

A Tripolar Approach to East Asian History

*Foreword*

## Distortions in East Asian History

Formulating a Correct Analytic Framework



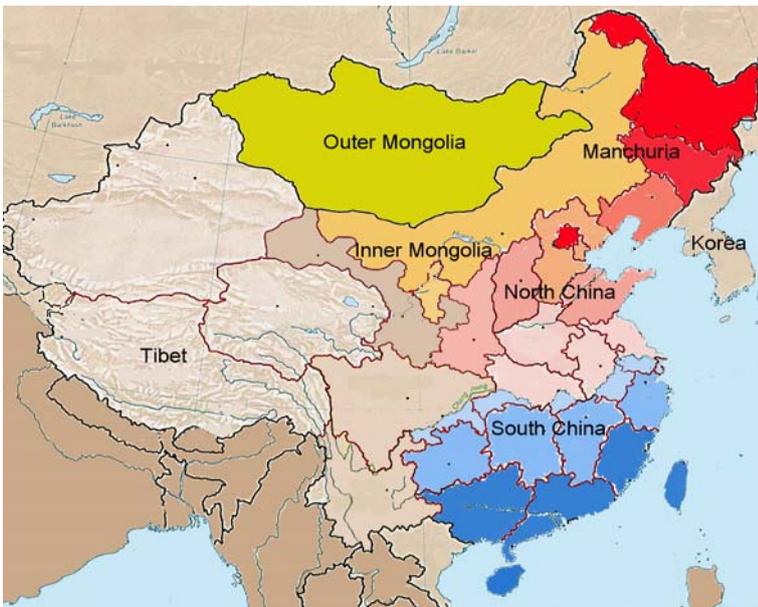
The Liaodong Chinese dialect spoken by the Han Chinese Bannermen (漢軍八旗) was brought to Beijing by the Manchu conquerors that became the Northern Mandarin (北京官話).

**CHINESE WORDS** are transcribed according to the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* compiled by the Dictionary Department, Institute of Linguistics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and published by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press at Beijing in November 2002.

When a syllable follows another syllable, and the boundary is confusing, the syllable-dividing mark (') is used.

"c." designates "circa," "r." "reigned," "b." "born," and "d." "died."

**DATING** of an event that occurred between 403 BCE-959 CE is based on the *Zizhi Tongjian* (資治通鑑) unless an alternative source is specified.



<sup>1</sup> See Allsen (1994: 329-30). The *Shiwei* had eked out a meager existence through a combination of primitive agriculture, pig raising, hunting, fishing, and pastoralism. A branch of these Manchurian woodsmen (likely from the Nenjiang-Lesser Xing'an Range area) had metamorphosed into the Mongolian nomads within some two hundred years. The ethnonym "Mongol," originally peculiar to a small *Shiwei* tribe of Yuwen-Xianbei provenance, was elevated above other tribes by Chinggis Khan. See also Janhunén (1996: 145-9, 158, 163, and 232). 舊唐書 卷一百九十九下 列傳 第一百四十九下 北狄 室韋者契丹之別類...又東經 蒙兀室韋之北 北史 卷九十四 列傳 第八十二 奚 本曰庫莫奚 其先東部胡宇文之別種...契丹國...與庫莫奚異種同類 唐書 卷二百一十九 列傳 第一百四十四 北狄 契丹本東胡種...室韋 契丹別種...有蒙瓦 魏書 卷一百 列傳 第八十八 失韋...語與...契丹...同 The name of "Mongols" appears for the first time in the *Jiu Tangshu*. The characters 蒙兀 is read "meng-wu" by the modern-day Chinese, but is read "mong-ol" by the modern-day Korean that is, as usual, much closer to the ancient (up to the Tang time) reading of "mong-uǎ" in metropolitan China. This may be due to what the anthropologists call the "freezing" phenomena in the periphery. The *Xin Tangshu* writes 蒙瓦 the ancient reading of which is "mong-uǎ" and the modern reading is "meng-wa" in China and "mong-wa" in Korea.

FOREWORD

## DISTORTIONS IN EAST ASIAN HISTORY FORMULATING A CORRECT ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

### MANCHURIAN CONQUEST DYNASTIES

Few people recognize the simple fact that, with the exception of Mongol Yuan (1206-1368), all of the foreign conquest dynasties in China were of Manchurian origin: Tuoba-Xianbei Wei (386-534) and Qidan-Xianbei Liao (907-1125) originating from the Liaoxi steppe of western Manchuria; and Nüzhen-Tungus Jin (1115-1234) and Manchu-Tungus Qing (1616-1911) originating from the wild forest regions of eastern Manchuria –not to mention Former Yan (337-70) of the Murong-Xianbei for its trial performance as a proto-conquest dynasty.

Even fewer people recognize the fact that the Chinggis Khan's Mongol tribe was the *Mengwu* (Mong-ol) branch of a larger ethnic grouping known to the Chinese as the *Shiwei*. According to the *Old History of Tang*, the *Shiwei* were a branch of the Qidan and, according to the *History of Northern Dynasties*, the Qidan were the descendants of Yuwen-Xianbei of western Manchuria. The Shiwei-Mongol tribe migrated from northwestern Manchuria to the Argun River area sometime during the tenth century, and finally settled in the Onon-Kerulen area during the eleventh century, transforming themselves into full-time nomads.<sup>1</sup>

The early conquest dynasties had conquered only North China. For the Han Chinese of that time, however, North China was China, the heartland of Chinese civilization. At that time, the south was politically and culturally a hinterland, conspicuous with the Han Chinese colonizers concentrated on the lower Yangzi and upstream plains, speaking the Wu dialect, and the native aboriginal peoples inhabiting the heavily forested mountains. By the time it became the South China of today under the Han Chinese elite mass who had fled south, the alien dynasties had conquered the entire mainland China.

### SINOCENTRIC APPROACH TO EAST ASIAN HISTORY

The traditional Sinocentric perspective of a self-contained and self-perpetuating center of civilization, surrounded by the uncivilized world of the "barbarians" who were permitted to pay tributes and even gracefully allowed to be sinified, contends

that the Chinese emperor, the Son of Heaven and the undisputed leader of the peoples of East Asia, imposed his own world order on the “barbarians,” through the tribute system, from the second century BCE until the middle of the nineteenth century. Rossabi (1983: 1-12), et al. were brave enough to challenge such a deluded view, but only by meekly saying that the Chinese world order did not persist for the entire period because, from time to time, China did not enforce its own system of foreign relations but, rather, treated the barbarian nations as “equals.” Song (960-1127-1279) is mentioned as an example of the principal Han Chinese dynasty that adopted a realistic and flexible foreign policy.

A slightly less Sinocentric bipolar approach, that of “the unified nomads in the steppe versus the unified Han Chinese in mainland China,” typically contends that, when the nomadic barbarians were not able to obtain essential commodities such as grain and clothes from the Han Chinese through gifts and subsidized trade at the frontier markets, they raided China to acquire the goods; but if the Han Chinese were willing to provide these goods peacefully to the nomadic peoples, peace was possible.

The traditional Sinocentric perspective seems to remain ingrained in the historians’ unconscious mind, witness the statement by Franke (1994: 320): “At the latest in 1203 the Nüzhen state of Jin had...become fully Chinese and...could be considered a fully legitimate element in the Chinese world order. Modern historians...might well consider the Jin as more than just a barbarian interlude in Chinese history. There can be little doubt that...the conviction of Jin intellectuals that they represented true Chinese values...enabled them to perpetuate Chinese ways of life...”<sup>2</sup>

#### FORMULATING A PROPER ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

The Chinese chroniclers called the Xiongnu of the Mongolian steppe by the generic name of Hu, and classified the “barbarians” in the east of Greater Xing’an Range into two groups: the Eastern Hu (Donghu) in the Liaoxi steppe of western Manchuria and the Eastern “Barbarians” (Dongyi) in central and eastern Manchuria. The Eastern Hu of the Liaoxi steppe had maintained some elements of settled agriculture, but they led a life rather like that of nomads. The Donghu included the Xianbei,

<sup>2</sup> The Sinocentric view on conquest dynasties propagates the notion of the eventual melting down of “barbarian” elements by assimilation. The “assimilation” is understood to imply that “the subordinate group attempts to abandon its inadequate culture by entering into the society of the dominant group and accepting its culture, retaining only token vestiges of their culture traits.” The concept of Sinicization is employed in the same sense as assimilation that encompasses both acculturation and integration. See Tao (1976: xiii, 111). There is also a simpler version of Chinese history for the English-speaking undergraduate students as Hansen (2000: 3-5) explains: “all founding emperors were strong. Able to...reform the tax system ... [and] to fund a powerful military force ... [they] conquered vast stretches of territory. Because they inevitably lacked the founders’ charisma, the successor emperors gradually ceded power to eunuchs, ministers, generals, and the families of the emperor’s many consorts. By the end of the dynasty the ruling emperors were often evil and always weak.” This is called the Confucian model of “dynastic cycle” that is then “criticized” as having exaggerated “the importance of the emperor,” and minimized “the contribution of other social groups” as well as “foreign influences.”

<sup>3</sup> See Janhunen (1996: 183-4) and Unger (2001).

<sup>4</sup> Ledyard (1983: 313) writes the “*triangular* relationship between the states in China, Manchuria, and Korea,” while Janhunen (1996: 14) writes “the China-Manchuria-Mongolia *triangle*.”

<sup>5</sup> All conquest dynasties were not nation states, but were imperial dynasties in the sense that their empires ruled over diverse lands and peoples who did not share the same culture.

<sup>6</sup> Comparatively speaking, even the Mongolian steppe seems to have held, thanks to Chinggis Khan, due limelight in the historians’ world. Janhunen (1996: 11) states that “the concept of Manchuria” became “something of a taboo in the People’s Republic” of China (PRC), and “the region is normally referred to as the Northeast (*Dongbei*)” in an “attempt to legitimize the political presence of China in Manchuria and to discourage any further attempts at creating a separate Manchurian regional identity.”

<sup>7</sup> See Barfield (1989: 97-8, 104, 110, 167) and Fairbank and Goldman (1998: 112). According to Barfield (1989: 9, 19, 230), the extreme physical and cultural dissimilarity between the Mongolian steppe and mainland China enabled the coexistence of Turco-Mongol nomadic empires and sedentary Han Chinese dynasties most of the time, with the partner empires tending to flourish or perish together. There was, however, not such an extreme dissimilarity between Manchuria and the Great Plain

Wuhuan, and many other tribes, but on most occasions implied the Xianbei people who founded various Yan kingdoms and Northern Wei. The Eastern “Barbarians” consisted of the Yemaek Tungus of the central Manchurian plain and Korean Peninsula, founders of Old Chosun, Puyo, Koguryeo, and Three Han, and the Mohe-Nüzhen Tungus of the heavily forested eastern Manchuria, descendants of the Sushen-Yilou and the ethnic ancestors of the core Manchu, who made a living with extensive hunting and gathering supplemented by patchy farming.<sup>3</sup>

There had been no period in East Asian history when the Han Chinese could conquer the whole of Manchuria or Mongolia. Barfield (1989: 12) contends that “the Mongolian steppe, north China, and Manchuria must be analyzed as parts of a single [East Asian] historical system.”<sup>4</sup> The process of collecting historical traces and facts, spotting patterns in the data, analyzing how one set of data relates to another, building a model, formulating hypotheses for empirical verification, and making predictions is determined by the prevailing conceptual framework. My study advances a conceptualization of Manchuria neither as “China’s Northeast,” nor as a contested borderland, but as one of the core regions in the construction and destruction of East Asian empires.<sup>5</sup> My study aims to show that, when this new conceptualization is integrated with the idea suggested by Barfield, Janhunen, and Ledyard, we obtain a tripolar analytic framework for East Asia’s history that would provide deeper insights into the processes of empire construction and destruction, and their effects upon individual configurations of ethnic and national identity.

When we have a realistic model, quite a few seemingly meaningless historical facts and seemingly irrelevant archeological traces become meaningful and relevant. My study spotlights the hitherto most slighted pole among the three, Manchuria, in order to compensate for the unwarranted neglect of such a crucial entity by historians.<sup>6</sup> My study, therefore, would look more like a Manchurian perspective on history. East Asian history becomes more coherent when the analysis is focused on the interactions among the Mongolian steppe, mainland China, and the greater Manchurian ethnohistorical sphere of the Xianbei-Tungus that includes the Korean Peninsula.

Barfield (1989: 70, 91) contends that neither the

Xiongnu-Turks nor the Donghu-Xianbei had ever tried to conquer China during the Han period (206 BCE-220 CE), not only because the number of their troops was barely sufficient to conduct savage raids to terrify the Han court, but also because they did not have the sedentary administrative structure necessary to govern the agricultural land. There was, in fact, no lack of attempts to conquer China by the latter-day Turks. The trial performance by Xiongnu Zhao (304-52) that had triggered the Era of Five Barbarians and Sixteen States (304-439) turned out to be fruitless. Former Zhao was so much in the Chinese style that it was unpopular among the tribal chieftains, breeding the seeds for internal revolt. Later Zhao was more in keeping with the steppe tradition, and hence was popular with the Xiongnu, but the regime was too cruel to govern Chinese subjects, and was destroyed by the Chinese rebellion. Nor was the performance by the Shatuo Turks during the Era of Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-79) any more successful. The rulers of Shatuo dynasties (923-36-47-50) augmented the Emperor's Army with Han Chinese soldiers in order to contain the power of provincial governors, but let a Chinese commander (Guo Wei) usurp the throne and commence Later Zhou (951-60), to be followed by the Han Chinese Song.

It was, however, a different story for the Xianbei of western Manchuria. The Manchurian people, including the latter-day Nüzhen-Manchu of eastern Manchuria, played the conqueror whenever possible by institutionalizing the so-called "dual system."<sup>77</sup> They could overcome their numerical inferiority and administrative deficiency by letting the Han Chinese gentry elite rule the Chinese peasants through the Chinese-style civil bureaucracy (以漢治漢策), while centralizing their military machine and limiting it to their compatriots who were subject to life-long universal conscription. The Eastern Turks (553-630/682-741) and Uighur Turks (744-840) in the Mongolian steppe, on the other hand, did not care to imitate, even belatedly, the institution-building Xianbei in order to overcome their numerical inferiority and administrative deficiency. They were content, à la the Maodun's Xiongnu, to practice extortions.

Though we cannot expect a uniform cycle in history that implies exact reenactment of identical sequences of events, we may still expect certain patterns of recurrence. Later actors, when

of China south of the Great Wall. Western Manchuria was very much nomadic and eastern Manchuria was heavily forested, and yet the Manchurian Plain had been producing wheat and millet. The "barbarians" of Manchuria knew how to rule the farmers, and consequently tried to conquer the Han Chinese whenever both the Chinese dynasties and the nomadic partner empires in the Mongolian steppe were weakened. Unlike Barfield (ibid: 4), however, I focus on "how" rather than "why."

<sup>8</sup> Chinese scholars contend that the Han Chinese had sustained continuous "barbarian" attacks and rule, but it was the "barbarians" who could not preserve their cultural and ethnic identity. Indeed, most of these "barbarian" peoples are now incorporated in the *Zhonghua* People's Republic (PRC 中華人民共和國), and are described as "branches of the Chinese people." The history of minority nationalities in the present territory and borders of China (such as Tibetans and Uighurs) has been systematically assimilated into Chinese history (called "China's territorialization of history"). The PRC government, for instance, has launched the "Operation Northeast (東北邊疆歷史與現狀系列研究工程)." One of its major objectives is to make the history of Koguryeo (called *Gaogouli* by the Chinese) a history of one of those minority nationalities in China. Paranoia or not, many Koreans suspect that the PRC government is trying to clear the ground

to take over North Korea when it collapses, and absorb it, à la Tibet, into the great Chinese empire. The ideological approach has not only discredited the so-called “scientific” PRC research results but has also been poisoning the academic environment in East Asia. Rawski (1996: 841) states: “Since Chinese history is constructed as the study of the governments that have ruled over Chinese speakers, nationalism creates problems of interpretation concerning the long period—over half of its recorded history—when China was conquered and ruled by non-Han peoples.”

<sup>9</sup> See Schurr (2000: 253) and Relethford (2003: 115, 133).

<sup>10</sup> Janhunen (1996: 7) states: “as a physical feature [the Korean Peninsula] is just a larger companion of Liaodong [Peninsula], both forming mountainous extensions of the Manchurian heartland towards the south.”

<sup>11</sup> The Altaic languages share a great number of grammatical characteristics, including the subject-object-verb word order. They add syllables to show tense, and insert particles into the sentences to show case instead of changing the vowel sounds within words to express tense or case, as the Indo-European languages do. The absence of direct lexical parallels between Turkic and Tungusic, however, is considered by the anti-Altaists as a simple and irrefutable piece of evidence

faced with a similar problem, may take actions similar to those undertaken in the past by someone in comparable circumstances. History evolves, and never repeats itself in such uniform cycles as to enable an exact prediction. And yet, a proper interpretation of past history provides a more plausible (or less preposterous) explanation for latter-day events, and enables us to predict some of the ways in which people will respond to the challenges they face.

In order to illuminate the plausibility of the new conceptualization and the tripolar analytic framework, I examine the past two thousand years of East Asian history (from the appearance of Maodun’s empire in 209 BCE until the death of Qianlong emperor in 1799), a seemingly enormous time span to cope with, and yet an unavoidable task to glean minimal sets of recurrent patterns and evolutionary trends. An investigation of a small segment of history obscures the actual continuities and changes between periods, causing scholars to overlook repetitive patterns and evolutionary trends, and imposing limitations on the hypothesis one can reasonably propose.

The numerically inferior conquering people had decided to keep only the military under their exclusive control, while letting the Chinese civil servants administer the great mass of Han Chinese. The almost uninterrupted Chinese-style civil bureaucracy in mainland China, however, seems to have fostered an optical illusion in historians’ mind of uninterrupted Han Chinese rule. I challenge the Sinocentric perspective which portrays the *sinicized* conquest governments dominated by the Han Chinese literati, and the *Sinicization thesis* that assumes that the Chinese-style bureaucracy adopted by the conquest dynasties is authoritative evidence of, in the words of Ho (1998: 131), “their full acceptance of Confucian morals, norms, and of the Chinese imperial system as the only political orthodoxy.” I illuminate the ethnic origins of the conquest dynasties and also the Xianbei roots of Sui and Tang in order to deconstruct the Sinocentric framework of analysis. The main objective of my study is to offer a proper balanced perspective on East Asian history by exposing readers to a non-Sinocentric framework of analysis.<sup>8</sup>

#### MANCHURIA AND MONGOLIAN STEPPE: THE CONTENDERS

The ancient northern Mongoloid populations who had

first settled around the Baikal Lake seem to have further dispersed across the Greater Xing'an Range to become the proto-Xianbei-Tungus in Manchuria.<sup>9</sup> The Korean Peninsula is an extension of central Manchuria towards the sea, and has been intimately connected with Manchuria, not only as a physical reality but also as an ethnohistorical entity.<sup>10</sup> The distinctive linguistic feature shared by all these people may be called Altaic, going back to their no longer extant common source, i.e., proto-Altaic.<sup>11</sup>

The Mongolian steppe itself had been a stage set for contest, most conspicuously, between the Turkic and Xianbei peoples. Whenever the mastery of the steppe changed, a large number of the vanquished fled east or west, but quite a few of the conquered remained in their old habitats, forming the substratum of the conquerors, adopting the name of the victorious tribes, and blurring the ethnic and linguistic demarcation on the steppe.<sup>12</sup> What were the Qidan-Xianbei are now calling themselves Mongols. They have disappeared as an independent ethnic entity in the PRC Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region that includes the traditional homelands of western Manchurian nomads. It may represent an ethnonimic unification, in the reverse direction, by the homecoming Mongols. The large amount of shared vocabulary between Turkic and Mongolic can be viewed as the result of intensive political and cultural interactions between the Xiongnu-Turks and the Donghu-Xianbei over a period of more than two millennia.

#### FOUNDERS OF THE CONQUEST DYNASTIES

Owen Lattimore (1900-89) contends that the emergence of a conquest dynasty “depends on the accident of the emergence of a leader of the right caliber,” and “it therefore follows as an axiom” that a successful conquest of mainland China “must be preceded by severe tribal fightings to the north of China” that “result in the emergence of a great leader.” The preliminary warfare that leads to conquest is never the warfare between Chinese and barbarians. It is the bitterest kind of infighting among themselves. The ambitious barbarian leader, Lattimore (1934: 54-5) continues, “must prove his worth, not to the Chinese but to his peers.” The conquest of mainland China itself offers no difficulties: “The subsequent operations attending the actual invasion,” according to Lattimore, can indeed be “dealt with as

of the (non-genetic) areal nature of the Altaic lexical relations. Anti-Altaists conclude that the Altaic entities were both genetically and geographically separate from each other until some time before the Hunnish period, and the Altaic corpus reflects a complex network of areal contacts between separate genetic entities.

See Janhunen (1996: 237-242).

<sup>12</sup> See Ratchnevsky (1991: 1).

<sup>13</sup> Lattimore (1934) continues: “Deeply engrained in the Mongol consciousness is the feeling that any Mongol horde which can master other Mongols can master anyone else in the world (ibid: 55). ...From the barbarian point of view the ‘civilized’ Chinese...has been the dependent man, the weak man, the man who has things taken from him and who is ruled (ibid: 65).” Ho (1998: 150) quotes the Lei Hai-tung’s (1902-62) “highly self-critical macrohistorical perspective” that “the Chinese civilization during the imperial age should be regarded as a ‘soldierless civilization,’ which accounted for repeated partial and total conquests by peoples of the great Eurasian steppe.”

<sup>14</sup> Rawski (1996: 834) states: “Manchus constituted only a fraction of the banner forces that swept south...to conquer the Ming ... We might ascribe the Nüzhen/Manchu skill in coalition-building to the geohistorical conditions of their homeland.” The nomads in the western Manchurian steppe, the

hunting/fishing woodsmen in the eastern Manchurian forest, and the agriculturalists in the central plain had maintained close physical and cultural contact throughout their history, creating a pliable frame of mind that the Chinese or the Pen/Insular peoples were unable to readily assimilate.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Franke and Twitchett (1994: 1-4)

<sup>16</sup> Wong (2003: 80, 82) summarizes what seems to be the very Sinocentric ideology indoctrinated into the Chinese population as follows. "Beginning in the latter part of the Han dynasty, nomadic tribesmen...started to advance inland...

The disruption caused by this large ethnic migration ushered in a period of chaos... Nomadic peoples set up numerous short-lived, petty kingdoms in the north, while displaced Chinese migrated south and established dynastic rule based at Jiankang (Nanjing). ... These nomads either became Chinese (if they were in China) or retained their old ways of living and remained in association with other nomadic tribes. Either case meant the loss of ethnic independence for these people. ... The conquest, settlement, and eventual integration of millions of ethnic peoples into China, creating a single polity, are crucial to the formation of the... 'Chinese' identity. In varying manners, this process was repeated later on, when a number of non-Chinese groups established the conquest dynasties of Liao (947-1125), Jin (1125-1234), Yuan (1279-1368),

matters of routine." After conquest, mainland China was "administered as the 'exploitable' part of the Empire (ibid: 75)." <sup>13</sup>

I further contend that the necessary qualification for a great "barbarian" conqueror is the ability to build up an institutional arrangement that enables not only a successful conquest of mainland China but also the sustaining of the newly created conquest dynasty. Leaders such as Maodun or Tan Shihuai were extremely capable and could master the rival Xiongnu or Xianbei tribes, but they were not such institution-builders as to establish a conquest dynasty; hence they did not conquer and rule mainland China, but were content, instead, with practicing extortions. Of course, all of the inborn natural talent in the world would not get a potentially great leader very far if he was not born at a propitious time and place.

#### NATIONALISM AND VESTED ACADEMIC INTEREST

The reality of Manchurian conquest dynasties has presented a challenge to the deeply rooted assumption of the Han Chinese about their political supremacy in the international order and the integrity of the so-called "Chinese culture." Because of this assumption of supremacy, Chinese historians have viewed every one of those conquest dynasties "as an interruption in the grand sweep of Chinese history." The theory based on the ancient ideal of the Middle Kingdom as the bearer of the Mandate of Heaven to rule mankind and the sole legitimate possessor of unquestioned moral authority (surrounded by "barbarians" who "should" voluntarily submit to the Han Chinese emperor) may have had some validity in the distant past. It became completely divorced from reality, however, with the appearance of the Murong-Xianbei proto-conquest dynasty in 352. Whenever a Manchurian conquest dynasty collapsed, the Manchurian people soon began to gather their energy in their homeland, improve their system, and then reappear time and again as a new conqueror of mainland China. The scholars should have focused more sharply on the ability of the Manchurian conquerors to co-opt the Han Chinese landed-gentry elite, the Turks, and the Mongols for their cause, "the Great Enterprise (大業)." <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, traditional Chinese historiography has never tried to match its cherished theory with reality, and consequently what we see is the "unchanging theory with constantly evolving actuality."<sup>15</sup>

The Han Chinese historians have apparently tried to overcome China's legacy of humiliation at the hands of "barbarians" (beginning with the extortions by the Xiongnu and ending with the yoke of Manchurian conquest dynasties) by writing an ultra-nationalistic history of China and then believing it true.<sup>16</sup> This tendency was exacerbated by the final chapter of humiliation at the hands of "Foreign Devils." They began denouncing Confucianism, not only because it was used for the conquerors' tool, but because it seemed to have inhibited the modernization of China. They condemned the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Manchus inability to carry out Japanese-style Westernization. In fact, modernization with Chinese ethos and Western technology has in due course been achieved in China under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping and his disciples---merely a hundred years later. If the Manchu emperors are blamed for having missed the early opportunity of Westernization in the Jesuits, who stood so high at the Qing court after 1644, the Tokugawa Shogunate may also be blamed for having missed the early opportunity in the Portuguese and Dutch who had been showing off their matchlock muskets and more to the Samurai rulers after 1543. Looking back at the end of the twenty-first century, the difference between Japan and China would seem to be essentially one of degree only, not one of kind—a little bit earlier in an island or a little bit later on a continent, as was the case with Industrial Revolutions in the British Isles and on the Continent.

In the words of Rawski (1996: 841), the "contemporary Chinese historians project China's past in terms of its 1911 borders," apparently trying to produce a seamless history of the territory of the modern PRC (People's Republic of China). Chinese leaders seem to have veered from a definition of the nation as a multiethnic political community that transcends "Han Chinese" toward a definition of "nation-state" through assimilation of the (mere eight percent) ethnic minorities à la the Sinicization thesis: "Once in China, become Han Chinese." Rawski continues: "China as presently constituted is the historical product of the interaction of many different peoples. ... The first unified empire, Qin (221-206 BCE), controlled only a fraction of the territory encompassed by later dynasties. ... Only a definition of the nation that transcends Han identity can thus legitimately lay claim to the peripheral regions inhabited by non-Han peoples,

and Qing (1644-1914). ... [T]he Chinese people have taken on 'civilizing projects' ... conferring the benefits of their superior civilization to inferior peoples on their periphery, who became 'acculturated' and 'assimilated' as part of the Han Chinese group. ... [T]he true Chinese [are] descendants of the mythical Yellow Emperor (黄帝)." According to Ho (1998: 129), what Mencius meant to say by the statement that "Shun [舜 the legendary sage emperor before King Yu 禹王 of Xia 夏] was originally an Eastern barbarian; King Wen (周文王) was originally a Western barbarian" is that "the original Sinitic group was relatively small and that any subsequent leaders of non-Sinitic...states who adopted the ... Sinitic way of life and contributed to its enrichment were retrospectively to be regarded as sage-kings of the progressively enlarging Sinitic world. ... The fundamental criterion for defining membership in the Sinitic world was the **awareness** of a common cultural heritage rather than rigid racial or ethnic identity. It is...prophetic because...this ...culture-orientation in interethnic relationships has largely accounted for the fact that [the ancient Sinitic world had kept on expanding and] China has become a state with 56 officially defined nationalities. ... Although the [post-960] alien dynasties of conquest ...have attracted most attention of Western students...the various pre-960 non-Chinese groups may have played a far more important role in the growth of China as a multiethnic state."

History seems to be a powerful means of creating a collective identity and national unity, bolstering the legitimacy of the regime in power. Almost every nation is playing with its historical record, creating glorious memories of the nation's past. Some nations even criminalize the questioning of the official version or the suggesting of an alternative version of the past, deemed to be detrimental to the pre-determined goal. School children are indoctrinated with the greatness of their fatherland. People prefer to forget the painful truths and believe the national myths taught in childhood. Scholars, however, should be able to freely disagree with the official view of a nation's history.

<sup>17</sup> The contemporary leaders of any multiethnic empire may benefit tremendously by reflecting on the implications of the following historical episode. The early Mughal rulers had adhered to the policy of religious-cultural toleration for the numerous multi-ethnic communities on the Indian Continent. Akbar the Great (r.1556-1605), the grandson of Babur (r.1526-30), did not believe that Islam possessed a monopoly on truth and virtue, and never attempted any sort of assimilation policy. Under the reign of Aurangzeb (r.1658-1707), the territory of Mughal empire expanded to its zenith but the drastic shift toward religious intolerance caused the irreversible decline and fall of the empire, seeing Queen Victoria proclaimed empress of India in 1877.

since these claims rest on the empires created by the Mongols and the Manchus.”<sup>17</sup>

Although Western historians have no excuse to write a “nationalistic” East Asian history, most of their writings somehow look extremely Sino-centric. Di Cosmo (2002: 3) states that an analysis of East Asian history is needed “that moves away from the claustrophobic narrowness of the Chinese classical tradition (largely endorsed by the modern Western exegesis).” Ledyard (1983: 350) contends that “the time has come for the establishment of East Asian history as a field in itself, with East Asian history by definition reckoned as something greater than the sum of the histories of its constituent parts.”

A scientific revolution is made by a complete change of ideas. In history, however, because of vested academic interests, a paradigm shift, often triggered by conceptual breakthroughs, usually takes place through the replacement over time, of the generation of historians who adhered to an old idea with another generation that cleaves to a new one.

#### PARADIGM SHIFT WITH THE SAME SET OF FACTS

In order to substantiate my thesis, I present rather extensive quotations from the works of distinguished scholars. When I totally subscribe to their factual findings and propositions, I present them without adding my own assessment or analysis of their findings. Otherwise, I quote other scholars and then immediately refute or challenge them. In most cases, I differ with them only in their Sinocentric perspectives and interpretations.

Instead of paraphrasing someone else's work, hiding the names of original contributors in hard-to-find endnotes, I quote them directly between “quotation marks” in the texts with reference sources listed in the sidenotes. My study is not composed of original research into primary materials. It does not present hitherto unknown historical facts. Rather, the objective of my study is to present a plausible and original framework of analysis for East Asian history that has heretofore been framed differently and, as I intend to show, erroneously. An original paradigm can be developed largely out of established secondary sources. If I uncover some previously hidden fact in primary sources, it is rather unintentional. My study does not aim to discredit a particular set of established factual findings, but rather

aims to show the experts that, a shift in paradigm creates an entirely different story (that may be closer to reality), even with an identical set of factual findings. A shift in paradigm, that is, draws attention to hitherto neglected and therefore seemingly meaningless facts, rendering them meaningful and relevant when seen in a new light.

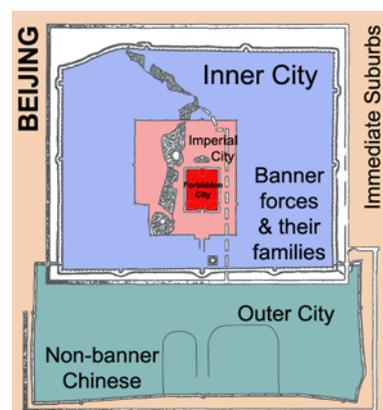
I still must rely heavily on paraphrases when I discuss passages from well-known dynastic chronicles. When this occurs, I present the excerpts of primary text (in Chinese) in sidenotes next to my paraphrase in order to enable the reader to readily double-check, unfiltered, my own interpretation of the primary sources. The dating of an event that occurred between 403 BCE-959 CE is based on the *Zizhi Tongjian* of Sima Guang unless an alternative source is specified.

#### A NEWLY CONCEPTUALIZED LOOK AT EAST ASIAN HISTORY

For historians as well as laymen, it will be a refreshing experience to look at the East Asian world neither from the perspective of center versus periphery nor from the bipolar perspective of nomads versus sedentary Han Chinese, but from a tripolar perspective. It is my intention to offer readers a tripolar framework of analysis that qualifies the traditional Sinocentric perspective and presents a more balanced view of East Asian history. I am offering readers a chance to see history from a point of view very different from what they are familiar with. A newly conceptualized look at East Asia's long history will also enable the formulation of a correct model that accounts for the causalities in modern East Asia within the globalized world, and to predict future trends that inevitably affect the entire human race.

In the limited preview edition of 2006, I had presented both the *Ancient Korea-Japan Relations* and the tripolar *East Asian History* together but, in light of the comments I received, they were presented in two separate volumes in 2010. This is the revised edition of the tripolar *East Asian History* volume. I am grateful, once again, to Professor Mary Suzanne Schriber of Northern Illinois University who did an excellent job of editing to make my book more readable.

Wontack Hong



0.1. Qing-era Inner/Outer City of Beijing  
According to Li and Dray-Novey (1999), the total population of the two walled (inner/outer) cities and their Immediate Suburbs (*Chengshu* 城屬) increased from 0.66 million in 1647 to 0.99 million in 1781, and to 1.09 million in 1882.

Throughout the Qing dynasty, the Manchu, Mongol, and Chinese Banner forces and their families (residing mostly in the Inner City) constituted more than 60% of these total figures. (In 1882, there were 1.36 million Han Chinese in the surrounding region beyond *Chengshu* that belonged to Greater Metropolitan Beijing.)

According to Elliott (2001: 364), the maximum size of the Banner population in 1648 was 2.4 million; of which 1.5 million were Chinese bondservants. According to Im (1980: 13), 8% of the total of Banner soldiers were stationed in the Beijing area in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. If every estimate quoted here is correct, then there must have been a relatively small number of Banner soldiers and a predominantly large number of banner bondservants in the Beijing area.

