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Presidential Address: Reenvisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History

EVELYN S. RAWSKI

THIRTY YEARS AGO, Association for Asian Studies President Ho Ping-ti summarized the state of Qing studies in his address, "The Significance of the Ch'ing Period in Chinese History" (Ho 1967). Since that time, there have been major shifts in scholarly perceptions of the nature and significance of Qing rule that bear directly on contemporary issues of nationalism and ethnicity. I will survey the recent secondary literature, compare current formulations of Qing history with those enunciated by Professor Ho, and appraise their implications for our understanding of China.

Although the Qing state conducted its official business in both Chinese and Manchu, many scholars ignored the documents written in Manchu, arguing that they merely duplicated materials found in the Chinese-language sources. This assumption was challenged by Beatrice Bartlett, whose investigation of the Grand Council's archival inventories led her to conclude that "many unique Manchu documents, never translated into Chinese, were produced in the middle and even the late Ch'ing" (Bartlett 1985, 26).

The new scholarship has demonstrated that Manchu-language documents were a vital part of an early Qing communications network that frequently bypassed Han Chinese officials. Until the Jiaqing reign (1796–1820), the court required banner officials, generals commanding armies in the north and west, and Manchu officials receiving edicts written in Manchu to write in Manchu to the throne. These Manchu-language palace memorials, court letters, and other central government documents are important primary sources that have not yet been fully exploited (Qu 1989; Wu Yuanfeng 1991; Crossley and Rawski 1993).

The recent scholarship has been stimulated by improved access to the archival materials in the Manchu language for the entire Qing dynasty, held in the Number One Historical Archives, Beijing, and the National Palace Museum, outside Taipei (Chen, Chieh-hsien 1988). The National Palace Museum's publication in 1977 of the Manchu-language palace memorials for the Kangxi reign (1661–1722) marked a significant advance in scholarly access (KCZZ). Although their counterparts for other

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reigns remain unpublished,¹ these materials in the Beijing and Taipei archives have been available to scholars since the 1980s. New analyses of the circumstances under which the materials were created have provided historians with the necessary context in which to place the documents (Guan 1988; Zhao Zhiqiang 1992; Qiao 1994). Catalogues of Manchu-language holdings around the world² include materials from the scattered Manchu-language archives of various banners. New Manchu-Chinese dictionaries (MHDC 1993), and recent Chinese translations of selected texts (see Crossley and Rawski 1993) have also eased the researcher's task.

Chinese-language sources for studying Qing history have also become more accessible in recent decades. The dynasty's Collected Regulations (DQHD) and the Veritable Records (DQSL) have been reprinted in both Taiwan and the PRC, as have many of the "diaries of rest and repose" which complement the Veritable Records (QDQZ; KXQZ; YZQZ). Chinese-language palace memorials compiled by the First Historical Archives in Beijing (KCHZ; YZHCC; QLHZZ) incorporate the archival materials held in Taiwan (GDZZ) and open new windows into the process of decision making at the highest levels. Archival materials concerning the palace workshops (*Yuanmingyuan* 1991) and the medical treatment accorded Empress Dowager Cixi and the Guangxu emperor (Chen Keji 1986) have been compiled and reproduced. Additional supports for Qing studies are the reprints of important printed sources concerning banner history (BQTZ; BQMST), contemporary memoirs such as Zhaojian's *Xiaoting zalu*, and palace history (GCGS; Zhang Naiyan 1990).

A number of organizations have also encouraged Manchu studies. There is a Manchu Association of Taipei, founded in 1981 (Crossley 1990a, 216), which brings together individuals of Manchu descent. In the PRC the Society for Manchu Studies (Manzuxue yanjiu) publishes a bimonthly journal (*Manzu yanjiu*). Japanese scholars in the Seminar on Manchu History, Toyo Bunko, have compiled important banner texts (Kanda et al. 1972, 1983), and the Manchu Historical Society (Manshûshi kenkyûkai) of Japan publishes a newsletter. Several European periodicals, notably *Zentralasiatische Studien* and *Central Asiatic Journal*, regularly feature articles on Manchu literature, religion, and history. American scholarship finds many outlets, including the journal *Late Imperial China*, first issued as a bulletin in 1967 by the Society for Ch'ing Studies under the title *Ch'ing-shih wen-t'i*. Articles on the Qing appear frequently in the periodical *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan*, published by the National Palace Museum, Beijing; *Lishi dang'an*, the historical archives journal; and *Forbidden City* (Zijincheng), a journal published from the 1980s through the early 1990s. Several presses, notably the Forbidden City Press (Zijincheng chubanshe), the Liaoning People's Press, and the Jilin wenshi chubanshe, have large numbers of Qing titles in their book lists.

The new interpretations of the Qing period rest on a large body of secondary literature published in the last two decades. New works have advanced our knowledge of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when Nurgaci (1559–1626) and Hongtaiji (1592–1643) unified the tribes of northeast Asia by force and laid down the foundations of Qing power (Zhou Yuanlian 1984, 1986; Wakeman 1985; Wang Zhonghan 1988; Zhang and Guo 1988). Accounts of the creation of the banner nobility, based on archival sources, have filled an important gap in the literature (Yang

¹See also QLSY, the "Grand Council Record Books" for the Qianlong reign (1736–95), published recently by the Number One Historical Archives and briefly described by Bartlett 1991, 213.

²For a listing of these catalogues, see Crossley and Rawski 1993, n. 4.

and Zhou 1986). Studies of the pre-1644 capitals (Shenyang 1987; Yan 1989, 365–93) supply concrete examples of the ways in which these political centers blended Sinic and northeast Asian political elements, a theme repeated in analyses of the Qing capitals of Peking and Rehe (Zhou Suqin 1995; Steinhardt 1990; Forêt 1992).

We now know a great deal about the individual rulers of the Qing dynasty, thanks to book-length biographies of every emperor and of notables like Dorgon, Empress Dowager Cixi, and Prince Gong (QDLZ). Studies of the Qing mausolea (Yu 1985; Chen Baorong 1987) and the demographic history of the Qing imperial lineage (Lee and Guo 1994) have produced new information about the life expectancy and living conditions of Qing rulers. Other investigations of palace ladies, imperial princes, and the imperial guards provide an unprecedented array of information concerning the Qing court (QDGT), including the lives of its eunuchs (Xu and Li 1986; Dan 1989; Yang Zhengguang 1990). Further perspectives on life in the Qing capital come from reminiscences by contemporary descendants of Mongol and Manchu princedoms (Jin 1988, 1989a; Jin and Zhou 1988), while studies of the distribution of banner families in Peking (Jin 1989b) and analyses of the Manchuization of Peking dialect (Chang Yingsheng 1993) and Peking place names (Zhang Qingchang 1990) remind us of its non-Han history.

Nor has scholarly output been confined to the view from the capital. Academic institutes in the former peripheries of the Qing empire—the northeast provinces, Inner Mongolia, Qinghai, Xinjiang, and Tibet—have since the 1980s also published many historical articles, based on Chinese, Tibetan, Mongolian, Uighur, and Manchu-language materials, which focus on Qing relations with these localities. These studies have introduced new perspectives and interpretations into scholarly discourse (Ahmad 1970; Millward 1993; Wang Xiangyun 1995). We know a great deal more about the Qing court's interaction with non-Han minorities than ever before.

Publications of oral legends collected by folklorists have significantly expanded our understanding of Manchu culture and the cultures of other Tungus and Mongol peoples (Fu 1990; Fu and Meng 1991; Stuart and Li 1994). Daur stories about intrigues in Mugden (Mukden) and Sibo Mongol recitals of the exploits of the great Kangxi emperor testify to the Manchu impact on the northeastern peoples (Stuart, Li, and Shelear 1994; Pang 1994). Variations of the creation myth still circulating in oral form in the northeast have been compared to the Qing written version that became part of Manchu identity (Tong 1992; Chen Huixue 1991; Crossley 1985). Scholars studying the Manchu-language shamanic code, *besei toktobuha Manjusai wecere metere kooli bithe*, printed in 1778 (Di Cosmo forthcoming; Tao 1992; Wang Honggang 1988) have looked at the impact of this compilation on popular practice in order to understand the effect of Qing policies on northeast shamanism.

Qing scholars today agree with Ho that the Qing was “without doubt” “the most successful dynasty of conquest in Chinese history” (Ho 1967, 191). The Qing empire laid the territorial foundations of the modern Chinese nation-state. What is at issue is not the magnitude of the Qing achievement, but Ho's statement that “the key to its [Qing] success was the adoption by early Manchu rulers of a policy of systematic sinicization” (Ho 1967, 191). The new scholarship suggests just the opposite: the key to Qing success, at least in terms of empire-building, lay in its ability to use its cultural links with the non-Han peoples of Inner Asia and to differentiate the administration of the non-Han regions from the administration of the former Ming provinces.

Interpretations of Qing history lie at the foundations of contemporary Chinese nationalism. When Ho Ping-ti wrote about the Qing period as a milestone along the

developmental path of China as a nation-state, he expressed an academic consensus which is being reevaluated in response to scholarly trends and new research. Many scholars today would contest the conflation of "Qing" and "China" in twentieth-century discourse. Research on Qing history also raises important questions concerning the role of non-Han peoples in the creation of what we call Chinese culture and points to a future research agenda to which I will later return.

Separate and Unequal: The Conquest Elite

The sinicization thesis expressed by Ho echoed the theme of Franz Michael's pioneering study of the formation of the Qing state (Michael [1942] 1979). The new research presents a Manchu rather than Han-centered perspective with analyses of the formation of pre-1644 policies (Zhang and Guo 1988; Li 1995; Crossley 1990a, 223–28): the state-sponsored invention of the Manchu written language (Chase 1979), the identification of the unified northeast tribes as Manchu (Stary 1990), and the creation of an origin myth (Crossley 1987; Chen Huixue 1991; Li 1995; Qiao 1994).

In contrast to the view that the Han Chinese literati dominated Qing governance, recent work identifies a separate conquest elite, composed of banner nobles and imperial kinsmen, that was superimposed upon the Han Chinese bureaucracy. Analyses of the banner troops garrisoned at strategic sites throughout the empire (Elliott 1993; Im 1981; Dray-Novey 1981) have deepened our understanding of the military organization that existed alongside the civilian bureaucracy. Banner nobles, whether of Manchu, Mongol, or Han descent, were part of a privileged hereditary elite whose titles and favored access to office stemmed from the achievements of their ancestors during the conquest period (Yang and Zhou 1986). Eunuchs, who had dominated palace administration during the preceding dynasty, were supervised during the Qing by bondservants registered in the upper three banners, who staffed the Imperial Household Department (Spence 1966; Torbert 1977). Qing rulers used members of the conquest elite to check the civil service and to staff administrative posts in the peripheral regions of the empire.

Banner nobles and banner officials sat on the Deliberative Council (Du 1986), the major policy-making body during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Beatrice Bartlett's study of the origins of the Grand Council points to the "Manchu preponderance in government" (Bartlett 1991, 25–26) in the Shunzhi (r. 1644–61) and Kangxi (r. 1662–1722) reigns. The Yongzheng emperor (r. 1723–35) created new inner court organs and staffed them with his own appointees. By employing inner-court agencies to manage the military campaigns against the Mongols, Qing emperors evaded the bureaucratic constraints on imperial power and confined their deliberations to a very small group of personal favorites. Although the "outer court" bureaucrats were eventually able to expand (and thus dilute) the power of the inner-court agencies and to institutionalize the Grand Council, they never succeeded in controlling appointments to the Council from outside the regular bureaucracy. The Qianlong emperor frequently appointed banner nobles who were linked to him through marriage to the Grand Council: the number of Manchus on the Grand Council exceeded Chinese in 73 percent of the sixty years of his reign (Bartlett 1991, 178).

The conquest elite continued to participate in the highest councils of state into the nineteenth century. A study of the decision-making process during the period 1835–50 argues that the Opium War was the product of a stalemate between a reform-

minded Manchu-Mongol faction and an adventurist group of Han Chinese officials in south China, who blamed the Manchu generals for the British victory and wished to mobilize the citizenry to fight the British (Polachek 1992). Decrying the “class chauvinism” of the literati faction which won the debate, Polachek suggests that the policy of the “Manchu clique” might have been a less destructive alternative.

Early Qing rulers developed specialized channels for dealing with Mongol allies and Tibetan prelates. The Office of Sutra Translation, housed in the northwest corner of the Forbidden City, was the first to specialize in Tibetan Buddhist affairs (Wang Jiapeng 1991). Tibetan Buddhism was an important vehicle for extension of Qing control over the Mongols (Zhang Xixin 1988). High prelates like the Qianlong emperor’s spiritual tutor, Rol pa’i rdo rje (1717–86), the lCang skya Khutukhtu, negotiated on behalf of the throne over the successor to the seventh Dalai Lama (1757), and persuaded the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu, spiritual leader of the Khalkha Mongols, to remain neutral during the 1756 Chingunjav revolt (Wang Xiangyun 1995).

The conquest elite also dominated Qing administration of the northeast, Mongolia, Tibet, and Turkestan, the “New Territory” (Xinjiang). For most of the dynasty, these territories were not incorporated into the framework of provincial administration that was under the Six Boards: Xinjiang became a province only in 1884, and the northeastern provinces of Fengtian, Jilin, and Heilongjiang were created in 1907. Neither Mongolia, Qinghai, nor Tibet was ever converted into provinces during the Qing. Qing documents referred to these newly acquired peripheral regions as the “outer” (*wai*) domains, which were thus classified apart from the “inner” (*nei*) domains made up of the former Ming territory. While the civil service bureaucracy, dominated by Han Chinese, dealt with provincial administration within China Proper (the territory within the Great Wall), the Court of Colonial Affairs (Lifanyuan) and banner officials supervised Qing ritual and administrative relations with the non-Han territories (Chia 1993; Zhao Yuntian 1995).

Of course, the conquest elite was not a monolithic group. There are many studies of the factional politics within the Manchu ruling elite during the first decades of Qing rule (Kessler 1976; Oxnam 1975; Yan 1983; Zhou and Zhao 1986), of debates on the Yongzheng succession (S. Wu 1979; Yang Zhen 1993), and of the struggle between the banner lords and the emperor, which culminated in their subjugation to the imperial will (Hosoya 1968; Feng 1985, chap. 8). Imperial kinsmen became pillars of the dynasty, serving in the imperial guards and performing a variety of diplomatic, military, and security functions for the throne (Chang and Li 1993) during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Rulership in a Multiethnic Empire

A Manchu-centered perspective is particularly important in reassessing the Qing empire. The territorial expansion which culminated in 1759 with the incorporation of the Tarim Basin and Zungharia occurred within a larger context of multistate rivalry, first between the Manchus and Mongols, and thereafter between the Russians and the Qing, for control of Inner Asia (Khordakovsky 1992; Bergholz 1993; Millward 1993). The most important factors influencing Qing expansion came from outside the Great Wall and not from within the political arena dominated by Han Chinese literati.

The new research forces us to focus more sharply on the ability of the Manchus to bind warriors from a variety of cultural backgrounds to their cause. Manchus constituted only a fraction of the banner forces that swept south of the Great Wall to conquer the Ming territories (Fang 1950). The Manchu conquest of the Ming lands was achieved with a multiethnic force, including a mixture of sinicized Manchus, Mongols, and Chinese "transfrontiersmen" living in northeast Asia (Wakeman 1985). We might ascribe the Jurchen/Manchu skill in coalition-building to the geohistorical conditions of their homeland in northeast Asia. Stretching eastward from the Great Mongolian plateau north to the densely forested *taiga* and south to the fertile Liao River plain, the northeast's three different ecosystems (Lattimore 1940, 105, 113–14), brought nomads, hunting/fishing peoples, and sedentary agriculturalists in close cultural contact.

By the middle of the sixteenth century, Jurchen living in the northeast were divided into three tribal groupings which approximated the ecological divisions. The "wild" Jurchen lived as hunters and fishers in the far north; along the Nen and Hulan Rivers, the Haixi Jurchen lived alongside Mongols (Lattimore 1934, 171–73), and the Jianzhou Jurchen who resided in the south were exposed to commercial and cultural influences from Korea and the Ming (Rossabi 1982). But sinicization does not adequately describe Jianzhou Jurchen culture during Nurgaci's time. Sedentary agriculturalists, they also raised livestock, prized horsemanship and mounted archery, and loved hunting.

Mongol allies were vital to the Manchu conquest. Since these alliances were usually cemented by marriage exchanges, early Qing emperors claimed Mongol as well as Manchu ancestry (Hua 1983, Rawski 1991). Mongolian and Manchu were the primary languages during the crucial conquest decades before 1644 (Li 1995, 85; Guan 1988, 54). Several of Nurgaci's sons and nephews bore Mongolian names or were given Mongol honorific titles (Liu 1994, 172–73). The many shared roots of Manchu and Mongolian words relating to livestock, livestock rearing, riding paraphernalia, and even agriculture reflect the close historical interaction of Jurchen and Mongols in this region (Liu 1994). The Manchus borrowed heavily from the Mongols in creating their famed banner organization, while many Chinese elements in the pre-1644 Manchu state were actually filtered through the Mongols (Farquhar 1968, 1971).

Earlier Chinese generalizations concerning the sinicization of the Qing emperors relied heavily on the official Chinese-language records. The determination of the rulers to present themselves to their Chinese subjects as Confucian monarchs is evident in their acquisition of Chinese, their acceptance of the Confucian canon as the foundation for the civil service examinations, their patronage of Chinese art and literature, and the Confucian content of their decrees. The rulers also modified Jurchen marriage practices and switched from cremation to burial to conform to Chinese prejudices (Rawski 1991, 1988). Filiality was developed to new heights as an essential prerequisite for rulership (Rawski 1996). No one can deny that the Manchus portrayed themselves as Chinese rulers. What is at issue is whether this was the complete imperial image. The archival materials strongly support the argument that the Manchus disseminated different images of rulership to the different subject peoples of their empire.

The ideologies created by the Manchu leaders drew on Han and non-Han sources. The earliest title claimed by Nurgaci was the title of Kundulen khan (*han* in Manchu), meaning "Venerated Ruler" in Mongolian. As Pamela Crossley (1992) has explained, the concepts underlying the khanship differ significantly from those supporting the

Chinese emperorship. After Chinggis, the title “khan of khans” or supreme khan (*kaghan*) was the ultimate political goal sought by ambitious tribal leaders in the steppe world. But the “khan of khans” was not a Chinese emperor. His power was based on the much more loosely integrated tribal confederations that emerged from time to time in the steppe world and was conditional on the acquiescence of tribal chieftains. This title—and the political conditions it implied—formed the political context of Nurgaci’s Later Jin dynastic rule. Mongols throughout the Qing dynasty referred to the Qing emperor as “Great Khan” (*bogdo kaghan*).³

Tibetan Buddhism provided the symbolic vocabulary for further refinements of a non-Han model of rulership directed at the Mongols and Tibetans. The *cakravartin* or Buddhist king emerged in China after the fall of the Han dynasty (202 A.D.). The *cakravartin* is a world conqueror, a universal ruler. In the fourteenth century, *cakravartin* kingship was modified by the incorporation of the Tibetan notion of reincarnated lines of spiritual descent (Wylie 1978). In what we might interpret as an adaptation of the Confucian idea of an “orthodox line of descent” which linked legitimate dynasties to one another in a continuous genealogy of rulership (*zhengtong*) (Wechsler 1985, 136; Chan 1991), we have after the fourteenth century a Buddhist “orthodox line of descent” which identified a line of reincarnated *cakravartin* rulers that began with Chinggis and continued through Khubilai.

In 1635, a year before he proclaimed the establishment of the Qing dynasty, Hongtaiji received the *yi-dam* consecration and thus the powers of the deity Mahākāla, a seven-armed warlike god known as a Protector of the (Buddhist) Law (Grupper 1980). Later Qing rulers were depicted as Manjusri, the bodhisattva of compassion and wisdom, whose cult was centered on the temples at Wutaishan in north China (Farquhar 1978). Thangkas depicting the Qianlong emperor as Manjusri were produced in the palace workshops in Beijing; one now hangs in a chapel in the Potala in Lhasa, Tibet (Lin 1991).

Concepts of emperorship changed after 1644 as the empire expanded. Using Manchu-language sources, Pamela Crossley (forthcoming) argues that the eighteenth-century Qing concept of universal emperorship differed significantly from Chinese precedents. Whereas Confucians assumed that their principles were universally applicable, the core of the Qing policy was a universal rulership based on the submission of divergent peoples, whose cultures would remain separate. The Qianlong emperor (r. 1736–95) identified himself as the ruler of five peoples: the Manchus, Mongols, Tibetans, Uighurs, and Chinese (Crossley 1985). Under his reign, the Qing tried to preserve the cultural boundaries separating these five peoples, while attempting to sinicize the ethnic minorities living in south and southwest China. The languages of the “five peoples” were officially enshrined as the languages of the empire, and the emperor commissioned translations, dictionary compilations, and other projects to promote each language. The emperor himself, as the crucial link uniting these diverse peoples, learned Manchu, Chinese, Mongolian, Uighur, and Tibetan (Jin 1992, 78).

Despite his rhetoric, the Qianlong emperor and other Qing rulers could not help but have a profound impact on the societies and economies of the peripheral regions. Eliminating opponents and rewarding allies had the effect of restructuring the social hierarchies of the “outer territories.” The Qing successfully eroded autonomous sources

³Pozdneyev 1896, 331ff. The same biography of the rJe btsun dam pa Khutukhtus, the highest Tibetan Buddhist prelate of the Khalkha Mongols, has been translated and annotated by Charles Bawden (1961).

of power and prestige to establish themselves as the source of all secular authority. Mongol nobles now bore Qing titles which could not be passed to descendants without the emperor's approval (Chia 1992). Qing patronage of the dGe lugs pa sect ensured its continued dominance in Tibet and among the Mongols, but the price for imperial favor was the assertion of the imperial authority to recognize rebirths and approve appointments of high prelates (Petech 1973). In the Muslim-dominated Tarim Basin, the court put new regulations in place that eroded the power of the *begs*, local notables descended from a sedentarized steppe aristocracy, by removing their hereditary right to office and limiting their authority (Miao 1987). Mongol, Muslim, and Tibetan leaders above a certain rank were summoned to the Qing capitals for audience on a rotating schedule and provided with gifts and honors reaffirming their high status.

Qing bureaucratic administration broke down the traditional life-styles of pastoral populations in the peripheries. Emperors incorporated hunting/fishing peoples like the Daur, Ewenk, and Oroqen into the banners and moved them into garrisons to defend the northeast against Russian incursions (Xu 1992). Mongol pastoralism was profoundly altered when the Qing allocated pasturelands to tribes, organized them into banners and leagues, and assigned *amban* (high officials) to adjudicate tribal disputes. After annihilating the Zunghars, the Qing established a military government with its headquarters in Urumqi. They shrewdly moved Dong'an Muslims from northwest China into Turkestan and used them against the Turkic-speaking Muslims, and one sect against another (He and Wang 1989; Togan 1992).

Qing policies also significantly altered the cultures of the peripheries. During the Qing large amounts of literature were written in the languages of the periphery, and more people living in these regions became literate. Banner schools educated the sons of the ruling local elites in several languages. Northeastern peoples like the Daur, who had no written language of their own, learned Manchu and began to write their own literature using Manchu script (Badarongga 1993). Classified as "new Manchus" (*ice manju*) in the seventeenth century, the Daur, Ewenk, and Oroqen were culturally "Manchuized." Banner schools taught Mongols to read and write Mongolian, and imperial patronage made Peking an important center of Tibetan Buddhist printing in Mongolian (Heissig 1954). Imperially commissioned multilingual dictionaries in the five official languages contributed to the gradual standardization of languages that, in their spoken form, were highly diverse.

Trading contacts with the peripheries grew during the Qing and significantly changed many peripheral economies. Iron implements stimulated the expansion of agriculture in the northeast; the rifle, introduced through Russian and Qing trade, ultimately supplanted the bow and arrow and weakened the communal basis of traditional hunting practices, while the court's demand for marten skins and other northeast products led to the commoditization of the hunting economy (Daur 1987; Ewenk 1983; Oroqen 1983). By promoting free trade between its "inner" domains and Xinjiang in order to help provision their troops, the Qing stimulated Han Chinese mercantile migration into the region and provided support for the conversion of the region to provincial status in 1884 (Millward 1993).

Non-Han Conquest Regimes

The revisions of Qing history described above are consonant with the recent scholarship on earlier conquest states (Franke and Twitchett 1994). Owen Lattimore's

classic analysis (Lattimore 1940) of the nomadic relationship with China was challenged in 1989 by Thomas Barfield, who argued that the relationship between the nomads and China was not confrontational but symbiotic. Cycles of unification and dissolution within China and the steppe were closely tied to one another, because "ultimately the state organization of the steppe needed a stable China to exploit" (Barfield 1989, 131). The most efficient method for nomads to obtain Chinese textiles and other products was to ally with Chinese rulers and obtain these goods by treaty. Chinese states, for their part, also learned that a more effective (and cheaper) alternative to fighting the nomads was to co-opt them with subsidies in exchange for military aid. This was the strategy adopted by the Uighur kaghan who preserved the Tang dynasty after the An Lushan uprising (755 A.D.).

Barfield also pointed to the centrality of the mixed ecological zones found in Turkestan and Manchuria in the development of conquest regimes capable of ruling the sedentary agricultural society of China. Whereas the steppe environment could only support the nomad confederacy, a loosely organized coalition of tribes which dissolved without a continual flow of resources, what Barfield called "Manchurian" states which shared important cultural elements from both worlds were more successful in integrating the steppe and agrarian societies.

Recent studies of the conquest regimes which ruled north and northwest China from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries partly affirm but also partly challenge Barfield's thesis. Under Khitan, Tangut, Jurchen, and Mongol rule, "Chinese-style bureaucratic governance became the political norm . . . and was adopted and adapted by regimes outside Chinese control and beyond what had been traditionally Chinese territory" (Franke and Twitchett 1994, 2). These were hybrid regimes that displayed new capabilities for ruling sedentary as well as nomadic peoples. Yet, although the Khitan and Jurchen were indeed "Manchurian" states, the Tanguts and Mongols originated in the steppe.

Like the Qing, the political skills of the Xixia, Liao, Jin, and Yuan dynasties were developed through interactions with other emerging states within a multistate context. Each ruling group combined parts of East Asia and Inner Asia into multiethnic empires that included nomads and agriculturalists. All employed non-Han as well as Han Chinese officials and created administrations that were differentiated by the ethnicity of the regional population. Different laws applied to different peoples. The non-Han ruling houses were eclectic in their political institutions. Thus the Khitan used Turkic titles of offices (Twitchett and Tietze 1994, 46); Jin rulers, like Chinggis, may have borrowed from the Liao (via the Uighurs) when they reorganized their followers into decimal units. The concept of universal emperorship, which was raised to new heights by Chinggis Khan, owed as much to Uighur as to Chinese influence (Franke 1978). Chinggis should thus be seen as the heir to a multigenerational process by which Mongols adapted to the political demands of an empire-state.

Although the Liao, Jin, Xixia, and Yuan regimes employed Han Chinese in government service, each resisted sinicization. All four governments created their own national scripts. The Khitan large script (920) and small script (925) were the basis for the Jurchen large and small script devised in the twelfth century. Mongol writing, created in the same period, borrowed the Uighur script, which was itself borrowed from the Sogdians. Unlike Khitan, Jurchen, and Tangut, which were neither alphabetic nor phonetic, the early Mongol script (and Manchu, which was based on the Mongol script) was alphabetic.

All of these conquest regimes pursued bilingual or multilingual language policies. The Jin retained the small Khitan script even after they had invented a Jurchen writing system: Khitan continued to be used in the Jin bureaucracy until the last decade of the twelfth century. Khitan, Jurchen, Tangut, and Mongol dynasty coins had bilingual inscriptions. The rulers had Buddhist, Confucian, and other works translated into their own national languages.

The Qing dynasty represents the culminating phase of the unification of Inner and East Asia. Many aspects of Qing history parallel those of the border regimes of the tenth to fourteenth centuries by conscious design: the founder of the Qing ruling house claimed descent from the Jurchen rulers of the Jin, and his successors attempted to perpetuate this historical link in their own policies. Like the Jin, the Qing first created state structures in northeast Asia. After they entered the Ming capital, Beijing, and performed the Confucian rituals that enabled them to become "Sons of Heaven," i.e., Chinese emperors, they established a summer capital in Rehe, which they believed to be the site of an earlier Jin capital. The Manchu rulers followed the custom of their non-Han predecessors in moving between winter and summer capitals. At Mulan, the huge hunting park created north of Rehe, they brought together their Mongol and other Inner Asian allies in annual hunts. Living in Peking, surrounded by the splendors of Han Chinese culture, they developed in the eighteenth century a definition of Manchu identity that stressed mounted archery and fluency in the Manchu language.

The Qing dynasty also followed the precedent set by the Liao, Xixia, and Mongol regimes in adopting Tibetan Buddhism as a symbolic language of rule. Their incorporation of Inner Asian and Chinese ideological themes into a new kind of rulership was, we would argue, precisely the key to their extraordinary achievements: not only the conquest of a vast territory spanning the nomadic and sedentary worlds, but the ability to create a stable empire that lasted for several centuries. The permanence of the Manchu achievement is evident in the contemporary shape of China. The modern Chinese state which exists today is a product of the long historical interaction of Inner and East Asia that has been outlined above.

Qing History and Chinese Nationalism

Qing history is directly relevant to the continuing tensions between ethnic nationalism and the creation of a multiethnic nation state (Townsend 1992). Shortly after the Revolution of 1911 ended the Qing dynasty, Sun Yat-sen and other nationalist leaders rejected a definition that would have made the Chinese nation-state coterminous with the Han Chinese people who constitute the majority of the population. The Provisional Law of the Republic (1912) specifically identified Mongolia, Tibet, and Qinghai as integral parts of the nation, even though these territories were historically recent additions to the empire created by the Manchus.⁴ By its omission of the many ethnic minorities residing in China's south and southwest regions, Sun's discussion of the ethnic issue in terms of the "five peoples" identified by the Qianlong emperor two hundred years earlier highlighted his geopolitical concern with the attempts of the Mongols, Muslims, and Tibetans to form their own autonomous states.

⁴Xinjiang and the northeast were not cited because they had already been administratively transformed into provinces.

From the outset the new republic struggled with a fundamental contradiction between Han nationalism and the desire to retain all of the Qing territories in the new nation-state. The creation of a "Han" identity, which today encompasses 92 percent of the population of the PRC, dates from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to scholars, the earliest self-identifications found in Chinese-language texts refer to the "Hua" and "Xia" as "civilized" people, in contrast to the barbarians (Dow 1982; Han and Li 1984). The term "Han" emerged in the context of a discussion framed by Social Darwinism and Chinese nationalism, when scholars like Liang Qichao responded to the European notion of race by claiming that the yellow race was dominated by the Han people, who "were the initiators of civilization and had civilized the whole of Asia" (Dikötter 1992, 86). As formulated by Sun Yat-sen, the term "Han" denoted a race.

Although successive constitutions defined China as a multiethnic political community, China's leaders from Sun Yat-sen through Mao Zedong have consistently argued that the country was rightfully dominated by Han Chinese. Liang Qichao had warned that the political consequences of defining the new nation in terms of Han culture alone would be the dissolution of the Qing empire. Liang sought to retain the Qing peripheries. Although he urged that a "greater nationalism" (*da minzuzhuyi*) be created to bring the Manchus, Mongols, Uighur, and Tibetans into the nation, Liang's own writings raised the possibility of assimilation. After all, Liang noted, Manchus were for the most part indistinguishable from Chinese. The European identification of coresidence, common blood, speech, religion, custom, and livelihood as the basis for a nation-state was thus already partially fulfilled (Kataoka 1984, 284).

Sun Yat-sen also occasionally spoke about the need to rise above existing ethnic identities to create a new "national people" (*Zhonghua minzu, guomin*) (Sun 1973, 1:2, 5; 2:397, 404). In the Sun-Joffe Manifesto (1923) and in the "Fundamentals of National Reconstruction" drawn up at the first Guomindang National Congress in 1924, Sun would proclaim the right of ethnic minorities to determine their own political future. But Sun also suggested that cooperatives should be organized to promote the migration of Han Chinese into the minority regions (Kataoka 1984, 298), and justified an assimilationist policy by identifying it as the contemporary counterpart of the historical process of sinicization. Chiang Kai-shek continued this theme by arguing that since ethnic minorities inhabiting peripheral regions were already part of the greater Chinese race, they could have no separate identity (Benson 1990, 12–14).

Theories of assimilation developed in the twentieth century paralleled earlier intellectual attempts to integrate the experience of conquest into a Confucian framework. The Confucian claim to cultural universalism defined Chinese identity on cultural rather than ethnic grounds and strove for incorporation of other peoples into Confucian civilization (Dow 1982).⁵ This perspective was severely challenged during the Northern Song confrontation with the Jurchen Jin in the twelfth century (Trauzettel 1975), when a few scholars proposed "a circumscribed notion of the Han community and fatherland (*guo*) in which the barbarians had no place" (Duara 1993, 786). Even if one accepts Duara's argument that their views were a kind of premodern nationalist consciousness, writers like Fang Xiaoru (1357–1402) and Wang Fuzhi (1619–92) remained in the distinct minority until the late nineteenth century. As the debates over assimilation through education of the non-Han peoples in southwest

⁵That Chinese attitudes towards ethnic minorities included a strong "Orientalist" component has been noted by a number of scholars recently: see Rowe 1994; Millward 1994.

China demonstrate (Rowe 1994), the Confucian ideal of cultural transformation remained alive through the Qing dynasty.

The emergence of Han nationalism inevitably stimulated the formation of ethnic identities in the peripheries of the former Qing empire. Crossley (1990b) has urged us not to attribute anachronistically too strong an ethnic consciousness to the early Manchu rulers. Although Nurgaci and Hongtaiji helped to create a Manchu community by commissioning the creation of a written language and designating the very name, "Manchu," by which the unified Jurchen were to be known, the Manchu, Mongol, and Han designations of the banners were not strict ethnic categories: there were Mongols in Manchu as well as Mongol banners, Han in Manchu as well as Han banners. Crossley concludes that "culturally the important distinctions of the early Qing period lay not between the Manchus and the Chinese-martial Bannermen but between the Bannermen of all origins and the conquered Chinese" (Crossley 1987, 779). Not until the eighteenth century did Manchu rulers reinvent ethnic categories, but exceptions, involving the transfer of "meritorious" non-Manchu households from Han and Mongol banners to Manchu banner registration, could be found into the middle of the nineteenth century (Crossley 1987, 779).

The Revolution of 1911 freed Manchus, Mongols, Uighurs, and Tibetans to create their own independent ethnic states. Loyalty to the Qing dynasty did not automatically translate into loyalty to China: as Nakami Tatsuo points out (Nakami 1984, 146), the Mongols never considered themselves part of a *Zhongguo* (China). Han migration into minority territories during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries exacerbated anti-Han sentiments (Crossley 1990b; Gladney 1991, 81–93). Although the Russians, Japanese, and British influenced the outcomes (Lattimore 1934; Terashima 1984), these independence movements were fundamentally the product of a new ethnic consciousness which was fed by the pan-Mongol and pan-Turanian movements developing outside China's borders (Khan 1994; Forbes 1986).

In Tibet, the ending of the Qing dynasty brought the Dalai Lama, head of the dGe lugs pa sect and the nominal ruler, back from exile in India. Tibetans expelled the Chinese officials and troops and declared independence. From that point until 1950, Tibet enjoyed *de facto* if not *de jure* independence (Goldstein 1989). The Khalkha Mongols established an independent state in 1912 and put the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu, their highest-ranked reincarnate in the Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy, at the head of a secular state with the title Bogd Khaghan ("Holy Emperor") (Humphrey 1994). This was the predecessor of the Mongolian People's Republic.

The creation of an independent Mongolia attracted Mongols from what is now known as Inner Mongolia (Nakami 1984, 136). Responses within Inner Mongolia from 1910 through the end of World War II ranged from attempts to restore the last Qing emperor to the creation of an Inner Mongolian Revolutionary People's Party on the Soviet model, which advocated self-determination through revolution (Lattimore 1934, 29–30; Terashima 1984). The strengthening of Mongol identity throughout the early twentieth century was epitomized in the revival of Chinggis Khan's cult. Prohibited by the socialist rulers of Outer Mongolia, the Japanese, Guomindang, and later Mao Zedong supported the cult center among Inner Mongols (Khan 1994; Liang 1988).

Both the Mongolian and Tibetan movements for independence were sustained by the presence within their borders of peoples belonging predominantly to one ethnic group. The situation was quite otherwise in the far west and northwest, where sectarian disputes divided Turkic-speaking Muslims and historical differences separated Turkic Muslims from the Dongan or "Chinese Muslims" (Gladney 1991).

Scholars have shown that the politics of the far west was also strongly influenced by events in Central Asia. In Gansu, Naqshbandiyya orders vied with each other and against the older Sunni tradition from the late Qing period (Lipman 1984). Even though their attempts to establish a Republic of East Turkestan in 1933, 1944, and 1949 failed, Xinjiang in reality moved out of China's control and into the Russian orbit after 1912 (Dreyer 1976, 22–26; Forbes 1986). Turkic-speaking Muslims rejected the assimilationist discourse of the Guomindang and have proved similarly resistant to PRC policies of ethnic “fusion” (Millward 1994).

Like its predecessors, the People's Republic of China has consistently repressed independence movements and emphasized its determination to retain control of Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia. Since 1949, China's policy toward ethnic minorities has veered between ensuring minority representation within the framework of a unitary state and focusing on the ultimate assimilation of minority peoples (Mackerras 1994). In place of *tonghua*, the phrase used by Sun and other early nationalists to discuss assimilation, PRC scholars talk about “fusion” (*ronghe*), the outcome of a long-term historical process in which nationalities will “influence and learn from each other” (Mackerras 1994, 7). Despite all of the slogans concerning the “unity of nationalities” (*minzu tuanjie*), students of the contemporary scene have noted the continuing persistence of ethnic nationalisms in the PRC (Gladney 1991; Townsend 1992). One scholar has ascribed this phenomenon to the failure of successive modern Chinese states to create one “imagined community” that would constitute the Chinese nation. John Fitzgerald (1996) concludes that China is a “nationless state”.

Conclusions

The disjuncture between Han nationalism and “state nationalism” (Townsend 1992) creates problems for the writing of Chinese history. Han nationalism has deeply influenced the historical discourse throughout the twentieth century (Duara 1995). Contemporary Chinese historians project China's past in terms of its 1911 borders, although it was not until the rise of nationalism that history was written as “a seamless narrative of one realm, the territory of the modern state” (Chatterjee 1993, 95). Since Chinese history is construed as the study of the governments that have ruled over Chinese speakers, nationalism creates problems of interpretation concerning the long periods—over half of its recorded history—when China was conquered and ruled by non-Han peoples.

China as presently constituted is the historical product of the interaction of many different peoples. The size of the Chinese empires varied enormously over time. Unification, which is frequently cited as a hallmark of Chinese identity, occurred only as the culmination of a centuries-long evolution of multiple competing states. The first unified empire, Qin (221–206 B.C.), controlled only a fraction of the territory encompassed by later dynasties. The empire grew during the Han (206 B.C.–220 A.D.) and Tang (618–907) dynasties and was rent asunder during the Six Dynasties (222–559) and the tenth to fourteenth centuries. Under the Mongols (1279–1368) and the Manchus (1644–1911), China (defined as the territory occupied predominantly by speakers of Chinese) was itself incorporated into larger empires that spanned Inner Asia and East Asia. Only a definition of the nation that transcends Han identity can thus legitimately lay claim to the peripheral regions inhabited by non-Han peoples, since these claims rest on the empires created by the Mongols and the Manchus.

"Sinicization"—the thesis that all of the non-Han peoples who have entered the Chinese realm have eventually been assimilated into Chinese culture—is a twentieth-century Han nationalist interpretation of China's past. Removing sinicization as a central theme in Chinese historiography focuses our attention on the research agenda ahead. We need to reevaluate the historical contributions of the many peoples who have resided in and sometimes ruled over what is today Chinese territory. The task of deconstructing the national-level narrative, which demands that scholars carefully study regional and local cultures in various periods, has already begun in China and abroad, with the startling discoveries of complex jade-working cultures outside the Central Plain that Ho Ping-ti cited as the "cradle of Chinese civilization" (Ho 1976). These new archaeological discoveries suggest multiple origins of the features that we have identified as "Chinese." Archaeologists have identified a distinctive northeastern cultural complex with ties to the peoples who resided in the Korean peninsula and islands of Japan, that might have contributed to the origins of the Shang state (Nelson 1995, 252). That the homeland of the Jurchen/Manchus developed its own distinctive Neolithic society, epitomized in the Hongshan site, challenges the center-periphery assumptions of Sinology. Multiply this question by the number of these new sites and we have an approximation of the challenge that awaits historians.

I have no doubt that the next thirty years will continue to overturn our generalizations about the significance of Qing history. For the moment, how might we summarize an answer to this question of significance? The Qing was the most successful of China's dynasties in terms of its territorial expansion. Its success was a consequence of its hybrid origins. A non-Han conquest regime, it drew on multiple sources and adapted ideologies of rulership and administrative structures to the cultures of subject peoples. This strategy was an important factor in its successful consolidation of the empire. But Qing policy yielded unanticipated consequences. By applying its vast resources to the task of educating subject peoples, bureaucratizing steppe regimes, and disseminating published literatures in the languages of subject peoples, Qing rulers actually altered their cultures and societies. The tribal barriers dividing Mongols were lowered; Qing patronage of the dGe lugs pa enabled that sect to dominate rival Tibetan Buddhist orders and unify Tibet. The Qing peace enabled reformist Islamic movements to penetrate and stimulate sectarian quarrels among Turkic Muslims. Harsher policies toward Muslims eventually stimulated peoples divided by sectarian strife to unite against the Han. The Qing peace also stimulated Han Chinese merchants to penetrate the economies of the peripheries and created a backlash amongst indebted ethnic minorities.⁶ Qing policies stimulated changes that paved the way for the ethnic movements of the early twentieth century. In that sense, too, the Qing deserves further attention and study.

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⁶There was armed resistance by Oroqen, Ewenk, and Daur minorities in the northeast after the 1911 Revolution; the activities of the Daur are described in Daur 1987, chap. 5; Hatanaka 1989; Stuart, Li, and Shelear 1994.

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