

= Deliberative Council of Princes and Ministers =

The Deliberative Council of Princes and Ministers (traditional Chinese : ??????? ; simplified Chinese : ??????? ; pinyin : yìzhèng wáng dàchén huìyì) , also known as the Council of Princes and High Officials and Assembly of Princes and High Officials , or simply as the Deliberative Council (traditional Chinese : ??? ; simplified Chinese : ??? ; pinyin : yìzhèng chù) , was an advisory body for the emperors of the early Qing dynasty (1644 ? 1912) . Derived from informal deliberative groups created by Nurhaci (1559 ? 1626) in the 1610s and early 1620s , the Council was formally established by his son and successor Hong Taiji (1592 ? 1643) in 1626 and expanded in 1637 . Staffed mainly by Manchu dignitaries , this aristocratic institution served as the chief source of advice on military matters for Hong Taiji and the Shunzhi (r . 1643 ? 1661) and Kangxi (r . 1661 ? 1722) emperors . It was particularly powerful during the regencies of Dorgon (1643 ? 1650) and Oboi (1661 ? 1669) , who used it to enhance their personal influence .

After serving as the most influential policymaking body of the dynasty for more than a century , the Deliberative Council was displaced and then made obsolete by the more ethnically mixed Grand Council , which the Yongzheng Emperor (r . 1722 ? 1735) created in the late 1720s to circumvent the influence of the deliberative princes and ministers . The Deliberative Council was formally abolished in 1792 .

= = Origins and formal establishment = =

Historian Robert Oxnam has called the origin of the Council " a complicated and often confusing process . " The Council originated in informal institutions created by Nurhaci (1559 ? 1626) to promote collegial rule among his sons . In 1601 , Nurhaci had organized Manchu society into four " Banners " that were doubled in number in 1615 to become the Eight Banners . In 1622 , he gave eight of his sons (who were called " princes , " or beile) control over one banner each and ordered them to meet to deliberate major policies , especially military matters . Nurhaci 's eight sons were known collectively as the " princes who deliberate on government " (yizheng wang) .

Another precursor to the Council was a group of " five high officials " and " ten judges " (jarguci) , all Manchu , that Nurhaci put in charge of administrative and judicial tasks in 1615 or 1616 . Robert Oxnam claims that this group was then referred to as " high officials who deliberate on government " (yizheng dachen) and assisted the princes in discussing policy . Franz Michael , however , claims that they were mere " technical advisors " , a point of view supported by Silas Wu . In 1623 , " eight high officials " were also made deliberative officials , but their functions were chiefly censorial and their primary role was to let Nurhaci know of conspiracies among the princes .

Nurhaci was succeeded by his son Hong Taiji (r . 1626 ? 1643) , who , instead of following his father 's wish for collegial rule , became a strong ruler who laid the institutional foundation of the Qing dynasty . In 1627 he placed the Eight Banners under the command of eight " high officials " (Ma . : gusai ejen ; Ch . : dachen) , who were also told to assist the princes in policy deliberations . Silas Wu identifies this reform as the bona fide origin of the Deliberative Council , which then became Hong Taiji 's main policymaking structure and was consulted on foreign and military matters . In 1637 , one year after he had declared himself emperor of the Qing dynasty , Hong Taiji officially excluded imperial princes from the Council . Instead , the Council was manned by eight lieutenant @-@ generals (later called dutong ?? in Chinese) with two deputies (fu dutong ???) each , who were put in charge of managing the Eight Manchu Banners . By limiting Council membership to Manchu military leaders from outside the imperial clan , Hong Taiji enhanced his personal power at the expense of the other princes . Nonetheless the Council remained a bastion of " collective aristocratic rule " within the Qing government .

= = Central role in the early Qing = =

When Hong Taiji died in 1643 , he was replaced by the young Shunzhi Emperor and two co @-@ regents : Dorgon and Jirgalang . In 1644 , under their leadership , the Qing dynasty defeated the

weakened Ming dynasty and moved its capital to Beijing . The Deliberative Council of Ministers was Dorgon 's main policymaking body during his regency . Soon after moving to Beijing , he gave the Council control over both military and civil affairs , and expanded its membership to all lieutenant @-@ generals and deputy lieutenant @-@ generals in the Manchu and Mongol Banners , as well as to all Mongols and Manchus who held posts of Grand Secretary or Board president . Far from limiting Dorgon 's power , the Council served as his tool to denounce and arraign other princes who challenged his authority . In May 1644 , for instance , he had Hong Taiji 's son Hooqe accused of seditious behavior and made Hooqe 's enemies testify against him in front of the Council . He used the same method to purge Hooqe for good in 1648 .

After Dorgon 's death on the last day of 1650 , the Shunzhi Emperor started his personal rule : he ordered the members of the Council to memorialize to him directly on important matters of state . After Dorgon 's supporters had been purged from the court (by March 1651) , his former co @-@ regent Jirgalang made a number of special appointments to the Council to foster loyalty among the Manchu elite . Between 1651 and 1653 , he added thirty new members who lacked official positions in the Banners or the metropolitan bureaucracy . Two of the new appointees were Chinese Bannermen Fan Wencheng ??? (1597 ? 1666) and Ning Wanwo ??? (d . 1665) , two of only three Chinese who were ever appointed to the Council . All four of the future regents for the Kangxi Emperor (Oboi , Suksaha , Ebilun , and Soni) were also appointed to the Council at that time . In 1656 , the emperor issued an edict abolishing the automatic appointment to the Council of Manchu and Mongol Grand Secretaries , yet by the end of his reign in 1661 , the Council still counted more than fifty members . During the Shunzhi reign , the Council was often convened to investigate important officials who had been accused of corruption or malfeasance .

The Shunzhi Emperor (r . 1643 ? 1661) was succeeded by four regents led by Oboi , who took care of state affairs during the minority of the Kangxi Emperor (r . 1661 ? 1722) . Under the Oboi regency (1661 ? 1669) , the Deliberative Council became " the most prominent Manchu institution . " While keeping their own seats on the Council , the regents limited membership to lieutenant @-@ generals of the Manchu and Mongol Banners and to Manchu and Mongol presidents of the Six Ministries . They also decided to grant membership to the president of the Court of Colonial Affairs , whose independence the Shunzhi Emperor had compromised by subjugating it to the Board of Rites . By 1662 , the Deliberative Council had been reduced to 31 members , chiefly senior Manchu leaders who had significant experience in both military affairs and civil government .

The Kangxi Emperor reverted many of the bureaucratic reforms of the Oboi faction after 1669 , but continued to rely on the Deliberative Council as a body of Manchu counselors whom he consulted on a wide variety of military and civil matters , especially those that were too sensitive or complex to handle through the regular bureaucracy . The emperor allowed the president of the Censorate to sit on the Council , then in 1683 , after the rebellion of the Three Feudatories had been suppressed and peace reestablished , he decided that the lieutenant @-@ generals of the Banners would no longer be automatic members . After that , the Deliberative Council became more oriented toward civil administration . Nonetheless during the First Oirat ? Manchu War , fought from 1687 to 1697 between the Qing Empire and the Dzungar Khanate , the Kangxi Emperor often consulted the Council on how to deal with Galdan , the khan of the Dzungars , and with the Dzungars ' enemies the Khalkha Mongols . During his reign , the Council met on imperial request and transmitted the result of its deliberations to the emperor , who usually followed the Council 's advice .

= = Replacement by the Grand Council = =

The Yongzheng Emperor succeeded the Kangxi Emperor after a crisis that pitted many of the Kangxi Emperor 's sons against one another . Many Manchu nobles who had sided with the Yongzheng Emperor 's rivals during the succession struggle were still members of the Deliberative Council . To avoid alienating these grandees , the Yongzheng Emperor still made new appointments to the Council and consulted it on various military matters , but he also worked to undermine its power . To bypass the Council , he created smaller parallel bodies which he found more reliable and less entrenched . Slowly , he transferred deliberative powers to these more trusted ministers .

Around 1730 , these informal institutions crystallized into the Grand Council . Unlike the Deliberative Council , whose membership was almost exclusively Manchu , the Grand Council counted many Chinese among its ranks . This more ethnically mixed privy council served as the empire 's main policymaking body for the rest of the Qing dynasty .

After the stabilization of the Grand Council in the 1730s , the influence of the Deliberative Council quickly declined . During the Qianlong period (1736 ? 1796) , the titles of " deliberative minister " and " deliberative prince " became mainly honorific . Manchu Grand Secretaries held such titles until 1792 , when the Council was formally abolished by the Qianlong Emperor . The title was revived in the second half of the nineteenth century for Prince Gong and others when Prince Gong was head of the Grand Council .