods were targeted principally for famine relief in Beijing and Zhili (Li and Jiang 1995, 93–99).

¹²This would be true using several possible standards of measurement. For example, in the eighteenth century the adult ration for famine relief was half a *sheng* (= 5 *he*) or 0.005 *shi* of *mi* (husked rice or grain) per day (Will 1990, 130–35). Thus each person would require 1.83 *shi* per year, and 3.5 million *shi* could have fed approximately two million adults a year at subsistence standards. This is very similar to another subsistence standard: the average per capita yearly grain consumption in Beijing in 1979, under the People's Republic of China, was 300 *jin* (Croll 1983, 131), or about 333 lbs (1 *jin* = 1.1 lb.), or in Qing terms, 1.9 *shi* (1 *shi* = 185 lbs). By this low standard, 3.5 million *shi* could have fed 1.94 million people a year. Using a much higher standard, Li and Jiang state that in the Qianlong period, about 4 million *shi* arrived in Beijing and Tongzhou each year, and calculate that if each person consumed 0.3 *shi* of grain per month, or 3.6 *shi* a year, then the grain tribute would have been enough to feed 1.1 million people for a year (1995, 85). Crossley (1990, 52), cites the standard of 0.25 *shi* of grain per individual per month, which amounts to 3 *shi* per person per year. Using that standard, 3.5 million *shi* would feed slightly fewer than 1.2 million adults a year. According to Hinton (1956, 97) 3.5 million *shi* would be equivalent to 280,000 tons.

would have been needed if direct consumption had been the only function of grain tribute.

According to one estimate, in the early Qing, only about 60 percent of the grain tribute was used in the payment of stipends for princes, officials, and bannermen (*fengmi* and *jiami*). Another 10 percent was needed for wages of government workers and artisans (*jiangmi*), and 1 percent for the Imperial family (*enmi*) (Li and Jiang 1995, 59 n.1, also 72 citing CYQS, *juan* 17). This would have left 29 percent (more than one million *shi*) for discretionary use. A more conservative estimate concludes that about half a million *shi* remained each year after the stipend grain had been distributed.¹³ Yet another source states that 2.4 million *shi* were distributed as stipends to the banners and 350,000–360,000 *shi* to officials, a total of about 2.75 million *shi* per year (CYQS 56; cited in Wu 1989, 170. Also, Li and Jiang 1995, 72, 83). In fact, the totals given by Li and Jiang (cited above) show such a surfeit of grain in the Beijing and Tongzhou granaries that we can feel confident in saying that the state had an amount far greater than half a million *shi* at its disposal.

Most of the surplus held in reserve formed an important source of relief grain in times of crisis, supplementing the stores held in the ever-normal granary system in the province of Zhili; moreover, the surplus provided an important source of Zhili's stability even in normal times.¹⁴ Grain tribute also was diverted to other regions of China, or retained in the province of origin, to meet critical shortages (Will 1990, 285–87). It was clear, however, that the functions of grain tribute were primarily provisioning the court, officials, and bannermen, and secondarily supporting the general population of the capital. In 1744, the Qianlong emperor explicitly cautioned against the overuse of the practice of diverting grain tribute to other regions: "In fact, although the Metropolitan Granaries' stocks are said to be enough for five years if not ten, and to be required, in principle, only for official salaries and military rations, if one reckons with the capital's whole population, it is to be feared that they will not suffice for so much as a year or two."¹⁵

When grain reserves were used in Beijing, they were released principally through the means of *pingtiao*, or reduced-price sales, which provided a useful mechanism for maintaining the stability of grain prices within the city and in the region. Grain that was used in government-operated soup kitchens every winter and for emergency relief also came from the tribute granaries. In addition to these uses of grain reserves, much of the stipend grain not consumed by its recipients was sold on the local market. One estimate states that in 1750, 30–40 percent of the stipend grain was consumed by officials and bannermen themselves, 20–30 percent was bought by government bureaus, and the rest was circulated outside officialdom; in other words, up to 60–70 percent of banner stipend grain, perhaps 1.2 million *shi*, reached the market.¹⁶

¹³Pierre-Étienne Will has estimated that about half a million *shi* of grain was the difference between the needs of the capital and the "maximum yield" of grain tribute, and this amount could be considered available for discretionary use (1990, 283).

¹⁴In addition to the metropolitan granaries and the grain tribute system, there was an extensive system of state granaries maintained in every province. During the second half of the eighteenth century, the reserves of the *changpingcang* (ever-normal granaries) and other state civilian granaries in Zhili province ranged from three to four million *shi*. Will and Wong provide a comprehensive study of the state civilian granary system empire-wide (1991; see Table 9.14 for Zhili holdings). Li, *Fighting Famine* (in preparation) will further analyze the granary system in Zhili.

¹⁵Dunstan 1996, 90. Translated from Shangyudang, QL9/2/23 and *Qing shilu*, QL, 213:10a–12b.

¹⁶*Qingchao wenxian tongkao*, 37/5198, cited in Dunstan forthcoming, ch. 2. Wu 1989, 177 cites Wang 1890, *juan* 4.

Thus, through these two routes—use of reserves for reduced-price sales or soup kitchens and sale of stipends—a substantial amount of the total grain tribute, perhaps two million *shi*, circulated on the grain market of Beijing and its environs. This market was not entirely “free,” because the chief source of the grain, the timing and manner of its entry, and its price were closely monitored and regulated by the authorities. Nonetheless, tribute grain helped greatly to supplement the food supply and support the stability of the entire region, not just the capital.

Some recipients sold their stipend grain because they preferred fresh, locally grown grain to granary grain that was often stale. Although we cannot construct an exact flow chart of grain movements, we can surmise that Beijing residents consumed a substantial amount of regional, nontribute, grain, constituting perhaps more than half of their diet. Millet, sorghum, wheat, and corn, as well as a limited amount of high-quality rice were grown in the capital region and the rest of Zhili province, and additional supplies came from adjacent provinces (Li, “Grain Prices,” forthcoming).

Although growing conditions in the Beijing region were notoriously fickle, with droughts and floods as common events, agriculture surrounding the capital seemed abundant to foreign observers. Lord Macartney reported in his diary that, traveling near Tianjin in fall 1793 as head of a British embassy, he saw the following crops: Indian corn, sorghum, millet, kidney beans, several varieties of rice, cucumbers, watermelons, apples, pears, plums, and peaches. Between Beijing and Rehe (Jehol), he observed: “on each side every cultivable inch is cultivated.” Sorghum, millet, beans, peas, and sesame were “all sown in drills between which another successive crop was often rising in the same ground” (1963, 106). Seventy years later, Fortune identified the following crops growing between Tianjin and Beijing: Indian corn, buckwheat, sweet potatoes, soy-beans, eggplants, and “oily grain” five feet high and very productive (1863, 350). About the same time, Freeman-Mitford noted near the Great Wall rich crops of “millet and Indian corn, with undergrowths of beans or buckwheat, bordered with the castor-oil plant. . . .” (1900, 137). Other nongrain foods included meat, butter, and milk from Mongolia; pigs and poultry; vegetables from suburban and Outer City gardens; fruit such as pears, apples, plums, cherries, and grapes from nearby sources; and fresh fish from Tianjin (Ripa 1846, 61–63; Timkovsky 1827, 189–93, 199–201; Davis 1836, I:354, 362; Fortune 1863, 361–63, 348; Rennie 1865, I:52–53, 189, 206–7; Williams 1882, I:78, 89; Freeman-Mitford 1900, 134, 180, 282).

Regions adjacent to the capital area and Zhili also provided grain for Beijing. Henan and Shandong provinces sent wheat and millet commercially as well as through the grain tribute system. Fengtian, in Manchuria, also became a major source of millet for the capital region. In the early eighteenth century, the dependence of Beijing on Fengtian grain already was clear to the Kangxi emperor. In 1709, he observed in an edict that the price of grain in the capital was very high. (Millet cost 1.2 taels per *shi*, and wheat 1.8.) Although some officials had speculated that the price rise was due to population growth, the emperor noted that many Henan, Shandong, and Zhili peasants had gone to open up new land in the border areas, and also that the grain supply of the capital was often dependent on cheap supplies, especially sorghum and millet, from beyond the Great Wall (*kouwai*) (*Qing shilu* 240:14–15, KX 48/11/24; reference from Susan Naquin).

The recent work of Chinese scholars such as Wu Jianyong and Han Guanghui supports the view that regional supplies were important in supplementing grain tribute and contributing to price stabilization (Wu 1989, 1994; and Han 1993, 1996b). Just as food prices within Beijing were sensitive to the distribution and sale

Table 3. Beijing Grain Prices, 1778 (QL 43/7/11)

(Price in silver taels per *shi*)

<i>Jingmi</i> (capital rice)	1.90
<i>laomi</i> (old tribute rice)	1.50
<i>suomi</i> (low-grade tribute rice)	1.20
<i>cangmi</i> (granary grain?)	1.00
<i>xiaomi</i> (millet)	1.42
<i>shang baimai</i> (high-grade white wheat)	1.98
<i>gaoliang</i> (sorghum)	0.90
<i>beidou</i> (black beans)	1.07
<i>ganmian</i> (dry noodles)	21 <i>wen</i> cash per <i>jin</i>
<i>qiemian</i> (fresh noodles)	20 <i>wen</i> cash per <i>jin</i>

Exchange Rates

yuانبao silver, one tael = 925 *wen zhiqian* (cash)*fenglu* silver (stipend silver), one tael = 917 *wen*.

Source: Price list for Beijing found as enclosure near memorial of Zhili Governor-General Zhou Yuanli, dated QL 43/7/11, in Junjidang (Grand Council archives) 20508, Taibei, Palace Museum Archives.

of stipend grain, as discussed below, they were vulnerable as well to fluctuations in local and regional harvests, which in turn depended on highly variable weather conditions. In one example, in 1751 a Shuntian prefecture official reported that the price of grains in the seventh month had risen quite high. The grain brokers (*mihang*) in the city told him that because of recent rains, the various local grains could not make it to the market, and the inventory of the shops was low. Later questioned about why prices had fallen after the sixteenth of the month, they said that the shops had heard that the granaries would be opened on the twentieth.¹⁷ This example demonstrates the sensitivity of the market to both tribute supplies and local agricultural conditions.

Despite the formidable gates and walls of the city and the efforts of the gendarmerie, Beijing's economy was not hermetically sealed off from its hinterland. While there is no grain price data for the city that can be analyzed at this time, it seems almost certain that Beijing's prices were well integrated with those of the surrounding region.¹⁸ Economic logic suggests that even a small amount of grain moving in and out of the city gates would have created some price integration.

¹⁷QL 16/7/20 [1751], *Gongzhongdang Qianlongchao zouzhe*, 1:192. We thank Susan Naquin for this reference.

¹⁸The Qing bureaucracy collected and reported on a monthly basis to the throne grain prices from every province of the empire from the beginning of the Qianlong period to the end of the dynasty. Most of these monthly reports are preserved in the Qing archives in Beijing and Taibei. A study of the grain prices for Zhili will be contained in Li "Grain Prices," forthcoming, and *Fighting Famine*, in preparation. As mentioned above, the Zhili province monthly grain reports give the prices for Shuntian prefecture exclusive of the Daxing and Wanping districts where Beijing was located. Some undetermined number of price reports for Daxing and Wanping are housed at the First Historical Archives in Beijing, but they have not been systematically located and catalogued. Some miscellaneous copies of the Daxing and Wanping price reports were obtained by author Li from Taibei in 1982 and Beijing in 1992, but they are not numerous enough to allow quantitative analysis. Table 3 is a sample of such a report.

Table 3 reproduces a grain price report from 1778 and shows the clear hierarchy of preferences in the capital grain market. Two grains of local and regional origin—high-grade white wheat and capital rice—fetched the highest price. Millet and *laomi* were close in price. *Suomi* and *cangmi* were only a little more expensive than the regionally grown *gaoliang*.

During years of normal harvest the movement of small quantities of grain was, in all likelihood, relatively unrestricted as the sale of stipend grain was counterbalanced by the marketing of regional grains, both within the Outer City and just outside the thirteen external gates of the Inner and Outer Cities. During years of poor local harvest, however, when outside prices would rise, the authorities probably became more vigilant in guarding the gates to see that no stipend grain was taken out for sale beyond the city—which would cause Beijing prices to rise even higher. Gendarmerie documents show that gate restrictions were especially emphasized in hardship years (JWSL 4:59ab [1822]; 4:60ab [1817]; 4:63a [1807]; 4:64a–66b [1806, 1808, 1810]; 4:67a–68a [1804]). Under such circumstances, officials also would become alarmed about sales of stipends at Tongzhou, preferring that grain be brought into the Inner and Outer Cities to help lower prices within the gates. In addition, Beijing grain shops would be subject to more inspections to guard against “hoarding,” *tunji*,¹⁹ as we shall see.

Grain Stipends: Distribution and Timing

The original purpose of the grain tribute was to provide stipends to the imperial family, court nobles and functionaries, high officials, and bannermen living in the walled capital and its suburbs. Stipends for princes and officials were called *fengmi*; those for bannermen were called *jiami* or *bingmi*. Levels for both were fixed by rank. From the beginning of the dynasty the stipends had consisted of two parts: silver and grain.

The highest ranking Manchu princes (*qinwang*) received annually 10,000 taels of silver and 5,000 *shi* of grain (HBZL 73:1 [1874]). By contrast, banner stipends were more modest although in the early postconquest period, they were “more than ample to meet the needs of the time,” according to Pamela Crossley’s study. Bannermen were given a monthly stipend in silver and an annual grain allowance distributed twice a year. In addition, beans were allotted for the bannermen’s horses, allowing from three to six horses per man. Grain stipends ranged from twenty *shi* per month for a general-in-chief to one *shi* for an infantry private. The assumption was that the private would support a family of four while a general-in-chief would have a large household of eighty or more staff and servants.²⁰ After 1686 (KX 25), the amounts of stipends and allowances were standardized. For example, for corporals in certain

¹⁹The term “hoarding,” *tunji*, was a stock phrase in official discourse about grain trade and storage, almost as common as the stock phrase “mean merchants,” *jianshang*. To the officials it was illegitimate for merchants to purchase and then withhold grain from the market until the prices became very high. The officials wanted to see a constant and rapid circulation of grain so that prices would remain low and stable. To this end, if merchants retained a large inventory, this could lead to “hoarding.” Because stocking and storage always verged on illegitimacy, these steps are never described neutrally, and the term *tunji* is always used. To convey the attitude of the officials, we have always translated the term *tunji* in its literal way, as “hoarding.”

²⁰This description follows Crossley (1990, 51–53). She notes that in reality a bannerman rarely had more than one horse.

banner divisions the silver allowance was four taels per month and the grain allowance was 46 *hu* (or 23 *shi*) per year; for cavalry privates, three taels and 46 *hu*; for infantry corporals two taels and 22 *hu*, and for ordinary privates, one and a half taels and 22 *hu* (Chen Jiahua 1985, 63–66).

Rank also determined the kinds of grain received. Originally, grain stipends for princes and officials consisted of various proportions of *baimi*, *gengmi*, and *suomi* (different kinds of rice, as shown above) and *sumi* (millet); stipends for bannermen did not include the superior *baimi* (HDSL 186:4a, 1731 [YZ 9]). According to a precedent of 1737 [QL 2], the banner stipends consisted of 50 percent *gengmi*, 35 percent *suomi*, and 15 percent millet (CYQS 60:6). In reality, however, minor short-term substitutions and adjustments often were made. If there was an excess of one kind of grain, it could be substituted for another kind. For example, in 1744 too much *gengmi* was stored and not enough *suomi*; therefore, for a limited number of months, only *gengmi* was to be distributed (HDSL 186:8a). In 1782, officials reported that there was too much *baimi* in one granary but too little *suomi* and millet. Citing precedents from 1742 and 1763, they suggested that in issuing stipends to Manchu and Chinese officials, old *baimi* be substituted for *suomi* and millet (CYQS 61:5b–6). In these substitutions, one motive of the authorities was to use up grain that had been stored too long. In 1768 officials wrote: “If grains are mixed up and cannot be separated into three categories (*gengmi*, *suomi*, and millet), distribute it all until you reach the bottom, using the old grain first” (CYQS 62:9).

Great attention was paid to the timing of grain stipend distributions because they had a strong impact on market prices. Officials feared that if the stipends were not distributed evenly throughout the year, or if they were so distributed but not promptly collected, hoarding would lead to price manipulation. The original schedule called for distributing both official (*guan*) and military (*bing*) stipends twice a year, in the second and eighth lunar months (spring and autumn). Each distribution was to be completed in three months. In 1704 (KX 43), the autumn military stipend was moved to the tenth month and both spring and autumn distribution periods were limited to two months. Officials were severely punished for any delays. In 1723 (YZ 1), the official grain was given out in the second and eighth months as before, but the military distribution was divided into three payments in the third, seventh, and eleventh months. Duration of both official and military distributions again was limited to two months (CYQS 60:2b–5). Thus there were distributions in the second, third, seventh, eighth, and eleventh months each year.

In 1752 (QL 17) the payment schedule for the different banners was staggered: the yellow and bordered yellow banners received their allowances in the first, fourth, seventh, and tenth months; the white, red, and bordered white banners received theirs in the second, fifth, eighth, and eleventh months; and the bordered red, blue, and bordered blue received theirs in the third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth months (CYQS 60:14). The purpose of evening out the stipend payments throughout the year was to reduce opportunities for hoarding and manipulation. As the 1752 edict stated: “In the past the banner stipends were given out four times a year, and it was the practice of the merchants to take advantage and hoard the grain.”

Failure to collect stipends promptly often posed a problem. At the beginning of the Yongzheng period (1723), the announced interval for collecting grain stipends was shortened to fifty days. In 1737 (QL 2), banner distributions were increased to four times per year. The banner grain office was to prepare a register and submit it twenty days in advance (HDSL 1143:15b; CYQS 60:6b dates this change at 1738 or QL 3). In 1761 (QL 26), the rules were changed again: officers of the eight banners

were given two months to collect their stipends, while soldiers were limited to one month for theirs (HDSL 606:20ab). In 1768 (QL 33), the importance of prompt collection of stipend grain was emphasized once again (CYQS 60).

When market prices already were high (as, for example, because of unfavorable weather conditions affecting local crops and transport), an early distribution of stipends could be authorized to allow prices to level off. An edict of 1758 (QL 23) reported: "Recently the price of rice (*mi*) in the capital has gone up and is quite expensive compared to last year. Usually the stipend grain of the capital officials is given out in the eighth month, but this year let us do it a month earlier. Let us open the granary in the seventh month to allow grain to be abundant and prices both inside and outside the capital to level off and then decrease" (HDSL 186:11b). The year 1824 (DG 4), which followed an extensive Zhili flood disaster, had an intercalary seventh month, usually an occasion for an extra month's banner stipend. An early distribution of that bonus was authorized in the third month as a sign of imperial blessing to provide famine relief. The edict remarked: "If we wait until the intercalary month, people will have a difficult time" (CYQS 61:22ab; HDSL 1139:17ab).

Sale of Stipends

Stipendiaries of all ranks sold at least part of their stipends but for different reasons. At the high-status end, princes, nobles, and high-ranking officials received as stipends far more grain than they and their households could possibly consume. If they sold it, they received additional income, and if they sold at Tongzhou, they avoided the cost of transporting the grain into the capital (Wu 1989, 179; CYQS 63). At the other end, bannermen of inferior rank sometimes were forced by financial hardship to sell their stipends for cash, even when the grain was barely sufficient for their needs. With the cash they could purchase coarser, less expensive grains, and/or make other urgent expenditures.

The Yongzheng emperor believed that many Manchus did not know how to manage their household incomes and had become too extravagant:

They want to eat meat every day, drink wine, and wear beautiful clothes. . . . The price of meat is 100 *wen* per *jin*. . . . If a large number of people would buy less, the price would go down. . . . The Han people know how to be thrifty. Even among the rich households, very few eat meat every day. The poor people pursue their daily livelihood and have just enough to eat. If the Manchus et al. could be thrifty, stay in their respective positions, reduce their meat consumption and eat only vegetables with each meal, they could save some of their monthly cash stipend, have a small surplus, and make a budget; then they would naturally prosper and become self-sufficient.

(HDSL 1146:14a–15b, 1727 [YZ 5])

A far more fundamental factor, however, was the distinct preference of bannermen, and other northerners, for the coarse grains of millet and sorghum, and later for wheat—all of which were staple crops of the north—over rice. "The people of Zhili most importantly value sorghum and millet, and after that spring wheat and buckwheat," observed the officials. "Beijing has one million households, which eat a lot of wheat. . . . The more that is shipped the more that is sold, and [this] causes

the market price to be level" (*Gaozong shilu* 214, 1058; cited in Wu 1989, 171).²¹ In 1812, proposing that sorghum (*gaoliang*) be used instead of millet for relief at Chengde, Manchuria, one official justified the change by saying, "We know that banner households are accustomed to eating *gaoliang*" (ZPZZ, NZZJ 0077, JQ17/11/16). In the nineteenth century, Western observers, too, reported that Beijing residents preferred wheat and coarse grains to rice (Freeman-Mitford 1900, 138; Fortune 1863, 338, 347–48, 362–63).

Not only had bannermen not developed a taste for rice, but much of the stipendiary rice was stale by the time it had been stored for two or three years and distributed. In fact, the local term *laomi* ("old rice") described precisely this kind of rice. Although a common part of the Beijing diet, it understandably was not the preferred grain.²² If bannermen sold their rice stipends rather than eating them, they could use the cash obtained to purchase fresh local wheat or millet for their own consumption. And, as we have seen in Table 3, millet was about the same price as *laomi*, and sorghum was less expensive.

For all of the above reasons, the sale of stipendiary grain was practiced almost from the beginning of the dynasty, periodically causing policy debates among Qing officials. During the Kangxi period (1662–1722), bannermen would sell their stipends immediately upon receipt to merchants, who might hoard the grain. The same bannermen later would be forced to the market to buy grain, which they now absolutely needed, at higher prices than they had received for their stipendiary grain. To address this problem, in 1728 (YZ 6), twenty-four Eight-Banner grain bureaus (Baqi miju) were set up in Beijing and two additional ones at Tongzhou. With annual funding of eight thousand taels, each bureau was to buy grain from the bannermen at current prices and sell it back to them when they needed it at a *pingjia* or stable price. By purchasing, storing, and reselling grain, these bureaus in principle formed a closed circuit and were intended to serve the interests of the banners exclusively. But in reality it was not a closed system. Some bannermen must have continued to sell grain directly to merchants; and the buyers of the *pingjia* or stable-price grain were not necessarily bannermen. One source suggests that the old banner grain was bought also by outsiders, including "bannermen and people from near and far," as well as "people in search of food, itinerant laborers, government functionaries and various types from other areas."²³ These bureaus operated for more than twenty years before they were disbanded in 1752 (QL 17). They had not actually kept prices stable, in officials' view, and moreover the danger of forced purchases (possibly from

²¹In another publication, Wu Jianyong writes that before the mid-Qing period Beijing residents ate mostly rice, but after the decline of grain tribute in the Daoguang period, their preferences changed. By 1911, rice constituted only thirty percent of the diet (1997, 345 n. 11). The allegation of a sharp nineteenth-century shift of preference from rice to wheat and coarse grains is difficult to document, but the estimate of preferences in the twentieth century is probably reliable.

²²*Laomi* was often reddish in color, had a bland taste, and was deficient in starch (*Qingmo Beijing zhi ziliao* 1994, 530). Regulations of the Board of Punishments for the treatment of prisoners in Beijing said that they should be fed one large bowl (half *jin*) of rice made of *laomi* in the morning, one medium-sized bowl of *laomi zhou* (gruel) each for lunch and dinner (147). Jailed criminals at the gendarmerie headquarters (Bujun tongling yamen) ate *laomi*, some of which had been confiscated by police at the city gates (JWSL 12:38a [nd]). We have already pointed out that the emperor and court ate locally grown rice. See note 2 above.

²³*Qingchao wenxian tongkao*, 37/5197. Identified but differently translated in Dunstan forthcoming, ch. 2. We are grateful to Helen Dunstan for making her translation available. This passage is also in Wang Qingyun 1890, 390.

bannermen by corrupt officials) was too great.²⁴ In the Yongzheng period (1723–1735) when the bureaus were initiated, grain supply was plentiful and prices low, but when prices were higher in the 1740s and 1750s, there seemed no benefit for any party in trying to restrict stipend sales to government-run bureaus. In fact, there is some suggestion that the fine grains stored by the bureaus were not much in demand and sometimes rotted (Hosoya 1974, 190).

In 1787 (QL 52) a proposal to revive the grain bureaus was defeated. Three reasons for this decision were given in the imperial rescript: (1) with population growth and pressure, it was not possible to stop inflation; (2) if the circulation of grain were to be impeded, the benefit would fall to the merchants, not the people; and (3) the bureaus lent themselves to official corruption. In the opinion of Wu Jianyong, this decision marked a shift in state policy that reflected the greater respect for merchants and trade in the Qianlong reign (1736–1795), quite different from that of the immediately preceding Yongzheng period. By the 1780s, the banner bureaus were seen as too repressive of trade. Moreover, it was true that they had afforded plenty of opportunity to profiteering officials (Wu 1989, 180). For Helen Dunstan, the disbanding of the bureaus marked a shift from the Yongzheng-early Qianlong “supply protectionism” that was “intensely interventionist” to a belief in the free circulation of grain that has the appearance of a kind of economic liberalism.²⁵

When we consider, however, the intense suspicion with which grain merchants continued to be viewed by officials, and the extreme measures that the latter sometimes used to restrict the activities of the former, we should be cautious about attaching great significance to the abolition of the Eight-Banner grain bureaus and viewing the decision as a vote for economic liberalism. The bureaus did not accomplish the goals for which they were established, and they may have interfered with the circulation of grain and hence with price stability. The authorities recognized implicitly that it was impossible to cordon off the economy of the bannermen from that of the city and the metropolitan region, and they also saw the interest of the state in providing food security for the population at large, not just for the banners and the court.

The official position from the mid-eighteenth century on was that the sale of stipend grain was desirable because it allowed for circulation. Somehow, after 1752, stipendiaries low and high sold their grain without the formal institution of banner bureaus. But the mechanisms by which this was done are not clearly documented. The official statutes of the Board of Revenue expressly forbade the operation of private *miju*. “Mean merchants and hoarders at Tongzhou or near Beijing who privately set up *miju* to purchase *fengmi* are to be strictly apprehended and punished by the managing officials, but clerks and runners are forbidden to interfere with those private stores that sell grain in the markets” (HBZL 17:35a; also HDSL 191:30ab, [QL 34]). Nevertheless, the Tongzhou granary corruption crisis of 1809 reveals that privately established *miju* were operating near the Tongzhou granaries, as will be seen below. When the corruption case erupted, all these *miju* were given three months to move into the city. Evidence in the case further revealed that there had been many private *miju* located near the granaries outside the Chaoyang gate of the Inner City at Beijing,

²⁴*Shizong shilu* 66, cited in Wu 1989, 179–80. See Dunstan 1988, section 31, and Dunstan forthcoming, ch. 2, for a discussion of reasons for creating and later disbanding the rice bureaus.

²⁵In her 1996 book, Dunstan refrains from categorically identifying this shift as “sprouts of liberalism,” as she did in earlier papers. She writes: “The paradox is thus that belief in free circulation is not the same thing as economic liberalism” (257, 330–31).

twenty-nine in the Left battalion (Zuo ying), and thirty-seven in the Northern battalion area (Bei ying) of the Chinese Green Standard gendarmerie (Wu ying) (JWSL 4:61a–62a [JQ 13/intercalary 5/13]).

Despite the general endorsement of stipend sales, officials continued to urge vigilance against hoarding by merchants. The sale of grain to brewers was a particular problem. In 1752, Fang Guancheng, governor-general of Zhili, memorialized:

In addition to this year's second month salary, the fall salary and next year's second month official stipends all are being given in advance. It is hoped that the Manchu and Han officials will not sell [the stipendiary grain] to the merchants, who will hoard it, or to the brewers. The situation should be watched. Every month cases of hoarding and/or brewing should be reported by local officials. In the third month, 38 *zhou* and *xian* [districts] have reported no hoarding.

(QL 17/?/14, *Gongzhongdang Qianlongchao zouzhe* 1979, IV, 597)

Stipend sales at Tongzhou were usually encouraged. An example is found in an edict of 1775, which was usually issued each year:

Hitherto it has been permitted that bannermen's extra grain be sold in Tongzhou to give them extra income. . . . If in addition to what bannermen are given as regular pay there is extra grain, those who want to sell it are permitted to do so in Tongzhou. Thus the bannerman should be happy, the amount of local grain will increase, and the market price of grain will benefit.²⁶

At other times, however, authorities regarded Tongzhou sales with suspicion. As we have seen above, requiring princes and high officials to collect their stipendiary grain at Tongzhou was thought to contribute to problems springing from grain sales, because the Tongzhou disbursement was less supervised than that of Beijing. For example, the following document is from 1809 (JQ 14):

If all the princes et al., were to sell their excess grain inside the city [Beijing], the price could level off, and the people would benefit. Transport costs also would be saved. But if grain is sold in Tongzhou, the grain does not flow into the city [Beijing], and city prices rise. The mean merchants take advantage "to hoard grain and raid the granaries" (*tunji huicao*). As a result, if the granaries are lacking grain, it is because of this. . . . From now on, when the princes and nobles et al. go to Tongzhou to get their grain, they should report [all that they do there]. The Censorate will memorialize and send Manchu and Han censors outside the Chaoyang gate to inspect the amounts coming into the city each month. All grain must be shipped into the city and not sold outside the city. If anyone violates this [rule], his stipend will be cut off permanently. As for the others—high civil and military officials—who go to Tongzhou to get their stipendiary grain, as well as those officials and soldiers who get their grain at capital granaries outside the walls, we should devise inspection methods so as to be certain that they transport their grain into the city and do not sell it at Tongzhou. . . . From now on, if civil officials of the fourth rank and military officials under the third rank who receive their stipendiary grain outside the city are found to have sold their grain or to have done other bad things, they will be impeached. Not only will the purchaser be punished, but the seller will be sent to the Board [of Punishments] for deliberation and punishment.

(HDSL 1026:12b–14a)

²⁶From Susan Naquin's notes from the Shangyudang 199–901, QL 40/5/10. Edict to the Grand Secretariat. (A similar edict usually was issued every year at the same time.)

Sales by officials and bannermen made the Tongzhou granaries, in effect, wholesale depots for commercial grain. Officials often were admonished to guard against cheating at both the Tongzhou and Beijing granaries (HDSL 186, *passim*). Sometimes merchants tried to bribe granary attendants to falsify measures used to weigh grain (HCSHZ 2/cangchu 2; also in HDSL 186, 1736 [QL 1]). Merchants were so bold as to place orders even in advance of distribution of stipends (HDSL 185:5b, 1794 [QL 59]). Banner officials sometimes sold their stipend tickets (*mipiao*) to the merchants instead of claiming the grain in person (HDSL 186:15b, 1792 [QL 57]). In another case in 1794, merchants forged names of soldiers and tried to take government rice directly in payment of loans, in collusion with clerks in charge of grain distribution. When the authorities uncovered the case, the soldiers concerned were flogged and officials ruled that the borrowed sums need not be repaid (HDSL 1038: 20–24). Although shopowners were supposed to stay away from the granaries, their porters and carts often entered there despite the rule (CYQS 61:19). At granaries in both locales, loan-shark Shandong merchants waited where soldiers were paid and demanded that payment on previous loans be made in grain. Interest rates were high and soldiers could never finish paying on their loans, so most of their grain went to the merchants (HDSL 1161:10b–11, 1810 [JQ 15]). In the view of the authorities, brazen merchants forever sought new stratagems in their constant efforts to hoard grain and raise prices.

Collusion between merchants and granary attendants or watchmen (*huabu*) was endemic in the Jiaqing and Daoguang periods (1796–1850). The following passage from 1802 (JQ 7) describes this situation:

It has not been forbidden for officials and military to sell the extra portion of stipendiary grain that they do not need to consume themselves. But when the price of grain is high, the shopowners (*pubu*) wish to benefit, and the granary watchmen (*huabu*) take advantage and extort a high price, causing the market price to increase. When this happens the granary officials (*cangchang shilang*) and the censors inspecting the granaries need strictly to forbid this practice, etc., and those watchmen who collude with the shopowners should be strictly apprehended and investigated.

(CYQS 63:6b–7)

This document was issued during the massive 1801–1802 flood crisis, when grain prices skyrocketed, and illustrates why violations of the norm were most likely during periods of inflationary crisis, when the temptation to cheat was the greatest. It was at such times that the authorities invoked prohibitions against sales at Tongzhou and required stipend grain to be transported into Beijing before being sold, as shown in the 1809 example above. The particular case that provoked these strictures involved substantial shortages that were discovered in each of the granary buildings at Tongzhou. After investigation it was found that princes and noblemen were in the habit of selling their grain or their tickets at either Tongzhou or Beijing. The *miju* who bought the tickets then resold them to two or three head watchmen (*huatou*), who then could use them to get more than the allotted share. This is probably the meaning of the form of malfeasance known as “hoarding grain and raiding the granaries,” mentioned above. (An edict in the sixth month observed that such abuses by granary personnel had started in 1798 [JQ 3].)²⁷ In a similar case in 1825 (DG 5), authorities found that the reason there was so much stipendiary grain that had

²⁷The documents for this case are reproduced in “Jiaqing shisinin . . .” 1990. The sentence that refers to corruption since 1798 is found at the bottom of p. 53.

gone uncollected at the Xingping granary (inside the Chaoyang gate; Li and Jiang 1995, 170) was that the bannermen had sold their tickets to grain shops, but the head watchman had tried to extort money from the shops to the extent that they were unable to collect the grain due to them for the tickets from the granaries (CYQS 61:22ab).

Pingtiao and the Beijing Market

Pingtiao, sale at reduced prices, was another way that tribute grain entered the market. It reflected the view that the food security of the capital could only be achieved by maintaining price stability both inside and outside the city. Although *pingtiao* was an ancient Chinese idea practiced throughout the land, in Qing-period Beijing it was a policy tool used with resources and regularity unmatched anywhere else. When there was a shortage of grain and prices were high, either because of regular seasonal variation or poor harvest conditions, grain from the tribute granaries was sold at grain stations (*michang*) in Beijing. In official documents these were referred to as “Wu cheng shi chang,” or the ten stations of the five districts, but over time their numbers increased and some of their locations shifted.²⁸ In 1738, seven of these were in the Outer City and three were just outside the west, north, and east Inner City walls (Figure 1). In the next year, however, so many famine refugees were flocking to the city that the Outer City stations were moved outside the gates (Li and Jiang 1995, 77). In 1744 (QL 9), a year of serious drought, four more stations were added in the nearby suburbs: at Lugouqiao (Marco Polo Bridge), Tongzhou, Shahe, and Huangcun (*Gaozong shilu* 216; cited in Wu 1989, 182, and Wu 1994, 386). Again in 1748, the emperor authorized *pingtiao* stations in the suburbs, citing a precedent of 1737 (HDSL 275:8a–9b. 1751 [QL 16]). In the early nineteenth century, *michang* were established on occasion at seven locations in Daxing and Wanping counties (HDSL 1899, 275:23b–24a; *Shuntian fuzhi* 1885, 66:29ab).

The consistent pattern of few if any stations in the Inner City, several in the Outer City, and several more in the suburbs reveals the basic purpose of *pingtiao*: to support the food security of the entire metropolitan population, not just that of the bannermen and other stipendiaries. During their period of operation up to 1752, the Eight-Banner grain bureaus also participated in this expanded *pingtiao*, but they were run by the banner authorities and by the Imperial Household Administration (Neiwu fu). The “Wu cheng” *michang*, however, were operated by the Board of Revenue, under the supervision of the censors of the Five Districts, the gendarmerie, Shuntian prefectural officials, and banner authorities. The *pingtiao* stations outside the city walls were supervised also by the local district authorities (HDSL 275:7b–9, 1751 [QL16]).

In the practice of *pingtiao*, prices always were set a certain amount below the current market price (CYQS 65:1a). In 1759 (QL 24/3), for example: “The price of grain in Beijing is very high. Thus 50,000 *shi* are being distributed from the capital granaries and stations are being set up for *pingtiao*. At present the market price of one

²⁸The term *michang* usually referred to these *pingtiao* stations, which sold reduced-price grain from the tribute granaries, while the term *miju* referred to the Eight-banner grain bureaus, which bought grain from bannermen and later resold the grain at reduced prices. The terms are sometimes used interchangeably even in the original documents. What they had in common was that both were government-run institutions. Wang Qingyun (1890, 386–90) uses the term *miju* in this generic sense to include both types of institutions.

shi of *laomi* is 1,550 cash; *suomi* 1,340 *wen*; and millet 1,170 *wen*. Each price should be reduced by 100 *wen*" (CYQS 65:6a).²⁹ In general, the Board of Revenue's rules for reduced-price sales provided that

The Board of Revenue should determine, according to the market price, how much the price should be reduced. Representatives of each of the ten stations in the Five Districts should go to the granaries to get the grain. (They should assume the costs of transport.) In selling the grain, each person should get two *dou* per day. It is not permitted to go above that limit. . . . [1 *dou* = 1/10 *shi*; see note 5]

(HBZL 1874, 16:8a; also appears in 1791 edition)

In addition to providing relief, these sales helped to rid the granaries of surplus stocks that were stale. There was an established schedule for semi-annual *pingtiao* sale of old grain once after the tenth month and again between the third and fourth months (CYQS 65:3b–4). According to the Board of Revenue's regulations, the adulterated grain (*chengse mi*) that was left from the metropolitan granaries' summer and fall distributions, and from the Tongzhou granaries' spring distributions, was to be sold off after the tenth month. The adulterated grain left over from the metropolitan granaries' winter and spring distributions and the Tongzhou granaries' fall distributions should all be sold off by the third or fourth month (HBZL 1874, 16:9ab; also appears in 1791 edition).

Because the most important function of *pingtiao* was to keep grain prices stable, Beijing officials also paid close attention to the price of cash (*qianjia*), and reported on it too when they reported grain prices, as Table 3 shows. Since cash (usually described as copper cash, actually brass) was the currency for small retail purchases, a shortage of cash (i.e., when one *tael* of silver would buy less than the nominal 1000 cash) was as damaging to overall price stability as was a shortage of grain. The cash from *pingtiao* sales was supposed to be closely guarded and returned to the Board of Revenue (HBZL 1874, 16:10ab; also appears in 1791 edition). Alternatively, on some occasions, merchants were invited to buy up the cash, and the silver that they paid was sent to the Board (CYQS 65:10 refers to a case in 1770). On occasion, local officials would in effect make up the deficit caused by an unfavorable exchange rate. In 1762, when grain and cash prices were both high, the gendarmerie was ordered to see that river workers who were to be paid 1000 cash were given one *tael* and two *qian* of silver (nominally equal to 1200 cash) (CYQS 65:7b).

Pingtiao sales were intended for individuals. The authorities were always anxious that grain shops might make illegal purchases and then hoard the grain, impeding circulation. Yet, under some conditions, they allowed limited sales to peddlers or merchants in order to promote circulation. One 1737 report pointed out the need to allow small retailers to purchase *pingtiao* grain because some old and weak people, or women, could not travel a long distance to take advantage of reduced-price grain sales. Thus officials recognized the need for small-scale retailers who would sell grain by carrying it around on their shoulders. But these merchants would be limited to storing no more than 50 *shi* of rice. Officials suspected merchants of deliberately hoarding rice in multiple places at once and with families bearing different surnames; thus they kept a close watch on operations of extremely limited size even while recognizing their usefulness to the people (HDSL 1160:7b–8, 1737–38).

²⁹Li and Jiang (1995, 78–79, table) lists the market and *pingtiao* price schedule from Yongzheng 11–Daoguang 4.

Relief sales apparently included not only tribute grain but also wheat that may or may not have been part of the tribute system. In 1759 (QL 24), not only granary stocks but also wheat shipped from Henan and Shandong to Beijing were ordered to be distributed to the ten grain stations of the city for reduced-price sales. Representatives of flour shops went to the stations to receive tickets to buy wheat and grind it into flour for sale to the people. A standard amount of purchase was five *shi*. The market price of wheat at the time was 2,124 *wen* per *shi*; when reduced by 325 *wen*, it equalled about 1,800 *wen* for reduced-price sales. The time limit for these sales was from the twenty-sixth day of the third month to the fifteenth day of the intercalary sixth month (CYQS 65:6ab).

When they were allowed to participate in *pingtiao* sales, merchants found their role strictly controlled by the authorities. Merchants from families regarded as upright and financially well established were chosen. Announcements would be posted informing everyone that hoarding and raising the price of grain were prohibited and would be punished seriously. When the merchants went to the government grain stores to get the grain, officials would be present to observe them (HDSL 1034:12b–13, 1813). If the merchant did not have enough room to store all the grain that he wished, he could obtain certain limited amounts from the government at a time. For example, in 1813 he could take 2,500 *shi* once in five days, selling 500 *shi* each day; the quotas varied with circumstances. Transport fees were paid by the government from money paid for the grain. The rest of the funds went to the Board of Revenue for military expenses.

Retailers got little profit from *pingtiao* business. The money that they collected had to be handed over to the government immediately. If they were found to sell the grain at a higher price than that set by the government in order to get more profit for themselves, all the grain that they owned, including nongovernmental grain, would be confiscated and sold on a *pingtiao* basis. In addition, the merchants would be punished as criminals. Profits to the merchants appear to have been mainly leftover rice. Having sold eighty percent of the grain or polished white rice (*ximi*), for example, they could keep twenty percent, mostly *suimi* (odds and ends, broken fragments, chaff). This would be their fee for handling *pingtiao* (HDSL 1034:7–8, 1038:20–24, 1787).

In some instances, the court explicitly ordered that private shops rather than the official stations be used for reduced-price sales. This decision may have reflected the struggle against the corruption characteristic of the last years of the Qianlong reign, when the bureaucracy was dominated by He Shen, the emperor's favorite. In an edict of the sixth lunar month of 1787, the emperor, or those who wrote in his name, directed that an additional 50,000 *shi* of grain be released for reduced-price sales to meet the relatively high prices that prevailed. According to custom, this grain should be given to the Five Districts to set up stations. But not only would the expenses be bothersome (*jingfei zhi fan*), but it would be difficult to prevent officials, clerks, runners and their hangers-on from colluding in fraud (*chuantong zibi*). Reduced-price sales then would be in name only, but without substance:

In My (Imperial) opinion it would be better to have each of the Wu cheng depute a high official jointly to select both inside and outside the city wealthy large grain shops (*yinshi da pubu*) to sell the official grain at reduced prices at each place. . . . If the shops do not respect the government-set price and still conduct private sales to make extra profit, not only will the government grain be given to another selected shop to *pingtiao*, but the shop's own inventory will be confiscated at the same time and sold at reduced price, and the merchant will be punished.

(CYQS 65:13b–14a)

In 1806 (JQ 11), during a period of excessive rains, the reduced-price sales were once again conducted by the government-operated stations. An edict had ordered that 40,000 *shi* each of rice and wheat be released for reduced-price sales in the Five Districts to help the poor during a period of rain and relatively high prices. The Board of Revenue complied, stating that

The present market price of *gengmi* is 1,850 *wen* [per *shi*]. It has been decided to reduce it by 250 and sell it at the reduced price of 1,600. As for the wheat, wheat is hard to store. Previously it had been requested and granted to take 60,000 *shi* in granaries to be used for banner stipends. Now it can all be sold at reduced-price sales. The present price of wheat is 2,800 *wen* [per *shi*], so reduce it by 300 *wen* and it will be 2,500 *wen*. As for the rice (*mi*) sold at reduced price, each person each day may buy from one or two *sheng* up to one *dou*. As for the wheat sold, each person is allowed to buy from one or two *sheng* up to two *dou*. They are not allowed to exceed that amount [1 *dou* = 10 *sheng* = 1/10 *shi*].

(CYQS 64:41a–42a)

In 1810 (JQ 15), wheat was sold directly to shops to be ground into flour:

Because wheat does not store long, it should be given over to the Board of Revenue for sale in the city to help the people [in the amount of] 74,000 *shi*. For granary wheat (*caomai*), the market price is 2,850 *wen* per *shi*, and should be reduced by 600 *wen* to 2,250 *wen*. For white wheat (*baimai*) the market price of 2,950 *wen* per *shi* should be reduced by 700 *wen* to 2,250 *wen*. . . . Because the ordinary people do not have any grinding instruments . . . [it has been proposed to] reduce each *shi* of both kinds of wheat to 1,600 *wen* and sell it to the shops and allow them to resell it at 1,750 *wen*, 500 *wen* less than the original price. Afterwards the shops can grind it and retail the flour at 20 *wen* per *jin*. In the Five Districts, publicize the price so people will know it. If the people purchase according to the [set] price, their subsistence will benefit and the shops will also enjoy a bit more profit [*shao zhan yurun*].

(CYQS 64:42ab)

Social Unrest, *Pingtiao*, and Soup Kitchens

Soup kitchens (*fanchang* or *zhouchang*) normally operated in Beijing every winter. During the first half of the nineteenth century, just as tribute grain often was used for emergency, as opposed to seasonal reduced-price (*pingtiao*) sales (CYQS 64:41–53, documents dated Jiaqing through Xianfeng reigns), soup kitchens also were increasingly used for famine relief in addition to their regular winter function.

The regulations of the Board of Revenue stated that in Beijing's Five Districts every winter—from the beginning of the tenth month to the twentieth day of the third month—soup kitchens were to be set up for relief. For each District each day, 2 *shi* of *mi* plus 1 *tael* for fuel were to be provided. Other provincial capitals and localities were directed to follow this example (HBZL 84:18–19). These official soup kitchens, initially ten, were located at strategic points in the Five Districts and just outside the gates. Most of them were located on the sites of temples.³⁰ Gendarmerie

³⁰JWSL 4:58ab; Naquin forthcoming, ch. 15. Before 1780, soup kitchens did not start operations until the eleventh month (ms. p. 880).

records show seven locations in the Outer City and three in the Inner City for an unspecified year (JWSL 9:58ab [nd]).

Beginning in the nineteenth century, problems of vagrancy and beggary seemed to abound in the capital; gendarmerie documents of this era, especially for 1830–1850, show many problems related to control of *laili bu ming zhi ren*, “people of unknown background” or “floating population” (JWSL 5:42a–43a [1838]; 5:60a–61a [1813]; 6:1a–5b [1829]; 6:6a–14b [1845]; 8:8ab ([nd]; 8:14ab [1851]; 8:15a–21b [nd]; 8:22a–48a [nd]; 8:51a [nd]). A persistent concern of local authorities was to stem the tide of poor people coming to the capital in search of relief. Demand for this relief was so great that sometimes people were crushed to death while waiting at soup kitchens, and the police were punished for failing to prevent it (JWSL 11:19a [nd]).

Refugee problems were not entirely new. In the well-documented drought crisis of 1743–1744, rural people “‘left in droves’ . . . as early as the sixth month, at the height of the agricultural year” (Will 1990, 41). Migration to Beijing was rapid and intense. Ten thousand refugees were fed by the soup kitchens in Beijing, many more than the norm (Will 1990, 234–35). In order to prevent crowding and disease in the capital, as mentioned above, extra soup kitchens on the city’s outskirts were set up. After winter had passed, vagrants were given allowances to return home in time for spring planting.

During the huge flood of 1801, officials tried to stem the tide of refugees flocking to Beijing by getting the word out that relief was available in the local areas (ZPZZ, NZZJ 0069, JQ6/6/25). In the seventh lunar month, 30,000 refugees were reported in Beijing (GZJS, *juan* 11–12), and despite efforts to keep them away, they were reported to be increasing at a rate of 8,000–9,000 a day, largely women and children, hovering by the city gates (GZJS, *juan* 15–16). The next spring, the soup kitchens were extended for another month to 4/20 from their usual 3/20 closing. Noting that it would be inconvenient for peasants to come to the city as the agricultural season was getting busy, and that the roads would be crowded, the imperial edict decreed that the soup kitchens of the Five Districts all move their operations outside the city (HDSL 273:1b).

Reduced-price sales often were used alongside the soup kitchens in times of crisis. In 1811, reduced-price sale grain stations were set up outside the city gates to give relief to the poor. Once again the decree said that “if poor people come into the city to get *pingtiao* grain, it is a hardship [for them] because they need to travel far and sometimes when they arrive, it is too late.” Left unsaid was the obvious advantage to the rulers of keeping impoverished grain recipients outside the city wall (BCSX 274, Renzong 57:19a–b [JQ 16/5]).

In the 1813 drought crisis, the same year as the assault on Beijing by White Lotus rebels (Naquin 1976), grain prices reached an all-time high and *pingtiao* was offered in desperation:

Around the capital area it has been very dry since spring. Prices are very high and people are suffering. The Board of Revenue has permitted 40,000 *shi* of wheat newly arrived at the granary this year to be sold at reduced prices at the ten stations in the Five Districts. Each *shi* will be reduced by 600 *wen* to a price of 2,100. Each person may buy from one or two *sheng* to one *dou* daily.

(CYQS 65:23b–24)

There also seems to have been a decision in 1813 to give grain directly to shops for reduced-price sales, citing the precedent of JQ 15 (1810) (on which see above) when

wheat had been given to shops to retail. "Find rich shops to do this," said the instructions (BCSX 274, Renzong 57:23a, 1813 [JQ 18/4]).

In 1819, in the wake of renewed flooding of the Yongding river in and around Beijing, Fang Shouchou, the Zhili governor general, advocated supplying soup kitchens for the districts (*xian*) around Beijing with grain from granaries or money from the treasury to buy grain and mill it. He recommended that this be done until the commencement of general relief (*dazhen*) in the tenth month. In those places remote from transport, he said, steamed bread (*mobing*) or cash should be given out (ZPZZ NZZJ 0081, JQ 24/8/6). It was necessary to have these soup kitchens along the road to discourage refugees from advancing on Beijing (ZPZZ NZZJ 0081, JQ 24/9/22).

In 1823–1824, at the beginning of the Daoguang reign, when Beijing and the entire region were confronted with tremendous floods followed by a serious epidemic, significant quantities of grain were released for reduced-price sales at Beijing: 50,000 *shi* in each year (CYQS 65:26b–27, 28ab). This grain also was given to selected merchants to sell. In addition, the authorities set up soup kitchens where gruel was served to the poor. To save famine victims the hardship of daily trips to the soup kitchens, they were allowed to collect five days' rations at once. Normally each adult got three *he* of grain and each child a half per day. (This represented a smaller famine ration than had been the standard in the eighteenth century; see note 12.) In this crisis, each adult could collect one *sheng*, five *he* of grain and each child, a half. The magistrates of Wanping and Daxing were ordered to purchase grain from Henan (BCSX 374, Xuanzong 47:21–22, DG 3/8). So in this case soup kitchens had become food ration (*kouliang*) distribution centers. Additional soup kitchens were set up in some of the usual locations in the suburbs: Lugouqiao, Huangcun, Dongba, and Qinghe. Shelters for the refugees were erected (JFTZ 5:14ab, DG 3/7[1823]).

Despite all these expenditures, however, the emperor observed that there were still many famine refugees crowding into Beijing, and there were even incidents of violence, of grabbing food by force. There were countless others who were fleeing beyond the Great Wall. To the emperor, this was a sign that the local officials had not done their work of distributing famine relief in the countryside; if they had, people would have had no need to leave their homes. If more bandits and vagrants appear, he said, it is a sign that the local officials are being contemptuous of the suffering of the masses, and they should be punished (BCSX 374, Xuanzong 47:28ab, DG 4/2 [1824].)

The grave social and political problems that started in the Daoguang period and lasted through the 1860s appear to have changed the emphasis in food security measures from *pingtiao* (eighteenth century) and gate restrictions (early nineteenth), which emphasized price stabilization, to soup kitchens, which emphasized direct relief. As Han Guanghui and others have shown, soup kitchens became far more frequently the major means of famine relief and crowd control in the nineteenth century.³¹ At the same time, *pingtiao* was less frequently employed because of the diminished capacity of the government to hold large reserves of grain. Also, there was an increasing tendency to locate soup kitchens outside the city walls. More soup kitchens were opened at even more temples.³² By the Guangxu period, many soup

³¹Han Guanghui (1996a, 23–26) has a very full list of soup kitchens in Beijing throughout the Qing period, as well as an informative discussion.

³²Susan Naquin's forthcoming book on Beijing will document this shift more fully. Han Guanghui (1996a, 25) entries also indicate this.

kitchens were privately operated, as part of a general trend toward private charitable organizations filling any vacuum left by the government.³³ The shift toward private charity reached such an extent that a few decades later, Sidney Gamble, a close observer of Beijing, mistakenly believed that under “the Empire, the poor relief [in Beijing] was carried on almost entirely by individuals or private associations” (Gamble and Burgess 1921, 267–68, 277, 304). He interpreted the assumption of responsibility for these activities by the government and the modernized city police as a new departure rather than (as it was) a return to the Qing-era pattern.

In the late nineteenth century, after the turbulence of the Taiping period and the sacking of Beijing by British and French troops, Li Hongzhang began to dominate the capital area through his positions as Zhili governor-general and commissioner of northern ports. *Pingtiao* at Beijing was conducted with grain shipped from Fengtian. After arrival at Beijing, the grain was distributed through the merchant bureaus that had facilitated the shipment and sold to small shops in Beijing, reducing the price by 1–2 *qian* per *shi*.³⁴ The walled cities at Beijing continued to receive the most attention. Because of the desperate conditions in the countryside, Li Hongzhang gave strict orders forbidding people from other districts to come to Beijing to purchase grain, and famine refugees crowded into the capital. About 30 to 40 percent of the recipients of famine relief were outsiders, while 60 to 70 percent were local residents (He 1980, 52).

How effective were these regular and emergency uses of *pingtiao* and soup kitchens, and how many people were directly affected? Without detailed price data, we cannot quantify the extent to which prices were stabilized by the reduced-price sales of grain. It is highly unlikely, however, that these considerable measures would have been continued over two centuries if they had not achieved noticeable economic and social benefits. The amounts for *pingtiao* cited in the sections above—ranging from 40,000 to 74,000 *shi* each time—were substantial. If we use the adult famine ration standard of 0.005 *shi* of husked grain per person per day (see note 12 above), such an amount would have produced ten million adult rations. In the course of a month, this would be enough to sustain—at bare subsistence level—330,000 adults. Looking at soup kitchens, we know the regulations called for ten stations, two in each district, and each district was provided two *shi* of grain daily. Using the same minimum standard of 0.005 *shi* per day, these ten *shi* would have provided 2,000 meals per day, or 60,000 meals a month (soup kitchens served one meal a day). Of course, in the nineteenth century there were many more than ten official stations routinely in operation, as well as numerous privately run soup kitchens; and the thin gruel that they served may have used even smaller amounts of grain. So, in fact, far more meals must have been dispensed.

We can compare our calculations to the figures cited by Gamble for the early Republican period. Adding the figures reported to him by various local police

³³This was part of the overall tendency toward charitable activities involving elite participation from all over the empire, not just the immediate locality. This trend is discussed in Rankin 1986, 142–47; Naquin forthcoming, ch. 15; and Li, *Fighting Famine*, in preparation. For a discussion of the merits of gentry-led relief efforts earlier in the Qing period, see Will 1990, 314.

³⁴He (1980, 49–51, table 13) shows the expenses for Beijing *pingtiao* during the first eight months of 1878. Eighty-seven thousand *shi* of grain were sold, costing 300,000 taels and selling for 225,000, with net subsidized cost of 75,000 taels. The China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company was ordered by Li Hongzhang, its patron, to make grain purchases in many regions to help the north. The Beijing branch office played a role in Beijing famine relief.

Figure 2. Boys at Beijing soup kitchen, 1924–25. Although taken more than a decade after the fall of the Qing dynasty, this photograph by Sidney D. Gamble shows well the continuing role of soup kitchens in the city. Reproduced by permission of the Sidney D. Gamble Foundation for China Studies.

authorities responsible for relief, we can see that 550–640,000 meals a month were dispensed at twelve soup kitchens. In the month of January 1918, over 700,000 meals were served (Gamble and Burgess 1921, facing pp. 270, 278). Six hundred thousand meals a month would have meant about 20,000 meals a day on average—a figure ten times the normative Qing standard of 60,000 meals a month, or 2,000 meals a day. During winter 1925 another source said that soup kitchens served 30,000 people a day (Strand 1989, 204–5). We would argue that the greater need for soup kitchens in the Republican period reflected not only the more chaotic political conditions—with warlord rivalries, greater foreign presence, and more displaced persons seeking food and shelter—but also the breakdown of other aspects of the food security system that the Qing state had provided for Beijing (see Figure 2).

Markets, Merchants, and Gendarmerie

To a greater extent than anywhere else in the empire, in Beijing the Qing state maintained a tight control over the supply and marketing of grain. The state, however, did not try to substitute itself for the market so much as to control and limit it as effectively as possible and with minimal expense to the government. Prices in the

pingtiao stations were set by officials, but in accordance with the prevailing market price. Government documents conventionally deprecated merchants as *jianshang*—"mean merchants"—but their necessity and usefulness always were acknowledged. An ambivalent tone about merchants was characteristic; for example, in a revealing reflection, one memorialist commented that, after all, merchants too were one of the four social classes (scholar, farmer, artisan, merchant, in descending order) and should develop Heaven's goodness. But in the next sentence he proceeded to castigate merchants for their continual hoarding, which showed them to be "really hateful" (HDSL 1160:10ab, [1786]).

We already have seen several ways in which officials tried to limit or control the activities of grain merchants: by regulating their purchases at Tongzhou and the other granaries, by limiting their profits in *pingtiao* transactions, and by limiting the amount of grain that could be taken out the city gates. Because of their great fear of hoarding by merchants—especially hoarding grain that could be held over for more than one season—local officials also limited the size, location, and inventories of grain shops.

In 1737, even amounts of 40–50 *shi* supposedly held by "crafty" people for brewing (*shaoguo*) were forbidden because of the concern that grain supplies would be affected and prices would rise. The regulations stated, however, that "those who just carry a few *shi* away on their backs should not be investigated" (HDSL 191:27b). "The small, ignorant people do not know anything about storage and just take the first price for wheat [instead of storing it until the price goes up]. Thus the merchants monopolize or corner the market and do not concern themselves about the food supply of the little people." This practice was considered to be especially severe in Linqing in Shandong and Zhenjiang in Jiangnan, so it reflected an empire-wide concern (HDSL 191: 27b–28a; also cited by Will 1990, 181).

In theory, the grain shops were limited in the stock they could maintain and violations were punished. But exact limits showed some flexibility. Regulation of inventories always was aimed at the prevention of hoarding, but the amounts varied in each instance. For example, an early nineteenth-century document states that if the grain accumulation was *not* judged to be for hoarding, the merchant could store even over 160 *shi*, but if hoarding and profit were the goals, he could be prosecuted even if he had *less* than 160 *shi* (HDSL 1038:20–24, [1813]). In the 1801 flood, the authorities already had acknowledged that some leniency toward merchants was necessary:

According to regulations, the grainshops in Beijing's Five Districts are not supposed to have more than 80 *shi* of each type of grain. If they exceed this amount, they are considered to be hoarding and should be punished. But in this crisis, it is important to keep grain circulating. *According to secret investigation*, grain shops in and outside the capital hold from several hundred to several thousand *shi*. Now we are raising the limit to 160 *shi*. The rest we will permit to be sold at a stable price (*pingjia*) and [we] will not permit any hoarding. Do not let the functionaries make the slightest excuses.

(BCSX 273, Renzong 56:18a–19a. 1801 [JQ 6/11]) (*italics added*)

Secret inspections of shops were carried out by the gendarmerie, particularly in connection with commerce in grain in shops located near the city gates. Special attention was given to gates located near granaries (JWSL 4:61a–62a [1808], 64a–66b [1810]). In 1810 a censor's memorial led to a secret police investigation of grain shops near the Xizhi gate in the western wall of the Inner City. The censor had feared that merchants were taking grain outside the city wall to hoard and sell later at a

higher price. Police officials reported that 32 shops did business inside the gate and 20 outside; those inside had much larger reserves of grain, bought at city markets. But gendarmerie headquarters reported that all this commerce was legitimate. Grain stayed in the capital area. It went through the gates by permit to the Western Hills on the backs of donkeys, as rations to the summer palace at Yuanming yuan, to storage at two granaries outside the Xizhi and Desheng gates at the northwest corner of the Inner City, and on the backs of peasants from nearby areas in small amounts for their own use. Moreover, the Captain-General of Gendarmerie reported that Wu ying police regularly monitored all grain shops in the gate area (JWSL 4:64a–66b [1810]). But all grain shops, not just those near gates, were closely watched. For example, in 1856 (XF 6) when prices had risen high in Beijing, shops were told to sell off all their grain within ten days and not to hoard any (HDSL 191:31b–32a).

Because of the bulkiness of grain, it was relatively easy for the authorities to be aware of shipments as they occurred and to stop those that were unauthorized. Shifts of gendarmerie continuously guarding the city gates could, if so ordered, permit only small amounts of grain bought by peasants to pass through (JWSL 4:59a–b [1822], 4:63a [1807]). Elaborate planning and precautions were devoted to official grain shipments, such as transports of grain through a gate to one of the government granaries (JWSL 4:45a–46a [1801]). Grain leaving the city gates as official rations for soldiers outside the city had to be accompanied by a pass from the Captain-General of Gendarmerie. Gate officers kept one part of the pass, and the other part needed to be returned for cancellation after the rice was consumed (JWSL 4:67a–68a [1804]).

A good example comes from the confession of Cao Fuchang, a Chinese bannerman whose father was the 1813 White Lotus rebel leader Lin Qing's sworn brother. Lin Qing and Cao's father often ate together at the Chongxiang restaurant on the south side of the Chashi alley outside the Xuanwu gate. During the winter of 1808, one could not leave the city carrying grain. Because Lin Qing lived outside the city, Cao's father gave him an authorized paper falsely saying that the grain was for soldiers' rations, and so they let him go through. In the summer and winter of the following year he did this twice more.³⁵

Pingtiao grain was not supposed to be moved outside the city wall; if it was carried through a gate, it needed to have a license and official stamp (JWSL 9.58ab [nd]). Gate officers were warned not to extort, hoard, or smuggle grain and not to create counterfeit passes. When grain was confiscated at the gates, it was either used as a reward to the confiscators or as food for prisoners at the gendarmerie yamen (JWSL 1851, 4:63a [1807]). Authorities also were concerned about grain leaving the capital region; the banner component of the gendarmerie was responsible for keeping track of grain in transport inside the gates, and the Green Standard component outside them (JWSL 4:59ab [1822], 64a–66b [1810]). As with other regulations regarding grain, these were enforced most strictly during times of poor harvests and high prices, when the fear was that grain merchants would be tempted to seek higher prices outside the city, thus causing city prices also to rise. During normal years the enforcement of this prohibition was probably relaxed.

The gendarmerie was a key factor in government effectiveness in regulation of the grain trade in Beijing. Composed of over 33,000 men, the gendarmerie was the only force in the city large enough to penetrate into every street and lane and to give systematic attention to food security. Knowledge of merchants, prices, and market

³⁵Deposition of Cao Fuchang in *Gugong zhouban* 227:3, 228:1. JQ 18/10/21. We thank Susan Naquin for this reference.

conditions obtained by open and secret surveillance enabled the authorities to respond in a flexible, timely manner. Many of their tactics, such as preventive regulations on inventories and at gates, early release of stipends, and reduced-price sales of tribute grain benefited from a dependable flow of economic information and from the work of gendarmerie checkers and enforcers. In Japan, in equally populous Edo, by comparison, police were far fewer but city magistrates compensated by organizing large numbers of merchants and artisans to carry out tasks of regulation and poor relief (Katō 1994, 45–48). In both Edo and Beijing, food-related activities by the authorities demanded significant manpower on a routine basis. Thus in Beijing it was not the imperial tribute and granary system alone, but rather its local combination with the daily, ground-level activities of a massive human institution—the gendarmerie—that assured the food security of the capital.

Another factor facilitating governmental control was that in Beijing, as in other urban centers in China, the scale of grain marketing was kept relatively small.³⁶ There were over a thousand small shops called *duifang*, run by Shandong merchants, that husked or processed grain (often stipend grain that reached the market through *pingtiao*) and then peddled it in the neighborhoods of the city (Wang 1890, 387; Hosoya 1974, 186, Elliott 1993, 372). Qing-era visitors consistently noted that all kinds of grain and other foods were sold in small-scale shops and by peddlers up and down the streets of both Inner and Outer Cities (Anderson 1795, 138; Timkovsky 1827, 2:190; Williams 1848, 1:68–69; Kovalevsky 1853, I:143–46; Fortune 1863, 362, 370; see also Bredon 1922, 60–61). A well-regarded late-Qing Japanese gazetteer noted that Beijing merchants were mostly small-scale; large merchants were very rare (*Qingmo* 1994, 343). Grain shops were located, among other places, inside the Qian (Zhengyang) gate, Qiaozi hutong, inside the Xizhi gate, and also inside the Qihua (Chaoyang) gate (*Qingmo* 1994, 345). Many travelers also commented on the handsome decoration of the shops and the colorful and lively air in the streets (Ellis 1818, 134; Williams 1848, 1:68–69, Fortune 1863, 362–63; Kovalevsky 1853, I:143–46). Drawings in the early eighteenth-century scroll *Wanshou shengdian* show many small shops along streets in the northwest suburbs and Inner City selling grain, vegetables, tea, candy, wine, medicine, and other foods; a large number of food peddlers also appear (WSSD 1717, 41:14a, 27a, 40a, 53a, 54a; 42:3ab, 4ab, 6b). (See Figure 3.)

Elsewhere in the capital region small-scale grain commerce prevailed, even at the wholesale level. At Tongzhou, where officials were vigilant against manipulation of the market, merchants were constantly under surveillance and every attempt was made to limit their scale of business. According to Governor-General Zhou Yuanli in 1778, there were 220 “guest” merchants at Tongzhou, each of whom had a stock of about 100 to 1,000 *shi* of wheat. There was a total stock of 200,000 *shi*. While he considered this a desirable situation, he thought that newly arrived merchants should not be compelled to limit their inventories lest they be discouraged from doing business there (GZD 035185, QL 43/6/8). Nevertheless, there was an investigation of the warehouses that normally stored the large shipments of wheat from Henan, Shandong, and Jiangsu, and sold the stock gradually to retailers in Beijing and Tongzhou. Such a large inventory (200,000 *shi*) remained in 1778 that officials were suspicious that merchants were withholding stocks in anticipation of a poor harvest. After a thorough investigation, the authorities concluded that the eighty or more merchants suspected

³⁶The reference to “wealthy large grain shops” in 1787 and to “rich shops” in 1813 cited above are the only such descriptions that we have seen, and the concept of “large” is not quantified. Wu (1997, 280 n. 10) mentions one large grain merchant family, located just outside the Chongwen gate, that was prominent from the Ming to the end of the Qing.

Figure 3. Police armed with swords and whips in front of a small grain shop, 1713. Their presence on this occasion is at least partly connected to an imperial procession, but the gendarmerie routinely regulated grain merchants. A money-changing shop is located across the street. (WSSD 1713, *ce* 16 *juan* 41, Harvard-Yenching Library; found also in 1717 edition at 42:6b).

were not guilty of actual hoarding and therefore should not be punished. Under pressure, however, the merchants volunteered to sell the whole of the remaining stock within two months at a price 0.2 taels per *shi* below the current price. The emperor then reduced this self-imposed penalty to 0.1 taels.³⁷

Like many means, direct and indirect, employed by the Qing state to control and limit commerce in grain, the atomization of the trade was not limited to the capital and its region. In the metropolitan region, however, the state's capacity to enforce it was greater. At Tianjin, the major seaport, and Baoding, the provincial capital, the grain trade was also small in scale.³⁸ Differing from trade in salt, silk, or other important commodities, the grain trade of the Chinese empire never had large-scale merchants who achieved economic influence and personal stature. An examination of over one hundred local gazetteers from Zhili province does not reveal even one grain merchant mentioned by name. Other sources refer to a few large dealers in Tianjin in the early nineteenth century.³⁹ There were no Chinese counterparts of the Cargills or Thellussons of the West. Unlike authorities in eighteenth-century France, Chinese officials had no need to negotiate with large grain magnates.

As noted above, some historians both inside and outside China have seen a trend toward liberalization of trade in the mid- to late-Qing period, spurred by an ideological transformation, a recognition of the importance of free markets and respect for merchants.⁴⁰ The decline in government intervention can certainly be seen in the grain trade, even in the capital area, where the state's role was greater than elsewhere, but it was prompted more by circumstance than by ideology. The decline of the grain tribute system and the other aspects of Qing fiscal weakness meant that the state simply could not command the resources that it had marshaled in the eighteenth century, and could no longer successfully enforce a free circulation of grain by restricting inventories and controlling hoarding. When the state turned to merchants to perform functions previously undertaken by the state, it was not because of a more positive view of merchants, but because its fear of bureaucratic corruption became more immediate than its fear of merchant connivance. In effect, corruption was part of the cost to the state of its intervention in the grain market. When this cost rose too high under either governmental or private auspices, the government switched to alternative channels to reduce it. We already have seen this tendency in *pingtiao* arrangements during the He Shen years. This was also apparent in the Daoguang crises. In the flood crisis of 1823–1824, the emperor ordered officials to purchase grain from as far away as Taiwan and Fujian, but he ordered the purchases to be delivered not to local functionaries, but rather to merchants recruited for the occasion to ship the grain to Tianjin and Beijing (JFTZ 1871, 5:23ab, DG 4/3).

Conclusion

Through single-minded determination and clever statecraft, and aided by the prosperity of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Qing rulers achieved

³⁷Translated and summarized in Dunstan 1988 ms., 533–34, n. 26, from *Tongzhou zhi* 1879, 10:23a–27a.

³⁸This is discussed in Li, *Fighting Famine*, in preparation.

³⁹There is mention of three large grain dealers in Tianjin starting from the Xianfeng period. See *Tianjin wenshi ziliao xuanji*, 20, 1982/8, 40–41.

⁴⁰The writings of Wu Jianyong, cited above in the section on stipends, are most noteworthy in this regard. Outside of China, Dunstan 1996, Dunstan forthcoming, Rowe 1993, and Will 1999 have focused on the relationship between state and market in the Qing.

an impressive degree of food security for Beijing. Grain flowed to the capital area from both north and south. Numerous large granaries were visible to everyone. Tribute grain was not supposed to enter the capital unguarded or leave it freely; guards at the sixteen gates in the city walls, on duty day and night, could enforce these rules. The marketing and pricing of grain were monitored, influenced, and when necessary, controlled by government. The urban population, consumers and sellers of grain, was watched in numerous interlocking ways, including preventive police patrol, secret investigations, and a semi-annual census of all households, shops, and temples (JWSL 5:57a–59a, 5:60a–61a, 6:1a–5b, 6:6a–14b, 6:15a–18a, 12:15a–23b, 12:31a–34a; Dray-Novey 1981, 220–35). The “riff-raff” from the countryside was kept away, often by means of reduced-price sales or charity distribution of grain outside the walls.

Despite frequent local harvest crises and some major disasters, overall price stability and food security were maintained even during the multiple nineteenth-century difficulties of the Qing dynasty.⁴¹ The Beijing populace never seized upon food scarcity or high food prices as causes of dissatisfaction with the Manchu rulers. There was an annual net inflow of tribute grain, even though much of this was not consumed by those for whom it was intended. This situation can be contrasted with the experience of London in the early eighteenth century, when urban residents could see vast quantities of grain being exported by grain dealers to foreign destinations, thus causing local scarcities (Ormrod 1985, 88–91). With the approval of the crown, Britain remained a major grain exporter until it faced the necessity of feeding concentrated urban factory populations in the mid-nineteenth century (Tilly 1975, 416). In Beijing, however, massive granaries along the eastern and northern walls of the city and at nearby Tongzhou, as well as the constant busy traffic of grain junks on the canal, were ever-present visual reminders of the capital's food supply and the unshakeable political will to maintain it. Even after the grain tribute was increasingly transported by sea, the late Qing government tried to avoid social disturbance due to food scarcity. Although there are some instances of food-related protests in other parts of China—for example in Hunan in the eighteenth century—the urban food riot was not part of the political life of Beijing (Wong 1982, 767–88).⁴²

Protecting the food security of Beijing, however, was not entirely the same as maintaining the economic security of the bannermen and their families or preventing poverty among urban dwellers. The Qing dynasty did not meet these latter challenges so successfully as it did the first. The inadequacy of banner stipends was felt as early

⁴¹Chen Jinling 1988 says that Beijing grain prices were stable in the eighteenth century, but that in the nineteenth century prices rose faster than in other places in China. His conclusions are based on anecdotal evidence, not a price series. Li 1992 provides long-term price trends for Zhili province that show overall price stability and slow inflation. The price effects of major and minor subsistence crises were serious, but never so great as the subsistence crises of Europe before the mid-eighteenth century. See esp. p. 93. Li, *Fighting Famine*, in preparation, will provide an updated version of these findings.

⁴²The following contrary observation by Williams (1848, 1.69–70), however, is not confirmed by any other source: “The poor, who resort thither [to Beijing] from other parts of the province, form a needy and troublesome part of the population, sometimes rising in large mobs and pillaging the granaries to supply themselves with food, but more commonly perishing in great numbers from cold and hunger.” Williams slightly edited but did not remove this sentence from the second edition of *The Middle Kingdom* (1882), published more than thirty years later when the author and other foreigners had had far more opportunity to know Beijing. It is possible that Williams' informant had in mind incidents of crowding and crushing to death in soup kitchens. Susan Naquin notes that disturbances in Beijing were more often caused by examination candidates (private conversation).

as the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The general economic decline of the bannermen over the course of the dynasty has often been described. Prevented for long periods from working at nonmilitary occupations, bannermen were heavily dependent on stipend rates set in the seventeenth century and cut in the nineteenth century (Crossley 1990, 52–54, 147–48). Not only were bannermen in Beijing and other garrisons poorly prepared to deal with the outside economic world, but in addition the cost of living in Beijing is said to have risen in the nineteenth century (Chen Jiahua 1985, 240–43). Han Guanghui shows a gradual increase in banner numbers and growing banner poverty as some did not receive stipends and some Chinese bannermen or *hanjun* even returned to the life of commoners (Han 1996b, 318–19). After the fall of the dynasty, a social survey showed the remaining Manchu population in Beijing to have an average income half that of the Chinese (Crossley 1990, 216, citing Gamble and Burgess 1921). Despite the dynasty's achievement of long-term food security in the capital, the deterioration in the economic and physical well-being of the banner forces weakened the Chinese state during a critical period.

The irony of banner decline in the much-protected Beijing dynastic stronghold underscores once more the primacy accorded the goal of food security for the capital as a whole, not just its rulers. This larger view of food security may be contrasted to the policies of the Tokugawa authorities in Edo in the same period. As James McClain and Ugawa Kaoru observe, the “Tokugawa regime . . . went to considerable lengths to create mechanisms to supply water, food, and other essentials to all of Edo's residents, but within that framework it paid particular attention to the needs of the samurai estate” (McClain and Ugawa 1994, 461). Because the incomes of the Tokugawa retainers were dependent on the value of their grain stipends when sold on the market, the authorities pursued a policy of keeping grain prices high, even in years of natural crisis such as 1733. Only when faced with evidence of widespread starvation did they lift the ban on imports of grain from neighboring regions.⁴³ The Edo commoners expected the state to protect them; on each of the three occasions in the Tokugawa period (1600–1868) when they rioted against grain merchants, they assumed that the state stood behind the merchants (Walthall 1994, 407, 410, 413, 428). Qing food policy differed fundamentally from that of the Tokugawa shogunate in that the interests of the ruling class were not put first. Unlike the Tokugawa shoguns and feudal lords, the Qing rulers wanted low, not high, grain prices. What the two had in common, however, was a highly political view of food security, one that emphasized control of distribution more than development of agricultural production.

Although they were not necessarily more poorly fed, the Paris population, by contrast, saw food as a source of grievance against the authorities. There were, to be sure, striking similarities in the food security of the two cities. In Paris as in Beijing, policing of grain merchants and bakers was central to the control of the grain trade,

⁴³Hayashi 1994, 228–33. In commodities other than rice, the authorities followed an “Edo-first” policy and encouraged commerce from other areas. “Because it was in the daimyo's interest to have rice sell at as high a price as possible, most daimyo governments enacted laws that, in effect, gave special protection to the rice dealers. . . . [and] strictly prohibited the importation of rice from outside [their] home domain[s], except during times of famine” (Nakai and McClain 1991, 547).

even after the short-lived "liberalization" in 1763–1764. French authorities regarded bread as the most vital link in the security of Paris, just as Beijing authorities placed great importance on guarding grain supplies (Kaplan 1976, xvi, xxxvi; 1984, 23–29). Both French and Chinese rulers recognized that wholly taking over the grain trade by means of a "leviathan machine" or "master-plan" was both undesirable and beyond governmental capacities (Kaplan 1976, 1:8–9). But after the building of Versailles in the later seventeenth century, Paris was no longer the seat of government. It had only about 3,000 police compared to Beijing's 33,000. Paris had no city wall after the seventeenth century to control grain movements. Paris authorities did not store grain in large quantities, subsidize grain supply, or run soup kitchens (which they left to the church). Because of a history of "extensive commercialization before state power became concentrated and centralized," the French bourgeoisie had "some independent bases of power and some forms of alliance with landlords" (Ikegami and Tilly 1994, 454). In Beijing, on the other hand, grain merchants were small in scale, did not have a sense of class identity, and did not oppose the state or police in a collective way. And in Beijing, unlike Paris, the local population did not seize upon hunger or high grain prices as a source of political grievance, regarding neither merchant nor official as their foe. They did not think they were the victims of a terrible conspiracy. They were in fact the beneficiaries of a complex food security system in which long-distance grain tribute was only the most famous of many components.

Reign Periods of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911)

SZ Shunzhi (1644–1661)
 KX Kangxi (1662–1722)
 YZ Yongzheng (1723–1735)
 QL Qianlong (1736–1795)
 JQ Jiaqing (1796–1820)

DG Daoguang (1821–1850)
 XF Xianfeng (1851–1861)
 TZ Tongzhi (1862–1874)
 GX Guangxu (1875–1907)
 XT Xuantong (1908–1911)

Glossary

ao 廠
 bailiang 白糧
 bailiangmi 白糧米
 baimai 白麥
 baimi 白米
 Baqi 八旗
 Bei cang 北倉
 Bei ying 北營
 bing 兵
 bingmi 兵米
 Bujun tongling 步軍統領
 Bujun ying 步軍營
 cangchang shilang 倉場侍郎
 cangmi 倉米
 Cao Fuchang 曹福昌
 caomai 漕麥
 caoyun 漕運
 changpingcang 常平倉
 Chaoyang men (gate) 朝陽門
 Chengde 承德
 chengse mi 成色米
 chengshu 城屬
 Chongwen men (gate) 崇文門
 chuantong zibi 串通滋弊
 daomi 稻米
 Daxing 大興
 dazhen 大賑
 Desheng men (gate) 德勝門
 dou 斗
 duifang 碓房
 enmi 恩米
 fanchang 飯廠
 Fang Guancheng 方觀承
 Fang Shouchou 方受疇
 fengmi 俸米
 Fengtian 奉天
 gaoliang 高糧
 gengmi 粳米
 guan 官
 hanjun 漢軍
 he 合
 He Shen 和珅
 hu 斛
 Hu bu 戶部
 huahu 花戶
 huatou 花頭
 Huang cheng 皇城
 jiami 甲米
 jiangmi 匠米
 jianshang 奸商

jin 斤
 jingfei zhi fan 經費之繁
 kouliang 口糧
 kouwai 口外
 laili bu ming zhi ren 來歷不明之人
 laomi 老米
 Li Hongzhang 李鴻章
 Lin Qing 林清
 Lü ying 綠營
 mai 麥
 mi 米
 michang 米廠
 mihang 米行
 miju 米局
 mobing 饅餅
 Nei cang 內倉
 Nei cheng 內城
 Neiwu fu 內務府
 nuomi 糯米
 pingjia 平價
 pingtiao 平糶
 puhu 鋪戶
 qian 錢
 qianjia 錢價
 Qian men (gate) 前門
 Qihua men (gate) 齊化門
 qinwang 親王
 shao zhan yurun 稍沾餘潤
 shaoguo 燒鍋
 sheng 升
 shi 石
 Shuntian fu 順天府
 suimi 碎米
 sumi 粟米
 suomi 稜米
 Tianjin 天津
 Tongzhou 通州
 tunji 囤積
 tunji huicao 囤積回漕
 Wai cheng 外城
 Wanping 宛平
 wen 文
 Wu cheng 五城
 Wu ying 五營
 xian 縣
 xianmi 秈米
 ximi 細米
 Xizhi men (gate) 西直門
 Xuanwu men (gate) 宣武門
 yinshi dapuhu 殷實大鋪戶

Yongding he (river) 永定河
 Zhili 直隸
 Zhou Yuanli 周元理
 zhou 州
 zhouchang 粥廠
 Zijin cheng 紫禁城
 Zuo ying 左營

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 GZD Gongzhongdang 宮中檔 [Palace Memorial Archives], National Palace Museum, Taipei.
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 JWSL *Jinwu shili* 金吾事例 [Gendarmerie regulations and cases]. 1851.
 WSSD *Wanshou shengdian* 萬壽盛典 [The Imperial Birthday Celebration]. 1713, 1717.
 ZPZZ NZZJ Gongzhongdang zhupizouzhe, Neizheng zhenji. 宮中檔硃批奏摺內政賑濟 [Palace Memorial Archives, Internal affairs, Relief]. First Historical Archives, Beijing.

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