Evolving On-Line Empowerment: The Manchu Identity Revival Since the 1980s

BAI Lian

School of Law
University of Maryland
Maryland Series
in Contemporary Asian Studies

General Editor: Hungdah CHIU
Executive Editor: Chih-Yu T. WU
Associate Executive Editor: Yufan LI
Associate Editor: Matthew Lyon
Managing Editor: Chih-Yu T. WU
Assistant Editor: Jinho SUH

Editorial Advisory Board
Professor Robert A. Scalapino, University of California at Berkeley
Professor Bih-jaw LIN, National Chengchi University
Dr. Ying-jeou MA, Chinese Society of International Law
Professor Toshio SAWADA, Sophia University, Japan
Professor Choon-ho PARK, International Legal Studies, Korea University, Republic of Korea

All contributions (in English only) and communications should be sent to:
Chih-Yu T. WU
University of Maryland School of Law
500 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-1786, USA

All publications in this series reflect only the views of the authors. While the editor accepts responsibility for the selection of materials to be published, the individual author is responsible for statements of facts and expressions of opinion contained therein.

Subscription is US $40.00 per year for 4 issues (regardless of the price of individual issues) in the United States and $45.00 for Canada or overseas. Checks should be addressed to MSCAS.

Tel.: (410) 706-3870
Fax: (410) 706-1516

Price for single copy of this issue: US $10.00

ISSN 0730-0107
ISBN 1-932330-25-9

© Maryland Series in Contemporary Asian Studies, Inc.
Evolving On-line Empowerment: The Manchu Identity Revival Since the 1980s

BAI Lian

Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION ........................................ 1
II. PRESENTABLE CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND VAGUE LEGITIMACY ................................. 4
   A. Manchu Language Fever and Scholarly Reconstruction .......................... 6
   B. Self-empowerment and Rebirth ................................................. 11
   C. Manchu as 'Others': Backlash or Catalyst? ............................... 13
III. NOSTALGIA AND CONSUMABLE ETHNIC CULTURE ........................................ 15
   A. Nostalgia: Legacy of Four Centennial .................................. 16
   B. Manchu Ethnic Tourism: A Nostalgic Commodity ......................... 19
IV. CREATING ONLINE-SELF IN THE CHINESE CYBER-SPACE .................................. 22
   A. The Unbroken Chinese Cultural-centrism towards the Manchus ................. 26
   B. The Imagined Manchu Community Online ................................... 30
V. CONCLUSION: BORDERLESS BOUNDARY ............................................ 42
GLOSSARY ......................................................... 45

I. INTRODUCTION

The Manchu group remained mute for almost a century due to the downfall of the Qing Dynasty, but has re-emerged during the several decades of Reform and Opening era. What is most striking is that the abrupt increase of the Manchu population from 2.4 million in 1953, to 4.3 million in 1982, and 9.8 million in 1990, and over 10 million in the new millennium, made them the second largest

* BAI Lian is a Visiting Scholar in the School of Humanities and Social Science, Hong Kong University of Science & Technology. She received her Ph.D. from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, and her research interests include ethnic identity, ethnic tourism in China and international migration.

1. My thanks go first to Professor Barry Sautman for his helpful comments and insights. I am grateful to Professor CHEUNG Siu-woo who led me to the field of Chinese Ethnic Studies. I shall take sole responsibility for all errors in the manuscript.
minority group in China. According to the 2005 National 1% Population Sample Survey, the Manchu population has risen to almost 13 million, 0.82% of China’s population. Over 97% Chinese Manchu live in six provinces, namely, Liaoning, Hebei, Heilongjiang, Jilin, Inner Mongolia and Beijing. The Manchu population in Liaoning accounts for more than 50% of overall Manchu population in China. The Manchu population boom is due mainly to the state’s re-registration policy for Chinese minority nationalities in the 1980s. Under this policy, those who had concealed their original ethnic identity for any of a variety of historical and political reasons were allowed to resume their minority identities by providing solid proof of their claimed minority titles. At the same time, the Reform and Opening Up scheme fostered the evolution of intra-group mobilization and an identity revival among the Manchu people.

Entering the 1980s, the minority nationalities in China gained more room for self-expression. Circumstantial changes also prompted the identity revival of the Manchu group. The dramatic demographic change is just one of various indicators of the Manchu


5. To quote, ‘Whenever and for whatever reasons, any individuals who had to give up their minority identity and expect to resume their original identity should be approved upon application’. State Ethnic Affairs Commission (SEAC), “Guanyu huihuo gaizheng minzu chengfen de chuli yuanze de tongzhi” “(Circular on the Measures for Resuming and Amending Minority Status)," in Minzu zhengce huibian: 1951–1990 (A Collection of Policies Concerning the Minority Nationalities: 1951–1990), (Beijing: Beijing Ethnic Affairs Commission,1990), p. 23. As a result, more than four million people successfully re-identified themselves as Manchu by providing proof that either parents or any member of his/her ancestry is a Manchu. This can partly explain the Manchu population boom. However, to have more than one child legally, it is said that lots of Han people took advantage of the policy and claimed to be Manchu even though they were not. When I interviewed a Manchu studies expert who himself is a Han Chinese, he said that there were so many people wanting to register as Manchu, as a result, the head of the Nationality Affairs Committee indicated that only those with this scholar’s reference could be recognized as Manchu. I also witnessed at a local office of the Ethnic Affairs how a person changed from Han Chinese to Manchu easily with a few stamped testimonials from his or her Jueweihui (Residence Committee). It seems that the demographic change alone cannot give us a full and accurate picture of the Manchu transformation since the 1980s.
identity reconstruction. Many obsolete cultural attributes that are significant in legitimating an ethnic group in China have been re-utilized by the group to reinforce the previously weakened Manchu identity. These include newly kindled Manchu studies, an extraordinary passion for the dying Manchu language, the mushrooming of Manchu associations across China and even beyond, as well as the sudden emergence of Manchu autonomous counties in Northeast China and Hebei Province where most Manchu are dwelling. Harking back to the reign of their Manchu ancestors during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), we might figure that all these measures have reified the dedication of the Manchus to revive the group through reacquainting people with pre-modern Manchu culture that hinges on Qing dynastic history. Apart from all of these endeavors, the proliferation and openness of the internet has also opened a new vista for the Manchu group, which has proactively extended their representation sphere to the internet in order to effectively rejuvenate the ethnic identity revival movement.

This study intends to trace the evolving identity reconstruction of the Manchu group since the 1980s, and in particular, draw attention to the newest surge of online nostalgia and self-empowerment thriving in cyberspace. Being aware of the State’s manipulation of the ‘political positioning’ of ethnic groups, the Manchus have been re-negotiating their peripheral position in China in a variety of suggestive gestures. In today’s China, the nostalgia for minority culture tends to take the form of many concrete commodities for people’s consumption, which explains the endeavour of the Manchus shifted

6. ZHAO Zhihui, “Shiniang huigu” (Ten years’ Retrospect), Shenyang Manzu (The Shenyang Manchu), vol. 1 (1998), pp. 18-19. Many privileges given to the minority nationalities in China, such as legislative, economic, cultural and educational rights, as well as autonomous right have encouraged many minorities to seek autonomy at different levels. In the 1950s, the endorsement of minority nationalities’ autonomy was judged according to the population percentage of minority group living in a specific area. If one minority group accounted for at least 30 per cent of the local population, it was eligible to form an autonomous unit. Later on, there were way too many minority nationalities applying for autonomy, therefore, the central government had to raise the population requirement to a higher percentage of the overall local population.

7. Deriving from the Jurchen Tribe in the Tang Dynasty, the Manchus began to dominate China proper from 1644 and ruled China until it was overthrown in the 1911 Revolution. The Qing Dynasty was the last dynasty of China. The Manchu monarchy was the second non-Han group that ruled China since the Mongols of the Yuan Dynasty. The last Manchu emperor Puyi was installed by the Japanese as the puppet emperor of Manchukuo in 1932, but Manchukuo was dissolved at the end of World War II.

from real social life to an imagined online community. Wide-reaching websites and bulletin boards have become the newest and strongest vehicle to retrieve Manchu fading history, unite Manchu people, and most importantly, demonstrate the distinct existence of this largely sinicized minority group.

II. PRESENTABLE CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND VAGUE LEGITIMACY

In spite of its overwhelming Han population and contestation regarding the officially designated ethnic minorities, China always claims to be a multi-ethnic country. The central government has been marshaling resources to assist some ethnic groups in building infrastructures to preserve their languages and cultures. The flourishing diversities among the Chinese minority nationalities are plausibly proving the success of minority policies in China. The diverse yet harmonious co-existence of the multi-ethnic groups is also staged in the China Nationalities Museum (Chinese Ethnic Culture Park, Beijing zhonghuaminzu yuan), where 44 distinctive buildings showcase traditional architectures and a variety of activities of the Chinese minority nationalities. Interestingly, among the completed ethnic villages, there is none representing the Manchu group, China’s second largest minority group. The ironic contrast between the striking demographic figure of the Manchu people and the implicit neglect of them has been attributed to the seeming sinicization of the Manchu people. Moreover, the burdensome history of the late Qing Dynasty somehow has made the legitimacy of the Manchu group questionable.

Due to anti-Manchu propaganda during the Republican period, the name “Manchu” became a stigma and the Manchu people were caught in an awkward situation. Suspicion of Manchu because of their ancestors’ deeds remained even after the foundation of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). For instance, it is said that in the First session of the First Chinese People’s Consultative Conference (Renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi), there was no independent Manchu representative in the minority nationalities’ delegations, but one Manchu, who surprisingly, represented the Xinjiang delegation.¹⁰ Lao-She¹¹, a renowned ‘people’s artist,’ appealed to Premier

---


10. This story was told the author by a Manchu scholar, but he did not remember the event correctly. He insisted that the Manchu group was neglected in the grand ceremony on National Day because the Manchu were not considered as an ethnic group at
ZHOU Enlai to redeem the Manchu status in new China. Later, when Premier Zhou met the last Manchu emperor Puyi and the previous Manchu royal family members, he elaborated three contributions made by the Manchu group in Chinese history, including uniting China, developing a large geographic territory and enriching the Han Chinese culture.\footnote{12} Afterwards, many Manchu still chose to conceal their Manchu status and reported themselves as being of Han nationality during the minority identification scheme carried out by the central government in the 1960s. In the 1980s, the re-registration policy was promulgated by the central government, where people who used to disguise their minority status were allowed to reclaim their minority identities by producing relevant proof.

Under such socio-political circumstances, the Manchu group also started to develop a more assertive Manchu image, and surges of ethnic-identity revival were launched. The outset of this identity reconstruction movement can be dated to the late 1970s to early 1980s, when a small number of Manchu individuals argued that modern China inherited a large geographical territory from the sovereignty of the Manchu Qing Dynasty, yet their ethnic group was that time. According to an article of SHI Guangshu, LI Weihan, Minister of the United Front Department (Tongzhan bu) and the First Head of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission in the post-1949 China, mentioned that some Manchu people in Beijing could not help shedding tears when they found there were no Manchu representatives in the new Chinese People’s Consultative Conference. “To Resolve One of the Biggest Outstanding Cases in the Minority Nationality Autonomy Issues in China (Jiejue Zhongguo minzu zizhi de yi da xuan’an),” 25 March 2004. http://www.56-china.com.cn/mzj/MZF-rw10m24.htm. Accessed on July 15, 2008. In response to this issue, the United Front Department then confirmed, in December 1952, that the Manchu constitute an ethnic group in China. See Investigation of the Minority Nationalities’ Work (Minzu gongzuo diaocha), The United Front Department, 1952. p. 706.

11. Lao-Shi (1899 –1966) was one of the most important writers in the Modern Chinese Literature. \textit{Luotuo Xiangzi} (Rickshaw Xiangzi) and the play \textit{Chaguanr} (Teahouse) are the best known works of Lao-Shi. He was of Manchu ethnicity.

12. On an official reception in June 1961, Zhou claimed, ‘First, it [the Qing Dynasty] brought together the many fraternal nationalities in China and established its territory as more than nine million square kilometers. Second, in order to perpetuate its rule, the Qing Dynasty reduced the feudal land tax, which enabled peasants to recuperate from years of oppression. As a result, the population grew to 400 million today. Third, the Qing Dynasty adopted the Manchu language and the Han language simultaneously, thus they gradually mingled the two cultures together and promoted the development of the Chinese culture. So the Qing Dynasty did three good things – expanding the territory, increasing the population and developing the culture’. See ZHOU Enlai, “Remarks at a Reception for Hiro Saga, Pujie, Puyi and Others, 1961,” \textit{Selected Works of Zhou Enlai}, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1984), p. 327.
not granted their own autonomous region and has been placed peripherally among the 55 minority nationalities. Therefore, they initiated a network to facilitate Manchu regional autonomy in Northeast China through liaising with accomplished Manchu members to empower a re-negotiation of the Manchus’ status. Eventually, twelve autonomous counties were endorsed by the central government in the 1980s; nonetheless, the accomplishment was far below their expectations. In their eyes, the size of the Manchu autonomous area is disproportionate to the Manchu population, whereas minority groups who have less population than the Manchu group have the privilege of their own autonomous regions, like the Mongolians, Hui, and Tibetans. At the same time, the dislocation of the Manchu triggered a series of other activities to sharpen the group image through reacquiring meanings for many of the ethnic characteristics prescribed by the state.

A. Manchu Language Fever and Scholarly Reconstruction

Why do the Manchu have to rekindle their ethnic identity under the new socio-political circumstances? As mentioned, the Manchu existence is always in question, for their sinicized image can hardly comply with a variety of standardized characteristics in identifying minority nationalities in China. For example, ethnic language is one of the characteristics for forming an ethnic group and is also an important component of ethnic culture. According to a governmental memo:

Before liberation, apart from Uygur, Kazakh, Korean, Tibet, Mongol, Dai and Yi, etc., most minority nationalities did not have their own written languages. After liberation, the Party and State helped those minority nationalities to create and revise their written languages. Thus, there are now 19 minority nationality languages. . . .

It seems that the central government of China has been generous in helping preserve and even create some ethnic languages. The irony is, by the time that the aforementioned official document excluded Manchu from the list of minority nationalities having their

13. According to personal communications in Shenyang, Liaoning province in January 1999. Most informants are anonymous in this article.

14. Propaganda Department of the Communist Party China Central Committee and SEAC, An Outline on Implementing the Policies to the Minority Nationalities and Strengthening National Union (Guanyu renzhen guanche zhixing dang de minzu zhengce, jiaqiang minzu tuanjie de xuanchuantigang)," 1990. p. 3.
own written languages, there were millions of Qing archives in China that were written in Manchu, of which only a fraction have been translated by a handful of experts.\textsuperscript{15} At that time, the last eighteen native speakers of Manchu in remote Sanjiazi Village of Northeast China, who were reported as having struggled to keep their language alive today,\textsuperscript{16} were just in their 60s. Moreover, a voluntary Manchu language learning school, Beijing Manchu School, had already taught the 300-year old Manchu language for six years.

The first Manchu language school in the post-Mao era was initiated by a descendant of a Manchu Qing Grand Secretary (daxueshi), who was then-an official in the Political Consultative Committee of the Beijing East District (dongcheng qu zheng-xie). Among the first learners, there was a Manchu teacher called JIN Baoseng (AISIN GIRIO Baosen),\textsuperscript{17} who was inspired by the idea of promoting Manchu language studies as a way “to boost the sense of pride”\textsuperscript{18} within the Manchu group. Afterwards, he opened a new Manchu school with other enthusiastic volunteers, who were mostly Manchu people. In 1985, with a ten-person advisory board including Mrs. HU Jieqing, wife of the noted Manchu artist and writer Lao-She, Mr. Jin and his colleagues established a small Manchu school with RMB 200 yuan (approximately US$20) as start up. It is said that two Manchu officials supported this school, one of whom was a former chairman of the Beijing Municipal People’s Congress.

Laura Hess has portrayed the enthusiastic Manchu language learners in the following way:

In many respects, the students represent a true cross-section of modern-day Beijing. They come from a variety of ethnic groups, including the Manchu, Mongolian, Hui and Han Chinese nationalities (although the majority are Manchu people). They range in age from 16 to 72 and in level of education from graduates of junior high school to


\textsuperscript{17} JIN Baoseng (AISIN GIRIO Baosen), a Manchu teacher in the Beijing No. 24 Secondary School, is one of the founding members of the Beijing Manchu School (\textit{Beijing Manwen shuyuan}). He has worked laboriously to improve the Manchu school, which is open to anyone interested in learning Manchu language.

holders to doctoral degrees. Some are university professors or researchers, while others are college students or workers, and still others are retired professionals, housewives or youth awaiting employment.19

Mrs. Zhu, a Manchu engineer, was one of the learners who assisted in translating the Manchu archives in the First Historical Archives of China (Guojia di yi lishi dang’a-guan). Another woman worked in the Nationalities Publishing House (Minzu chubanshe) and she thought Manchu language studies would give her a slight edge in her skills for typing Manchu characters, even though the publishing house rarely published in the Manchu language.

The “Manchu language fever” was not only lit in Beijing, but many places where the Manchu people dwelled. In an article written by a Manchu intellectual in the Xinbin Manchu Nationality Autonomous County, the author recalled how he picked up the Manchu language at 60-years of age.

I admire the Mongol and Korean people because they successfully preserve their language, costumes and customs until today. On the contrary, we Manchus, apart from a few remnants, can only see ‘ourselves’ in dramas, and so we are almost not different from the Han people. . . (If we aim at promoting our genuine culture, we must make our language live among our people.)20

The enthusiasm towards ethnic language can be taken as one gesture in boosting ethnic awareness. According to De Vos, “The manipulation of language as a status marker can also be used by individuals aspiring to change how they are defined ethnically.”21 For Manchus, the Manchu language appears to have the particular significance of meeting a criterion of visible characteristics of minority nationalities in China.

Apparently, most Manchu language learners who only studied Manchu in their spare time would hardly be able to work in the historical archives like Mrs. Zhu. On the other hand, it is difficult

20. NINGUTA Pengyun, Learning Manchu Language to Promote Our Culture (Wei hongyang Manzu wenhua er xue manwen), The Shenyang Manchu (Shenyang Manzu), vol.1 (1999), pp. 20–21.
for common Manchu people to acquire the language which is no longer used for daily communications. "Manchu language fever" gradually waned after a few years. As a result, the Beijing Manchu School becomes the only one and is barely maintained today. The reasons explaining why the "Manchu language fever" declined are mixed. Mr. Jin, the founder of the Beijing Manchu School attributed the failure to the non-for-profit feature of the schools and their associated financial constraints.

The "Manchu language fever" since the 1980s appears to be a self-driven statement of group legitimacy through keeping their language alive. However, support from the government at different levels remained inadequate in this regard. It can be recalled that only Premier ZHOU Enlai was concerned with having the imperial archives in Manchu language translated and well-preserved. Apart from this, the official attitude seems to be rather vague, even though there are voluminous Manchu documents in the First Historical Archives of China. Whatever assistance the Manchu learners might receive was actually delivered by individual Manchu officials at a limited level. In fact, apart from the endogenic enthusiasm towards the Manchu language, what fuelled Manchu people to study their own language might be the strong preference of the state in adopting ethnic language as one of several primary indicators of officially recognized minority nationalities. Despite its failure, "Manchu language fever" can still be considered as a significant milestone of the Manchu identity reconstruction movement since the 1980s. It was utilized, in the first place, to reinforce the difference of Manchu people within a multi-ethnic country that emphasizes the plurality of ethnic cultures under one roof. By and large, the "Manchu Language fever" also boosted the dynamics of the overall Manchu identity revival movement in the 1980s.

Flourishing Manchu language study further stimulated interest in Manchu culture. Many Manchu scholars believe that the archives in the Manchu language can help to solve contested historical issues. In attempting to reveal anti-Manchu bias involved in Han Chinese research, research papers like one contesting the Yangzhou shiri (Ten Days Massacre in Yangzhou) were published in the

---

22. JIN Baosen, "The Beijing Manchu School: A Cradle for Manchu language learners and a vehicle for Manchu studies (Wei peiyang manwen rencai, cujin manxue yanjiu er jianli de Beijing manwen shuyuan)", Manzu yanjiu (Manchu Studies), vol. 4, 1989, p. 47.

Manchu Culture Quarterly (Manzu wenhua) under the auspices of the Taiwan Manchu Association. Meanwhile, studies on the Manchu group and Qing Dynasty boomed, as more domestic and international scholars engaged in Manchu studies. For example, extinct Manchu Shamanism drew attention from scholars worldwide, after Manchu local scholars brought forward their pilot research results. Therefore, overseas interest complemented domestic Manchu studies in researching the weakened Manchu culture. A strong incentive for Manchu research, was claimed by the Manchu Culture Quarterly:

Every tree has roots, every river has origins, and everybody is bound to derive from somewhere. They all should be proud of their hometown and ancestry. It is a shame that many accomplished Manchus are reluctant to publicize their Manchu identity, as a consequence, the young generation has no idea of our ethnic history, tradition and customs. If we were preoccupied only with our individual life, we Manchu would become extinct in the ever changing world. How devastating would that be? . . . The Manchu people are at this historical juncture obligated to record what is happening and what has happened.

While rectifying Han ethnocentrism embedded in research about Manchu history and the Qing dynasty, many Manchu scholars undertook studies from an indigenous perspective. Manchu studies also greatly contributed to sharpening the Manchu image in contemporary China. It seems that this group, which was once muted, has gained another platform to voice its historical “truth” and debate current affairs.

It is said that the well-known Ten Days Massacre in Yangzhou is an eye-witness account by WANG Xiuchu of how Manchu troops slaughtered people and raped women in May 1645. It revealed the conflict at the eve of the Qing domination through racial discourse, i.e., only the Han monarch was legitimate, and the barbarian rulers would only create racial hatred. Many Manchu scholars are suspicious of the account. They have tried to clarify by investigating the population in Yangzhou at that time and have pointed out that the Manchu Eight-banner men could not speak Chinese, and it was Han traitors and bandits who killed their compatriots.

B. Self-empowerment and Rebirth

With only seven members at the outset, the first Manchu Studies Association in Shenyang, Liaoning Province was established just as Manchu studies began to thrive. In 1987, it was officially approved as a legal local ethnic minority organization. By 1998, there were already 66 Manchu Associations scattered in China, including one in Hong Kong and another in Taiwan. Most were officially recognized by local authoritative departments, and served the needs of social liaison and academic exchange. The attempt of Manchu self-empowerment has been mainly realized through a number of Manchu Associations since then. As a non-official medium, the Manchu Associations have been dedicated to building intra-Manchu networks and facilitating negotiations for a better group position in China. The ultimate goal in their agenda is to obtain a Manchu autonomous region. Their belief is that the larger the Manchu administrative unit is, the more advantages the Manchu group would have. For instance, the rights given to the ‘county or above’ levels of autonomous units include not only legislative authority and more seats in the autonomous government, but also economic benefits, i.e., to retain local taxes.\(^{25}\)

Other than appealing for more autonomous counties, townships and an autonomous region, these Manchu associations also revived the group by celebrating a new ethnic festival. An innovative *Banjin* Festival (meaning birthday in Manchu language) was reinvented in 1989 to highlight the Manchu identity through annual celebrations. While Manchu people began to applaud the new ethnic festival “*Banjin*,”\(^{26}\) a Manchu festival “*Bala*” officially designated by the primary journal for Chinese minority nationalities, *Minzu gongzuo cankao* (A Reference Guide to Nationalities’ Work) was replaced without being noticed. Furthermore, once Xinbin achieved Manchu autonomy at county level, and therefore, was entitled to legislative rights, the *Banjin* Festival was written into the local autonomous law and stipulated as a local statutory holiday. As an initiative in the Manchu Associations’ agenda, the recreation of a new festival exclusively for Manchu people, is seen as


\(^{26}\) “*Banjin*” in Manchu language means “birth” or “thriving,” which commemorates the day when the first emperor of the Qing Dynasty Hong-Taiji (AISIN GIRIO Hung-Taiji in Manchu language) renamed the group as “Manchu” on the 13th day of the 10th lunar month in 1635.
promoting cultural heritage and enhancing internal cohesion, which is considered the most crucial factor for group continuity. The festival is also expected to reinforce distinctions between Manchu and the rest of China’s populations and legitimate Manchu existence. It thus, furthers the agenda of Manchu identity. The following event is self-explanatory in this regard. On 17 December 2007, 400 students and teachers in the Wula Street Manchu Elementary School in Longtan District, Jilin City celebrated the Banjin Festival by showcasing Manchu dance, eagle taming, sports, games etc. in a Banjin Gala. The Gala aimed to immerse kids in Manchu culture, so that the non-material legacy of the group can be passed down.\textsuperscript{27}

Among these 66 Manchu associations, room for manoeuvre varies in accordance with their distinctive geopolitical location. Taking a glance at Beijing, because it was the capital of the Qing Dynasty, there is a large Manchu population. Nevertheless, what the Beijing Manchu community has done in the course of Manchu self-empowerment has been limited. Despite the fact that Beijing is geopolitically well-located, the Beijing Manchu community experienced difficulty in being approved by the local censorship for the Banjin Festival celebration. The embarrassing positioning of the Manchu group in the post-Mao era is also reflected in the attitudes of senior Manchu officials. In an interview a Beijing Manchu cadre said that only one Manchu Minister did not resent his Manchu identity and was willing to do something for the Manchu group; whereas some other prominent Manchu officials are reluctant even to acknowledge their ethnic affiliation.

Among the diverse social actors involved in the Manchu identity movement, the overseas Manchu communities offer insight into the trans-national aspect of the Manchu identity revival movement. Every year, Manchu communities outside Mainland China return to Northeast China to connect with their roots, including Manchus from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, and the United States. These travellers reminisce about an honourable collective Manchu self through what they had seen and experienced in their visits in Northeast China. These visits have minimised cultural distance between past and present and have yielded a rediscovered and self-valued ethnic identity. These visits to local Manchu organizations and prestigious Manchu individuals also helped to forge a transnational Manchu network. The Manchu community in Taiwan is the

most proactive, and Taiwan Manchu delegations frequently visit Northeast China. After the trips, a number of nostalgic articles have been published in the Manchu Cultural Quarterly, such as one written by WENG Fu-hsiang, Vice President of the Taiwan Manchu Association:

We Manchu are categorised as the second largest ethnic group in Taiwan, along with Han, Mongol, Tibet and Hui. But our existence as Manchu is at stake, and that position is impossible for us to retain. In Mainland China, the central government states that minority nationalities have equal status, but the government is still wary of the Manchu. It is obvious that the Manchu people in the Mainland China can only have autonomous counties, whereas many nationalities with less population have their autonomous prefectures and autonomous regions. Therefore, there is no essential difference in the status of the Manchu under the ruling parties in Taiwan and the Mainland.28

In some sense, trans-national influence has unconsciously recharged both the scholarly reconstruction of Manchu identity and Manchu self-perception since the 1980s.

C. Manchu as ‘Others:’ Backlash or Catalyst?

Apart from the endogenous efforts, we may well take into account some external factors contributing to the recreation of the Manchu identity in the past decades. The overwhelming costume dramas and TV series about Manchu historical anecdotes and historical records can be taken as rich sources, which have been produced to not only entertain audience, but also provide us with a publicly perceived Manchu image. In fact, prior to the reform era, most films concerning the Qing Dynasty were about patriotic Han Chinese who fought against the corrupted Manchu monarchy. The images of the Manchus were rather vague until Hong Kong films and costume dramas about the Qing Dynasty began to pour into the Mainland market from the 1980s onwards; making the historical image of the last feudal regime, the Qing Dynasty, the natural representation of the Manchu group. LI Han-hsiang, a well-known

Hong Kong director should be given credit; his productions, such as 
Chuilian Tingzheng (Governance behind the fallen curtain) and 
Huoshao Yuanmingyuan (Burning the Yuanming Garden) have be- 
come household names. The antagonism between the Manchus and 
the Han also contributed much to such productions. Many costume 
dramas captured the theme, for example, Shu, jian enchou lu (Book 
and Sword, Gratitude and Revenge) adapted from Jin-Yong’s 29 fic-
tion tells the story of a secret anti-Manchu mass movement during 
the Qing Dynasty.

The latest productions including Yongzheng huangdi 
(Yongzheng Emperor), Shaonian tianzi (Young Emperor Shunzhi), 
Tiezui tongya Jī Xialan (A Silver Tongue: Ji Xialan’s Story), 
Zaitiang LIU “Luoguo” (Chancellor Hunchbacked Liu), Huanzhu 
Gege (My Fair Princess ), and Modai Huangfei (The Last Em-
presses), just to name a few, have all been hits with Chinese audi-
ences. In some sense, all these recently produced dramas offered 
mixed images of the Qing Dynasty and Manchu group, which are 
rather different from the mainstream narrative about the Manchu 
Qing Dynasty, a weak dynasty crushed by foreign encroachment, 
with merely a few good emperors. Being built on floating historical 
accounts, the massive productions of costume dramas and TV series 
about the Manchu during the Qing Dynasty have functioned to 
reawaken the historical memory of Chinese people and reconfigure 
the Manchu image to certain extent. With the patronage of the con-
ceptualized distinction between Han Chinese and Manchu, an 
“imagined” Manchu community and symbolic boundary have been 
gradually formulated by both Manchus and non-Manchus.

Many Manchu people, however, are unhappy about market-
oriented productions with distorted and stigmatized Manchu 
images. Given the opportunity, the Manchu Associations always 
boycott negative representations of the Manchu group. In the 
“Manzu yi nian dashi ji (A Chronicle of Events in 1996)”, we can 
find a paragraph about boycotting the costume drama Fengliü 
huanghou (The Romantic Empress).

We heard from Chengde Ethnic Affair Committee regarding 
their complaint about the TV series The Romantic Empress and an inquiry telegram of the Panjin Manchu

29. Jin-Yong (Gam Yung in Cantonese) is the pen name of Mr. Louis Cha, who is 
one of the most influential Chinese Wuxia (martial arts and chivalry) novelists and co- 
founder of the Mingpao Daily in Hong Kong. His works have been adapted numerous 
times into films, TV dramas and video games etc.
Association in August. Our association called a standing committee meeting, and we decided to turn in our petition to the State Ethnic Affairs Commission. Another case is the contention about *NA Wu*. *NA Wu* is a costume drama awarded by the State Ministry of Culture. As a stereotyped Manchu Eight-banner man, *NA Wu*, a loser, is a flawed and weak descendent of a Manchu Eight-banner man. He indulged himself in playing with birds and crickets, and made a living by pawning his family’s goods after the collapse of the Qing Dynasty. The Manchu communities were annoyed by this lazy, stupid stereotype of the Manchu Eight-banner man; which sparked complaints. The Manchu Associations planned to hold a press conference to boycott the drama, but were soon reconciled by officials who stressed that there should be harmony between nationalities. The triumph of the Manchu Associations was, however, that they were allowed to participate in previews of costume dramas or TV series related to the Manchu group, in order to avoid future distortions. The irony here is that mass productions have become an undeniable counter-force to help the Manchu group be reckoned as a distinctive, yet largely assimilated minority group.

Since the Manchu group has become the most thoroughly sinicized of ethnic groups after they entered China proper, the Manchu people today are rather ambivalent towards their ethnic identity. While the process of “Manchu other making” in films and TV series continues, they are also able to reacquaint themselves with their group culture and self-discover their identity from time to time. Simultaneously, mass productions also lead to a process of identity recognition by non-Manchu people, who form conceptions of ethnic categorization. Through objectivizing gaze contesting with anti-objectivization, and ethnic amnesia with ethnic memory, Manchu historical images in mass production have actually helped people to re-conceptualize ethnic boundaries.

III. NOSTALGIA AND CONSUMABLE ETHNIC CULTURE

Both the root-retrieving tours of transnational Manchu communities and financial constraints of the Manchu Associations that affected the Manchu identity revival moment have contributed to the upsurge of Manchu ethnic tourism in the past decade. The Manchu Associations have been collaborating with local govern-

---

ments to identify Manchu ethnic historical and cultural resources. A number of nostalgic features such as costumes, rituals and living habitats have been displayed to differentiate the cultural image of Manchus.

Apparently, the Manchu are more closely assimilated with the dominant Han population than are the other minority groups. So when it comes to tourist consumption, it is difficult to identify what is an intrinsic Manchu style. Virtually all that the Manchu group has is their past: a shared ancestry and relationship to the Qing dynasty. Like “Manchu language fever” and the boom in Manchu cultural studies, ethnic tourism in the Manchu areas, the ‘ethnic minority industry,’ Litzinger calls it, has similarities with the nostalgic tourism of other contemporary ethnic groups in China. Nostalgia permeated in the contemporary ethnic tourism is not an invention of the ethnic groups in today’s China. It is a peculiar sentiment and spirit that repeatedly emerge at historical moment of social change. Therefore, it is necessary to review the evolution of “nostalgia” in order to assess the awakening Manchu nostalgia programmed in the Manchu identity reconstruction movement since the 1980s.

A. Nostalgia: Legacy of Four Centennial

The word “nostalgia” was first invented in the late 1700s by a Swiss doctor to explain the pathology of unusual homesickness, that is one could be overwhelmed and led into a serious medical condition if one were haunted by fantasies of home. Nostalgia, as a medical discovery, proved enlightening in the following centuries by evolving in its definition to mean “a type of autobiographical memory.”

From the twenty century, nostalgia was employed by social scientists to unveil a commonly occurring social syndrome that is embodied by salient reminiscence among people. According to sociologically theorized nostalgia, people are likely to view the past, where they used to be, and the present, where they are, in a dualistic manner; the former is like a sanctuary with a high degree of certainty and security compared to the latter. In this sense, sociolo-

gists enabled a shift of nostalgia "from the spatial to a temporal dimension,"\textsuperscript{34} where one could conflate old self with a new context with selected rosy memories of the past.

In my view, nostalgia is not a dilemma, to return or not, but a soothing therapy for people to offset uneasiness experienced under new circumstances. Nostalgia resurfaced with its positive aspects to make one's identity complete and continuous by merging new differences with the familiar past. It seems that the perennial obsession for one's past is no longer a disease awaiting cure. Rather, it has therapeutic value by alleviating anxiety due to spatial movement and/or temporal changes. To look back at the past and to mystify or magnify it is one way to reconstruct oneself in full meaning. Nostalgia, in the socio-psychologically sense, is restorative and somehow voluntary. The readily occurred nostalgia preserves its sentimental and complicated dimensions; whereas the realization of self limitation makes one rational and realistic in configuring nostalgic expression and behaviour at present. In other words, "what to remember and how to remember" requires "active reconstruction of the past-active selection."\textsuperscript{35} To figure out "what to remember and how to remember," we should scrutinize three aspects that make nostalgia significant today.

In the first place, the nostalgic syndrome identified by sociologists was found existing at both personal and collective levels. As "a different form of desire," nostalgia "may be a construct of the individual or may be drawn from public representations or images of the past."\textsuperscript{36} In some sense, personal and collective nostalgia are complementary, because personal memories and a reminiscent mood may be spread between individuals and agglomerate collective nostalgia, which further permeates more individuals and eventually helps to solidify personal nostalgia. A common reminiscence shared by many people becomes a vehicle to connect individual and group experiences, and the past and present. By recalling, remembering and reconstructing a common past, the politicization of collective nostalgia is able to "serve the purpose of forging a national identity, expressing patriotism. It also might reflect selective re-


membering and selective forgetting that occur at the collective level.”

The intangible collective past and reconstructed memory could be fulfilled by reproducing the stereotyping cultural symbols. Chan provides an example of the construction of Huang Da Xian temple in Zhejiang, where both overseas Chinese pilgrims and Zhejiang natives employ nostalgic “Huang Da Xian as a symbol of nationalism to reinforce a Chinese identity.” Nostalgic spirit becomes a source of meaning, making individual and collective identity sound and informed; meanwhile, nostalgia empowers individuals and groups by linking people with constructed attributes of similarity. Despite its validity in constructing similarity, nostalgia however, “is not immune to politicization and commodification by political and commercial forces.” For example, the construction of Malaysian ‘Cultural Theme Parks’ and the creating and making of nostalgia through the Parks is virtually a politicization of power relations in the Malaysian state.

I argue that nostalgia is not only a source of meaning but also that the meaning could be innovatively re-crafted and manipulated to exert power. The loss of “a sense of importance” and uncertainty of being displaced have all contributed to the resurfacing of nostalgia under the context of socio-political change. It is particularly true for “ethnic groups and nations that have available evidence of that past,” because nostalgia is deemed important increasing a sense of belonging to a glorious past in contrast to their current situation.

Nostalgia is a strong therapeutic desire to maintain personal identity meaningful in different contexts, and it “establish[es] an emotionally charged relationship between an individual and the past. . .it can also serve as a vehicle for xenophobia, anger, fear,

42. ibid.
hatred and anxiety." Just as we've discussed in previous sections, nostalgic sentiment enables Manchus to re-acquaint with the history of their ancestry, and to reconstruct themselves as more meaningful social entities in the post-Mao era. Nostalgia could be easily manipulated by social agents to serve different ends. It could be manipulated to politicize or commercialize, but this is just a different facet of nostalgia. To some extent, there is vagueness involving the way nostalgia is instrumentalized, politicized or commodified, but this is just another side to a two sided coin and it depends on which side lands up. In the following section, we will look at how nostalgia plays as indispensable role in regenerating the Manchu identity, commodifying the group's culture and simultaneously fueling the group's political appeal.

B. Manchu Ethnic Tourism: A Nostalgic Commodity

The nostalgia for the Qing monarch and Tungusic tribal tradition embedded in Manchu ethnic tourism has served to re-fashion the Manchu image in today's China. Shenyang (Mukden in Manchu language, meaning 'prosperous capital') was one of the capitals of the Manchu empire. This city's historical legacy has been tailored for tourists' consumption of the Manchu culture. There was renewed attention to the Shenyang Imperial Palace (Shenyang gugong) and the Eastern and Northern Mausoleums (Dong-ling, Bei-ling, Nurgaci and Hong-Taiji's mausoleums). Moreover, a 'Qing Dynasty Street,' adjacent to the Shenyang Imperial Palace, was built in the 1990s with support from the Shenyang municipal government. The Street forms a coherent entity with the Shenyang Imperial Palace, which symbolically articulate the pervasive Manchu existence in the locality.

Commencing construction in 1987, the Jinlin Yitong Manchu Folklore Museum was designated a "Patriotic Education Base" by the Jilin municipal government in 1995, an "Academic Exchange Base" by the Jilin Academy of Social Science in 1998, and a National 2A Tourism Destination by the State Bureau of Tourism in 2002. The museum shows elaborately a collective Manchu "self" that is timeless, ancient and primitive, the legendary origin of the Manchu group, adventurous fishing and hunting in olden times,

44. Nurgaci and Hong-Taiji were the founders of the Qing Dynasty. The former established the Later Jin Dynasty in Northeast China; the latter founded the Qing Dynasty in 1644.
family daily life, etiquette, customs and habits, as well as Manchu people in today’s Yitong. An ancient, industrious, and warrior-like Manchu image is being portrayed and immortalized by the rich display of Manchu Qing dynastical antiques.  

The Shenyang Manchu Association, the Shenyang Landscape and International Travel Agency, and Lixiang Town together built a Manchu folk village in the East Mausoleum (Dongling) District in Shenyang at the end of the 1990s. The Folk Village presents persuasive evidence of Manchus’ living folk culture. It has three Manchu style houses with Sülun totem poles that used to be erected in traditional Manchu courtyards. There are textile weaving exhibitions, traditional wedding performances, and dance shows to expose the living culture of rural Manchu people who are considered to be exemplars of the authentic Manchus. It is said that the Manchu Folk Village is often used for the shooting of costume dramas. The ‘packaged differences’ of the Manchu group have been made so tangible to tourists that we may say these ‘images of timeless primitivity’ are effective in constructing peoples’ knowledge of this ethnic group. Compared with the majestic mausoleum of the ancestors, the Manchu Folk Village appears to be a secular myth that immerses visitors back in the Manchu people’s natural and unaffected remote past. According to Litzinger, this kind of ethnic cultural reproduction ‘is an upgraded primitivity, the recovering of a difference’. Although the Manchu image recreated in the village is too ambiguous and has no tangible connection to their daily lives, such attempts have reacquainted people with the historical legitimacy of the Manchu group. It manifests nuanced historical continuity; and somehow helps to institutionalize Manchu self-representation within the state’s narrative of ethnic cultures. While re-crafting a living Manchu group through traditional appearance, the Manchu group has been implicitly repositioned in the multi-ethnic political scene in the post-Mao China.


46. In a Manchu legend, a crowd of crows flew over Nurgaci’s body to protect him from being killed by his the Ming soldiers. The Manchu people therefore erected poles with plates on top to feed crows, known as Sülun poles.


In the past decade, there were many folk villages of this kind built in Manchu concentrated areas, such as the Tianlong Cave Manchu Folklore Village in Benxi Liaoning Province, the Wula Street Manchu Folklore Village in Jilin, and the Xiangzhazi Manchu Folklore Village in Huairou, Beijing. A few are currently being built, including the Beiyinhe Manchu Folklore Village in Heilongjiang and the Changbai Mountain Manchu Folklore Village in Fusong, Jilin Province, etc. In the summer of 2007, a Manchu Folklore Gala together with Manchu Traditional Sports Games were staged by a Manchu township, called Labagoumen, in Beijing’s suburban area Huairou. Visitors were not only offered Manchu performing arts, a day tour of the staged Manchu village, and a visit to the village Manchu museum, but also were given an opportunity to live with rural Manchu families to experience Manchu daily life. A middle-aged Manchu woman in the village called LIU Wanlian felt ashamed that she couldn’t speak the Manchu language or cook Manchu dishes; therefore, she learned some simple Manchu greetings, and enrolled in the village sponsored Manchu cuisine class to learn how to make typical Manchu dishes and snacks.\textsuperscript{49} It seems that fragments of historical memory have been meticulously selected, and pieced together to cater to exotic tourist requests. The newly interpreted Manchu cultural image is readily planted into people’s minds and coexists with the group image portrayed by the great number of the Qing Dynasty costume dramas produced in recent decades. It has helped to reinforce a certain style of Manchu identity in the new historical context. Just as Schein comments, these are “seen not as a consumption of culture, but as a sensible way to preserve and celebrate through commodification.”\textsuperscript{50} The newest trend to celebrate Manchu culture is to craft the Manchu image online, the most accessible and relative sensible way favoured by younger Manchu online generation. In the next section, I will elaborate how internet community plays an important role in the Manchu identity reconstruction movement and its renewal of a seemingly obsolete ethnic past.


IV. CREATING ONLINE-SELF IN THE CHINESE CYBER SPACE

Manchu ethnic websites are thriving against a backdrop of a dramatic boom in the number of internet users in China, called wangmin, netizens. By December 2007, there were already 210 million internet users, and Chinese people who can access the internet are increasing rapidly with an annual growth around 20 percent. At present, the number of Chinese internet users or netizens is ranked second largest in the world, according to an annual report released by the China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC). It is also noted that over 72 percent of internet users among the massive Chinese online population are educated and young, below the age of 30. Over half of Chinese netizens surf the internet on average 16.5 hours per week.51 Along with the tremendous development in telecommunications and internet technology, it is remarkable that four out of the world’s top ten websites are privately owned Chinese websites, namely, www.baidu.com, www.qq.com, www.sina.com.cn, and www.163.com. Even the state leaders in China chose to embrace the internet rather than stand by watching. Premier WEN Jiabao has his own facebook page and HU Jintao had a brief online chat with Chinese netizens in 2008. In September of the year, the “Shi ‘Jin’ ba ‘Bao’ fans web” (assorted eight treasures rice pudding website), an officially endorsed personalized website for President HU Jintao and WEN Jiabao was put on the People’s Daily website, where their fans can register to be “shi ‘jin’ fan” or “baobao’ fan,” and are able to express views and write to their leaders.52 Despite the fact that internet publications and online actions related to China’s politics are under the surveillance of the internet censorship, Chinese netizens have gained a relatively unprecedented freedom of expressions on a wide spectrum of topics.

Every day, Chinese online users surf on the internet to browse up-to-minute domestic and world news, search information and disseminate their views. They vigorously participate in a variety of dia-


52. China’s netizens use “shijin fan” (“assorted rice pudding”) to indicate they are fans of President Hu. In Chinese, the middle character Jin is the same one as in Hu’s name; “babao fan” (eight treasures rice pudding) highlights the bao from Wen Jiabao; "fan" pronounced the same as "rice" in Chinese. See http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/8198/132796/index.html. Accessed on October 9, 2008.
logues on the online Bulletin Board System (BBS), converse, exchange ideas and even confront with a number of people who could dwell anywhere in China and in the world.

The Weblog (boke) is a highly customizable online platform that fascinates Chinese internet bloggers who want to publicize their personalized narratives in a much better decent format. The development of celebrity bloggers further boosts this lively way of online communication. Whilst sensitive information is filtered by firewalls and many websites are screened, the dynamics and robustness of Chinese cyberspace has an undeniably profound impact on the formation of Chinese world views and social lives.

Chaozuo\textsuperscript{53}, internet hype has created miracles for many Chinese internet users who successfully transformed themselves from a mere name to “somebody” in cyber sphere. The recently banned \textit{Rentou sosuo}, which literally means “human-flesh searching (cyber manhunt)” was capable of utilizing collective power to hunt a perceived wrongdoer, expose his or her private details and punish his or her moral stance.

Chinese cyberspace provides a vast platform for the general online population, who would otherwise be merely passive recipients, to express themselves. Many Chinese netizens are testing the waters by voicing their opinions over certain social issues and apply online pressure on the Chinese government. The Weng’an Riot in June 2008\textsuperscript{54} is just one of these cases. Information swiftly disseminated online and cyberspace became one of the few available channels for people in the rest of China to learn what was going on in that southeast mountain county. The internet appeal for justice emerged as a kind of power to force the government to publicize the incident, rather than adhere to suppressing measure like they did before.

Among general online public, those who favour political issues and always utter radical viewpoints are called \textit{fen qing}, raging

\textsuperscript{53} There are many well-known names in Chinese cyber space. A reporter Muzimei gained overnight fame by publishing her sex diary in her blog. A girl in rural Sichuan was photographed by a netizen and soon became a net star, called \textit{Tianxian meimei} (goddess sister), who was picked by Sony Ericsson as its mobile phone spokesperson.

\textsuperscript{54} On the night of June 28, 2008, a 15-year old school girl’s death sparked violent conflict between many local residents in Weng’an County in China’s Guizhou Province with the local policemen. The mass gathering for justice turned into a chaos, and rioters smashed and burnt the police station and vehicles, because they believed that the alleged suicide was a rape and murder crime committed by the son of a county official.
youth. They tend to be “diligent constructors, active contributors” of Chinese nationalism that is surfacing online, and they sometimes go beyond “having a say on the internet” and manage to mobilize others in order to exert their social influence on social or political issues. For example, angry Chinese fen qing called for boycott actions against the French Carrefour Supermarkets in China after the Olympic Torch Relay incident in Paris in May 2008. The Carrefour boycott incident underscores roaring nationalism among the young Chinese online population, who longed to host the Olympic Games and therefore had zero tolerance for the “bullying” the torch carriers endured on route of the “sacred flame relay.” Their protest against French support for the Dalai Lama’s separatism, endowed these Chinese fen qing with a “politically correct” ideological basis for a campaign against “unfriendly” Western countries both on- and off-line.

By circulating different views, a variety of boundaries have emerged and the grouping and re-grouping of like-minded netizens is constantly taking place, which has spurred countless sub-cultural communities. Under such circumstances, a number of Manchu online communities have appeared naturally. Whilst cyberspace is wielded to fight for national pride and dignity; it is also utilized as a new genre of social action to declare perversively the cultural superiority of Han Chinese over minority nationalities. The following is just such case of emerging cultural-centrism or Sino-centrism in Chinese cyberspace.

On October 15, YAN Chongnian, a well-known historian with expertise in Manchu studies, was slapped at a book signing ceremony in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province. The person who assaulted Yan is addressed by his web nickname, Da han zhi feng, “the Spirit of the Greater Han.” He accused Mr. Yan of being a Han jian, “traitor to the Han” by raising a list of quotes from Yan’s monographs about the Qing Dynasty. It seems that some active netizens seriously dis-

56. In April 7 2008, the 2008 Olympic Torch Relay in Paris was interrupted by “Tibet Independence” activists who tried to snatch the torch from a wheelchaired torch bearer JIN Jing and, French President Sarkozy implied that he would boycott the Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony to impose pressure on China over Tibet. The disruption of torch relay and the threatening remarks from the European leaders enraged many Chinese. They argued that the French retail giant Carrefour donated a large amount of money to support Dalai Lama and “Tibet Independence” organizations, so Chinese should stay away from Carrefour supermarkets. Many angry Chinese netizens even stood outside the supermarkets to stop people who attempted to go shopping in local Carrefour stores.
approved Yan's sympathy for the Qing Dynasty in his TV lecturer series aired on CCTV (China Central Television). He considered Yan's arrival in Wuxi a humiliation for the local natives whose ancestors suffered from the Yangzhou and Jiading Massacres when Manchu troops conquered these two cities in the Early Qing Dynasty. Waiting for Yan's signature in the line, the man delivered two slaps swiftly when it was his turn to get the signature. He was immediately detained and fined RMB 1000 for the assault. Yan expressed his disappointment after the incident, and said his encounter was not merely an individual misfortune for a 74 years old man, but for the whole of China's society, where academic research had no dignity and researchers had no deserved respect for their opinions.57

The incident stirred up heated discussions on- and off-line. There are online voices condemning the brutal behaviour towards a senior scholar; however, it seems that applause for the heroic slaps prevails over the former in cyberspace. The man, who owns an online shop Hua Xia Yi Guan (Hua Xia Costumes) on the leading Chinese online auction website taobao.com,58 quickly gained fame among his anti-Manchu compatriots as a national hero. When he was released after ten days' detention, he was welcome by a group of Han culture enthusiasts to celebrate his heroic behaviour.59

Aside from those quotes, greater paranoia is caused by the cultural hegemony they perceived after CCTV broadcast Yan's research on the Qing Dynasty, which made them feel deprived of the right to express their opinion about the Qing rule and Manchu rulers. Though they had never lived under the reign of Qing Dynasty, they contended it traumatized the national-esteem of Chinese who were defeated and ruled by nomadic barbarians, de facto colonizers. It seems that the disapproval of Yan's research statement also pulled many Manchu websites into troubled waters, and many were crashed subsequently by unidentified parties. As a result, these Manchu websites had to temporarily close or relocate to other IP addresses. After filing police reports, many Manchu netizens encountered battle with some Han Chinese netizens in a temporary forum where some Manchu netizens assembled after their web


58. Taobao.com is the leading e-commerce C2C platform in China, and one of the biggest comprehensive online shopping websites in Asia. It has 80 millions users and daily transaction over CNY 300 million.

“home” were hacked. They accused the Han chauvinism and the unfair treatment of the senior Han historian who had just positively commented on the Qing Dynasty.

To some extent, the Han Chinese neitizen who assaulted his- torian YAN Chongnian reflects the rising Sino-centric sentiment of a young online generation observed in Chinese cyberspaces. In his monograph about Chinese cyberspace nationalism, Xu stated that “the advent of the internet and the online sphere has provided Chinese grassroots nationalists with an unprecedented channel to vent their anger, form their opinions, and most importantly, have an impact.”\(^6\)\(^1\) Meanwhile, he pointed out the dualistic character of Chinese cyber nationalism as a “blend of a jubilant victor and a humiliated victim,” and its potential “to be fanned up into a wild flame” of social action.\(^6\)\(^1\)

A. The Unbroken Chinese Cultural-centrism towards the Manchus

As a matter of fact, Chinese cyber nationalism was not created yesterday but is rooted. The awakening of Chinese nationalism can be dated back to the Republican era when the revolution’s pioneers tried to find solutions to save the country from Western encroach- ment and the internal decay of the Qing Empire. However, Chinese nationalism actually grew out of cultural-centrism among the Chinese worldview in place for thousands of years. The reason is that all revolutionary forces, at that time, placed the ruling Manchus and Western forces in the same category as dalu, barbarians. A new China would be restored only if these evil and uncivilized segments were removed from the country. Despite the fact that the Manchu ruler was recognized as the “son of the Heaven” according to Confucian orthodoxy, there had been anti-Manchuism on and off throughout the Qing’s reign. Anti-Manchuism was a natural product of persistent Chinese “cultural-centrism” or “Sino-centrism,” according to Laitinen\(^6\)\(^2\).

The antagonism that derived from Sino-centrism first prevailed among Ming dynastic loyalists in South-east China in the early Qing Dynasty. At that time, Manchu rule had not fully occupied the region, where there were a great number of Ming loyalists who used

---
to be Ming officials who had become the Ming officials through the Ming imperial examination, and most defended when Manchu troops tried to gain full control of the territory. Those Ming loyalists together with many other intellectuals who preferred Ming rule, due to Sino-centrism, actively opposed rule by the “barbarians” and refused to serve the new dynasty. Moreover, these Han people were forced to adopt Manchu dress and queue, which was considered humiliating.

The privilege that evidently existed between the Manchus and the mass Han Chinese sparked anger among Han people, where the Manchu military banner men had been receiving stipends and living in inner Manchu enclaves. Anti-Manchusiam was in the first place rooted in the pro-Ming intellectual and gentry strata. The spreading discontent made the Manchu emperors in the early period of their dynasty very sensitive to unfavourable expressions of resistance against the Qing rule, even though they had to rely on Han Chinese officials to maintain their sovereignty. The tension was obvious, and suppression on literary works in this regard could be supposed through for example “word prison” (wenzi yu) and literary inquisition. To extinguish anti-Qing sentiment among pro-Ming people, especially the literati class, the Qing government persecuted those people cruelly. Many books criticizing the Manchu rule and containing unorthodox rhetoric were confiscated and burned. During the reign of the Qianlong, officials were ordered to compile the Four Treasures (siku quanshu). While selecting classics to be included in the series, a list of suspected rebellious and anti-Manchu writings was also taken away and destroyed and anti-Manchu writers were punished. This, to a great extent, reflected discontent and anti-Manchu sentiment among Chinese intellectuals.

In general, the pro-Ming intellectuals can be categorized into two types. Some adhered to Sino-centric prejudice, but only expressed their anti-Manchu grievances subtly in their writings; therefore, poetry of this kind was prevalent. The other type of pro-Ming intellectuals was desperate and they turned to “pure” research of Chinese ancient classics to pursue a utopian vision of Chinese society. While the Ming memory faded away gradually, anti-Manchuism among the literati and gentry class became more or less attenuated in the mid-Qing era or reached a low ebb awaiting another surge.

The anti-Manchuism reflected in pro-Ming intellectuals’ literary works was virtually the tip of the iceberg. While the early Qing rulers cruelly persecuted the intellectuals who vented their hatred
of the Manchu rulers by composing poetry, the resentment hidden in Chinese grassroots agrarian society resurfaced like a wild flame. Laitinen pointed out that the discontent of peasants and other agrarian populations with the reigning dynasty had been constant in China's historical record and massive peasant rebellions could always cause dynastic change. In other words, the uprising did not occur because the Chinese peasants regarded the Manchus as being inferior to the Han people, but rather because they generally disapproved all dynastic rulers. It just happened that political power was in the hands of Manchu rulers. therefore, most peasant uprisings, the Nian Rebellion and the Taiping Movement thrived in the 19th century combined anti-Manchism and their revolutionary slogans, such as the widespread slogan jan Qing fu Ming (over throw the Qing and restore the Ming).

By the end of the Qing Dynasty, the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the failure of the 1898 Reform, and the Boxer Uprising (1900) deeply shocked all Chinese patriots. The decaying Qing Empire and its inability to face Western encroachment motivated many patriotic Chinese to act in hopes that they would be able to rescue the country. The influence of Western nationalism eventually helped to foster political consciousness and a divide between Chinese and Manchu emerged. The early anti-Manchu prop-

63. ibid. p.31.
64. The first Sino-Japanese war was between the Japanese imperial navy and the Beiyang Force of the Qing Dynasty. It was a war over regional dominance. After being defeated, the Qing government signed an unfair treaty with Japan, ceded the Liaodong Peninsula to Japan, and also paid war reparations. Japanese troops pushed forward to Manchuria in the aftermath of the war. The war revealed the inability and corruption of the Qing government, stirred anti-Western sentiment across China, and led to the Boxer Uprising and the 1911 Republican Revolution later on.
65. It is also called the “Hundred Days Reform”. The reform was led by a group of officials and scholars who had progressive minds and sought to strengthen China, such as WENG Tonghe, KANG Youwei and LIANG Qichao. They aimed to introduce the constitutional and parliamentary political system to China, and so did other reforms. The reform was resisted by the conservative forces in the Qing imperial court. After 103 days, the Empress Dowager took over political power, and arrested reformers. KANG Youwei and LIANG Qichao went into exile abroad.
66. The Boxers were members of an anti-foreign secret society that emerged in Shandong. They killed Christian missionaries and foreigners, and sought to “fu qing mie yang (revive the Qing and defeat the foreign force)”. In the summer of 1900, they attempted to besiege the foreign diplomatic compound in Beijing with the subtle approval of the Qing court. The Boxer Uprising was defeated when the Eight-nation Alliance attacked Beijing.
aganda from pro-Ming literary works was employed by Chinese patriots as “an ideological basis for modern Chinese nationalism.”

The late 19th century became a herald of the 1911 Revolution to overthrow the decayed old order of the central kingdom. The Manchus inevitably became a scapegoat for all wrongs and political turmoil that the country had encountered, and the portrayal of Manchu as “colonizer” and backward tribesmen was overwhelming. Political awareness was soon “transformed from Sino-centrism to nationalism,” and according to Laitinen, “the Manchus were seen as colluding with the powers, anti-imperialism now easily turned into anti-Manchuism." Furthermore, the May Fourth Movement in 1919 was another powerful wave of revolution in Chinese history. The active student patriotic vanguards vigorously criticized and boycotted foreign powers, and at the same time, anti-Manchuism was placed as one of primary tasks of their revolutionary agenda.

To sum up, unbroken anti-Manchuism throughout the Qing Dynasty and in the wake of the Qing’s downfall was actually a reflection of “ethnocentrism” or “Sino-centrism” among Chinese who had high collective-esteem and a sense of cultural superiority over millennia. Sino-centrism led to prejudice against the Manchus, who were considered culturally inferior simply because they were from the peripheral regions of China. According to the late Qing patriotic vanguards, therefore, to save China from troubled waters, Manchu rule must be overthrown and a culturally pure new nation restored. Han-Chinese chauvinism towards the Manchus finally culminated in the subsequent internal and outward crisis during the late Qing and early Republican period. Sino-centrism in China’s late 19th to the early 20th century was anchored in anti-Manchuism by different social strata, scholar-gentry, secret societies, patriotic students and revolutionary vanguards. Anti-Manchuism helped to validate their pursuit of social betterment and radical change and marked the cultural encounter of the Manchu group in the following decades.

When we give a glance at the Manchus in the contemporary era, we have to take into account what had happened to them then in order to know what is happening to them now. As a popular quote from Karl Marx states, “history tends to occur twice, the first time as a tragedy, the second time as farce.” To some extent, we

68. ibid. p.48.
may say that Manchu websites blossom partially against the back-
drop of a new anti-Manchu surge in Chinese cyberspace. As we’ve
discussed in the previous section, the incident in which the historian
YAN Chongnian was slapped for his complementary comments on
the Manchu emperors has hinted of a rising anti-Manchuism or
Sino-centrism and in part of Manchu reactions in today’s cyber-
space in China.

B. The Imagined Manchu Community Online

The newest trend of the Manchu identity revival is to make a
Manchu cyber-self. As one of the officially recognized minority
groups, Manchu people have voluntarily put forward quite a few
gateway websites for wider audiences, in particular, by offering
intra-group support and communication spheres, such as the
Manchuria.net (Man-zhou wang), http://www.manchuria.cn69, the
Northeast Manchu Online (Dongbei Manzu zaixian), http://www.
dbmanzu.net/70, and the Jixiang manzu (Propitious Manchu), www.
manchus.cn, as well as the Mukden Manchu Culture Research and
Development Association (Shengjing Manzhou zu wenhua yanjiu
fazhan xiehui), http://www.manju.cn/. In addition, there are a few
websites specially designed for Manchu language learners, the
Manchu language input: http://www.anaku.cn/, the Manchu-Han
School: http://www.man-han.com/manju/, and the Banjin Manchu
Classroom http://www.banjimbi.com/. Moreover, there are bulletin
boards limited to Manchu intra-group communications, including
http://manchusky.qq.topzj.com/, http://www.kangyong.net/, and the
Qingshi luntan (Qing Dynasty Forum) http://qingshiti.tsite.com/. Al-
most any social issue or event related to the Manchu group taking
place in the country can simultaneously find its report in these
aforementioned Manchu websites. The “perception of value simi-
larly”71 enables Manchu website members to relate themselves to
Manchu communities across the country, without time and space

69. From September 8, 2008, the URL address of the Manchuria net has been relo-
cated to www.imanchu.com.

70. According to a brief notice in the Northeast Manchu Online North American
Weblog, the website of Northeast Manchu Online was closed on October 8, 2008 due to
financial constraints and technical reasons. Interestingly, a guest to the weblog com-
mented on the closure of the Northeast Manchu Online, saying “Shame on you! You
can only make a big sound. How come you are unable to sustain the website? Don’t you
have lots of fellow Manchus who are celebrities and entrepreneurs?” http://www.

71. Tasuku Igarashi et. al., “Culture, trust, and social networks”, Asian Journal of
limitations. In addition, these websites accommodate online Manchu lessons, videos, downloadable Manchu 800 sentences, and electronic files of precious Manchu archives.

This section will focus on the imanchu.com (Manzhou wang), one of the most representative online home for the Manchu internet surfers. It is the most informative and up-to-date website. The layout of the website is rather eye-catching, with a variety of Manchu artworks embedded in it, including pictures of Manchu paper cuts, Manchu embroidery, and Manchu costumes. Quite a few Manchu members are able to post Romanized Manchu messages or Manchu language characters to make the website look bilingual.

There are rich picture collections on the website, where people with different interests can find portraits of the imperial figures, old and new maps, treasure photos of the Qing imperial court, and photos of famous Manchu people from different times. Interestingly, many contemporary famous Manchu individuals from across Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong are all listed along with their outstanding achievements. In particular, people who are considered central to Manchus pride, namely Taiwanese pop singer QI Qin, Hong Kong film star Rosamond KWAN Chi Lam, and a rising film star in the Mainland, HU Jun are also listed on the website. Furthermore, there are more than 50 visual materials for online watching and downloading, including movies, costume TV series, documentaries, Manchu language videos etc., including a bilingual publicity clip called Manzu fengqing (Manchu Customs) and a Manchu traditional dance, the Ladies of Manchu Imperial Court. Most are welcome by website visitors, for example, the 372nd Anniversary of the Banjin Festival Gala was watched 250 times; Bernardo Bertolucci's movie The Last Emperor and Hong Kong director LI Han-Hsiang's movie Eight-Banner Men, both received more than 400 hits; the Chabuchaer72 Trip, about an enthusiastic Manchu gentleman who went to visit a Shaman's son to learn the Manchu language has received 514 hits; the Sanjiazi Village Manchu Language Conversations got 546 hits; the Manchu Artist LIU Lanfang's Popular Tale (Pingshu) Nurhachi, with both free online watching and downloading, has received 601 hits. The Great Qing Dynasty Gala, has gained 475 hits, and so on so forth.

---

72. Chabuchaer is a Siber nationality autonomous county in Ili, Western Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The oral language of the local seniors is mixed with Manchu language.
The main focus of the Manchurian.net is however Manchu current events. For example, a Jilin 2008 Olympic Torch Relay bearer, SHI Lixue, president of the Jilin Manchu Folklore Study Association, posted an article immediately after his leg of the torch relay on July 8, 2008 to express his excitement at not only being a Beijing Olympic torch bearer, but also a torch bearer of Manchu culture. He says:

Raising the cauldron (xiangyun torch), wearing sunshine and carrying wind, I am one of the Beijing Olympic Torch bearers. I share the responsibility with the cauldron in my hand. Every step means the distance between China and world is being shortened. As a scholar in the Manchu folklore field, I am dedicated to rescuing endangered Manchu folklore through discovering from grass-root Manchu people and beyond classical texts. In this regard, I have been a torch bearer in that I am holding and passing along the torch of Manchu culture, which still shines in the world civilization.

Likewise, festival celebrations, local gatherings among Manchu people, and accomplished Manchu individuals, all events and news related to Manchus across the country are publicized in a timely fashion. Two days after the May 12th earthquake in Wenchuan, Sichuan Province in 2008, a message about the Manchu people’s donation to the Sichuan earthquake victims was posted. Beside the message, there are articles recalling how all Manchu people in the Qinglong Manchu Autonomous County escaped from the 1976 Tangshan Earthquake catastrophe through accurate earthquake prediction. There is also an article about a Manchu seismic expert GENG Qingguo whose prediction about the Wenchuan earthquake had been neglected for some reason. In addition, there is an article discussing how the Qing emperors took quake-relief measures.


Another outstanding column that draws people’s attention contains updates about current research topics on Manchu history, historical figures, Shamanism, and legends. For people who seek Manchu language learning opportunities, one Manchu sentence is posted daily on the website, to gradually instill native language learning. The Manchu classroom recording is also uploaded for distance learning, along with a number of other visual and audio materials. Surprisingly, electronic books of Manchu research and bilingual archives of the Qing Dynasty are also available for online access. There are also downloadable Manchu songs, both newly-composed popular songs by young Manchu volunteers, and songs of the Qing Dynasty, that demonstrate how the website manages to meet a wide range of interests. Website members are not only allowed to enjoy these Manchu songs and music online, but to download them and use them to personalize their cell phone’s ring tone.

Different from the resources above, the Manzu luntan (Manchu forum) is only open to registered members. The main sub-forums are: Manchu Development Forum, Manchu History Forum, Manchu Historical Figures Forum, Manchu Genealogy, Manchu Language Classroom, Manchu Culture Heritage Forum, Manchu Clothing and Food, as well as Manchu Art.

Interestingly, the registered members call themselves “Manzhou” (Manchu), the original group name in the Qing Dynasty, rather than “Manzu,” the officially designated title after 1949. There are also some suggestive user-IDs, such as Manchu Baturu (Manchu hero), Manchu Feiyangu76, Manchu Soldier, Manchu Warrior, etc. Furthermore, many interesting and in-depth discussions are taking place within the forums every day. One posting can explain why the forum attracts so many registered members. A Manchu living in Northeast China says:

Today I saw the forum and finally found the place that I have longed to be, a place where I can voice my complaints. Why cannot we find our own culture in our native land? Why is there nobody standing up for justice for us? Why do people travelling to the Northeast have to experience Korean culture? Why do I have no idea about Manchu culture? Let’s help our native land to generate a boom! All my fellow Manchus, please support the Manchu

---

76. Feiyanggu was a well-known General in the Qing Dynasty who helped Kangxi emperor defeat Galdan’s rebellion at the Battle of Zunmud.
children under the Changbai Mountain. Let's protect our native land and build a Manchu cultural tourism site under the Changbai Mountain. I can only think about it, rather than being capable of doing it. If any fellow Manchu member is interested in it, please contact me directly at 0439-xxxxxxx, and my real name is WANG XX.

Agree or disagree, the forum members participated in the discussion express their attachment to the place where the Manchu group originated. One member, "Manchu Warrior," supported the proposal and urged every Manchu to pay a visit to the Changbai Mountain at least once in their life time. He argued that the whole Manchu group should learn from the Muslim people, who must visit Mecca once in their life; therefore all Manchus should visit Changbai Moutain where their roots are.

To further expand the discussion, we can find a variety of postings in forums, including postings tracing family or clan origins, questions about the Manchu language, and generic interests towards Manchu cultural practices. Manchu people can not only retrieve their Manchu family names and family history online, by sharing what they know about their families, but also can express their deep concern for Manchu development in the contemporary era. Among all these postings, the salient frustration is that the Manchu group is too sinicized to sustain the Manchus' own culture. For example, a registered member with the ID "Jarguci" summarized three mistakes that the Manchu group has made:

First, growing up by learning Mandarin (nikan\textsuperscript{77} language), as a result, the Manchu people can only think in Mandarin rather than in the Manchu language;
Second, taking Han Chinese' history as Manchu history, as a result, many Manchu people have less knowledge about our own group;
Third, taking the Han culture as Manchu culture, as a result, it has led to a complete loss our own culture.

This posting further sparks heated discussions regarding whether Manchu survival is being threatened in the contemporary era. The participants in this discussion indicate that the Manchu people are scattered here and there in the country, and many are

\textsuperscript{77} "Nikan" is how Han Chinese are called in the Manchu language. Most registered members of the Manchu Forum use the word to indicate Han people in order to emphasize their difference from the Han.
struggling to maintain their basic living standards. Meanwhile, accomplished Manchu people have no intention to do something for their own ethnic community. Therefore, they are pessimistic about the future of the group, due to limited autonomy, inadequate financial support, and social-cultural circumstances.

Similar discussions are continuous among members. On July 1, 2008, a long-running online discussion took place. A member with the ID “Humansky” raised a question: “What do you think is the thing most needed for our Manchu group?” The multiple-choice survey included eight questions, and 93 members participated. The questions and responses are as follows:

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We lack a charismatic leadership</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and preferential policies from the government</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic coherence, identity</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial resources</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stronger organization</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit and awareness</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The government is good to us, so we lack nothing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One participant, “Baturu” (hero), indicated that the Manchu group needs self-organization, land, and accumulated strength to await the best time to revive themselves. “Manchu warrior” argued for a different set of goals for the Manchu group: it is imperative to establish self organization and an ethnic autonomous region; for Manchu individuals, it is indispensable to strengthen ethnic awareness.

The survival anxiety of the Manchu group is striking. The key to reviving the group has become how to meet the criteria for what is designated to be a legitimate ethnic group in China. There has been a long-running discussion since May 2007 among a few members. “Manchu Baturu” proposed a series of actions that all Manchus should take to revive their group:
1) To identify a Manchu from others, we should wear identical archer's rings (Jade *banzhi*);  
2) This website will be built into a communication space; whereas the annual assembly place for our Manchu people should be Hetuara, the first capital of the Qing Dynasty.  
3) We should conduct pilot-visits among common Manchu people and learn what they need the most.  
4) Pioneers should form our ethnic organizations at different levels;  
5) We strongly appeal to have our own autonomous region or prefecture  
6) Advance the ethnic economy and preserve ethnic language and culture.  
Let work together for our group. Please contact me at xxxx@sohu.com, my contact phone number is 130xxxxxxx.

"Manchu Iron Calvary" agreed with "Manchu Baturu," and said "the Northeast Manchu homepage has ordered the first batch of archer rings, Manchurian.com members should order our own or collaborate with other Manchu websites to produce more archer rings. If all Manchu people wear archer rings, our Manchu revival will have greatly progressed."

The following postings mentioned challenges they may meet in order to realize their group goal, "Humansky" said:

Our ethnic group should revive, but we have to make clear in the first place, what are our reviving goals. To negotiate for an autonomous region is one realistic goal. Yet, it is somehow sensitive to talk about Manchu autonomy. Would people who were ruled by us 100 years ago like to see us revived? Would it be possible that they allow us to have an autonomous region? Would they feel secure when the Manchu people inhabit together and form an autonomous region with 10 million people? Nevertheless, it all depends on whether we are dedicated to it. However, we have to be aware of the difficulties and barriers ahead in the course of achieving our autonomous region. I myself would like to contribute to our Manchu group's revival.

---

78. Archer's ring (Jade *banzhi*) is what the Manchu banner men put on their thumbs to protect fingers when they practiced archery in the Qing Dynasty, and it later became popular among Han males.
Let's unite together to establish a solid organization so as to push forward the Manchu revival!

Apart from the salient anxiety towards the future of Manchu people, Manchu Forum members are very sensitive about their image in the eyes of "others", i.e., non-Manchu people. For example, they were irritated by some hostile comments appearing online in October 2007; hence, they discussed whether they should go to the website baidu.com, a Chinese leading search engine, to confront those Han Chinese netizens who disseminated insulting words targeting the Manchu group and the Qing Dynasty. They blamed the anti-Manchu sentiment that stigmatized every Manchu and their group reputation. Member "rao qi (Fearless cavalry)" reported:

A number of anti-Manchu people are clustered around the Qing Frum at Baidu.com. They spread humiliating words to stigmatize our reputation. There were quite a few Manchu people confronting them, but we were many fewer than them. Should we go to the Qing Forum to be against them? The reason why they are so aggressive is that there is no moderator for the Qing Forum, so we can apply to be the moderator who at least can exercise his/her duty to remove those postings cursing Manchu people. It conforms to the principle of posting messages at Baidu.com; moreover, we can take the advantage to promote our authentic culture and history. What do you think about my suggestion?

There followed a posting from "North Pole," who is a moderator of the Manchu Forum.

It is absolutely passive to leave the rumours on, which would make people confused and increase their hostility towards our group. However, if we confronted them, more people would be interested in such kind of confrontation. Once there were more people joining the online conflict, they would believe lies and later internalize them to oppose us. There are two solutions: first, the forum should be monitored by a moderator who can assure equal dialogue; second, even when we are accused by the other side, we should debate with them, without triggering more hatred. If we could act accordingly, people loving to see a fight would feel bored and leave eventually. In my opinion, the
first solution is more feasible. We could introduce our culture to those who are really interested in our Manchu culture. As is well-known, today's Chinese youth are used to searching for things on baidu.com. I read an essay before, which discusses the characteristics of the post-80s generation, i.e., they are inclined to search from Baidu for whatever information they need. “Baidu” is influential. If we can achieve something by letting people know more about us, I will fully support your suggestion.

Member “Gentleman Yangyang” responded to the discussions by stating:

Any Manchu individual can decide to confront people who insult the Manchu group or not. One thing I want to say is that there used to be a Manchu and Mongol forum respectively at Baidu.com; however, some people intended to mess up the forums. As a result, both forums ceased. Later on, the Mongol forum re-emerged and appeared to allow only postings about Mongolian culture, customs and language, which filtered hostile people away; nevertheless, the Manchu forum today is still overwhelmed by anti-Manchu postings, which have submerged our postings about Manchu culture and language.

Confrontations between Manchus and “others” are readily available online. To a great extent, both Manchu netizens and some unfriendly non-Manchu netizens conflate today’s Manchu group with the later Qing monarchy. Just as shown by the discussions above, the Manchu Forum members grieved when others insulted the Qing Dynasty and the Manchu group in general; whereas the corrupted and defeated Qing Dynasty has prejudiced many Chinese, so that they still criminalize the Manchu group today. It is just the mixture of the past and present that defines the Manchu position and their identity negotiation today.

On July 6, 2008, member “Baturu Jang-gin”\(^\text{79}\) forwarded some postings from other websites that accused the Qing Dynasty:

Since Manchu Qing entered China proper, they virtually halted the development of Chinese civilization. Their worst deed is that they misinterpreted Chinese history and culture, and also forced Chinese people to be their slaves.

---

The Manchu queueTV series, which was all about stories of "slaves and masters," disgusts me.

Despite the chaos at the end of the Ming Dynasty, Ming officials dared to offend the emperor by criticizing his policies. If the emperor promulgated policies with no benefits to the grassroots, the cabinet would disallow it. Somehow, we can see a tendency toward constitutional monarchy, and, meanwhile, capitalism had emerged in Ming society. However, it was swept away by the peasant uprising leader LI Zicheng and the Manchu barbarians. Fortunately, SUN Yat-sen devoted his life to "expel the barbarians and restore China"; thus, our nation saw the dawn of hope again.

Another netizen applauded the statement above and commented, "Bravo, our hero who eliminated the Manchu barbarians will be perpetuated in Chinese history."

No doubt, these postings irritated the Manchu netizens and led them to fight-back on the cyber battlefield. They demanded that these anti-Manchu postings be removed and mentioned some weaknesses of the Han people, in order to defend their own group. The self-empowering of the Manchu group on online forums is unprecedented, and a group that used to keep a low profile in order to assure its existence showed a stronger desire than ever to make their voices heard.

Likewise, The Manchu Forum not only serves as a battlefield for Manchu netizens to confront bias and insults against the Manchu group, but also as a space-transcending sphere to re-brand and self-represent the Manchus. Strong emotional attachments to the Manchu group also blossom. For example, one member posted a poem in April 2008, entitled "Manifesto of the Manchurians." It read:

My fellow Manchu people, please kindly note
Do not call yourselves "Man zu" any more
Others would laugh at you for your ignorance
They would belittle you because of the decline of our group

My fellow Manchu people
Please make sure not to bend your noble head
Because our Manchu ancestors had never compromised with anybody
And their blood of freedom has been running in your veins
My fellow Manchu people
Wherever you are
Please do not forget the land where our ancestors grew
and dwelled
Our Manchu ancestors were buried there, and our future
is also there. . .
My fellow Manchu people
Please do not forget our common ancestor
Learn our own history,
Because our ancestors had created glorious wonder in
the world
They defeated the most powerful empire at that time
The people under their reign were more than their herds
of sheep
My fellow Manchu people
Please look at the stars in the sky when you are
confused and helpless,
Because the stars are the souls of our Manchu ancestors
and
They will lead you to go forward

A member called "Half Manchurian (ban ge manren)" applauds the
poem and indicated that he/she would like to learn more of
Manchu's history. Another member inputted Manchi characters to
show enthusiastic support for the declaration.

After recalling these online discussions and debates, we cannot
help but wonder what motivated this surge of online representa-
tions by the Manchu people. In some sense, it is the traumatizing
experiences of the older generations that fuelled self-empowerment
and the revival of Manchu identity among younger generations. For
example, one complained:

Our old house now belongs to the government, and people
can buy tickets to visit it. My grandfather’s grandfather
was a General in the Qing Dynasty and my grandfather’s
father had lots of land. But my grandfather was over-
thrown as a landlord, and my father said that in his gener-
ation he would be assaulted if he identified himself as a
Manchu. . . .

80. See the posting at www.manchus.net/bncbbc/dispbbs.asp?boardid=2&id=439, 17
As a young Manchu wrote in the Manchu Forum, "I am not proud of the Manchu Qing Dynasty because the Qing Dynasty was eventually eliminated as a result of its arrogance. The Manchu group helped the Han Chinese to expand their territory, but we ourselves are becoming almost extinct."

Likewise, the author of *Sichuan Man zu bianqian shi* (The Sichuan Manchu Transformation) tried to discover the ultimate historical reason that caused the Manchu situation to deteriorate. According to local archives about the Manchu community in Sichuan since the Republic of China, a number of Manchu Eight-banner men were jobless, and over 85 per cent made a living by pulling rickshaws or running wayside stalls. Many Manchu families could not afford their children's education. It was not rare that many Manchu families starved to death. At that time, there were three things that Manchu people in Chengdu had to refrain from doing in order to be safe: they couldn't travel far from home, travel outside the city, or go out alone.

To sum up, the rising wave of Manchu group's empowerment at cyber domain is based upon the vicissitude of the group since the past century, or a mixture of historical pride and today's inferiority complex.

Notwithstanding the bold online discussion, all statements have to comply with certain "game rules," with a webmaster who can issue warnings. Upon entering the forum, one is reminded that Manchu website members should not address political topics but only focus on the Manchu cultural issues:

Please strictly abide by the three principle and six disciplines of the Manchuria homepage. Please make sure that you only post rational opinions, and do NOT get involved in any political issue.

The implication here no doubt is that the Manchus try to differentiate themselves from those seeking to realize their group appeal through a political stance against the current Chinese regime. It is also a message to the state's censorship that the discussions at this site have no intention to challenge the state's power, nor stir up hatred between minority nationalities and Han Chinese. It might

also be a suggestive statement that the Manchu people group would like to strive for more group autonomy in a negotiated manner, within the current political system.

V. CONCLUSION: BORDERLESS BOUNDARY

For today’s Manchu people, the glorified era of the Qing Dynasty is a source of power. They seek to program nostalgia into their identity reconstruction movement. As a consequence, a renewed Manchu image that seemingly matches the stereotyped image of an ethnic minority in China has been exhibited in order to brand their cultural distinctness. The grassroots Manchu language fever, the scholarly exploration of Manchu history and culture, refurbished ethnic tourism, and vibrant online communities have demonstrated different dimensions of the Manchu identity negotiation.

The thriving Manchu websites since the beginning of the new millennium, have apparently greatly facilitated intra-Manchu communication and mobilization. Moreover, they have diversified the strategies of the group’s exposure and its identity reconstruction in the context of China’s multi-ethnic landscape. Being the most manageable, most efficient and accessible vehicle, the emergence of Manchu online communities, to a great extent, has extended the Manchus’ ability to reclaim their legitimacy within a new domain. More importantly, it helps to reinforce the boundary of imagined Manchu communities in a manner that transcends space and time, and considerably contributes to a collective fantasy of an imagined home. It doubtlessly represents a trend from scholarly-oriented identity reconstruction to massive online mobilization.

Many young Manchu netizens are fascinated by their group culture; for example, a Manchu young man learnt a Manchu popular song from the Manchurian website, and sang the Manchu language solo at an event at the City University of Hong Kong. By offering the Hong Kong audience an eye-opening experience, he became a focus of attention on campus after the performance and posted a message to show his excitement about having proved the Manchu language remains alive. Similarly, a female young singer recited the Manchu language lyrics of her song, entitled “The Eight-Banners Capriccio (Baqi suixiang)” when she participated in the “12th China Central Television (CCTV) Young Singers Contest” in May 2008. The talented Manchu lady may have intended to highlight her uniqueness as a minority singer, yet it was the first time that a Manchu individual got to speak in her native language on the
most important stage for young performers in China. The video was then uploaded to Manchurian.com and was warmly applauded by all viewers.

A bundle of distinctive ethnic customs is inextricably linked to the group images of those minority nationalities who are acknowledged by the State; therefore, they are tactically utilized by the Manchu group to “display authenticity”\textsuperscript{83} in order to justify their very existence. The fabrication of the Manchu online images is rather nuanced, with fragmentary group memories and subjective narratives. On the one hand, the images manage to encapsulate the glories of Qing Dynasty in spite of overshadowing shame due to the unfair treaties endorsed by the corrupted late Qing government. On the other hand, they attempt to go far back into archaic times in order to portray the Manchu as a primitive nomadic group, secluded, mysterious, heroic, and a “cultural fossil.” The newly created Manchu image conforms to Chinese ethnic minorities’ requisites prescribed by the state. By and large, these representations seem to keep “switching” between “reference frames.” They “move between different more-or-less inclusive conceptions of the group’s boundary”\textsuperscript{84}. Such “switching” or contradictions in the Manchu identity reconstruction can be observed in the pervasive forms of power negotiation between the Manchu group with those uttering contempt for the Qing Dynasty. It can also be observed when the Manchu group tries to stand on an equal footing with other well-positioned ethnic groups, or ethnic groups who are privileged in the strategic hierarchy of ethnic minority groups in China.

Context and personal experience are vital in making ethnic identity an optional choice in today’s China. The uniqueness that might have been burdensome and therefore lead to detachment or avoidance in the past can have added new value under the new social context, which acts as a catalyst to enable meaning to shift towards individuals’ desired directions and helps to define who they are. Meanwhile, the new social context has also made some collective concerns and social actions possible. The initiatives of Manchu identity reconstruction, such as reviving ethnic language, reinventing a traditional Manchu image for ethnic tourism, striving for regional autonomy, and extending the network to the internet, are all


“easily reshaped in response to varying situational contexts and growing social needs.”

To evaluate the authenticity of these representations has no significance because ethnicity has become more concerned with the symbols of ethnic cultures than with cultures per se. Reproduced Manchu identity is metaphorical in all its dimensions, since made and remade Manchu identity have been interwoven with politicised boundaries and legitimised social positioning, both on-and off-line. Cultural mechanisms have been manipulated to serve group empowerment “with the potential of transforming the activities of off-line into an online context,”

while the process in turn functions to ‘primordialize insiders’. 

In the multi-ethnic mosaic in China, the Manchu group, which used to be unnoticed, is breaking away from culturally obscured and politically peripheral status quo. The salient vicissitudes of the Manchu group have been invested with new meaning through the online “autobiographical identities,” in order to form “a more complete identity.”

This certainly empowers the Manchu group as they re-negotiate their collective socio-cultural and political position in China. The reconstruction of an attenuating ethnic identity manifests the Manchu group’s confrontation with the “group hierarchy” of minority nationalities in the post-Reform China. Complementing each other, the actions of ensuring self-empowerment in real society and in cyber domains will continue.

---


88. ibid. p. 310

89. ibid. p. 310
GLOSSARY

I. Chinese Names

Geng, Qingguo  
Hong-Taiji  
Hu, Jieqing  
Jin, Baoseng (Aisin Girio, Baosen)  
Jin-Yong (Louis Cha)  
Lao-She (Shou, Qingchun)  
Li, Han-hsiang  
Li, Weihan  
Li, Zicheng  
Liu, Lanfang  
Nurhachi  
Sun, Yat-sen  
Shi, Luxue  
Puyi (Aisin Girio, Puyi)  
Wang, Xiuchu  
Weng, Fu-hsiang  
Yan, Chongnian  
Zhou, Enlai  

II. Organizations

Beijing China Nationalities Museum (Chinese Ethnic Culture Park)  
Beijing Ethnic Affairs Commission  
Beijing Manchu School  
Beijing Municipal People’s Congress  
China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC)  
Chinese People’s Consultative Conference  
First Historical Archives of China  
Jilin Academy of Social Science  
Lixiang Town  
Mukden Manchu Culture Research and Development Association (Shengjing)  
National Bureau of Statistics of China  
The Propaganda Department of the Communist Party of China  
Central Committee
III. Locations

Beijing
Beijing East District
Chabuchaer
Changbai Mountain Manchu Folklore Village, Fusong
Eastern Mausoleums/ Northern Mausoleums
Hebei
Heilongjiang
Hetuara
Labagoumen, Huairou
Huang Da Xian
Inner Mongolia
Jilin
Jinlin Yitong Manchu Folklore Museum
Liaoning
Northeast China
Sanjiazi Village
Shenyang Imperial Palace
Tianlong Cave Manchu Folklore Village, Benxi
Wula Street Manchu Folklore Village, Jilin
Beiyinhe Manchu Folklore Village, Heilongjiang
Weng’an
Xiangzhazi Manchu Folklore Village, Huairou
IV. Movie Titles

Chaguanr (Teahouse)
Chuiliang Tingzheng (Governance behind the fallen curtain)
Fengliu Huanghou (The Romantic Empress)
Huanzhu gege (My Fair Princess)
Huoshao Yuanmingyuan (Burning the Yuanming Garden)
Luotuo Xiangzi (Rickshaw Xiangzi)
Modai Huangfei (The Last Empresses)
Shaonian tianzi (Young Emperor Shunzhi)
Shu jian enchou lu (Book and sword, gratitude and revenge)
Tiechi tongya Ji Xiaolan (A Silver Tongue: Ji Xiaolan’s Story)
Yongzheng huangdi (Yongzheng Emperor)
Zaixiang LIU Luoguo (Chancellor Hunchbacked Liu)

V. Media

Banjin Manyu ketang (Banjin Manchu Classroom)

Chaozuo (Internet Hype)
Da han zhi feng (The Spirit of the Greater Han)
fen qing (raging youth)
Hua Xia yiguan (Hua Xia Costumes)
Manchuria.net
Muzimei
wangmin (Netizens)
Northeast Manchu Online
Renrou sousuo (Human-flesh searching)
People’s Daily
Jixiang Manzu (Propitious Manchu)
Qingshi luntan (Qing Dynasty Forum)
“Shi ‘Jin’ ba ‘Bao’ fans wang” (assorted eight treasures rice pudding website)
Tianxian meimei (Goddess sister)
www.baidu.com
www.sina.com.cn
VI. Nationalities

Dai 傣族
Kazakh 哈薩克族
Korean 朝鮮族
Manzhou (Manzu) 滿洲(滿族)
Mongol 蒙古族
Nikan 尼堪
Tibet 藏族
Uygur 維吾爾族
Yi 彝族

VII. Other Terms

Archer’s rings 扳指
*Bala Festival* 八臘節  
*Banjin Festival* 頒金節
Beiyang Force 北洋水師
Boxer Uprising 義和團
Cauldron 祥雲火炬
*Dalu (barbarians)* 鞑虏
Eight-Banner Men 八旗子弟
Four Treasures 四庫全書
Grand Secretary 大學士
*Han jian (Traitor to the Han)* 漢奸
Hundred Days Reform 百日維新
Jang-gin 章京
Manchukuo 滿洲國
Ming Dynasty 明朝
Qing Dynasty 清朝
Nian Rebellion 暴軍
*Pingshu (Popular Tale)* 詩書
Shamanism 蕃滿教
Sulun totem poles 索倫竿
*Taiping Movement* 太平天國運動
*Yangzhou shiri (Ten Days Massacre in Yangzhou)* 揚州十日

Yuan Dynasty 元朝
Word Prison 文字獄