

1759-1864

JAMES A. MILLWARD



BEYOND THE PASS

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Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia,
1759–1864



JAMES A. MILLWARD

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To the memory of Celia and Richard Millward

For Madhulika

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In his attempt to cross Xinjiang's Taklamakan Desert in 1895, Sven Hedin found his men to be more of a liability than an asset. When sandstorms threatened and water grew low, he forged ahead while they lost hope, drank camel urine, and died in the sand.

My experience in writing this book could not have been more different—all the way, I have been borne along by the help and encouragement of others. This was especially the case in China, where I conducted the bulk of the research for this book in 1990 while affiliated with the Institute for Qing History Studies at People's University in Beijing. I was extremely fortunate in having as my advisors Cheng Chongde and Hua Li, who on that and subsequent occasions have shared with me their deep knowledge of the Qing frontiers, steered me to the important literature, and introduced me to other scholars in the field of Xinjiang history. The sheaves of letters they wrote gained me a warm welcome among their colleagues in Mongolia, Ningxia, Gansu, and Xinjiang as well as around Beijing, and thus made this book possible. I am thankful as well to Dai Yi and Ma Ruheng at Renda and to Ma Dazheng and the staff of the Zhongguo Bianjiang Shidi Yanjiu Zhongxin for similar help.

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Two extended seminars have added vastly to my understanding of Xinjiang

and the Qing dynasty. The first, a conference and field expedition in Xinjiang organized in 1992 by the Center for Research on Chinese Frontier History and Geography (Beijing) and the Sven Hedin Foundation (Sweden), gave me the chance to travel some of Altishahr's desert roads myself. The second, a month-long summer institute on the Qing palace at Chengde, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and held on the campus of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in 1994, first brought many of the issues discussed in this book into focus for me. I hope the organizers of both events will find in this book some sign that their efforts have paid off.

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J. M.

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PREFACE

"What do you want to study those frontier places for? All the history happened in China!" So a Chinese friend told me many years ago when I spoke of my growing interest in the Central Asian region known as Xinjiang—the Qing dynasty's "New Dominion," or the "Western Regions." My experience during my first years in graduate school seemed to bear him out. Although teachers and classmates encouraged my pursuits, nothing on our reading lists seemed to apply to the far west. This bothered me, but I carried on, motivated (and funded) to a great degree by virtue of the unconventionality and, perhaps, exoticism of my topic. Eventually, my efforts to link my peripheral interests with what seemed to be the central concerns of the field led me to start on a basic, material level, examining the physical exchanges connecting China proper to Xinjiang, and investigating the travelers—mostly merchants—who frequented the routes between China and the new Qing acquisition. Thus began what started as a study of commercial relations between China proper and Xinjiang in the Qing period.

In the course of my reading in the Qing archives, annals, and gazetteers, however, I realized that in the eyes of Qing policy makers, Chinese commerce in Xinjiang was inextricably linked to issues of control. Whenever the activities of commoners became objects of state scrutiny (and on the frontier, that was often), Qing sources almost invariably took care to distinguish the *type* of merchant—or farmer or herdsman—involved, whether they were Han Chinese, Muslim Han, local Muslim, Oirat, Andijani, Kazakh, Kirghiz, or members of another of the groups the Qing carefully distinguished. Thus, I could not consider commerce without reference to this aspect of the Qing government in Xinjiang, an aspect I have called, for lack of a better term, ethnic policy.

Somewhat farther along, I discovered that the two issues I had singled out, the economics of empire and the interactions of people in an imperial context, comprised core concerns of the Qing imperial enterprise and that what I was working to uncover was nothing less than the mechanics and ethos of Qing imperialism. Moreover, during the span of time I chose to study, poli-

cies changed and ideologies shifted as events encroached and the dynasty's circumstances worsened. My Chinese sources reflected a change in attitude toward Xinjiang: what was a Qing empire in the west at the beginning of my period began to sound more like a Chinese one by the end. And in pondering the differences between Qing and China, and why such a distinction seemed odd, I began to reflect again, this time with greater understanding, on why the empire in Xinjiang, a major preoccupation of the Qing court, has been of such little concern to historians in the twentieth century.

This is a study, then, of the workings and conception of Qing empire in Xinjiang during its first phase, from the initial conquest to the time of the mid-nineteenth-century Muslim uprisings that severed the region from control by Beijing for over a decade. Qing economic and ethnic policies in Xinjiang receive the most attention here, but in the course of examining these issues, I attempt also to shed light on a broader issue: the transition from a Qing dynastic empire to a Chinese nation-state.

The chapters below approach this subject according to the following plan. We begin at the Jiayu Guan, the western terminus of the Ming walled defense system, in the early nineteenth century. I consider the ambiguity and liminality of the Jiayu Guan (and Xinjiang) during the Qing and hazard some thoughts on why the historiography of early modern and modern China has paid so little attention to these issues. Chapter 1 then provides geographic and historical background to the region and introduces the discourse on Xinjiang's place in the empire that carried through the 1759–1864 period. In this discourse—the court and scholarly debates over imperial conception and implementation—the discussion of fiscal matters overlay deeper concerns about the proper limits and nature of the empire. In order to justify the conquest, the Qianlong emperor, who had pushed ahead with the conquest of Xinjiang in the face of domestic opposition from certain quarters in China, was concerned that imperial rule in Xinjiang be inexpensive to maintain. His court thus encouraged fiscal innovation in the new territory. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the fiscal foundations, and limitations, of Qing rule in Xinjiang, outlining the means by which the military government was maintained without an agricultural tax base like that in China proper. Despite the emperor's hopes, the dynasty was forced to subsidize the Xinjiang garrisons in order to support its armies and officials there; these chapters quantify the extent of reliance on Chinese silver and examine the various means by which Xinjiang authorities attempted to reduce that reliance. Because many of these means involved the commercial economy, Chinese merchants in Xinjiang came to provide an in-

creasingly important safety margin to the tight budgets under which Qing authorities in Xinjiang operated.

The subsequent chapters examine these private merchants and the policies adopted by the Qing toward their activities in Xinjiang, especially in the south, where the population of native Muslims was highest. Chapter 4 outlines the process of Chinese commercial penetration of Xinjiang, Qing control measures, Chinese settlement patterns, and the extension of Chinese urban culture to parts of the New Dominion. One central problem explored here is the degree to which Qing authorities attempted to segregate Chinese traders from the natives of southern Xinjiang; I examine the construction and inhabitation of walled citadels in southern cities in an attempt to illuminate this question. Chapter 5 describes the experiences of Han, Tungan (Chinese Muslim, today's Hui), and East Turkestani (today's Uyghur) merchants trading between China and Xinjiang. Case studies of two major articles of trade, tea and jade, further highlight these groups' activities and reveal that private commercial links between China proper and Xinjiang were segmented at gateway cities and functionally differentiated among distinct types of merchants plying different routes, including small-scale Chinese Muslim traders, representatives of Shanxi firms, and dealers in silk and jade from the Jiangnan region. Chapter 6 first considers ethnic policy in Xinjiang from a theoretical standpoint, contrasting the historiographical commonplace that the empire was Sinocentrically conceived with how the Qianlong emperor envisioned it. This chapter concludes with a case study of a grisly incident in Kashgar in 1830 that tested, and eventually led to the replacement of, the mid-Qing ethnic policy with one more favorable to Han Chinese. Analysis of this event suggests that part of the explanation to how a new, Greater China arose out of the Qing imperium lies in the convergence of Manchu and Chinese interests in Xinjiang. A concluding chapter traces the crumbling of Qing control in Xinjiang to the dual failure of silver stipends and the Xinjiang commercial economy and argues that the continuation of the debates over Xinjiang by statecraft writers in the first half of the nineteenth century—again, framed in economic terms—anticipated a more assimilationist Chinese model of empire that was to be implemented in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND PROPER NAMES

Chinese terms and names below are given in *Hanyu pinyin* and Manchu ones according to the Möllendorff system. For Mongolian terms, I use Antoine Mostaert's scheme as adapted by Francis W. Cleaves, except that γ is here written "ğ" and "j" printed without the haček. However, for Mongol names I have sacrificed technical accuracy for recognizability and readers' ease, and thus have Torghut, Khoshuut, and Chinggis Khan instead of Torğut, Qoşuut, and Činggis Qa'an. For romanization of Uyghur (Eastern Turki) I follow the system used by Reinhard Hahn in his *Spoken Uyghur*, which is generally recognizable to Turkologists. For practical reasons, "ng" is substituted for Hahn's ŋ (the eng). Foreign terms in the text are generally given in Chinese, unless otherwise noted. Where versions are given in more than one language or where confusion might be possible, the language is identified as follows: Ch. = Chinese; Ma. = Manchu; Mo. = Mongol; Tu. = Eastern Turki, that is, Uyghur.

Researchers working on Qing Inner Asia often encounter non-Chinese personal names for which only the Chinese, and not the spelling in the original language, is available. It is inappropriate to write these as if they were Chinese names (that is, as "Fu Heng" or "Na Yancheng," for example). For such names, I adopt the following convention: the Chinese characters are transliterated in *pinyin* and linked by hyphens. Another method, now common among scholars who use *pinyin* in preference to the Wade-Giles system, is to run the Chinese characters of transliterated non-Chinese (especially Manchu) names together. However, I believe Gen-chu-ke-ze-bang to be somewhat more manageable than Genchukezebang. This convention also instantly distinguishes non-Han from Han personages, while preventing confusion in those occasional cases where a spelling might be a transliteration from either Chinese or an Altaic language (as with Fukanggan or Nayanceng, for example). Of course, the best course of all is to provide both non-Chinese and Chinese spellings; unfortunately, this is not always feasible.

Where possible, names of major East Turkestani and Kokandi historical figures and some terms have been given in Arabic transcription, to conform

to the precedents established by Joseph Fletcher and Saguchi Tōru. There are no universally accepted spellings for non-Chinese Xinjiang place-names, and, indeed, many of those names have been changed frequently over the past two centuries. After an analysis of the spellings in the *Xiyu tongwen zhi* and modern Uyghur-language maps of Xinjiang, I have determined that there is no strong linguistic or historical basis to adopt either of these sources as a standard for place-name spellings; today's official Chinese versions (Kashi for Kashgar, Shache for Yarkand) are unfamiliar and not in popular use even in Xinjiang; some, like "Urumqi" for Urumchi, are based on a P.R.C. system for romanizing Uyghur that has now been abandoned. Thus, again for continuity, I follow Fletcher's spellings in the *Cambridge History of China*, volume 10. It is hoped that these will in any case be the forms most familiar to readers.

I refer to Qing emperors primarily as the Qianlong emperor, the Jiaqing emperor, the Daoguang emperor, and so on. When stylistic concerns require another name in order to avoid cumbersome repetition, I follow many Chinese scholars in employing the temple names Gaozong (for Qianlong), Renzong (for Jiaqing), and Xuanzong (for Daoguang).

Finally, a word on the terms "Inner Asia," "Central Asia," and "Xinjiang." Once, Europeans referred to a geographic and cultural entity known as Tartary. Though few agreed on where Tartary began and ended, or whether it included Cathay or not, everyone knew where it was. Our terminology today is hardly more concrete; thus it is with a certain arbitrariness that I adopt the following usages. In this book, "Inner Asia" is used for those northern and western territories that the Qing dynasty, in building its empire, added to the lands of former Ming China. Thus, Inner Asia comprises Manchuria, Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet. I use the term "Central Asia" here to indicate the geographically central regions of the Eurasian continent, especially the Islamic lands once known by such names as Trans-Oxiana or Turkestan, including the former Soviet Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as Afghanistan. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the region known in Chinese as Xinjiang was commonly called Eastern Turkestan or Chinese Central Asia, and I therefore also include it within my definition of Central Asia. Xinjiang thus falls within a zone of overlap between Inner and Central Asia. I refer to Xinjiang in my title as "Central Asia" for the benefit of browsers or readers who are not China specialists; I intend no political message by this or any other terminological usages in this book.

ABBREVIATIONS

CZGS	Caizheng guanshui (finance and customs). Subject category of archival holdings in the Number One Historical Archives of China.
GPSYYSA	"Gao Pu si yu yushi an" (The case of Gao Pu's illegal private jade sales). <i>Shiliao xunkan</i> (Historical materials trimonthly) nos. 19–28 (Feb. 1930 to March 1931).
GZSL	<i>Da Qing lichao Gaozong shilu</i> (Veritable records of the successive reigns of the Qing dynasty—Qianlong reign).
GZZZ	<i>Gongzhong dang Qianlong chao zouzhe</i> (Palace memorials of the Qianlong Period). Compiled by the Palace Museum, Documents Section. Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 1983.
HJTZ	He-ning, ed. <i>Huijiang tongzhi</i> (Comprehensive gazetteer of Altishahr). 1804.
HYXYTZ	Fuheng et al., comp. (<i>Qinding</i>) <i>huangyu Xiyu tuzhi</i> (Imperially commissioned gazetteer of the Western Regions of the imperial domain). 1782.
LFZZ	Junjichu lufu zouzhe. Reference copy of palace memorial stored in the Grand Council; a class of document held in the Number One Historical Archives of China.
MZSW	Minzu shiwu (Nationality affairs). Subject category of archival holdings in the Number One Historical Archives of China.
NWFLW	Neiwufu laiwen (Communications to the Imperial Household Agency). A class of document stored in the Number One Historical Archives of China.
NWYGZY	Nayanceng (Na-yan-cheng). <i>Nawen yigong zouyi</i> (Memorials of Nayanceng). Rong'an, ed. 1830.
PDZGEFL	Fu-heng, et al., comp. (<i>Qinding</i>) <i>pingding Zhunga'er fanglue</i> (Imperially commissioned military history of the pacification of the Zunghars). 3 vols. (<i>qian, zheng, xu</i>). 1768.
QDDA	Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'an guan (Number One Historical

- Archives of China), ed. "Qianlong chao neidi yu Xinjiang sichou maoyi shiliao" (Materials on silk trade between China proper and Xinjiang in the Qianlong reign). In *Qingdai dang'an shiliao congbian* 12:44–214. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1987.
- RZSL *Da Qing lichao Renzong shilu* (Veritable records of the successive reigns of the Qing dynasty — Jiaqing reign).
- SYMY Shangye maoyi (Trade and commerce). Subject category of archival holdings in the Number One Historical Archives of China.
- SZJL He-ning, ed. *Sanzhou jilue* (Cursory record of three prefectures: Hami, Turfan, and Urumchi), Preface 1805.
- WZSL *Da Qing lichao Wenzong shilu* (Veritable records of the successive reigns of the Qing dynasty — Xianfeng reign).
- XCYL Qi Yunshi, comp. *Xichui yaolue* (Survey of the Western borders). 1807.
- XJZL Song-yun et al. (*Qinding*) *Xinjiang zhilue* (Imperially commissioned gazetteer of Xinjiang), Preface 1821.
- XYWJL Qi-shi-yi (Chunyuán). *Xiyu wenjian lu* (Record of things heard and seen in the Western Regions). 1777.
- XZSL *Da Qing lichao Xuanzong shilu*. (Veritable records of the successive reigns of the Qing dynasty — Daoguang reign).
- YJHL Ge Beng'e. *Yijiang huilan* (Survey of the Yili River region). 1775.
- YJJZ *Yijiang jizai* (Record of the Yili River area). C. 1862.
- ZPZZ Gongzhong zhupi zouzhe. Rescripted palace memorial; a class of document stored in the Number One Historical Archives of China.
- ZTYLSY Yong-bao. *Zongtong Yili shiyi* (Comprehensive survey of affairs in Yili). C. 1795.

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Introduction

Early in July 1805, Qi Yunshi traveled northwestward through the sere, sparsely populated landscape of the Gansu corridor on his way to exile in northern Xinjiang. His appointment to the Baoquan Ju Coinage Office in the capital the year before had not worked out well. When Qi took up his job as overseer, he had been able to check only the books, not the mint's actual copper stocks, because audits of copper supplies were carried out only at fixed intervals. When the scheduled audit took place and a large shortfall left by his predecessor was discovered, the blame fell on Qi, and he was banished to Yili.

Not that this surprised Qi, particularly. In the uneasy years surrounding the death of the Qianlong emperor and the demise of the corrupt imperial favorite, Hešen (He-shen), it had been easy to make enemies in the bureaucracy, and Qi had not improved matters by publicly exposing malfeasance among officials administering the grain transport system. Now they were getting even.

Nor was Qi Yunshi completely unprepared for what lay before him. Before the Baoquan Ju appointment, as a Hanlin compiler he had assisted in a major study of the elite genealogies of Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet, the *Waifan Menggu Huibu wanggong biaozhuan*, and this task had exposed him

to the history and geography of the Qing lands in Inner Asia.* The diary he kept of this journey into exile reflects the objective, empirical approach of an eighteenth-century scholar in imperial employ: "Went west thirty *li* to Scorched Gulch. The earth is red in many places, but there is no gulch." Another day, "Went west forty *li* to Red Axe Lake. It is not a lake." Despite his background, however, as Qi jounced along the stony post road in his high-wheeled cart, the last city in China seventy *li* behind him and the late afternoon shadow of the massive Jiayu Guan (Jiayu Pass) fortification drawing nearer over the yellow plain, his heart grew heavy with the significance of the passage he was soon to make.

Qi knew the Pass's official function: although technically it lay well within the jurisdiction of Gansu province, it was the gateway to Xinjiang, the Qing's New Dominion in the far west. Here his party's papers were to be presented and checked—people could not pass through the stone gate at will. But these formalities did not overly concern him. Instead, Qi was recalling literary descriptions of the brooding crags and wind-swept fortresses that defend the Western Regions frontier. He may, for example, have remembered Li Bo's famous lines,

The bright moon rising over the Tianshan glides into a boundless sea of cloud.
A ceaseless wind over myriad miles whistles through Yumen Pass.
Men of Han descend the Baideng Road; Tartars scout the bay of Kokonor.
From this ancient battlefield, no one has ever returned!¹

With such images fueling his imagination, it is not surprising that Qi found the real Jiayu Guan nothing like he expected. The surrounding mountains were far away, and, he wrote in his journal that evening, did "not seem at all high or imposing." The fort itself was "merely situated on a rise of earth; there is no treacherous defile." Still, he knew the passage from China proper (*neidi*) to beyond the Jiayu Pass (*guanwai*) had to be one of great moment, so, once through, he lingered on the western side.

I stood there, alone, not a soul in sight. I was determined to move ahead,
but at the same time strongly reluctant to leave behind all that I love.

* As mentioned in the Note on Transcription and Proper Names, definitions of Inner Asia vary somewhat. I follow the practice of Joseph Fletcher and the *Cambridge History of China* and take Inner Asia to comprise the regions generally known as Manchuria, Mongolia, Xinjiang (Sinkiang), and Tibet. (Xinjiang is also considered to lie within Central Asia.) Qing control over Manchuria, of course, had been mostly consolidated before the Manchu conquest of China. The eighteenth-century Qing expansion added Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet to the Qing empire.

These feelings warred confusedly within me for a moment while I beheld the landscape. Then, suddenly, I saw it all in a new light.

Qi does not share with us the exact nature of his epiphany, though he hints at it with the following, apparently matter-of-fact, observation: "What the ancients called Yumen Guan and Yang Guan are still several hundred *li* to the west, on the border of today's Dunhuang County. So Jiayu Guan is in fact not really remote."²

Not really remote—its distance diminishes as Qi decides the Jiayu Guan is not one of those dangerous passes into wilderness and barbarism that the Tang poets sang of so emotively. Those lie further west, he reminds himself, apparently resolving the incongruity between image and reality that had puzzled him. But in fact, by Qi's time, Yumen Guan and Yang Guan were no more than memories, ruins lost under the desert, and in any case, he knew he would not pass through them. He was already over the threshold; there would be no other, more definitive moment than this spasm of ambivalence to mark his entry to the Western Regions.

The idea of the boundary has recently been embraced by scholars in the humanities and social sciences as a powerful metaphor and hermeneutic device. At boundaries, differences are articulated and negotiated; decisions are made to include or exclude; categories are drawn up. Not only do boundaries distinguish two entities; they define the entities themselves: there can be no civilization without barbarism, no true religion without infidels, no Occident without the Orient, no Self without the Other. Yet boundaries are seldom rigid. Rather, they are porous surfaces where heterogeneous physical or conceptual zones come into contact and interpenetrate. Nor are they static, but change position, character, and meaning over time.³

Jiayu Guan in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a boundary in all these senses, operating on both physical and symbolic levels. It was a fort and a gate in a defensive long wall, a military checkpoint that patently announced the border dividing the eighteen provinces of China proper, known in Qing sources as the "inner land," from the territory "beyond the Pass." (The paired terms, *neidi* and *guanwai*, remain in common use today, *guan* referring both to the Jiayu Guan and the Shanhai Guan, at the opposite end of the Ming wall, on the coast.) As suggested by Qi's ruminations, it was also, for both educated Qing subjects and the imperial court, a point of contact between the past and the present. Yumen Guan and Yang Guan, gates in the Han Dynasty mural defense system in the northwest, are prominent landmarks in a frontier literature populated with soldiers on lonely borderland duty, exiles banished beyond the pale, and princesses married off to coarse

barbarian chieftains. Verses in this genre employ description of a hostile natural environment to stress the moral and cultural gulf that was seen to separate China from lands outside the walls. These resonances, familiar from Tang poetry or the fictional *Journey to the West* (*Xi you ji*) and easily triggered by the invocation of Han and Tang period Western Regions place-names, attached themselves to the later Jiayu Guan as well. In the period of cultural and strategic retraction that followed the reign of the Ming emperor Yongle (1403–24), this frontier fortress near the northwestern terminus of the wall aptly marked, in Chinese eyes, a boundary between civilization and chaos.

By the high Qing, however, Jiayu Guan was in many ways an incongruous relic. It was not of real strategic significance. No threat lay on the other side, nor was “beyond the Pass” the exclusive domain of non-Chinese; in fact, by this time, it was impermissible to apply the term *yi* (foreign, nonsubjects) to Xinjiang peoples.⁴ Han Chinese^{*} and Muslims from the west had been traveling back and forth in increasing numbers for decades, and Chinese colonies in Xinjiang were thriving. The Pass did not correspond to any climatic zone or particular feature of the natural landscape: where the wall and Jiayu Guan cut across Gansu, one side looks pretty much like the other, and, literalist that he was, Qi Yunshi was quick to note the discrepancy between the “Pass” here and the dramatic topography in the idealized literary images of frontier portals. Jiayu Guan simply divided one part of the empire from another—a purpose that, upon reflection, is not simple at all.

Boundaries and Modern Chinese History

Until quite recently, few Western historians of Qing or Republican China have taken their research beyond Jiayu Guan, and fewer still have done so for the period before the 1860s.⁵ This is despite the fact that the Zunghar campaigns that ultimately resulted in the conquest of Xinjiang commanded the

^{*} The term “Han,” as generally used in the field of modern Chinese history, refers to the native Chinese-speaking inhabitants of the “eighteen provinces” of China proper, as well as migrants from China proper to places in Inner Asia. It is thus roughly synonymous with “Chinese” as commonly used, though not of course with today’s inclusive political meaning of the word (which includes, as well as Han, members of any “minority nationality” with Chinese citizenship). Although as officially defined in the P.R.C. the Han nationality comprises the vast majority of today’s Chinese population, this category in fact subsumes vast linguistic, cultural, and physical variety that in other contexts might be considered constitutive of “national” or “ethnic” difference. The Qing use of the term “Han” in Xinjiang differed slightly; see the discussion of Qing categories in Chapter 6.

attention and strained the treasuries of the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong emperors; despite the fact that two major institutional innovations of the Qing, the Ministry for Governing the Outer Domains (Lifan Yuan) and the Grand Council (Junji Chu), were deeply engaged in the business of acquiring and maintaining the territory; despite the fact that the dynasty chose to reconquer part or all of Xinjiang on several occasions in the nineteenth century, when most modern scholars believe (and many Qing ministers at the time agreed) that more critical problems required concentration of resources along the maritime frontier of China proper; and despite the fact that Mao Zedong and other leaders of the early Communist state likewise made reassertion of Beijing's control over Xinjiang an early priority. Why have so few historians in the twentieth century expended a similar proportion of their efforts on the region and the issues its conquest raises? Why has Qing imperial expansion in Inner Asia not been considered important? When one considers the prominent place occupied by "Western history" or "frontier history" in the historiography of the United States, the almost absolute neglect of China's eighteenth-century westward and northward expansion is all the more remarkable.

This elision of Qing Xinjiang and Inner Asia from the historiography of modern "China" is not accidental. To a great degree, it is the result of how the boundaries of modern Chinese history itself have been drawn by some of the field's most influential historians.

One of the scholars responsible for this phenomenon is none other than Owen Lattimore. This is ironic, of course, because Lattimore, a great friend of the nomad, journeyed personally through Manchuria, Mongolia, and Xinjiang and left an important legacy of travel accounts and historical works focused on the people of these areas and their relations with China. But his best known and most read book, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, by the power of its highly original analysis and its stress on the Great Wall as the boundary par excellence defining the Chinese world, established a framework for understanding Inner Asia and China that few scholars have looked beyond.

In *Inner Asian Frontiers*, rather than survey Chinese–Inner Asian relations chronologically, Lattimore's method was to seek "first principles" in ancient history and frontier geography itself. The bulk of his historical analysis thus concerns the interaction of Chinese and nomad states from before the Qin unification until the end of the Han dynasty in A.D. 220. Lattimore also devotes considerable space to the geographic, economic, and ecological differences between Inner Asian and Chinese areas. From these foundations, Lattimore draws a series of general conclusions: that the Great Wall line func-

tioned to delimit the “geographic field” of Chinese history; that the marginal zone along that frontier served as a reservoir where societies sharing qualities of both the steppe and China proper developed and eventually moved on to conquer China; and that Chinese and nomad history were characterized by interrelated cycles. He casts these observations as laws of history.

Hence for about two thousand years, from the time of the Earlier Han to the middle of the nineteenth century, the combined history of Inner Asia and China can be described in terms of two cycles, distinct from each other as patterns but always interacting on each other as historical processes—the cycle of tribal dispersion and unification in the steppe and the cycle of dynastic integration and collapse in China.

Lattimore’s periodization here—the culmination in the nineteenth century—is significant. In his own travels he was struck by the effects of modern industrialism, particularly railroads, on Inner Asia, as well as the foreign presence in China in the 1920s and 1930s and imperialist incursions into China’s frontier regions. He thus concluded that “it is the penetration of all Asia by the European and American industrialized order of society that is putting an end to the secular ebb and flow by making possible—indeed, imperative—a new general integration.”⁶

Lattimore believed that it was the advent of the West in China in the mid-nineteenth century that brought an end to the pattern of historical interaction along the Great Wall frontier he had identified. Accordingly, he dealt with early and mid-Qing involvement in Inner Asia in surprisingly cursory fashion. He devotes no more than twenty pages to direct discussion of Qing Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet; the century of Qing rule in Xinjiang before the Tungan (Hui) rebellions is covered in less than two paragraphs. *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* thus leaves readers with an impression of the absoluteness of the Great Wall frontier and its enduring role dividing historically antagonistic societies, the interactions of which follow a timeless pattern determined by the geological imperatives of climate and terrain. Only modernity (railways, firearms, Western and Japanese imperialism) could disrupt the age-old pattern and truly integrate China and Inner Asia. Such a view minimizes both the momentous changes in Inner Asia during the early and mid-Qing, and the changed significance of the Great Wall frontier in a Qing (not Chinese) empire that included both China and Inner Asia.⁷

The fundamental contributions of John King Fairbank have likewise served to deflect interest from Qing Inner Asia. Fairbank elaborated a complex of interconnected ideas that for a good part of the twentieth century have shaped

understanding of China throughout, and often beyond, the English-speaking world. Some of these include the application of the tradition/modernity dyad to China; the Western impact/Chinese response paradigm; the notion of spontaneous sinicization through proximity to Chinese culture; and the use of the "tribute system" and "Chinese world order" as models of Chinese relations with non-Chinese. All have come under extensive reconsideration in recent years, and I will not reiterate these critiques.⁸ However, it is worth noting how these key organizing concepts serve to marginalize the story of Qing activity outside of China proper and to heavily veil those aspects of the Qing imperial order that do not fit within a Sinocentric depiction of Chinese history.

None of these concepts was invented, held, or propagated exclusively by Fairbank, of course. These ideas are rooted variously in the early nineteenth century writings of Western China hands and in late nineteenth and early twentieth century nationalistic Chinese interpretations of imperial history. However, it was Fairbank's influential survey textbooks and graduate pedagogy that amplified and entrenched these ideas within our understanding of modern China. Moreover, Fairbank assembled these concepts for a purpose: to explain what has generally been seen as the Chinese failure to respond adequately to the West in the nineteenth century.

Perhaps the most basic of these interdependent ideas is the tendency to view "traditional China" as essentially changeless, or at least incapable of meaningful "transformation." Paul Cohen has examined this approach and remarked upon its origins in the self-congratulatory outlook of the nineteenth-century industrializing West. Cohen did not note, however, how this view underpins one of Fairbank's major interpretive models, the tributary system. The paradigmatic expression of the tributary system model appeared as a chapter in Fairbank's *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast* and, in more detailed form, as one of his and Ssu-yü Teng's three studies of Qing administration. Later, Fairbank developed the thesis further in "A Preliminary Framework" in the introduction to *The Chinese World Order*. There are slight differences of emphasis in these versions, but essential points of the theory remain consistent.⁹

Briefly put, Fairbank argues that through centuries of interaction with non-Chinese "barbarians," especially nomadic tribes to the north, China developed and by Ming times institutionalized a "diplomatic medium" that enshrined Chinese cultural superiority over surrounding peoples and the myth of the Chinese emperor's sovereignty over all humankind. Diplomatic ritual and rhetoric expressed an ideology that recognized no boundedness to the Chinese state, only varying degrees of accommodation to Chinese custom as one moved outward from the Sinic center. The hierarchical con-

ception of domestic political and social relationships, so highly stressed in neo-Confucian thought, was thus extended to include foreign lands within a similar hierarchy that culminated in the Chinese Son of Heaven. In "the Chinese view . . . the imperial government's foreign relations were merely an outward extension of its administration of China proper."¹⁰ Foreign peoples who approached China seeking commercial or other relationships were perceived by the Chinese court—or at least described in court records—as "coming to be civilized." The formal presentation of "tribute" by these peoples, along with such ritual acts as the kowtow, comprised in Chinese eyes a foreign acknowledgment of the supreme virtue of the Son of Heaven, and the foreigners' own subordinate position in the hierarchy. Foreigners were required to go through these rituals, even if they sought only commerce; trade thus assumed the guise of tribute. Diplomatic and commercial partners with a military advantage could be accommodated as well, as long as China's appeasing payoffs could be treated as "gifts in return." As Fairbank described it, this idealized imperial cosmology as laid out in the Chinese classics more or less determined the form of Chinese relations with foreign peoples continuously until the late nineteenth century; the tribute rituals remained the *sine qua non* of diplomatic practice over that same period—this possible, of course, because of the essential changelessness of China prior to contact with the West ("change within tradition"). Moreover, Fairbank suggests, this Sinocentric worldview remained in force even when the ruling dynasty was not Chinese. This had to be so, otherwise the tribute system model would not explain the Qing dynasty's incompetence at diplomacy with the West in the nineteenth century. Thus the notion of "sinification" also plays a crucial role: because China spontaneously absorbed and culturally converted its conquerors, according to Fairbank, the Manchus, too, internalized the conceits of the tribute system and thus were unable to respond adequately to the arrival of European traders and emissaries on Chinese shores.

In this way, the master narrative of modern Chinese history precludes all possibility that the Qing might deviate from the worldview or the diplomatic and strategic practices of its predecessors. Because there is no real distinction in this account between "Qing" and "China," the Qing expansion into Inner Asia—an approach radically different from that of the later Ming—was a somewhat problematic issue for Fairbank, who at first tended to treat the Inner Asian subjects of the Qing as foreign. Following a bibliographic note in "On the Ch'ing Tribute System," for example, he and Ssu-yü Teng write: "This cursory survey reveals many lacunae in our knowledge of *Ch'ing foreign relations: Manchu administration in Central Asia; Sino-Dutch relations*

in the seventeenth century; tributary relations with Siam, Laos, and Liu-ch'iu; the Chinese side of foreign trade in general" (my emphasis).¹¹

Later, in the introduction to *The Chinese World Order*, Fairbank leaves the status of Qing Inner Asia ambiguous. Manchus, Mongols, Turkic peoples, and Tibetans do not appear on a table of "Ch'ing Tributaries as of 1818," although Fairbank's list of the practices that "constituted the tribute system" (granting of patents of appointment, official seals and noble ranks, use of the Ch'ing calendar, presentation of tribute memorials and local products, escort of envoys by official post, performance of the kowtow, receipt of imperial gifts in return, trade privileges at the frontier and in the capital) applies to the dynasty's Turkic officials in Xinjiang as well as it does to foreign rulers—indeed, even Han officials engaged in many of these practices. Fairbank does, however, include Inner Asians two pages later on a second table of "Aims and Means in China's Foreign Relations," where they are relegated to an "Inner Asian Zone"—*outside* the "Chinese Culture Area" occupied by Korea, Vietnam, the Ryukyu Islands, and Japan. This suggests, paradoxically, that the Inner Asians with whom the Qing imperial clan intermarried, worshiped, and hunted (among other interactions) were culturally more distant from the "center" than countries that merely sent embassies, or even than Japan, with whom the Qing had no official relations at all until the latter half of the nineteenth century.¹²

Fairbank recognizes a difficulty here when he points out that the "Sinocentric world order . . . was not coterminous with the Chinese culture area." Even though they were culturally non-Chinese, Inner Asians had to be included in the Chinese world order because of their military superiority. Moreover, in his "Aims and Means" table he indirectly acknowledges that Qing relations with Inner Asia involved something other than the tribute system; the table indicates that Qing foreign relations with Mongolia, Tibet, and Central Asia were conducted through some combination of military control, administrative control, cultural-ideological attraction, Tibetan Buddhist religious attraction, diplomatic manipulation, and/or pursuit of material interest. Of these types of relationships, only cultural and ideological attraction (which Fairbank glosses as *wen* and *de*) seems to fit within the tribute system model.¹³

Therefore, "A Preliminary Framework" leaves Qing Inner Asian areas in limbo: Though part of the Chinese world order, they are not tributaries; though not Chinese, they are not foreign either. Fairbank did not himself pursue the contradictions inherent in the attempt to fit Qing Inner Asia into his "comprehensive" model, despite the challenges raised in the same volume by David Farquhar's article on the influence of Mongol political culture on the

Qing regime and Joseph Fletcher's revelations of decidedly nontribute system style Ming and Qing relations with Central Asian states. Fairbank's interests, and those of many of his students, for the time being at least lay elsewhere: with the nineteenth-century impact of the West and "China's" response.

Paul Cohen's 1984 reflection on the state of American scholarship of China's recent past identified and celebrated what was then a relatively new trend away from research driven by the paradigms of impact/response and tradition/modernity. This trend, Cohen writes, is characterized by an attempt to move beyond exclusive focus on the advent of the West and, instead, to "center Chinese history in China." Among the scholars Cohen singles out for praise in this regard is G. William Skinner, whose regional systems approach, by substituting geographically and economically determined marketing systems for political units of analysis (counties, provinces), literally redrew the boundaries of modern Chinese history for many scholars.¹⁴

Without questioning the utility of Skinner's approach to much of China proper, it is worth noting another of Skinner's boundaries that has generally gone unremarked. In laying out his central-place theory and defining China's eight physiographic macroregions, Skinner restricts his field of inquiry to a unit he calls "agrarian China minus Manchuria," deliberately excluding Inner Asia. Skinner posits a ninth macroregion in Manchuria for the later nineteenth century, but excludes this region from his analysis of the relationship between urbanization and field administration because of the lateness of Han settlement in the northeast. Similarly, although Skinner's *Modern Chinese Society: An Analytical Bibliography* defines "modern China" as "the territory of the present People's Republic of China plus Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau, from 1644 to the present," thus including Inner Asian lands, by design it excludes works concerning "non-Han peoples, whether natives of China or aliens."¹⁵

These calculated omissions of territory and people should give us pause. Why are they made, and why are they so readily accepted? It is not so much that the millions of people labeled "minority nationalities" living in the P.R.C. ought to be represented in works purporting to encompass "Chinese society," although that is perhaps a legitimate claim. (If not in some sense "Chinese," what are such people?) Of greater concern is the way in which these boundary markers preclude inquiry into a range of important topics. For example, others have noted how Skinner's scheme leaves little room for consideration of interregional trade. This is doubly true of trade between China proper and Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet, regions completely ignored by Skinner,

although this commerce was of great cultural, political, and economic significance on frontier areas, as well as on communities in China proper that produced commodities, such as tea, silk, or rhubarb, destined for frontier markets or that specialized in moving goods and capital between Inner Asia and the Chinese heartland.

Another topic occluded by Skinner's model is that of ethnic interaction. In applying central-place theory to China, Skinner takes as his point of departure "an isotropic plain on which resources of all kinds are uniformly distributed."¹⁶ He then suggests how the irregularities of actual geography modify this ideal case. Less explicit in the model, however, is his working assumption that the regional systems are populated by "Han" sharing a single "Chinese" culture (albeit one characterized by class and occupational cleavages, differential distribution across the hierarchy of central places, and considerable variation among "little-local traditions").¹⁷ Yet variations in local cultural or ethnic makeup, just like deviations from uniform topography, might dictate modifications of the central-place model. For example, what happens to the periodicity of market days (which Skinner suggests fit within a ten-day cycle in "traditional Chinese society") where Han and Hui (Muslim) villages lay closely interspersed? Friday worship at mosques brought (and still brings) practicing Muslims to central places in large numbers once every *seven* days. One could well ask similar questions for regions where the agrarian was juxtaposed with pastoral or slash-and-burn economies and the ebb and flow of trade followed other rhythms.

Skinner's answer to ethnic difference is to point out that it lay primarily at the peripheries of regional systems and "the frontiers of the empire" (by which he means the internal borders of China proper with Qing Inner Asian territories as well as the southwestern and maritime frontiers). "Tribes of non-Han aborigines and pockets of incompletely sinicized groups" occupied such places along with "heterodox sodalities . . . religious sects . . . seditious secret societies . . . bands of bandits . . . [as well as] smugglers, outcasts, political exiles, sorcerers and other deviants."¹⁸ Skinner here has adopted the perspective of the mandarin state, of course, and this suits his purposes in "Cities and the Hierarchy of Local Systems," which include demonstrating that Qing field administration categories in China proper took account of special strategic needs in such frontier regions. But when calling on Skinner's work in teaching or writing, it is important to remember that the frontier situation can be interpreted somewhat differently. Rather than argue that non-Han peoples, like "other deviants," are concentrated in regional peripheries and leave it at that, might we not consider that it is precisely the occupancy of

core areas and adherence to state-sanctioned ecological, economic, and political forms that *defines* what is meant by “Chinese?”* Such a view allows for a more complex consideration of interactions on frontiers, what exactly distinguished political or religious deviancy from the ethnic difference implied by the phrase “incompletely sinicized groups”; and, indeed, what “sinicization” might entail and to what extent it was a reversible process.¹⁹

There is a more concrete problem with Skinner’s analysis of Qing territorial administration: he discusses only one of several Qing systems, that employed in China proper. In fact, the Qing developed other means of administering areas where non-Han population predominated. These included the *tusi* in southern and western China, as well as the *jasak* and *beg* systems in Inner Asia (more about these systems below). Civilization did not taper off into chaos and lawlessness on all these frontiers, as Skinner implies; rather, in many areas, Chinese *junxian* administration (with the familiar territorial units of *xian*, *fu*, *zhou*, *ting*, and so forth, administered by magistrates) simply gave way to one of the other systems.

It is noteworthy, too, that Skinner defines “China” in different ways for different purposes. While he chooses “agrarian China” with or without Manchuria for studies of marketing, social structure, and urbanization, his bibliography of Chinese society requires a definition inclusive of Inner Asia, even while it excludes non-Han peoples. While it is easy to accept this inconsistency as arising from the different practical concerns of each project, it nonetheless illustrates a common tendency of post-war American scholarship to alternate unwittingly between a definition of “China” based on Ming territorial and ethnic boundaries and one based on those of the Qing empire (eventually recreated by the P.R.C.), without acknowledging that two very different quantities are involved and ignoring the process that led from one “China” to the other, along with all the ramifications of that change.

For all their importance, then, perspectives shaping the foundational work of Lattimore, Fairbank, and Skinner have contributed to a collective blind-spot in the field of modern Chinese history not only toward Inner Asia, but toward the differences between Qing and China and the process by which one became the other. Similar tendencies could no doubt be traced in the work of other historians. As recent work by Pamela Crossley and Prasenjit Duara suggests, the source of these tendencies lies in the project of modern Chinese nationalism, which from its inception was plagued by contradictions inher-

* In Qing sources, the term used for such people seems more often to be the generic *min* (“populace”) than the culturally and ethnically flavored *han*.

ent in the process of constructing a postimperial “Chinese” nation from the ruins of a non-Han dynastic polity. On the one hand, the cultural and territorial parameters of the late Ming, as defined by such figures as Gu Yanwu and Wang Fuzhi, inspired nineteenth- and twentieth-century Han activists opposing the Qing dynasty. On the other hand, the legacy of the Qing conquests was an empire of great geographical and ethnic diversity, twice the size of Ming China, whose Inner Asian territories, if not people, remained highly desirable additions to a new Chinese nation-state. Efforts to articulate an image of the postimperial nation were further complicated by the fact that early Han nationalists, including Sun Yat-sen and Liang Qichao, had like the Taipings before them exploited anti-Manchu racial animosity to stir up popular support for their cause. Although there were some, such as Zhang Binglin, who advocated abandonment of Inner Asian lands and the creation of a racially pure China within the old Ming boundaries, the leaders of the Republic and People’s Republic have generally sought to retain—and justify retention of—the Manchu empire while renouncing the Manchus.²⁰ Besides recurrent military operations, this task has often involved ideological contortion and historical legerdemain—Chiang Kai-shek’s assertion that Manchus, Mongols, Tibetans, and Muslims are descended from the same original stock as the Han and are thus true “Chinese” and the current P.R.C. contention that Xinjiang and Tibet have been “Chinese” since ancient times are just two examples.²¹ These rationalizations are strained, perhaps, but have nevertheless been highly successful: for most Chinese today, the former Qing frontiers, and not the narrower boundaries of the Ming, make up the “natural” extent, or sacred space, of the Chinese nation.²² Historians, too, in our readiness to neglect what was non-Chinese about the Qing, have followed the ideological contours of Chinese nationalism. We have uncritically mimicked the nationalist tendency to treat the Qing dynasty as Chinese in its successes and alien in its failures.

Toward a Qing-Centered History of the Qing

In his state-of-the-field essays, Paul Cohen noted that in addition to deemphasizing Western impact and directing their attention away from maritime regions to the Chinese hinterland, growing numbers of American scholars were turning to the eighteenth century in search of the indigenous underpinnings of nineteenth-century history. This tendency has continued, aided in part by the increased accessibility of Qing archival records in both Beijing and Taiwan collections. Delving into the eighteenth century leaves a