



Shao Dan. *Remote Homeland, Recovered Borderland: Manchus, Manchoukuo, and Manchuria, 1907-1985*. World of East Asia Series. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011. xxi + 413 pp. \$55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8248-3445-6.

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Contested Histories of a Borderland and Its "Native" People: Manchuria and the Manchus

In this ambitious and meticulously researched book, historian Shao Dan poses the question, "What happened to the Manchus and their purported homeland?" How were a particular people de- and then re-territorialized in less than a century of political upheaval and regime change? Her dense text begins by revealing "pieces of the present and forgotten past of the Manchus" in an intriguing metaphor of neglected steles crumbling near the 'September 18, 1931 Incident Monument' in Shenyang in the People's Republic of China (PRC) (p. xxi). Symbolized by these markers in a park commemorating the fateful 1931 Japanese invasion, the strata of northeast China's layers of historical memory, first elucidated by Mariko Tamanoi (*Memory Maps: The State and Manchuria in Postwar Japan* [2009]) whose book precedes Shao's in the same series, point to the complexity of contested claims over a region in the past often referred to as "Manchuria" or the land of the Manchus. These interpretations reflect "the multilayered and multidimensional processes by which the Manchu identity has been reconfigured, perceived, self-identified, and state-designated at a time when nationalism and ethnification, decolonization and territorialization constantly interact" (ibid.).

Rather than an exploration of the region's sovereignty, like in previous works by Prasenjit Duara, Suk-Jung Han, and Thomas David Dubois, Shao looks at the human dimensions of the effects of regime change on a fluid people—the Manchus—marked by either ethnicity or political status depending on their official or self-definitions of identity.[1] The author shows us their wavering fate in incarnations beginning as Manchu and then renamed by a succession of governments as *qiren*, *qizu*, *Manzhouren*, *Zhongguoren*, and currently, *Manzu*. She begins her study by posing a fundamental question: "How does the past failure of an ethnic people to maintain sovereignty in their homeland influence their

contemporary reconfigurations of ethnic and national identities?" (p. 1).

Without a doubt, the Qing government's 1907 reorganization of the administration of Manchuria's Three Eastern Provinces to reflect conditions in China proper deeply affected the economic, social, and political status of the banner people and those who identified as Manchu.[2] While some took advantage of new opportunities in Han-dominated commerce or farming, others were marginalized and left destitute in the absence of income or government privileges. Terming it the region's "Chinafication" rather than earlier "Sinicization," Shao makes the point that China's northeast was incorporated in the Qing Empire as part of China relatively recently due to domestic financial constraints and foreign pressures.[3] This political change coincided with a transformation in nomenclature for banner Manchus that had far-reaching consequences. The author argues that "the conceptualization of *qizu* among banner people was a key stage in the historical transformation of the banner institution into today's Manzu ethnic community" (p. 94). However, Shao's book ending of this important policy between a general history of the Qing, its attitudes toward a Manchurian "homeland," and developments leading toward the area's status as a "contested borderland" nevertheless diminishes the significance of this moment identified in her title.

After the 1911 fall of the Qing dynasty, Shao asserts, the Manchu experience in Northeast China differed greatly from that below the Great Wall, and even provided the seeds for future Japanese influence in the region. Initially evident in the indifferent treatment of the Manchus in Manchuria in contrast to sometimes violent attacks by Han Chinese in China proper, as the new Chinese Republic concerned itself with more pressing concerns in the south, its northern provinces became sub-

ject to jockeying for power by various factions or nations. For example, Manchu royalists like Prince Gong even approached Japanese nationalists to restore the monarchy when faced with a weak, and contradictory, new Republic of China (ROC) government, while Zhao Erxun, the governor of the three northeastern provinces, felt that the ROC neglected the region's concerns toward the Russians. The weak Chinese government thus ignored a rising Japanese economic and cultural presence in the area following the Russo-Japanese War, and by the late twenties, left the area in charge of warlords, who were militarily unable to defeat the renegade Kantô Army following its engineering of the 1931 "Manchurian Incident."

After the Japanese government recognized Manchukuo with some trepidation in 1932, the new nation experienced heated argumentation over its status in the words of "Chinese and Japanese government officials, diplomats, media, and scholars (who) deployed history in their debates over Manchurian territory" (p. 133). To assuage Manchu royalists and further differentiate the new state from China, Japanese advisors installed the former Qing emperor as putative "ruler" over the Manchukuo "empire," but "the value of Manchu ethnic, historical, and political ties to this region was ambiguous" (p. 110). In some instances, the Japanese rulers of Manchukuo believed that the Manchu aristocracy could be courted for their collaboration, as when the former emperor of China Pu Yi was designated "emperor of Manchukuo" in 1934. However, most inhabitants of Manchukuo were called "Manjin" or Manchurians, whether they were Han Chinese or Manchu, so the separate category of Manchu became subsumed under the Japanese imperial project and its categorization of ethnicities to reflect the harmony of the five races/ethnicities (*minzoku kyôwa*). Therefore, the category "Manchu" was either erased or only furthered on the elite level, resulting in the ambiguous value of the Manchus as a separate people for the Japanese. To rid the purportedly "independent" new notion of ethnic nationalism, Japanese rulers promoted the general propaganda slogan "minzoku kyôwa" (ethnic/racial harmony). However, because of the "challenge they posed to Japan's colonial stance in Manchuria," the Manchus and their banner associates soon found their identity redefined or even erased amid Sino-Japanese contestations (ibid.).

As a result, the Manchukuo period (1932-45) emerges as an important phase in the history of the Manchus as an ethnic group, when Japanese advisors used the rhetoric of "ethnic harmony" to subdue resistance against Japan as well as assuage Manchu restorationist sentiments. Relying on both Chinese- and Japanese-language sources, Shao astutely claims that "the politi-

cal value of the Manchus and their former sovereignty over their homeland was lessened through the propaganda of Manchurian-Japanese 'ethnic harmony' and Manchukuo-Japan national amity in the mid-1930s. The Manchus were recategorized as merely a subgroup of the 'Manchurians,' whose role was to cooperate with, and in fact, be ruled by, the Japanese" (p. 144).

However, Shao somewhat erroneously points out that the origins of *gozoku kyôwa* (harmony of the five races/ethnicities) have eluded scholarly attention, a topic discussed by Louise Young, Duara, and me.[4] "Minzoku kyôwa" and "gozoku kyôwa" refer to the same concept of racial harmony, but the second term is more precise. If Japanese rulers wanted to refer to specific peoples in Manchuria, they broke down the phrase "minzoku kyôwa" into "gozoku kyôwa" (harmony of the five races/ethnicities). These could include Japanese, Chinese, Manchu, and Mongols, and occasionally Russians, who sometimes took the place of Koreans in the group of five. The appeal of "ethnic harmony" served as a clever means to cloak populist fascism inspired by ideas first derived from German conceptions of *Volk* in Japan, which then combined with Sun Yat-sen's earlier Republican ideals (which Shao does discuss, but could have noted that Sun also encountered them during his exiles in Japan).[5] The *Kyowakai* (Concordia Association), a fascist mass organization that evolved out of the Manchurian Youth League originally founded in 1928, was formed in the early thirties to co-opt these earlier throes of Chinese nationalism, and was thus added to existing state structures by Japanese who were very much aware of discourses originally emanating from Republican China.

An intriguing aspect of the book that (perhaps unintentionally) supports the author's argument about the politicization of scholarship of China's early twentieth century is how Shao uses Japanese-published primary materials from the late Qing into Manchukuo periods, but then notes their shortcomings as "propaganda"—in contrast to her largely uncritical assessment of other Chinese sources, like those of the Beijing-based Department of Civil Affairs (dating from 1930). While this may reflect earlier views held by PRC historians, her extensive reliance on the Japanese-owned *Shenjing shibao* (Shenjing Daily) and studies by the South Manchuria Railways Company research department in chapters 3 and 4 points to their usefulness for the topic that she investigates. Indeed, when discussing Manchuria, and after 1932, Manchukuo, scholars worth their salt cannot avoid analyzing both the positive and negative aspects of the region or state's inextricable relationship to Japan while employing media illustrating this. Shao contradicts her

uncritical use of Chinese sources when she later illustrates how *both* Chinese and Japanese scholarship in the 1930s was in “service of political goals” (p. 123). Just as studies of early twentieth-century India overlap British imperial history and the Crown’s fetishization of records, meticulously detailed materials produced by a colonial regime (like Japan’s) often paint a fairly accurate picture of statistics, despite their production by a conquering power to better rule over the colonized, and are useful in showing its political trends, concerns, and preoccupations.

Two concluding chapters illustrate how descendants of Manchus and the banners were caught between successive layers of empires (Qing China, Russia, ROC, Japan, PRC). Shao examines national and ethnic identity by probing the case of Aisin Gioro Xianyu, the daughter of a Manchu prince accused of treason by the ROC government following the 1945 Japanese defeat. Though denying Chinese nationality, at varying times (and when it might offer her favorable treatment) at her trial, Xianyu pleaded her identity as Japanese (Kawashima Yoshiko), Chinese (Jin Bihui), or banner person (Xianyu) in shifting names that revealed her chimeric relationship to a contested area. Shao highlights Xianyu’s example to prove that “during the first half of the twentieth century, shifting ethnic and national borders in East Asia had recategorized people along new national lineages and redefined their social obligations accordingly” (p. 241). A following chapter examines Manzu narrations of their own pasts in banner people’s early twentieth-century writings and poems, Mu Rugai’s 1938 novel, early PRC interview transcripts, and 1980s–90s recastings of Manchus as “heroes” in new, revisionist scholarship.

One of the highlights of Shao’s volume is a fragment of her historical fieldwork among a community in northeast China that defines itself as Manchu since 1985, and what points to the Chinese government’s growing attention toward minority peoples in often contested border regions. Her fusing of a solid foundation of scholarly research with ethnological research based on oral histories gives an account of “living history” still in creation and reconfiguration. However, Shao devotes only limited space to this unique methodology where she shares the experiences of only two individuals, which she could have expanded and further illuminated, especially considering the importance of this concluding date for her study reflected in the title (“Individuals’ Narrations of Their Pasts”). She employs these examples to illustrate that, in contrast to marginalization often followed by destitution experienced by Manchus and banner people in the late Qing and early ROC periods, under China’s mod-

ern, centralized authoritarian socialist government, clear benefits currently accrue from minority status and association with a particular locality. Yet she only provides a small glimpse of what these may be, where her text could have fleshed out the economic support, ethnic pride, relaxing of the “one child policy,” and other benefits accrued to Manchus as relatively recently recognized “ethnic minorities.” The author of this review hopes Shao (and others) will further investigate the intriguing revival of the Manchus as *Manzu* in future scholarship.

The weaknesses of this book relate to its overly ambitious goals and occasionally pedantic style, as if the author fears leaving any stones unturned. However, since Shao serves as a pioneer in her field, she may have felt compelled to support her broad claims with extensively detailed examples—revealing the depth of her scholarship, but which a future edition can perhaps trim to make it more accessible to undergraduates and non-historians. Manchu experiences during the Maoist years also could have been discussed at more length, though the paucity of sources in Mainland China reflects the PRC government’s initial preoccupation with rectifying China’s feudal past (in part blamed on the Qing dynasty and its Manchu rulers), incorporating ethnic peoples through socialism, and mobilizing the masses while minimizing individual distinctions. The text also contains minor misspellings of Japanese words, occasional clunky Japanese translations into English, and sometimes obscure or awkward terms (like *avant la lettre* or “doggerel”)—all of which the editors should have caught. This most likely arises from the author’s Chinese studies background and use of extensive archives in China and to some extent, East Asian collections at major U.S. universities. Visits to Japanese archives would have balanced Shao’s great dexterity in the use of Chinese documents, ephemera, and autobiographies, but may also have generated a much longer, more complicated, and even less accessible treatment of a subject of study in its nascent phases in English-language scholarship.

Like Nicola Di Cosmo’s 2006 translation of a rare diary (*Diary of a Manchu Soldier in Seventeenth Century China: My Service in the Army* by Dzungseo) revealing concerns of a seventeenth-century Manchu soldier that illuminates our understanding of Sinicization and Manchu identity, Shao’s much-anticipated and sorely needed text helps fill a large gap in scholarship on the Manchu experience from the late Qing period until the 1980s ethnic revival. As document-based research by a China historian, it also aptly complements recent transnational and transregional research in the Asian studies field on borderland issues, sovereignty questions,

and ethnic claims to territory. The author concludes her book by restating its key argument: “The transformation of Manchuria from the Manchus’ remote homeland to a contested borderland, then to China’s recovered Northeast, is a continuing process of interactions between the legacy of Manchu rule over the Qing Empire, new ideologies of anticolonial nationalism, and the imported concepts of national identity and ethnic categories” (p. 288). Shao has compiled an outstanding reference volume replete with provocative case studies and newly discovered materials begging further analysis for scholars and graduate students that cannot be overlooked in a new body of recent scholarship on northeast China and Manchukuo.

Notes

[1]. Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Law and Legal Institutions in Manchukuo* (Landam: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Suk-Jung Han, “The Problem of Sovereignty: Manchukuo, 1932-1937,” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 12, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 457-478; and Thomas David Dubois, “Inauthentic Sovereignty: Law and Legal Institutions in Manchukuo,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 3 (August 2010): 749-770.

[2]. The “banner people” were the individuals whom the Qing dynasty originally organized as military troops. In the late seventeenth century, they were exclusively Manchu, but Mongols and Han Chinese were added to their ranks in “banners” or what were essentially military squadrons organized under their own flags. There were golden banners (the elite) and banners with other colors and borders denoting rank and ethnicity. We can probably say that each banner is like a regiment, but later on, they tended to acquire social distinctions and many no longer even had a military function but were granted

subsistence from the Qing government. Those who identified as “banner people” in the late Qing followed certain customs related to the Manchus and were given a stipend by the Qing government (which was taken away in the waning years of the dynasty).

[3]. “Chinafication” is a term that Shao uses to distinguish the process of incorporating Manchuria into the Chinese Empire in the late Qing period (“Chinafication”) from “Sinicization” (which refers to borderland peoples, such as the Manchus, who acquired Chinese cultural characteristics, like adopting their language and Confucianism). In 1907, the three northeastern provinces of China (above the Great Wall, known as Manchuria) were administratively incorporated by the Qing rulers into China proper (below the Great Wall). Hence, this administrative change is called “Chinafication” since the provinces were now ruled like any other Chinese provinces.

[4]. Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998); Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*; and Annika A. Culver, “The Manchukuo Publicity and News Bureau’s War of Words and Images: Mutô Tomio and the Discourse of Culture, 1938-1943,” in *Glorify the Empire: Japanese “Avant-Garde” Propaganda in Manchukuo* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, forthcoming 2013).

[5]. For more on the origins of how conceptions of *Volk* and *minzoku* (ethnicity) developed in early twentieth-century Japan, see Kevin Doak, *A History of Japanese Nationalism in Modern Japan: Placing the People* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

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