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NEW QING HISTORY: DISPUTE, DIALOG, AND INFLUENCE

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*This article studies the New Qing History approach that arose in the US in the 1980s and the ensuing responses to it, and how these responses can be understood in the context of American China studies, twentieth-century historiographical trends, and Chinese nationalism. It argues that the New Qing History approach should be considered in a contextualized and de-politicized way. After examining how Chinese-born scholars responded to the controversial issues (sinicization, the nature of the Qing dynasty/Empire, and the definition of China/*Zhongguo*) provoked by New Qing History, the article suggests that sinicization should no longer be used as an uncontestable interpretative framework for studies of Chinese history. Instead, it favors a historicized conceptualization of China emphasizing its open, inclusive, and integrative character, as well as the uniqueness of Qing China's expansion. The article also demonstrates the New Qing History approach's positive influences in diversifying primary sources and its contribution in promoting borderland and non-Han studies.*

Keywords: *New Qing History,* Zhongguo*, sinicization, Qing Empire, Chinese nationalist historiography*

Since the 1990s, New Qing History, originating in the US, has challenged China historians in and outside of China. Richard J. Smith claimed in a book of 2015 that "most China scholars in the West, and increasingly in China, accept the basic outlines of New Qing History."[1] These outlines were summed up by Ding Yizhuang and Mark Elliott earlier in an article published in 2013: (a) a global perspective, which reexamines the Qing history as one of the world empires; (b) an emphasis on the Manchu ethnicity and identity, arguing that sinicizcation is insufficient to interpret the cultural relations between the Manchu Qing Dynasty and the Han-Chinese culture, nor can it explain the Manchu dominance of China; and (c) an emphasis on using Manchu-language primary sources, which are believed to represent a distinctive Manchu political and intellectual world.[2] Instead of sinicization [*hànhua*], New Qing History (hereafter NQH) scholars tend to use the term acculturation [*hánhua*], which simply means cultural modification and adaptation. Prior

[1] Smith, *The Qing Dynasty and Traditional Chinese Culture*, x.

[2] Ding, Ou, "Ershi yi zhiji ruhe shuxie zhongguo lishi: Xin Qing shi yanjiu de yingxiang yu huiying", in Peng ed., *Lishi xue pinglun*, 116–46.

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to Ding and Elliott, Ruth W. Dunnell and James A. Millward summarized the features of NQH in 2004. They deconstructed the concept of sinicization and approached the Qing as an Inner Asian rather than Chinese empire.[3] Pamela Crossley, a pioneering scholar who is usually listed as a member of NQH, observed its two tendencies: one is Manchu Studies, and the other is the study of the Qing as an empire. At the same time, Crossley pointed out that the "New Qing History" as a label overlooks the different approaches among the scholars involved.[4]

This current article unravels the rise of NQH, its main assumptions, the response of Chinese scholars, and examines the main issues touched upon in the debate, regarding the nature of the Qing Empire/Dynasty, the (re)definition of China, and the alternative analytical frameworks suggested by this new approach. I argue that NQH and the debate it generated was a significant transnational intellectual dialog and that it has contributed to contemporary thinking about Chinese nationalism, imperialism, and ethnicity, as well as the relationship between scholarship and politics.

The Challenge and Implications of NQH

The most salient way to examine the rise of NQH is to put it in the context of American China studies as well as the changing Western intellectual discourse. In a 1978 article, "Emperor as a Bodhisattva in the Governance of the Ch'ing Empire," David M. Farquhar drew readers' attention to the close ties between the Qing emperors and Buddhism, as well as the similarity between this practice in the Manchu government with that of the Mongol rulers of China in the fourteenth century.[5] In a 1979 letter, Joseph Fletcher suggested three directions to explore in the field of Qing studies: (a) the mechanisms of the Qing Empire as a whole, especially in the peripheral regions such as Manchuria, Mongolia, Xinjiang, Tibet, and the southwest tribal areas; (b) the basis of the central government; and (c) Manchu studies.[6] In the acknowledgement of her 1990 work *Orphan Warriors: Three Manchu Generations of the End of the Qing World*, Pamela Kyle Crossley stated that

> Though it is fashionable today in Qing studies to point out how significant the Northeastern heritage is for understanding the political style, social milieu and cultural vigor of China's last dynasty, it was very different when I started graduate studies at Yale. At the time the general thing was to brush aside any questions of Manchu culture or language as having little importance after the conquest of China…[7]

This suggests that the American academia began to pay attention to the significance of the Manchu heritage in Qing studies in the late 1970s. Substantial research works appeared prior to the early 1990s. It is unfair for some Chinese historians to

[3] Dunnell and Millward, "Introduction", in Millward et al., eds., *New Qing Imperial History*, 3–4.
[4] Crossley, "A Reserved Approach to 'New Qing History'".
[5] Farquhar, "Emperor as a Bodhisattva in the Governance of the Ch'ing Empire".
[6] Fletcher, "On Future Trends in Ch'ing Studies—Three Views".
[7] Crossley, *Orphan Warriors*, iv.

criticize American Qing history scholars as "overemphasizing the Manchu ethnic character while overlooking the historical fact that the Qing dynasty absorbed and was integrated in the Han culture."[8]

A number of important works developed the main ideas of NQH. In *Orphan Warriors*, Crossley cast doubt on Mary Wright's thesis that in the late Qing the Manchus' ethnicity and traditions were no longer relevant, and "all barriers between the Chinese and Manchus were artificial."[9] Around 10 years after Crossley published *Orphan Warriors*, Edward Rhoads' "Introduction" to *Manchu & Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China* (2001), argued that Mary Wright had internalized the sinicization theory so thoroughly that she refused to accept the Han-Manchu distinction in the late Qing.[10] For Rhoads, the absorption of the Manchus into Han culture should be seen as a two-way process of acculturation and, more importantly, he claimed that Manchu identity was actually reinforced in the last decade of the dynasty. In 2001, Mark C. Elliott published *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*. Elliott emphasized the importance of ethnic differentiation as well as acculturation, and argued that both the Manchu rulers' "acculturalization" and "differentiation" were crucial to the success of their prolonged rule of the empire. For Elliott, the Manchus were acculturated but never assimilated as a group into Chinese society.[11] Elliott used ethnicity as an analytical framework to approach the rule of the Manchu elites in China, arguing that while the cultural distance between Manchus and Han-Chinese had narrowed, the ethnic boundaries remained, and that accepting Chinese institutions did not mean "becoming Chinese" in an abstract sense.[12] As with Crossley and Rhoads, Elliott disagreed with Mary Wright's rejection of symbiosis between the Han and the Manchus.[13]

This trend of rethinking and rewriting the Qing history was summarized for the first time in printed form in a 2004 review essay by Joanna Waley-Cohen, who confirmed that the view of the Manchus as merely "the last in a line of alien rulers [who engaged in] wholesale adoption of China's culture and institutions" was being replaced by new perspectives buttressed by the availability of new evidence written in the Manchu language.[14]

In the larger intellectual milieu of the West, this kind of deconstruction of grand narratives, and the rise of bottom-up, localized approaches have become an irreversible trend, which is "potentially resistant to totalizing ideologies."[15] In the field of China studies, there has been not only a call for "rescuing the history from the

[8] For Chinese attitudes toward the debate, see Liu, "'Xin Qingshi' yanjiu: butongfanxiang de xueshu zhengming."

[9] Crossley, *Orphan Warriors*, 149–50.

[10] Rhoads, *Manchus and Han*, 10.

[11] Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, xiv.

[12] Ibid., 18, 28.

[13] Ibid., 30.

[14] Waley-Cohen, "The New Qing History." Scholars who used the term "New Qing History" include Mark Elliott, James Millward, and Joanna Waley-Cohen, while Waley-Cohen was the first to use the term in the review essay that I cite here. Ruth W. Dunnell and James A. Millward trace the use of the concept to Guy, "Who Were the Manchus? A Review Essay."

[15] Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, 16.

nation" by Prasenjit Duara concerning modern China, but also a "localist turn" as advocated by Peter Bol in the study of earlier periods a.[16] In China, the historian Xia Mingfang recognized that Paul Cohen, while accepting the assumptions of NQH, first and foremost attacked the West. Xia also realized that Manchu-centrism was a logical extension of Cohen's thesis of China-centered approach.[17] The skepticism of Western-centrism, as part of the anti-Enlightenment, post-modern discourse, thus led to a similar skepticism of Sino-centrism and the image of China as a homogeneous nation-state, and the anti-modernization discourse implicitly undermined any assumption of one-way and linear cultural assimilation and political unification.[18]Many NQH scholars experienced similar internalization and skepticism of certain given values at first, and then shared several tenets later: challenge of historical teleology and emphasis on historical contingency and process; resistance of the predominance of the Han-Chinese ideologies (including Han-centrism and unification) emphasis on the agency of the relatively ignored groups, and shift from the center to the margins[19]; and a global and comparative perspective to revisit Qing China. Here, the assertion of the Manchu distinctiveness also embodied a post-modern intellectual effort to identify "difference and heterogeneity in postindustrial Western societies."[20] Ruth Dunnell, another historian who approaches the Qing as an empire, confirmed that "I just want to comment that the assumption of a stable category of 'Chinese' from the beginning is one that I continually work to deconstruct, in the same way that the 'West' needs to be deconstructed and de-centered."[21]

The General Assumptions of the Chinese Nationalist Historiography

NQH, however, challenges the assumptions constructed through the state-dominated knowledge-production process during many Han-Chinese scholars' socialization, which is also "the acquisition of role-specific knowledge."[22] As opposed to a post-modern, de-constructive academic trend in the US, many Chinese scholars, either from mainland China or Taiwan, grew up in a shared official discourse and historical narratives about a cohesive and unified China and a decadent late Qing ruling group. This discourse is based around three assumptions. First, the study of the Qing has been influenced by the traumatic historical memory of the Han humiliation and slaughter at the hands of the Manchu conquerors in the seventeenth century, their suppression of Han scholars in the eighteenth century, and their failure to facilitate China's cultural progress

[16] Bol, "'The Localist Turn' and 'Local Identity' in Late Imperial China."

[17] Xia, "Yibu meiyou 'jindai' de zhongguo jindaishi"—"cong 'Kewen san lun' kan 'zhongguo zhongxinguan' de neizai luoji ji qi kunjing."

[18] For the postmodern attack on the Enlightenment totality and teleology, as the master-narrative, see Jameson, "Forward", in Leotard, *The Post-modern Condition*, xiv.

[19] Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 102.

[20] Jean-François Lyotard highlights the character of postmodern condition as "wag(ing) a war on totality," see Zhang, *The Tao and the Logos*, preface, xv.

[21] Personal correspondence.

[22] Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 138.

and to resist the encroachment of Western imperialism.[23] As historian Jiang Tingfu claimed in 1938,

> After the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, all the people felt that the Qing Dynasty was an impediment to our nation's revival. This observation was well-grounded … Their (Manchu) resistance to reform was to use it as a pretext to exclude the Han, and thus after 1900, the Han people no longer trusted them, despite the Qing court's gradual implementation of the Xinzheng reform.[24]

In his MA thesis on late Qing reform, completed in 1948 Shi Quan, a graduate student of the prominent historian Chen Yinke discussed the Manchu rulers' dominance of the Han elites, and how Manchu elites mistrusted and suppressed the rise of Han power in the Qing.[25] The Marxist historian Fan Wenlan in his 1949 book labeled the Manchu aristocrats "capitulators" while extoling Han officials and military generals as resisters.[26] While all these grievances were legitimate for Han-Chinese nationalists and particularly useful in a nationalist revolution, they might have had a negative effect on scholars' impartial and rational assessment of the Manchu/Qing's dynamic and flexible governance of China. However, it is notable that the common nationalist-revolutionary ideology also had its internal fissures: the Nationalist Party denied the existence of minority nationalities in China in the 1940s, while the Communist Party advocated the combination of the common Chinese identity with particular national identity.[27] More importantly, the Chinese Communist Party promoted the ideal of a unified Chinese nation as late as 1938, largely as wartime expedient for mobilization and solidarity after it modified the Comintern's vision of a non-inclusive China.[28]

Second, until the early 1980s, the Marxist theory of the five successive stages of human development led to criticism of Qing rulers' retardation of the growth of Chinese capitalism, which had supposedly emerged in the Ming dynasty. For Liu Fengyun, scholars' obsession with the issue of the sprout of capitalism [*zibenzhuyi mengya*] was the largest obstacle against fairly assessing the significance of the Qing dynasty prior to 1980.[29] The Qing dynasty's main contribution lay in its consolidation of the unified multi-ethnic state [*tongyi duominzu guojia*].[30] It is noteworthy that this Chinese Marxist-to-nationalist paradigmatic shift in reassessing the status of the Qing dynasty occurred almost simultaneous with the US academia's discovery of the Manchu ethnicity and the Qing rulers' ability of adaption, though they were apparently two distinct strains of interpretation: one emphasized China's national unity and the other focused on ethnic differentiation.

[23] Zarrow, "Historical Trauma: Anti-Manchurism and Memories of Atrocity in Late Qing China." For the revolutionary propaganda of the Han Chinese national humiliation to the masses in the late Qing, see Li, *Qing mo de xiaceng shehui qimeng yundong, 1901–1911*, 160–1.

[24] Jiang, *Zhongguo jindaishi dagang*, 72.

[25] Shi, *Jiawu zhanzheng qianhou de zhi wanqing zhengju*, 25–8.

[26] Li, *Reinventing Modern China*, 89.

[27] Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation*, 28–30.

[28] Liu, *Recast All Under Heaven*, 123–4.

[29] Liu, "Guannian yu redian de zhuanhuan."

[30] Ibid., 49.

The third assumption is the unity narrative. Almost all (Han) Chinese scholars take a unified, multi-national China for granted. As Peter Perdue noted, there were unified approaches among "Qing, Republican, Taiwanese, and PRC scholars" who take "Han-centered nationalism" for granted, seeing unity as a predestined and teleological process. He questioned if the political myth about unity could be replaced by territorial expansion in the Chinese conceptualization of the Qing history.[31] This master narrative of a self-conscious, cohesive, unified, multi-national China precludes deeper inquiries about ethnic identities.

As a result, no matter the master narrative of modern China is led by "revolution" or by "modernization," by the budding capitalism thesis or by national unity, the presumably sinicized Manchus will not be given a prominent place except for the Qing dynasty's assumed role in territorial consolidation and national solidarity.[32] American scholars revisiting the relationship between Chinese culture and the Manchu rulers were interpreted by Chinese scholars as attempting to conceptually reduce the legitimate domain of China to the territories of the Ming dynasty, i.e. China Proper. This not only challenges the Chinese concept of *Zhongguo* as an inclusive and cohesive cultural/political entity, but also suggests potential undermining of the present Chinese national and territorial integrity.[33] As Mark Elliott points out in an article on Chinese nationality/ethnic policies, the overwhelming consensus among Chinese scholars who questioned NQH is based upon the assumption that the Qing expansion was a natural process of China's grand unity rather than Qing conquest or colonization. In addition, there was a Chinese fear of China's disintegration just like the former Soviet Union after 1991.[34] In Taiwan, the historian Wang Rongzu maintained that NQH scholars in America are politically and emotionally hostile to China.[35] In Beijing, the Qing studies scholar Li Zhiting of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences represents the most radical response among NQH's Chinese detractors. In a 2015 article, Li emphasized that the Chinese scholars had already studied the Qing history in the context of world/global history, and had long emphasized the Manchu factor and used Manchu-language source materials. Li argued that in spite of the façade, NQH studies distorted the Qing history of unification into expansion and invasion; fabricated a "capital" of Inner Asian peoples at Chengde, and insisted on calling the peripheral regions of non-Chinese. Convinced that NQH was an exemplifier of "neo-imperialist historiography" with the ulterior purpose of splitting China, Li condemned it as shallow, pathetic, and absurd.[36] For these scholars, the debate has become ideologically charged and emotion-laden.

The anti-neo-imperialist accusation of Li Zhiting prompted us to rethink the complex and subtle relationship between scholarship and politics in modern China. For the Chinese, the Japanese Sinologist and publicist Naitō Konan might

[31] Perdue, *China Marches West*, 508, 510.

[32] For the two main frameworks of "revolution" and "modernization", see Li, *Reinventing Modern China*.

[33] Liu, "'Xin Qingshi' yanjiu: butongfanxiang de xueshu zhengming."

[34] Elliott, "The Case of the Missing Indigene: Debate over a 'Second-Generation' Ethnic Policy."

[35] Wang, "Wei xin Qingshi bianhu bixu xian dongde xin Qingshi."

[36] Li, "'Xin Qingshi': Xin diguo zhuyi shixue biaoben."

have been identified as "an imperialist or even as one whose scholarship served as a cosmetic cover for Japanese imperialist encroachment on the Asian mainland" because of the often ambiguous relationship between his Sinology and his political views.[37] In the 1930s, Chinese historians Fu Sinian, Yao Congwu, Jiang Tingfu, and Xiao Yishan were all inspired to write the history of Manchuria as part of China to defy the Japanese claim on it.[38] Yet, Ge Zhaoguang observed that Gu Jiegang was split between his academic "doubting-antiquity" tendency in the 1920s, which advocated challenging the mindset about Chinese territorial integrity in history, and his nationalist feeling in the late 1930s, which presumed China's historical and cultural unity. Ge admitted that it was inevitable that historians would be influenced by the politics of his time and Gu Jiegang attempted to combine scholarship with patriotism, yet Gu was sadly caught between a politicized, nationalist historiography and his personal desire for a critical reexamination of ancient Chinese history.[39] In 1958, historians in socialist China launched a "historiographical revolution" that stressed that historical studies' main goal was to meet the need of the Communist Party by emphasizing class struggle.[40] There is no doubt that Li Zhiting's sweeping denunciation was articulated out of his anti-imperialist sentiment, a hidden feeling of China's vulnerability, and a sense of political mission of self-defense. One problem of the Chinese scholars who doubted the innovation of NQH, however, is their failure to understand that the "newness" is valid only within the American scholarship, as we outlined above, which does not have the pretension of guiding Chinese scholars' research on their own history.

Nevertheless, it is misleading to think Chinese scholars are opposed to NQH collectively, since some are more sanguine about its contribution. Ding Yizhuang is a defender of the NQH approach. The compilation of the state-sponsored *Qing Shi* [Qing History] project is informed by NQH by paying attention to the multi-ethnic character of the Qing as a conquest dynasty, its territorial expansion, as well as the importance of the Manchu-language sources. In fact, the compilation project has extended the interest in non-Chinese language sources from Manchu archives to Tibetan primary sources.[41] Zhao Ma believed that this "indicates Chinese specialists' recognition of new trends in the Qing history field aboard that seek to de-centralize, de-sinicize, and globalize Qing China."[42] In a 2014 article, Yang Nianquan sought reconciliation by advocating the combination of the historiographical horizon of "Northeast-Inner Asia" with that of "South-North." Yang insisted on the significance of the Chinese south, namely Jiangnan, as the civilizational core and the foundational role of the Han civilization in the consolidation of the Qing rule, but he was also open to an "integrative perspective" in order to engage in dialog with NQH.[43]

[37] Fogel, *Politics and Sinology: The Case of Naitō Konan (1866–1934)*, xvii.

[38] Wang, *Inventing China through History*, 171.

[39] Ge, "Paihuai dao jiujie: Gu Jiegang guanyu 'zhongguo'he 'zhongguo minzu'de jianjie."

[40] Li, *Inventing Modern China*, 132.

[41] Ma, "Research Trends in Asia: 'Writing History during a Prosperous Age: The New Qing History Project."

[42] Ibid.

[43] Yang, "Xin Qingshi yu nanbei wenhua guan," in Wang ed., *Qing diguo xingzhi de zai shangque*.

Sinicization: A Main Controversy among Scholars

In this epistemological as well as historiographical clash, one of the most important contributions of NQH and also the most controversial issue among the scholars was the issue of sinicization. As Crossley noted recently, NQH scholars as a group "virtually all reject the idea that the Manchus are so assimilated into Chinese culture that the Qing Empire has no profound distinctions from other empires that have ruled China."[44] Evelyn Rawski had advocated in 1996 that

> 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.[45]

In 1998, Ping-ti Ho published his formal rebuttal of Evelyn Rawski's challenge of the sinicization thesis. Drawing on the interactions between the Chinese and non-Chinese throughout Chinese ancient history, Ho insisted that the history of China was undoubtedly a history of alien rulers' internalization of Chinese classics and history and the non-Chinese people's adoption of the Chinese type of sedentary agriculture.[46] While accepting the notion that the Qing was an empire and its empire building should be studied as a viable theme, Ho argued that the Qing's Manchu characteristics and its sinicization were not a polarity but can be complementary.[47] To put it another way, while NQH scholars emphasize the Inner Asian features and the Manchu legacies of the Qing rule, Ho insisted that the Qing was an empire but a Chinese one. To avoid the implicit bias of the term "hànhua," Ho proposed the replacement by the Chinese term "Hua-hua" since *Hua* has a broader culturalistic connotation than the racial/linguistic *Han*. To highlight the unifying role of Confucianism, Ho also emphasized the cultural influence of the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucian orthodoxy on the Qing rulers and the bureaucracy while denying the ethnicity of the Han and non-Han peoples.[48]

The trend of sidestepping the sinicization thesis continued. In *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Euroasia* (2005), Peter Perdue offered his rebuttal to Ho's sinicization thesis by raising two points: it "neglects the continued concern of the Manchu elite to maintain its separateness from the Han mass, expressed in its marriage policies, separate residence, and religious rituals, and especially in the banner institutions that were its basis of control" and, the sinicization thesis "ignores how the Qing continually reinscribed difference alongside uniformity in its subject populations."[49] In the introduction written by Pamela

[44] Crossley, "A Reserved Approach to 'New Qing History'."

[45] Rawski, "Reenvisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History."

[46] Ho, "In Defense of Sinicization, A Rebuttal of Evelyn Rawski's 'Reenvisioning the Qing'."

[47] Ibid., 149.

[48] By adopting the term *Hua-hua*, Ho attempted to avoid the ethnic connotation of *Han-hua*, because *Hua* is a fluid and inclusive politico-cultural term. For Mark Elliott, *Hua* implies "all who participated in the same politico-cultural ecumene." *Han-hua* for Elliott is the Chinese equivalent of sinicization, i.e. assimilation, which is more psychological than institutional. See Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 22.

[49] Perdue, *China Marches West*, 338.

Crossley et al. for *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China* (2006), the authors make it explicit that "our first task is to avoid the once common assumptions of 'sinicization,' or 'sinification,' an established notion already challenged by several case studies and interpretative essays."[50] For Crossley et al., the main problem of the narrative of sinicization was a reduction of Chinese history into "assimilation in a single direction" combined with "convergences of and divergences from heterogeneous sources."[51] The sinicization paradigm was not only Han-centric but also nearly narcissistic: "In short, sinicization posited a special category distinct from acculturation or assimilation, and implied that the causes and effects of changes are the same—the inherent charisma of Chinese culture."[52] Early Qing rulers' non-Han and Inner Asian character was highlighted in Michael G. Chang's *A Court on Horseback: Imperial Touring and the Construction of Qing Rule, 1680–1785* (2007). Chang reexamined the southern tours of the Qianlong Emperor and persuasively argued that in the "Qing ethno-dynastic state," the Qianlong Emperor's southern tours were not due to his admiration of the Chinese culture and the scenery in the Jiangnan region, but part of a scheme to tour other parts of the empire, including Manchuria. More importantly, Qianlong's decision was largely driven by his martial and military concerns based on Inner Asian political traditions and his motivation to maintain and show off the Manchu militant spirit and prowess. In Chang's analysis, while the Qing was a Chinese dynasty, it was also a Manchu empire in which ethnicity played a crucial role in shaping the ideology and decision-making of the rulers. One example was that Qianlong insisted on setting up camps and Mongolian yurts on the tour, and riding a horse when entering Suzhou in 1751.[53]

Sinicization: Alternative Perspectives

To be sure, not all Chinese historians are staunch advocates of sinicization. If we trace the historiography further back, Lien-sheng Yang, who wrote in the 1950s and was not involved in this kind of debate, also called the Qing a "Manchu dynasty," which for Yang was a "stable and lasting dynasty though alien."[54] Lü Simian in his notes completed in the 1930s already pointed out the "barbarianization" [*huhua*] of the Han-Chinese from the Southern-Northern Dynasties throughout the Sui-Tang period, and Lü fully acknowledged the Han people's exploitation of non-Han peoples in the border region.[55] In the following paragraphs, many reassessments came not only from American scholars but from Chinese scholars as well.

To supplant the simplified sinicizition framework, first, in the American scholarship on Qing China, John K. Fairbank had provided an analytical framework to conceptualize the relations between the Qing and China. Written in the 1950s, the piece is still thought-provocative in light of today's debate about the New Qing

[50] Crossley et al., *Empire at the Margins*, 6.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Chang, *A Court on Horseback*, 137, 181.
[54] Yang, "Schedules of Work and Rest in Imperial China," in Lien-Sheng Yang, *Studies in Chinese Institutional History*, 25.
[55] Lü, *Lü Simian dushi zhaiji*, 1114, 1134–5.

History. In an article titled "Synarchy under the Treaty," Fairbank conceptualized the nature of Qing rule in China as a "joint Sino-foreign administration of the government of China under a foreign dynasty." For Fairbank, the Qing was a "conquest dynasty," whose rule was exercised through a universalist "Confucian monarchy," which was essentially a "Sino-barbarian institution." In the meantime, the Qing ruling elites "attempted to preserve their conscious existence as a people and avoid or postpone that 'absorption' which a popular but superficial Western tradition used to assign as the ineluctable fate of foreigners who conquer China." Fairbank's position here is still meaningful in bridging some the disputes that we face today: (a) the Qing was an alien conquest dynasty; (b) its government was a joint administration; (c) it was "Confucian" ideologically but hybrid institutionally; (d) there were indeed Manchu attempts to maintain their identity, and (e) the hybridity did not imply wholesale absorption or sinicization.[56] The idea of "synarchy," i.e. joint rule, was inherited by Beatrice S. Bartlett in *Monarchs and Ministers: The Grand Council in Mid-Ching China, 1723–1820* (1991), in which Bartlett used the term "dyarchy," rule by two authorities, to capture the unique character of the Qing court, and described how the Qing court promoted a mixing of Manchu and Han officials on the Grand Council.[57]

Second, the ideological sinicization of non-Han rulers should be studied with more scrutiny. The sinicization thesis usually assumes the Qing ruling elites' wholehearted acceptance of Confucianism, and Fairbank called the Qing a "Confucian monarchy." This, however, did not stop the critical reassessment of the relationship between the Qing rulers and Confucianism. NQH and the deeper inquiries it generated helped complicate the issue. In an earlier Qing history work, Harold Kahn's *Monarchy in the Emperor's Eyes: Image and Reality in the Chi'en-lung Reign* (1971), which mainly emphasized the Chineseness of the Qianlong Emperor, the author also took into account the significance of Manchu tradition with regard to the succession. He regarded the Qing institution as a "unique and highly successful compromise between traditional Chinese succession practices and non-Chinese nomadic systems of selecting an heir."[58] In response to Ping-ti Ho's argument about the Confucianization of Qing rulers, Ding Yizhuang argued: "…in the process of conquering regions of minority groups, the Qing rulers did not present themselves via a 'Confucianized' image."[59] In a 2000 article, the Qing Studies scholar Guo Chengkang shifted the conventional angle by perceiving the Manchus as an active agent who did not just passively accept Han culture, but self-consciously resisted the penetration and erosion of their culture by Han culture. For Guo, the Manchu rulers reshaped Han culture while maintaining their own cultural characteristics. Guo argued that both the Kangxi and Qianlong Emperors critically and selectively utilized some elements of Han-Chinese culture. For these Qing rulers, Chinese culture and institutions were more instrumental for the purpose of ruling

[56] Fairbank, "Synarchy under the Treaties," in John K. Fairbank ed., *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, 205–9.

[57] Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers*, 35. For the study of the institutional renovation of the Qing government in the 19th century, see Rudolph, *Negotiated Power in Late Imperial China*, which was largely inspired by Bartlett's study and considered another fruit of NQH.

[58] Kahn, *Monarchy in the Emperor's Eyes: Image and Reality in the Chi'en-lung Reign*, 232.

[59] Ding, "Reflections on the 'New Qing History' School in the United States."

than absolute as universal values.[60] Guo argued that the famously sinicized Qianlong emperor accepted Han culture largely for political purposes, and Qianlong was equally concerned about how to maintain Manchu character among his descendants and other Manchu nobles. In addition, there are multiple examples that demonstrate how the Manchu rulers criticized and reformed Han culture.[61] Hence, the debate enabled us to achieve a fresh understanding of the agency of the Manchu rulers in cultural and religious affairs. If the Qing emperors treated Confucianism more as an instrument of governance than sincere commitment, then they might have done the same to Buddhism. David Farquhar actually made it explicit in his 1978 article that the Qing emperors pretended to be Buddhist believers and patrons, because it was a policy "designed to impress the Mongols favorably, and to make submission to Manchu imperial authority more acceptable to the Mongolian princes."[62] In fact, the early Qing emperors "disliked lamas and their influence on the Mongols."[63]

Third, a bottom-up approach to the Qing state-society relations focusing on non-Han and also non-Manchu groups further complicates the sinicization myth. Joseph W. Esherick confirmed that it was under the Manchus that Mongolia, Tibet, and the Muslim areas of Xinjiang were incorporated into the Qing Empire, but he argued that the Qing made a clear institutional distinction between its rule of China proper and the frontier regions, where the rule was indirect, feudal, and adaptive. For Esherick, sinicization, or "Hanization" as he named it, did happen, especially at the grassroots level. (Here we should also remember that Peter Perdue and Edward Rhoads stress the Manchu elites', rather than the lower-class Manchus', efforts towards maintaining their separateness.) Esherick pointed out, however, that the process was not uniform. For instance, in Tibet and Mongolia, hereditary aristocracy and Buddhist establishment somewhat impeded the acculturation process, which went deeper in Xinjiang.[64] Later research has revealed a more complex picture of sinicization at the bottom level of society. Jodi L. Weinstein's *Empire and Identity in Guizhou: Local Resistance to Qing Expansion* (2014) focused not only on the Qing state strategy and policy but on how local Zhongjia (Buyi) people coped with the Qing expansion with their own counter strategies. Drawing upon the theory of livelihoods and local oral literature and largely informed by the swork of James Scott, Weinstein made Guizhou indigenous commoners the agents of history and convincingly demonstrated that the ordinary non-Han people either adapted to the Qing rule or resisted it, based upon their "livelihood choices," for the indigenes were more concerned about their economic interests than state-imposed ideal of civilization.[65] Whether they were sinicized or not was merely out of their rational choice, Weinstein argued.[66] Though it is not a Qing History monograph *per se*, Bin Yang's *Between Wind and Clouds: The*

[60] Guo, "Ye tan Manzu hanhua."
[61] Ibid.
[62] Farquhar, "Emperor as a Bodhisattva in the Governance of the Ch'ing Empire," 20.
[63] Qianlong's suspicion of the Buddhist clergy despite his patronage of Buddhism was discussed in Kuhn, *Soul Stealers*, 45.
[64] Esherick, "How the Qing Became China," in Esherick et al., eds., *Empire to Nation: Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World*, 229–59.
[65] Weinstein, *Empire and Identity in Guizhou*, 5, 81–2.
[66] Ibid., 130.

Making of Yunnan (Second Century BCE to Twentieth Century CE) (2009) also touched upon the question of whether the non-Chinese peoples in Yunnan were sinicized. As with Elliott and Giersch, Bin Yang provided a negative answer, and his main challenge was that the sinicization perspective ignored that "any interaction is essentially two-sided." By utilizing local accounts, Bin Yang presented a counter-narrative about the "indigenization" of the Chinese culture in newly incorporated and largely non-Chinese Yunnan and how the Chinese population was influenced by local non-Chinese customs in the Ming-Qing periods.[67] Anthropologist Wang Ming-ke, who had also been informed by the debate between Ping-ti Ho and Evelyn Rawski, in his microstudy of the Qiang people's sinization process revealed that first, sinicization in many peripheral regions occurred as a very long and slow process; second, the most important motivation for sinicization was the non-Han people's aspiration for a "more secure and superior social position"; third, there also appeared in the border regions Han people who identified themselves with local non-Han culture.[68] In all the three cases presented by Weinstein, Yang, and Wang, the unquestionable linear sinicization model based on the Han cultural superiority was already inadequate to explain the actual situation at the micro level.

It is arguable that sinicization/*hanhua* is a descriptive terminology of a historical phenomenon occurring in specific times and situations with diverse motives, but the thesis should not be regarded as a static and unidirectional understanding of Chinese ethnogenesis. The myth of sinicization also ignores the factor of demography, i.e. the Chinese culture had the biggest influence in the areas when the Chinese population was dominant, but in the overwhelmingly non-Chinese regions, when the Chinese immigrants became minority in a predominantly non-Chinese community, they would also adopt indigenous language and customs. Acculturation in both directions and co-existence and multiculturalism, and approach developed by Lynn A. Struve in her analysis of the Qing Empire, can be more persuasive framework than the one-way sinicization.[69] In addition, the concept of sinicization itself needs to be studied more carefully. James A. Millward differentiated two concepts of sinicization: one was a process in which "both neighboring peoples and conquerors of China acculturated spontaneously to the superior Chinese civilization once they encountered it," and the second was "direct state attempts to eradicate non-Chinese cultural elements and convert a people or region to Chinese ways."[70] All the past debates actually centered on sinicization in the first sense, but the second type of sinicization, i.e. the government policy of spreading Chinese language and basic Confucian education, as well as how the peoples on the frontiers actually accepted it, should continue to be researched as a mechanism at work in history.

Chinese Responses: What do "China" and "Chinese" Mean?

Another fundamental question arising in NQH debates was about how to define China and how to define its relationship with the Qing. For Richard J. Smith, NQH is primarily based on the assumption that "the Qing Empire and 'China'

[67] Yang, *Between Wind and Clouds,* 162–71.
[68] Wang, *Fansi shixue yu shixue fansi*, 300–1.
[69] Struve, "Introduction," *The Qing Formation of World Historical Time*, 11.
[70] Millward, *Euroasian Crossroads*, 107.

were not, in fact, the same thing."[71] Was the Qing Empire synonymous to *Zhongguo*, or were these essentially two different concepts and the Qing Empire actually transcended *Zhongguo*?[72] In response to NQH, Huang Xingtao cautioned that scholars should not go to another extreme of wiping out the "Chineseness" [*Zhongguo xing*] of the Qing while examining Manchu subjectivity, nor should the scholars see the dual character of Manchu and Han as two polarities. Huang criticized that American NQH scholars had so far paid insufficient attention to the "Chinese identity" [*Zhongguo rentong*] of the Manchu rulers.[73] This criticism ignored the intellectual context of the rise of NQH as I outlined in the first section of this article. While Huang Xingtao argued for the Manchus' identification with China, Yang Nianqun provided a more balanced point of view. Yang pointed out three characteristics of NQH: its emphasis on "break" rather than "continuity" in defining the Qing's position in Chinese history; its focus on the Manchu character of the Qing rule; and its east–west view of Manchu conquest and control, i.e. the Manchu rule in the Northwest and Southwest frontiers rather than only in the Jiangnan region. Yang Nianqun's main contribution was his interpretation of the origin of the concept of *Zhongguo*, which for Yang was not an invention of twentieth-century nationalism but could be traced back to the cultural nationalism of the Song dynasty, i.e. the distinction between barbarians, *yi* and Chinese, *xia*.[74] More importantly, *Zhongguo* has a long history of merging of multiple groups, which was contradictory to the ideology of the *yi/xia* distinction. For Yang, this inclusive cultural *Zhongguo*, with a longer history starting in the Han dynasty, circumscribed the worldview of the Qing rulers, rendering them unable and unwilling to develop an independent, inner Asia-centered worldview. Yang claimed that NQH's research on the frontiers marginalized the Central Plains and Jiangnan while denying the inner Asian regions' common history with the Inner China. Instead, Yang suggested that Jiangnan's meaning to the Qianlong Emperor was much larger than what NQH scholars chose to believe. He noticed the tendency of NQH scholars to put the Qing in the context of world history and to interpret it with the theory of empire building, however, he argued that Peter Perdue's study of the Qing expansion to the Northwest frontier as "colonization" is "over-interpretation" and an inaccurate analogy between the Chinese history of unification and European colonial experiences.[75]

Other Chinese scholars also joined the debate on the relationship between the Qing and China from a more critical point of view. Guo Chengkang gave a sophisticated theoretical analysis based on meticulous use of Manchu-language archives by drawing a road map for the changing definition of *Zhongguo* among the Qing rulers: for Nurhaci and Hongtaiji, *Zhongguo* was first a cultural and moral

[71] Smith, *The Qing Dynasty and Traditional Culture*, ix.

[72] For a Chinese leading scholar's discussion of the issue, see Ge, "Chongjian Zhongguo de lishi lunshu."

[73] Huang, "Qingchao manren de zhongguo rentong—dui meiguo xing qingshi de yizhong huiying", in Liu et al., eds., *Qingdai zhengzhi yu guojia rentong*, 16–34.

[74] In a recent article entitled "Born in Translation: 'China' in the Making of 'Zhongguo'", Arif Dirlik insists that China/Zhongguo and Chinese/Zhongguoren were two sets of politically constructed and ambiguous concepts in the 19th century and early 20th century, see Dirlik, "Born in Translation: 'China' in the Making of 'Zhongguo'."

[75] Yang, "Chaoyue 'hanhua lun' yu 'manzhou texinglun' qingshi yanjiu nengfou zouchu di san tiao daolu?"

concept equivalent to the Ming Dynasty, yet the Ming *Zhongguo* formed a larger *tianxia* along with other states or groups such as the Mongols and the Jurchens, a community in which the Ming *Zhongguo* was an overlord. When the Qing established its legitimate rule in inland China, the rulers also inherited all the Ming territories and subjects, but in the meantime, the meaning of *Zhongguo* was also broadened to include Mongolia and Manchuria. In this sense, as Guo pointed out, the early Qing emperors incorporated the "first layer" of the *tianxia* space, i. e. Mongolia and Manchuria into the map of *Zhongguo*. The Qing's expansion of the territories of *Zhongguo* was recognized by the Yongzheng Emperor. During the mid-Qianlong reign, "Zhongguo" had become coterminous with "Da Qing Guo" [The Great Qing State].[76] For Guo Chengkang, *Zhongguo* was a fluid concept, and it was this conceptual fluidity that allowed the Qing rulers to claim their own Chineseness, and then in turn redefined the concept of China. Responding to the same question concerning *Zhongguo*'s cultural characteristic, Ge Zhaoguang also pointed out that historical China's boundary was ever-moving and fluid, yet its inner core was stable and relatively fixed.[77] Drawing upon Chinese, English and Manchu sources and fully informed of the NQH debate, Zhao Gang also provided a balanced analysis of the Qing rulers' identification with China as a political, territorial as well as a cultural concept, and he demonstrated that for the Qing rulers, "Qing" and "China" were often used interchangeably in foreign relations and domestic politics. Zhao Gang unwittingly agreed with Huang Xingtao that late Qing anti-Manchu revolutionary discourse was exaggerated to such a degree that it overshadowed the actually more important trend of cultural integration and the concept of a multi-ethnic greater China. In this sense, Zhao Gang disagreed with some American scholars' (over)emphasis on Manchu identity throughout the Qing dynasty, however, he also departed from the position of most Chinese scholars in that he did not perceive a pure sinicization or Confucianization process among the Qing rulers. Instead, Zhao argued that the Qing rulers did accept their own Chinese identity, but it was not passive assimilation because during the process they creatively transformed the old China, a Han-centered cultural concept, into a multi-ethnic political entity. In other words, the Manchu rulers assigned new meaning to the word "China" while becoming Chinese. Here, what worked as a historical agent was not the omnipotent Chinese culture or Confucianism but the Qing emperors themselves.[78]

Some criticisms concerned semantics. For Wang Rongzu (Yung-tsu Wong), an outspoken critic of the NQH approach, the English term "the Chinese" falls short of capturing the nuance between "Zhongguoren" and "Hanren." Wang argued that the Han people themselves were highly hybrid after centuries of merging with non-Han peoples, but the Han were not equivalent to *Zhongguoren*, which was a collective term. Wang criticized Mark Elliott for making a conceptual error when referring to the Qianlong Emperor as a "non-Chinese ruler of China," for in Elliott's view, the "Chinese" only means the "Han Chinese." Wang went on to emphasize that the Manchu ethnic identity should not be confused with, nor can it replace, their

[76] Guo, "Qingchao Huangdi de Zhongguo guan."
[77] Ge, "Chongjian Zhongguo de lishi lunshu."
[78] Zhao, "Reinventing *China*."

political identity as *Zhongguoren*.[79] Moreover, Wang argued that the late Qing anti-Manchu discourse was nothing but rhetoric to instigate revolution, and the Republican revolution was essentially a political revolution rather than an ethnic one.[80]

It is here that Chinese scholars made contributions in clarifying the definition of China from Chinese perspectives in response to the somewhat excessively radical challenge of NQH, which has attempted, wittingly or unwittingly, to reduce "China/*Zhongguo*" to China Proper and Chinese/*Zhongguoren* to the Han people. These Chinese scholars emphasized the modern character of "China" as a political and territorial concept which encapsulated the ethnic identity of the Manchus. Not only the Manchu rulers used the term *Zhongguo* and *Da Qing* interchangeably, they meant the same thing to Zheng Xiaoxu, a Qing loyalist and Prime Minister of Manchukuo, who in his diary used the term *Zhongguo* much more frequently than "Qing" when referring to China. Zheng referred to the Guangxu Emperor as the "Chinese emperor" [*Zhongguo huangdi*] in 1895, while referring to the Xuantong emperor, i.e. Puyi, as the "Qing state emperor" [*Qingguo huangdi*] in 1911, when Puyi abdicated.[81] In the second case, Qing was used only because the Xuantong emperor was related to the fallen Qing dynasty. In his memorials to the Guangxu Emperor, the Qing court historian Yun Yuding also used the term *Zhongguo* exclusively to refer to Qing China in political, diplomatic and territorial senses.[82] Hence, I argue that *Zhongguo* as a political/territorial concept was not constructed by twentieth-century nationalist intellectuals, and a greater multiethnic and unified China, as a "state-nation" [*guojia minzu*], is not only a political reality but also a cultural possibility, though this political/cultural entity does not have to be constructed upon the premise of sinicization. Instead, it can be realized through the policy of participatory multiculturalism.[83]

The Qing as a Global Empire and its Uniqueness

A more enduring contribution of NQH is studying the Qing's governance of the peripheral regions during the process of empire building and expansion. It is worth noting that Pamela Crossley suggested that the emphasis on a "Manchu-centered history" and the Qing expansion as an empire are two separate trends with some contradictions, for the former emphasizes the Manchu uniqueness and the latter

[79] Wang, "Yi gongxin lun xin Qingshi", in Wang ed.,*Qing diguo xingzhi de zai shangque*, 41–42. In my conversation with Professor Wang in January 2015, he reconfirmed to me that his main challenges to NQH was mainly a about Western misunderstanding of the concepts *Zhongguo* and *Zhongguoren*.

[80] Ibid., 48.

[81] Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 681, 1361.

[82] Yun, *Yun Yuding chengzhai zou gao*, 15, 31, 39. When Yun mentioned the Qing dynasty in the historical context, he usually used the terms "*wochao*" (our dynasty); "*benchao*" (this dynasty), and "*guochao*" (national dynasty).

[83] Chinese historian Qian Mu used the term "state-nation", *guojia minzu* to capture the character of China after the Qin unification, which acknowledged and legitimated the constructive role of the state in forging the nation. Qian also argued that China was not a conquering empire, but a centralized empire that engaged the excellent elements from the peripheries. See Qian, *Guoshi dagang*, 14, 116.

has universal and global meaning.[84] "The history of the conquest as we now know it suggests that the Qing conquest of China was not in any meaningful sense an achievement with a Manchu ethnic secret of success," Crossley remarked.[85] If we reject the assumption that the Qing's success in expansion and rule was either due to the wholesale acceptance of Chinese culture, or because of its unique Manchu heritage, then the third interpretative framework will be needed, which is the Qing's character as an empire with global relevance. The NQH monographs discussed in this essay examined the mechanism of the Qing government's flexible imperial administration in peripheral regions and its "differential and multiple instrumental logics," which was comparable with other pre-modern world empires.[86]

The reconceptualization of the Qing as an empire, *diguo*, equivalent to the British Empire, was first adopted by the Qing rulers, and by doing so, they departed from the Confucian idea of all-under-heaven, *tianxia*.[87] As mentioned above, Ping-ti Ho did not reject the idea that the Qing was an "empire" either. The Qing's image as an "early modern empire" equivalent to other empires and with global relevance, regardless of their Manchu identity, is illuminated in Laura Hostetler's *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (2001). In this book, Hostetler explored the Qing state's use of cartographic and ethnographic representation in the building of the empire in the 17–eighteenth century, and related the ruling technology of the Qing to the European empires of Russia and France during the same time period. Hostetler argued that the Qing Empire, not truly isolated from the world, used both ethnography and cartography effectively to gain knowledge about the Southwest culture and peoples during the process of its expansion.[88] Hostetler extracts the Qing Empire from the chain of the Chinese dynastic cycle and repositions it in a global and comparative context.

The problems with the concept of "unification" and its teleological implications also appear in C. Patterson Giersch's *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier* (2006). Giersch did not consciously identify himself with NQH, for his main theoretical framework drew from the debate about the meaning of the frontier and the alternative terms "borderlands" and "middle ground," which was introduced to "overcome Sino-centric preconceptions."[89] Giersch examined the expansion of the Qing in the Southwest in the context of its rivalry with other regional empires such as Burma and Siam, and detailed the process of the Qing government's combination of indigenous and imperial institutions. Peter Purdue seemed to have more self-awareness of confronting Chinese nationalist historiography. In *China Marches West*, Purdue announced that his research was conducted with a concern that "…most historians, supported by the prevailing nationalist ideology that reigns on both sides of Taiwan Strait, take the current territorial and cultural boundaries of the Chinese nation-state for granted."[90] For

[84] Crossley, "A Reserved Approach to 'New Qing History'."
[85] Ibid.
[86] Hardt, Hegri, *Empire*, 339–43. The authors of this book also differentiated traditional empires and modern colonial empires, and point out that the correlation between capitalism, expansion, and modern imperialism was a central argument of Marxism.
[87] Wang, *Renewal*, 29–30.
[88] Hosteller, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, 1.
[89] Giersch, *Asian Borderlands*, 3.
[90] Perdue, *China Marches West*, 1–4.

Perdue, the nationalist ideology among the Chinese covered up the other side of the Qing expansion in central Asia, which was more than the natural process of "unification" of Qing/China, but an imperial expansion of the Qing as a world empire. Instead of seeing the Qing as a "Chinese dynasty," Purdue puts the Qing in the larger arena of world history and as an equivalent to and rival of the other two contemporaneous empires: Muscovite-Russia and the Mongolian Zunghars, and he discussed its conquest not as "unification" in the official Chinese parlance but interplay with other empires. He consciously rejected the traditional view that the Qing conquest was "merely one link in a chain that inevitably led to the nation-state."[91] Some other recent works continue this trend of approaching the Qing as an empire and focus on its ruling technology. Wensheng Wang's book *White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates: Crisis and Reform in the Qing Empire* (2014) is another example. First, the central theoretical framework for Wang was how the early Qing "pre-modern empire building" was challenged by the popular resistance and demographic crisis during the Jiaqing Reign. Here the assumption about the Qing as a pre-modern empire, as with what Laura Hostetler did earlier, sets Wang's work apart from traditional studies on peasant uprisings. Wang also inquired about how the Qing state practiced "crisis management and reform" and how it "adjusted its governing priorities and strategies in order to create more sustainable emperor-bureaucracy and state-society relationships." The concern with the operating mechanism of the state and a more positive reassessment of the Qing state's ability to adapt and to reform is not particularly related to the Qing's ethnic background, but its nature as an empire.[92]

While all Qing history scholars today focus on how the central government of the Qing Empire worked hard to penetrate the border regions to consolidate its rule, represent local culture, define the strategic role of each region, and govern or even "civilize" the local peoples with various strategies, a new model is arising that studies the Qing state's relationship with the borderland regions, from the perspective of the central government.[93] Implicitly, this is still a "top-down" approach that lacks the angle and the voice of the local ordinary people. The bottom-up mode was only very recently embodied by Jodi L. Weinstein's *Empire and Identity in Guizhou*. In the preface, Stevan Harrell referred to the term "New Qing History" and acknowledged its contribution toward seeing the Qing as an empire, yet he complimented Weinstein's book as complicating the story. What Weinstein did was first confirming, though implicitly, Crossley's caution that Manchu studies and the "Qing as an empire" thesis are different. Weinstein pointed out that in the grand scheme of Qing colonialism, the rulers treated Guizhou indigenes different from more politically and culturally established groups such as the Mongols or strategically more important groups such as the Tai of Yunnan.[94]

Although scholars now seem to agree that the Qing was an "empire" and should be studied as such, Wu Qine in his Chinese-language paper pointed out that Chinese

[91] Ibid., 4.

[92] Wang, "Introduction", *White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates*, 1–9. For an interest in the Jiaqing Reign, also see Rowe, "The Significance of the Qianlong-Jiaqing Transition in Qing History."

[93] Harrell, "Introduction: Civilizing Projects and the Reaction to Them", in Harrell ed., *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, 7. Dai, *The Sichuan Frontier and Tibet*.

[94] Weinstein, *Empire and Identity in Guizhou*, 128–9.

traditional imperialism was actually distinct from modern Western colonialism. Responding to NQH, Wu argued that modern colonialism grew with capitalism, and the colonialists sought to loot land, labor, and resources from the colonized regions, while the Chinese emperors, mainly pursuing symbolic subjugation, did not attempt to squeeze economic resources from Xinjiang, nor did the Qing levy taxes or station armies in these areas. Moreover, Wu claimed that the term "colony" grew out of European experience, and the Chinese dynasties' cultural and political expansion from the center to the periphery was not identical to Western colonialism.[95] Here, the Tibetan history specialist Melvyn C. Goldstein had used a phrase, "passive hegemony," to describe the relation between Qing China and Tibet. However, he suggested that it was undeniable that the Qing attempted to "control" Tibet as a dependency to serve its dynastic interests, no matter whether there was exploitation of local resources or not.[96] If we follow Wu Qine's argument about the capitalistic/economic character inherent to the term colonialism, combined with Goldstein's observation, then it should be possible to more accurately study the Qing as a traditional, military imperial state which was chiefly concerned about territorial expansion, state security, and the ruler's pretension of being a universal overlord, rather than economic expansion.[97]

Conclusion

NQH includes a series of perspectives and assumptions under the influence of postmodern historiography, and it has generated a cluster of key issues which involve the nature of the Qing dynasty, the meaning of imperialism, assimilation vs. acculturation, and the definitions of China/*Zhongguo*. Its deconstruction of the modern Chinese master narrative of nation-building, however, conflicted with Chinese nationalist historiography and its view of a unified and homogenous Chinese nation. The debate has thus become somewhat emotional and politicized given an acute Chinese sense of victimization and vulnerability. Yet, a de-politicized and unbiased analysis of NQH reveals its contributions to the field of China studies. First, the uniform and indisputable sinicization thesis is no longer an exclusive, absolute interpretative framework of historiography. Terms such as "ethno-sovereignty," "ethno-dynastic state," "dyarchy," "acculturation," and "multiculturalism" provided new conceptual frameworks to rethink the Qing as a more politically and culturally complex, multi-faceted, yet symbiotic empire than a purely Chinese

[95] Wu, "Qingchao de zhanlue fangyu youyiyu jindai diguo de zhimin kuozhang", in Wang ed., *Qing diguo xingzhi de zai shangque*, 41–2, 106.

[96] Goldstein, *The Snow Lion and The Dragon*, 14. One historical source material may help us better understand the boundary of Qing/China in the eyes of Westerners. In December 1890, Swedish geographer and explorer Sven Anders Hedin arrived at Kashgar, a westernmost city of Xinjiang, and in the following years, he crossed the Taklimakan desert, discovered the long-deserted Loulan Kingdom, and visited Tibet several times. In 1897, Hedin met with Li Hongzhang in Beijing. In their conversation, Li Hongzhang referred to "East Turkestan, northern Tibet, Tsaidam, and southern Mongolia", which Hedin had visited, as all "vassal states of ours." This means that China enjoyed suzerainty over these territories, not provincialization nor European-style colonialism, see Hedin, *My Life as an Explorer*, 71, 80, 84, 102, 323.

[97] Yun Yuding mentioned in a memorial that the Qing government provided several hundred thousand taels of silver to subsidize Xinjiang, a "screen" to protect Gansu, while did not at all profit from the province. See Yun, *Yun Yunding chengzhai zougao*, 63.

dynasty; second, NQH has also generated heated debates about what China/*Zhongguo* and Chinese/*Zhongguoren* mean in history. Chinese scholars defended China/Chinese in their broad senses and insisted on their conceptual fluidity and inclusiveness, rejecting equating the "Chinese" with the "Han" nation. They argued for the conceptual and empirical validity of a multi-ethnic Chinese nation, the broad and inclusive *Zhonghua minzu*, and this articulation should receive more serious reconsideration from American scholars; third, the Qing dynasty is being studied as an empire which in fact "provided the foundation for reconstituting the new Chinese nation as a unitary yet multiethnic state."[98] No longer a simplified, teleological story of the Chinese territorial unification and political solidarity, the Qing conquest of China's Northwest and Southwest borderlands is now seen as an imperial expansion process, which involved a set of political technologies, strategic calculations, culture clashes, and accommodations and is part of the global history of empire building. This direction also enhanced the research on the frontier regions in their own right. As Jonathan Schlesinger states in a 2012 dissertation influenced by NQH, "each frontier was also a homeland, and each homeland had its own, dynamic history."[99] In this dissertation, which drew on Mongol and Manchu language sources, Schlesinger combined the approach of NQH with environmental history, focusing on how the Qing as a vast multi-ethnic empire controls environment and market on its northern border and attempts to "purify" it. In Richard J. Smith's *The Qing Dynasty and Traditional Chinese Culture* published in 2015, the author admits that he already broadened the concept of Qing culture to "include influences from Manchuria, Mongolia, Central Asia, and Tibet," and he "placed the Qing Empire in a truly 'global' context," as a result of the influence of NQH.[100] It is arguable that NQH will continue to be entrenched and make impact on scholars of the Qing history, yet it will still face skepticism and the criticisms discussed above.

Glossary

Buyi	布依
Da Qing guo	大清國
diguo	帝國
guojia minzu	國家民族
hànhua	漢化
hanren	漢人
hánhua	涵化
huhua	胡化
Qing Shi	清史
Qingguo huangdi	清國皇帝
Tianxia	天下
tongyi duomingzu guojia	統一多民族國家
xia	夏

[98] Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism*, 19.
[99] Schlesinger, "The Qing Invention of the Nature", 11.
[100] Smith, *The Qing Dynasty and Traditional Chinese Culture*, xi.

yi	夷
Zhonghua minzu	中華民族
Zhongguo	中國
Zhongguo ren	中國人
Zhongguo rentong	中國認同
Zhongguo huangdi	中國皇帝
Zhongguo xing	中國性
Zhongjia	仲家
zibenzhuyi mengya	資本主義萌芽

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