

Shuiluocheng Incident and Valuing Literary Talent Above Martial Arts in the Song Dynasty

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Abstract. In the third year of the Qingli period in Emperor Song Renzong, Zheng Jian, the envoy of Shaanxi fourth Road, made a formal proposal to build Shuiluocheng. However, this border city construction triggered a year-long debate between the city construction and the anti-city construction. In order to prevent the occurrence of “no military commanders can work for the court”, the court finally chose to reconcile the civil-military relationship instead of solving it according to the actual military situation. Putting this controversy in the political environment of valuing literary talent above martial arts in the Song Dynasty, we find that Emperor Song Renzong’s choice is actually an adjustment of the civil-military relationship that has reached the tension limit.

Keywords: The Song Dynasty; Shuiluocheng; Valuing literary talent above martial arts.

1. Introduction

Located in Zhuanglang County, Gansu Province, Shuiluocheng was one of the military fortresses in the Song Dynasty. During the Qing Li period of the Emperor Song Renzong, whether or not to build Shuiluocheng caused an uproar in the Song Dynasty, in which many complicated factors were involved. There have been many fruitful academic achievements in the research of Shuiluocheng, which mainly involve such issues as the style of literati in Qing Li period, political ideas, the war against the Kingdom of Xia, and the struggle between the parties in court and so on. However, the dilemma and adjustment of the civil-military relationship reflected in Shuiluocheng incident and its influence over a long period of time are still rarely involved. Focusing on the Shuiluocheng Incident, this paper aims to investigate the civil-military relationship reflected in the dispute and settlement of the incident, and explores the flexibility and adjustment in the implementation of the policy of “Valuing literary talent above martial arts” in the Song Dynasty.

2. The History of Shuiluocheng Incident

Shuiluocheng was located between Qinfeng Road and Jingyuan Road in the Song Dynasty, which is two hundred miles away from Lueyang Road. The road is flat, the land is fertile, and it has the advantages of water wheels, silver and copper. Besides, it is “one hundred and thirty miles away, and it is the place where the family lives.”¹ As early as June of the first year of Qing Li period (1041), Wang Yaochen, Shaanxi’s physical governor, began to pay attention to the strategic significance of Shuiluocheng. In the second year of Qing Li period (1042), Fan Zhongyan first proposed the construction of Shuiluocheng. However, due to the lack of opportunity to build the city, civil-military relations, political disputes and other complicated factors, Emperor Song Renzong still adopted Han Qi’s opposition from a realistic perspective. The official beginning of the Shuiluocheng Incident was the offering of land in October of the 3rd year of Qing Li period (1043). In 1041, Liu Hu, the jailer of Wating Village and the owner of Quan Jingbian Village, was recommended by Han Qi and Fan Zhongyan to be given the title of “Hemen Zhihou”, and then he broke through Muning Shengdi. Then, he “went to Zhangchuan, and harvested hundreds of hectares of good farmland for the benefit of stationing troops. The emissary persuaded the duke Duo sina to submit to the court.”² At this time, when Zheng Jian was patrolling the border, Liu Hu gathered Duo Sina and tributaries together. Unexpectedly, the situation changed, and a large number of soldiers gathered to set fire and kill at night. Liu Hu quickly defeated them with a thousand troops, and the chieftains of all the tributaries had to surrender and offer the land again. Soon after, Zheng Jian proposed to build Shuiluocheng.

Zheng Jian believed that the construction of Shuiluocheng has two advantages: one is the road connecting Qin Zhou, and the other is that it can absorb 30,000 soldiers and 50,000 archers, so as to achieve the goal of jointly defending western thieves. After this proposal was put forward, the city building was carried out quickly. However, in December of that year, Han Qi of the Shaanxi Xuanfu once again expressed his opposition. He believed that the construction of the walled city was not only unprofitable to the military, but would lead to the Song military being trapped without fighting when facing the enemy's attack. In addition, Han Qi also refuted Zheng Jian's suggestion about the convenience of the road, arguing that the newly built Huangshihe Road has replaced the traffic significance of Shuiluocheng. To prove that what he said was true, Han Qi also showed Emperor Song Renzong that if the court did not believe these actual situations, he could send cronies to Qinfeng Road and Jingyuan Road to see themselves, or ask Wen Yanbo, Yin Zhu, Di Qing and others to know the advantages and disadvantages of the construction of Shuiluocheng.

In fact, the situation at that time, as Han Qi said, was that Huangshihe Road had been connected to Qinfeng Road and Jingyuan Road, and there was no need to rely on Shuiluocheng as the road for Qin Zhou. Han Qi has served as Xuanfu for five years in Jingyuan Road and Qin Feng Road, and knew the specific situation of Shuiluocheng better than others. Therefore, the court finally adopted Han Qi's suggestion, and in the first month of the following year, the construction of Shuiluocheng finished. However, Zheng Jian refused to stop building, so he sent Dong Shilian to assist Liu Hu to continue building the city. Judging from the content of the dispute between Zheng Jian and Han Qi, at this time, the issue of Shuiluocheng was still a contradiction about the actual value of Shuiluocheng. The court, again followed Han Qi's suggestion, dismissed Zheng Jian's Shaanxi fourth road deployment, appeasement and solicitation, and then reinstated all-way-deployment, appeasement and solicitation. The fourth road commanders transferred the right to handle Shuiluocheng from Zheng Jian to Yin Zhu, the appeasement envoy of Jingyuan Road, which followed Han Qi.

Zheng Jian, however, did not give up, and emphasized the convenience of Shuiluocheng and ordered Liu Hu and Dong Shilian to rebuild Shuiluocheng. Liu Hu and Dong Shilian also resolutely refused to stop building Shuiluocheng. "All the tributaries were supporting Liu Hu and Dong Shilian, and requested to use their own financial resources to build Shuiluocheng. Liu Hu and Dong Shilian also collected money from households, and did not use the financial support from the officials." 3 As to how to deal with this matter, the court did not make a decision, so they sent Yu Zhouxun, the deputy of Salt and Iron, to check it out. Before the arrival of Yu Zhouxun, Yin Zhu "strongly ordered Zhong Zhang, the governor of Wating Village, to replace Liu Hu. And Liu Hu refused again, which made Yin Zhu furious and sent Di Qing to lead the troops to patrol the border, hunting Liu Hu and Dong Shilian, in order to convict them in the name of violation of orders. After Liu Hu and Dong Shilian were put in jail, Shuiluocheng was in chaos again, and tributaries were disturbed, robbing money everywhere and killing civilians indiscriminately. This chaos quickly attracted the attention of the court. At this point, a border city construction incident officially went to court for debate, and multiple factors were mixed in.

Han Qi, as the military commander-in-chief, naturally knew more about Shuiluocheng than other officials in the court. Although Fan Zhongyan has also been in the west for a long time, he mainly took the Fuyan and Huanqing Roads. And he was in charge of the New Deal of Qing Li period in the early fourth year of Qingli. His consideration was not only the rise and fall of a small border town, but more importantly, the smooth progress of the New Deal and the smooth operation of the dynasty. As Zeng Rui Long said in the book *Expanding the Frontier to the Northwest*: "If the dispute continues to the court, and those who are familiar with the situation may not have an overwhelming advantage. What is important is how to choose and win matches with the country's policy." 4

For this matter, Fan Zhongyan, Yu Jing, Ouyang Xiu and others all advocate mediation, and Liu Hu, who built the city without authorization, should not be blamed. Fan Zhongyan may have realized that the long-term suppression of martial arts led to the laziness of the frontier generals, so he focused on Liu Hu's status as a martial man, and thought that Liu Hu's feelings were excusable. If Liu Hu was pardoned, the emperor's protection of frontier generals could be demonstrated, so as to achieve

the purpose of rewarding the holy grace by the military generals' small death. Yu Jing also believed that if the court punished Liu Hu at this time, it would break its promise to the tributaries who surrendered to Liu Hu. Ouyang Xiu was aware of the tense relationship and contradiction between civil courtiers and military commanders at this time, and noticed that military officials had suspected that the court was biased towards civil courtiers. In addition, most of the ruling officials are civil courtiers, which made it easier for military commanders to be resentful. Besides, Liu Hu was active in border affairs. If Liu Hu, a military commander, was blamed, other military commanders would probably refuse to work for the court again. Ouyang Xiu intended to alert the emperor that if Liu Hu was not handled properly, the conflict between civil and military affairs would be further intensified, and even the military commanders would be in the dilemma of being detached from the court.

Shortly after Fan, Ou and others' requests, Han Qi once again set out from reality and put forward thirteen objections to building Shuiluocheng, including the factors such as "no harm to Yuanhao and no benefit to the border" and Liu Hu and others' unfamiliarity with the geographical location. And he analyzed the financial factors that if the court wanted to open up the border, it must wait until the northwest was peaceful and its financial resources were strong. And it was useless to build it at this time.

It is worth noting that Han Qi, who has served on Qin Feng Road and Jing Yuan Road for a long time, has made clear the geographical situation and strategic gains and losses of Shuiluocheng in thirteen suggestions to Emperor Song Renzong. On the other hand, Fan Zhongyan, Yu Jing and Ouyang Xiu were more concerned about the idealized way of comforting tributaries and how to deal with Liu Hu to avoid intensifying the personnel level of civil-military relations. Han Qi's opinion paid more attention to the actual objective environment and technical details, and his viewpoint had a rare strategic vision. However, the court sent Han Qi's letter to Yu Zhouxun, Cheng Jian, etc., and soon after, Chen Weixin, an inner temple worshiper, went to Jingyuan Road to urge the construction of Shuiluocheng. Under the pressure of losing ground in the wars with the Kingdom of Xia and deepening civil-military estrangement, the ruling clique finally chose to support the city-construction faction represented by Liu Hu, a military commander.

3. The Predicament of Valuing Literary Talent above Martial Arts

Ouyang Xiu and others' careful handling of Liu Hu, a military commander in Shuiluocheng Incident, also showed that the civil-military relationship has reached a relatively tense level during the Qingli period. Despite Han Qi's repeated explanation of various practical hazards caused by the construction of Shuiluocheng, the court finally listened to the opinions of Fan Zhongyan and Ouyang Xiu. In June of the fourth year of Qing Li period, Shuiluocheng was completed. Liu Hu returned to Shuiluocheng again after being punished by demotion.

In fact, before the Shuiluocheng Incident, the court also had disputes about the construction of other border forts. When civil and military issues were not involved, the court mostly chose from the actual situation such as financial resources and whether it was beneficial to the country. For example, in the third year of Qing Li (1043), Shi Changyan suggested to Emperor Song Renzong that the construction of the twelve villages of Lin and Fu should be stopped. Compared with Shuiluocheng, which was not directly connected with the Kingdom of Xia and not related to the tributaries, and the actual financial situation of excessive military expenditure, it seemed a wiser choice to abandon the construction of Shuiluocheng. However, it was precise because Ouyang Xiu and others, who advocated city building, took the civil-military imbalance caused by valuing literary talent above martial arts into the decision-making factors that Song Renzong finally chose to continue building the city to ease the tense civil-military situation.

It is generally believed that the idea of valuing literary talent above martial arts originated in the Emperor Song Taizu period. At the beginning of the Song Dynasty, the emperors and ministers often discussed and reflected on the chaos caused by the situation of the Five Dynasties, in which the emperor was weak and the ministers were strong, and the civil courtiers were less important than the

military commanders. They attached great importance to the internal order construction, taking the right to receive soldiers as the primary means, supplemented by the way of dividing the powers of the central and local governments, and carried out measures to comprehensively strengthen the autocratic imperial power. 5 After Emperor Song Taizong acceded to the throne, he hoped to promote culture and education and suppress martial affairs. The number of civil persons in the imperial examination of the second year of Taiping Xingguo was far more than before. While giving preferential treatment to the civil persons, the court also further strengthened the guard against military commanders. Soldiers were regarded as bad weapons and would never be used unless they had to. In November (1004) of the first year of Jing De, Gao Qiong, a veteran, clashed with Feng Zheng, a civil courtier who was the governor of the Privy Council at that time, mocking the civil courtiers why they did not use poetry to repel the enemy. The contradiction between Gao Qiong and Feng Zheng was a reflection of the tense relationship between civil courtiers and military commanders at this time. With the signing of the alliance of Chanyuan, the court turned to internal governance, and restrained military commanders in the borders.

Under the inertia of the ruling group's long-term "respecting the holy sermon", the governance concept of "ruling by literary virtue" established by the Emperor Song Taizong and Emperor Song Zhenzong has been deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. Therefore, even though they knew that foreign aggression is on the side, Emperor Song Renzong and ministers still regarded valuing literary talent above martial arts and emphasized more on internal affairs than external affairs as a consistent basic national policy. The continuation of this policy further worsened the civil-military relationship in the Song Dynasty. During the Tian Sheng period, prime minister Wang Zeng openly ridiculed Zhang Qi, a military commander, as "a barefoot athlete". In the second year of Bao Yuan, just as the soldiers were fighting, every time the generals came back from the front line and wanted to see the emperor, the courtiers were not allowed to see him. The reason was that the military commanders were rough and contemptible, and the emperor, as the son of heaven, could not be profaned by the ordinary ministers. Fu Bi expressed his disbelief and opposition to this phenomenon, and thought that since the court had appointed military commanders, how could they be so despised? At the same time, he pointed out that in the face of the situation of "the frontier enemies were in the ascendant and Shaanxi was in great disturbance", it would be more beneficial for the frontier protection if the emperor could listen to the advice of the military officials in the court. However, Fu Bi's suggestion did not attract attention. On the eve of Shuiluocheng Incident, the tradition of valuing literary talent above martial arts continued from generation to generation has caused the contradiction between civil courtiers and military commanders to deepen further. Therefore, Ouyang Xiu had to alert Emperor Song Renzong at that time when dealing with Shuiluocheng Incident. At this time, the civil-military relationship had reached an extremely tense situation, and mutual contempt and even suspicion between civil and military had become the norm.

The internal and external difficulties caused by the implementation of the policy of valuing literary talent above martial arts and restraining the martial arts are obvious. Internally, due to long-term repression, military commanders became mediocre and incompetent, and their combat effectiveness was exhausted. From the period of Emperor Song Taizong to the reign of Emperor Song Zhenzong in the Xian Ping period, "The imperial troops were extremely stern, and there was always the worry of military attacks in the suburbs. There was almost no peace between Qi and Zhao." 6 In the later period, military commanders inside and outside were lazy and even exploited ordinary people, which affected social stability. Corresponding to this, it is the final result that the soldiers in the western border areas would lose every battle in foreign wars. Not long before the dispute over Shuiluocheng happened, the Song Dynasty had just experienced a crushing defeat between Haoshuichuan and Dingchuan Village, and the losses were extremely heavy. Su Shi once said, "Emperor Song Renzong once nurtured the world, but he did not pay attention to the soldiers. The soldiers were lazy, the weapons were dull. Yuan Hao took advantage of it and attacked Yan'an, Jingyuan and Linfu in the west and tens of thousands of people lost their lives." 7 During the Song-Xia War, with the deteriorating battlefield situation in the Song Dynasty, the western defense line faced the risk of

collapse at any time, even threatening the stability and long-term rule of the country. Faced with this situation, the ruling group had to reflect on the long-standing policy of valuing literary talent above martial arts.

When the relationship between civil and military affairs reached the limit of tension, the Song Dynasty entered a dilemma that needed to be reconciled.

4. The Civil-military Entanglement and Adjustment Under the Predicament

As one of the core features of the political culture in the Song Dynasty, valuing literary talent above martial arts permeated various institutional designs in the Song Dynasty, and brought many negative influences. However, in the process of policy implementation, there was also room and flexibility for adjustment, rather than simply tough implementation. As Zhang Bangwei said: “The Song Dynasty values literary talent above martial arts, and the basis was quite sufficient. The reason why there are still objections is that it is related to simplified explanation and absolute understanding.” [8].

As far as the Shuiluocheng Incident in the Emperor Song Renzong period is concerned, if we want to understand the support of the literati group represented by Fan Zhongyan and Ouyang Xiu for the military commander Liu Hu and Song Renzong’s choice of deviating from the actual situation to appease the military commanders, we must see the special times behind the unusual civil-military relationship.

First, the wars in the Song Dynasty were still frequent, and the conditions for completely suppressing the armed forces were not yet available.

In the third year of Qing Li period (1043) of Emperor Song Renzong, that is, the year of Shuiluocheng Incident, after Lv Yijian’s strike, many auxiliary ministers were able to become officials. This was a happy thing, but Shen Miao, the official of the imperial court, objected to being an official because he was worried about the Song Dynasty’s foreign wars. In February, the fourth year of the Qing Li period (1044), almost at the same time as the dispute over Shuiluocheng, a new conflict broke out in southwest China, and Xifan, a barbarian area in Yizhou, Guangxi, rebelled. In the fourth year of the Huang You period (1052), the rebellion of Nong Zhigao, the barbarian leader in Guangyuan happened. For the Song Dynasty court, if they want to win on the battlefield, they still cannot do without excellent military officers and generals. This reality also forces the implementation of valuing literary talent above martial arts to take into account the situation of martial arts, and the policy must be adjusted when it reaches the tension limit.

Second, the civil courtiers do not blindly agree with the policy of valuing literary talent above martial arts.

In the third year of the Tian Sheng period (1025), Fan Zhongyan said to Emperor Song Renzong, about the significance of military commanders. 9 Fan Zhongyan believed that the state should attach importance to the selection and training of military commanders and make preparations for the battle. Cai Xiang thought that “today’s big illness is situated in the army” and “when making the civil courtiers face the wars, they were not able to handle them sometimes”. He advocated that civil courtiers and military officials should carry out their respective duties, with a clear division of labor: “the position of words and orders should be given to the civil courtiers” and “the position of soldiers and generals should be given to military commanders”. 10 Besides, Fu Bi, Wang Yucheng, Ouyang Xiu, Mei Yaochen and other civil courtiers have similar expressions. Liu Chang once recorded that Mei Yaochen had made notes for *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu before the war against the Kingdom of Xia, and wanted to remind the court that there was always sorrow when forgetting the war. 11 We can see that, by the time of Emperor Song Renzong, a group of officials and bureaucrats had realized the harms caused by suppressing military commanders, and at the same time advocated selecting outstanding generals, defining the division of civil and military work, and guarding against the disadvantages of forgetting to fight.

Third, the literati group in the Song Dynasty is eager to restore the territories of the Han and Tang Dynasties.

Since the early Song Dynasty, the restoration of the territories of the Han and Tang Dynasties has become a common reason to support the frontier expansion war. Although in the first year of the Jing De period of Emperor Song Zhenzong (1004), after the Song and Liao Dynasties signed the alliance of Chanyuan, the rulers of the Song Dynasty gave up the idea of the Northern Expedition and turned to the policy orientation of “stopping the wars and being friendly with enemies”.

However, for the civil courtiers of the current dynasty, it was always their desire to reuse the good generals and recover the territory of Youyan, so as to revenge. For example, when Zhang Fangping sent his friend Gu Bian to the north in 1030, he wrote: “To recover the land in the north of the mountain, to revenge, to tie the neck of Huhanye, to tie up to the queue, to make them yearly congratulation, as in the time of Emperor Han Xuan, is it easy or difficult?” The land north of the mountains, a century-old shame in the central plains, is the neck of calling out the evil spirits of Korea, and it is easy to congratulate him when he is young. For example, when Emperor Xuandi of the Han Dynasty observed his behavior, was it easy or difficult?”¹² In addition, he also said to Renzong: “Today Qiang Rong is a county of Han and Tang Dynasties”, hoping to enable the rulers to explore the land and restore the old territories. In addition to Zhang Fangping, other civil courtiers in the reign of Emperor Song Renzong had similar statements, and the voices of literati to restore the old territories of the Han and Tang Dynasties and restrain the Kingdom of Xia made their opinions on the wars against the Kingdom of Xia gradually become the mainstream of the court.

We can see that, on the one hand, the long-term suppression of military commanders has led to the tension between civil-military relationships and even mutual suspicion. Literati regard military commanders as rough warriors who do not understand the general state, and military commanders also regard literati as useless persons. On the other hand, in the middle of the Song Dynasty, it was faced with the increasingly heavy border wars and the growing idea of restoring the old territories of Han and Tang Dynasties. The interweaving of the two factors has caused the civil-military relationship to fall into a contradictory dilemma. The conflict brought about by this dilemma is bound to make the ruling clique take certain measures to repair and adjust while not giving up the basic national policy of valuing literary talent above martial arts, so as to prevent more adverse consequences. The Shuiluocheng Incident is one of the typical examples of policy adjustment.

5. Conclusion

Since the establishment of the Song Dynasty, in order to consolidate and strengthen the rule, Emperor Song Taizu's rulers and officials rectified the phenomenon of arrogant soldiers and strong generals, weak literati and strong military forces since the end of the Tang Dynasty and Five Dynasties, improved the status of social literati and cultivated the Confucian worship atmosphere. In the period of Emperor Song Taizong and Emperor Song Zhenzong, due to successive setbacks in foreign wars, and the pursuit of “rule by literati” and the stability of internal rule as the focus of the administration, the ruling clique began to take the passive idea of emphasizing the inside and weakening the outside as a long-term basic national policy.

From the overall perspective of the times, it is the usual research angle to observe the operation and implementation results of policies. But in fact, neither the “ancestor's law” that has been followed for a long time nor a temporary example or measure is static and unchangeable. Many dynamic and flexible variables, such as social groups and ideological activities involved in the implementation of the policy, are unexpected things for policymakers at the beginning of their formulation. Therefore, the ruling class can adjust in time according to the actual situation and not stick to the old routine, which has also become the guarantee for the long-term operation of the dynasty.

The present paper is not to deny the fact that the Song Dynasty values literary talent above martial arts, but to show that any kind of policy will always have deviations and drawbacks in the process of implementation and implementation, and whether it can be self-adjusted and improved is particularly

important. Unfortunately, the solution of the Shuiluocheng Incident was only a small splash in the long-term environment of valuing literary talent above martial arts in the Song Dynasty. Later, even though there was the expansion of the frontier by Emperor Song Shenzong and the five-way attack on the Kingdom of Xia, the Song Dynasty finally returned to the old way of valuing literary talent above martial arts, which also made the fashion of emphasizing the civil courtiers more and more intense, and finally affected the morale boost and the appointment of talents. And the shining literary spirit was reduced to ashes along with the Song Dynasty in the second year of Jing Kang by the Jurchen.

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