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The Qing Empire in the Central Eurasian Context: Its Structure of Rule as Seen from the Eight Banner System

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Introduction

After the fall of the Ming in 1644, the Qing emperor succeeded to the throne of the Chinese emperor. For this reason the Ming and Qing dynasties are usually referred to as "late imperial China," and the period of their rule is regarded as the period when China's imperial administration was brought to its full maturity. In this context, the structure of the Qing's rule can be described in the following manner. The emperor was a Chinese emperor who had succeeded to the position of the Ming emperor, and he promoted Chinese officials to important posts and in the eighteenth century created a system of monarchic autocracy. The bureaucracy took over the institutions of the Ming more or less as they were, with the addition of a number of new institutions such as the Grand Council (*junjichu*), Court of Colonial Dependencies (*lifanyuan*) and Imperial Household Department (*neiwufu*). The Qing's vast territories were divided into areas under its direct control and Outer Feudatories (*fanbu*). Under the jurisdiction of the Court of Colonial Dependencies, the Outer Feudatories preserved their traditional social structure. Described this way, with the Ming's regime serving as a point of reference, any elements that did not fit into this framework are either treated as elements added during the Qing or dismissed as aspects of a dynasty of conquest, and the Qing as a whole has been explained as the last Chinese dynasty.

It is true that for Russians and Europeans the Ming and the Qing — and the same could be said even of the present age — were the same insofar as they dealt with the emperor or government in Beijing. But it

goes without saying that during the Qing the emperor was not Han-Chinese but Manchu (Ma. *manju*). The Jesuit missionaries who visited the Qing court also clearly differentiated between Han-Chinese and Manchus. That being the case, into what sort of political organization were the Manchus organized and what influence did this have on the character of the empire? Whence did its distinctive features originate and to what did they bear a resemblance? In this article I shall focus on the Eight Banner system, considered to constitute the basis of Manchuness, and examine the distinctive features of the structure of rule of the Qing as a Manchu dynasty.[1]

This approach, which highlights the fact that the rulers of the Qing were Manchus, accords with the "Manchu-centered" perspective of the "New Qing History" school that has been flourishing in the United States since the 1990s.[2] This school attaches importance to the fact that the Qing was an empire ruled by Manchus and ruled over areas in Inner Asia, where a variety of languages and scripts were used; its findings merit attention. However, as Mark C. Elliott recognized, a representative driving force behind this school were Japanese researchers, who have been pioneers in the study of the Qing as a Manchu dynasty, with a focus on Manchu materials and also on the study of the regions of Inner Asia, by making use of Mongolian, Tibetan, Turkic and other non-Chinese

[1] With regard to the Eight Banner system and the structure of the Qing empire, I have relied on my own articles, and I have kept notes to a bare minimum: "The Ch'ing Empire as a Manchu Khanate: The Structure of Rule under the Eight Banners,"*Acta Asiatica* 88(2005), pp. 21-48; "The Structure of Qing Imperial Rule as Seen from the Eight Banners: From the Studies of Manchu-Qing Imperial History in Japan,"in Fujita Kayoko et al., eds., *Proceedings of the Second COE-ARI Joint Workshop "Dynamic Rimlands and Open Heartlands: Maritime Asia as a Site of Interactions"* (Osaka University, 2007), pp. 224-237; "Daishin teikoku no shihai kozo to hakkisei—Manshu ocho to shite no kokusei shiron [The Structure of Rule in the Qing Empire and the Eight Banner System: A Tentative Study of its Constitution as a Manchu Dynasty], *Chugoku Shigaku* [Chinese History] 18 (2008), pp. 159-180..

[2] On trends in the New Qing History school and its "Manchu-centered" perspective, see Evelyn S. Rawski, "Reenvisioning the Qing: Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History," *Journal of Asian Studies* 55: 4(1996), pp. 829-850; Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001); "Introduction"; James A. Millward et al., eds., *New Qing Imperial History: The Making of Inner Asian Empire at Qing Chengde* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), "Introduction"; Elliott, "Manchu-language archives and the New Qing History, " in Hosoya Yoshio, ed., *Shincho-shi kenkyu no aratanaru chihei* [New Perspectives on the Study of Qing History] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Publishers, 2008), pp. 124-139.

materials.[3] Therefore, in this article I shall base my assertions primarily on the results of Japanese research into Manchu history and the history of Inner Asia.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE EIGHT-BANNER SYSTEM

The Qing empire was established by the Tungusic Jurchens (*Jušen*) of Manchuria. Their society was divided into a ruling class of *beile, amban,* etc., and their vassals and subjects, known as *jušen* or *harangga,* and the rulers, each with their own base, were in constant conflict. Originally, the word *jušen,* as well as referring to the Jurchens as opposed to Han-Chinese, Mongols, and so on, also signified the vassals and subjects of the chieftain class, and in 1635 its use was restricted to this latter meaning; as an ethnic designation it was replaced by the word *manju*, i.e., Manchu.

In the 1580s Nurhaci (1559-1626), a petty chieftain of the Jianzhou Jurchens in southern Manchuria, launched a campaign to unite the Jurchen tribes, and by the 1610s he had united all the Jurchens. In the course of this process of unification he gave his state the name of "Manchu nation" (*Manju gurun*), and in 1616 he assumed the position of khan and chose the Chinese-style name of "Latter Jin state" (*amaga Aisin gurun / hou Jin guo*) for his country. His son and successor Hong Taiji (r. 1626-43) became emperor in 1636 and renamed the Latter Jin the "Great Qing state" (*Daicing gurun / Dai Qing guo*). This was the origin of the Qing Empire, which was to last until 1912. When Beijing fell to the rebel Li Zicheng in 1644, thus bring the about the fall of the Ming dynasty, the prince regent Dorgon crossed Shanhai Pass and installed the infant emperor Shunzhi (r. 1643-61) on the imperial throne in Beijing. So began Manchu rule of China, which was to last for more than two hundred and sixty years.

[3] On the history of Japanese research on Qing history and research trends in recent years, see Kishimoto Mio, "The Ch'ing Dynasty and the East Asian World," *Acta Asiatica* 88 (2005), pp. 87-109; Sugiyama Kiyohiko, "Daishin teikoku shi kenkyu no genzai: Nihon ni okeru gaikyo to tenbo" [Research Trends in the Study of Qing Imperial History in Japan], *Toyo Bunka Kenkyu* 10 (2008), pp. 347-372.

The Eight Banners, which Nurhaci had established by 1615, represented an organization combining military and administrative aspects. Its basic unit was the *niru* (*niulu* or *zuoling*), usually translated as "company," which served as the source of able-bodied men for military service and labor services; several (up to more than a dozen) *niru* formed a *jalan* (*jiala* or *canling*), or "regiment"; and five *jalan* made up a *gūsa* (*gushan*), or "division." Eight *gūsa* were distinguished by yellow, white, red and blue flags, which were either plain or bordered, and it is for this reason that they were called "banners." The Eight Banners thus possessed a pyramidal structure, and each banner was led by a banner commander (*gūsai ejen* / *gushan ezhen* or *dutong*), appointed from among the bannermen. The Eight Banners included everyone under Nurhaci's rule — the imperial family, ministers, soldiers, officials, servants and slaves; Manchus, Mongols, Chinese and Koreans; men and women, and young and old. In other words, prior to 1644 the Eight Banners constituted the state itself.

The Eight Banners are usually explained as a pyramidal organization extending from the above-mentioned company (*niru*) to division (*gūsa*), but this is in fact only one of the many different aspects of the Eight Banners. This renowned hierarchy can be said to have represented the chain of command and the system of control within the Eight Banners. As for the relationship between ruler and ruled, while there existed a superior-subordinate relationship between the banner commander and bannermen, this was no master-servant relationship, and the bannermen of each banner, including the banner commander himself, were all subject to a banner prince, that is, a member of the imperial Aisin Gioro (Aixin Jueluo) clan that had been invested with a banner.[4] Each banner was under the control of the banner prince(s), and the emperor himself controlled the Plain and Bordered Yellow Banners (to which was added the Plain White Banner by the Shunzhi emperor after Dorgon's death, together forming the Upper Three Banners). In some cases a single

[4] On banner princes and their control of bannermen, see Du Jiaji, *Qing huangzu yu guozheng guanxi yanjiu* [A Study of the Relationship between the Qing Imperial Family and National Government] (Taipei: Wunan Tushu Chuban Gongsi, 1998); Suzuki Makoto, "Shincho nyukan-go, kio niyoru niru shihai no kozo — Koki Yosei cho wo chushin ni" [Structure of *niru* Rule by Banner Princes after the Start of the Qing Dynasty], *Rekishigaku Kenkyu* 830 (2007), pp. 18-34.

banner prince had exclusive control of a banner, as in the case of the emperor and early powerful banner princes such as Dorgon, while in other cases several banner princes — for example, siblings or father and sons — possessed a single banner in portions.

The differences in status between a banner prince and bannermen were absolute, and in no circumstances was a subject belonging to another clan, regardless of how much power he might flaunt or how many company he might have, able to cross the line between a bannerman, or servant, and a banner prince, or master. This relationship of control and subservience between banner princes and bannermen was established through the provision of company to the banner prince, and the bannermen belonging to a particular company were called the banner prince's *jušen* or *harangga* and served the banner prince. Because of Confucianist scruples, the master-servant relationship between banner princes and bannermen is not explicitly noted in Chinese-language sources, but it is clearly described by outside observers such as missionaries. In a letter written in Beijing on July 20, 1725, the French Jesuit Dominique Parennin made the following observations while describing the fate of the imperial prince Sunu and his family, who had been punished by the Yongzheng emperor (r. 1722-35) on account of their Christian beliefs.[5]

> There are in addition two things that I would ask you to observe. First, that among the Servants who will follow these Princes (i.e., Sunu and his family) into exile, there are two kinds: some are indeed slaves of their household; the others are Tartars or Tartarized Chinese whom the Emperor gives in large or small numbers in accordance with the rank with which he honors the Princes of his Blood. These latter are the retinue of the Noble (*Regulo*), and they are generally called people of his gate. There are among them considerable Mandarins, Governors and Governors-general. Although they are not slaves like the former, they are almost equally subject to the wishes of the Noble as long as he retains his rank. After his death they pass into the service of his sons if they are honored with the same rank.

As is clearly stated here, there existed in the Eight Banners a master-servant or lord-vassal relationship in which high-ranking

[5] *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des Missions Étrangères, par quelques Missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jesus*, vol. 18 (Paris: Le Clerc, 1728), pp. 37-38.

officials, including "considerable Mandarins, Governors (*xunfu*) and Governors-general (*zongdu*)" (*des Mandarins considérables, des Vice-rois & des Tsongtou*), submitted to the banner prince's orders just like slaves. Furthermore, this relationship was not based on private connections or coercion, but was established because these people had been given to the banner prince by the emperor, and this practice continued from one generation to the next. Thus, the Eight Banners had a dual structure consisting of an institutional hierarchy and the banner princes' control of the bannermen, for which there were no explicit provisions in the legal code, and one needs to pay attention to both of these aspects.

The companies under the command of a banner prince were usually divided into regular companies, or "outer" banner, and bondservant companies (*booi niru* [*baoyi*]), or "inner" banner, which were under the direct control of the banner prince. Though the regular companies, as noted above, were subject to the banner prince, the company itself was controlled and managed by the bannermen, and its earnings, military service and manpower were basically offered to the state. The earnings from the bondservant companies, on the other hand, were added to the family finances of the banner princes. Initially there were no distinctions among the regular companies, but as the number of Mongols and Chinese submitting to the Manchus increased with the spread of the latter's power, Mongol companies and Chinese-martial companies were established, and these were then organized into divisions. As a consequence, each banner came to consist of an "outer" banner made up of three divisions (Manchu, Mongol and Chinese-martial) and an "inner" banner made up of bondservant companies. The "Tartarized Chinese" (*Chinois Tartarisés*) under the command of a banner prince (mentioned by Parennin) refer to the Chinese-martial bannermen,[6] but there were no differences among members of a banner insofar that they were all subject to a banner prince.

The banners were ranked from the Bordered Yellow Banner, which ranked first, to the Bordered Blue Banner, which ranked last, and they were also divided into four left-wing banners, headed by the Bordered Yellow Banner, and four right-wing banners, headed by the Plain

[6] For an example of a similar expression by the other observer, see Joachim Bouvet, *Histoire de l'Empereur de la Chine, présenté au Roy* (Paris, 1697 [reprinted, Paris: La Haye, 1699]), p. 71.

Yellow Banner. But all rights and obligations, such as participation in government, military service, conscript labor and division of the spoils of war, were in principle shared equally by all banners.[7] This was intended to equalize distribution and burdens, and it could also be said to have meant that the fruits of conquest were not the exclusive possession of the emperor, but were shared by the entire family. In this respect, the Upper Three Banners under the direct command of the emperor did not enjoy any special position or treatment, and it can be said that, in view of the fact that the emperor possessed particular banners and was attended by the companies belonging to these banners, he too was one of the banner princes. The entire structure was, moreover, integrated on account of the fact that the banner princes accepted the emperor as the representative of the Eight Banners and as the head of the imperial family.

The emperor and banner princes selected from among those under their command children of leading vassals or people whom they trusted and created groups of guards and aides who were at their beck and call. These bodyguards were called *hiya* in Manchu, and in Chinese they were called *shiwei* (Imperial Guard) in the case of the emperor and *huwei* (Escort Guard) in the case of banner princes. Their main duties were (1) to attend on the sovereign and provide him with protection, (2) to guard the palace, and (3) to carry out the various tasks with which they were charged by the sovereign.[8] Even long after the Manchu conquest of China, many high-ranking officials among the Manchu bannermen were men who had served as *hiya,* and the *hiya* groups could be said to have been a talent pool for potential executive officers in the government.

Thus, the Eight Banners were no mere military organization, and up until 1644 they corresponded to the state itself. Even after the Manchu conquest of China, they constituted a separate society, which formed the ruling class of the empire, and they continued to exist as an integrated

[7] This was known as the "eight privileges" (*jakūn ubu / bafen*), and Du Jiaji (*op. cit.*, pp. 70-80) calls this system of the equal sharing of rights and obligations amongst banners under the Eight Banner system the "eight privileges system."

[8] Sugiyama Kiyohiko, "Nuruhachi jidai no hiya-sei: Shinsho jiei ko josetsu" [The *Hiya* System during the Reign of Nurhaci: An Introductory Study of the Imperial Guard in the Early Manchu-Qing Period], *Toyo-shi Kenkyu* [The Journal of Oriental Researches] 62: 1 (2003), pp. 97-136.

whole differentiated from Han-Chinese society. Moreover, they differed completely from the institutions and organizations of the Ming.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE QING EMPIRE AS SEEN FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE MANCHUS

In what way, then, did these distinctive features go beyond the framework of the Eight Banner system and tie in with the overall structure of the Qing Empire? First of all, the system of ranks under the Eight Banner system was applied to the empire as a whole, and members of the imperial clan and their subjects were all ranked in an integrated manner. Banner princes were initially divided into two grades called *hošoi beile* (*heshi beile*) and *taiji* (*taiji*), and they were collectively called *beile.* After Hong Taiji's accession to the throne in 1636 a system of imperial nobility was established, based on six ranks from *heshi qinwang* (*hošoi cin wang*) to *fuguo gong* (*gurun de aisilara gung*), and the high-level members of the imperial clan holding these ranks were known as *wanggong* (*wang gung*) or "princes." At the same time a schedule of ranks called "hereditary officials" (*shizhi*) was established for bannermen, and these were granted in accordance with the individual's achievements in combat and administration.[9] The system of hereditary officials later merged with China's traditional system of five titles of honorary nobility, ultimately resulting in a system of ranks consisting of twenty-seven grades, whereby all subjects were uniformly ranked.

The ordering based on titular ranks would at first sight suggest that the Qing was a typical Chinese dynasty, but in content the ranks were quite different. The distinctive feature of the Qing system of ranks was that the position of banner princes holding the title of *wanggong* was extremely high. Ordinary members of the imperial clan and bannermen, regardless of how distinguished their family or how great their political power might be, were categorically differentiated from banner princes. As for ordinary Chinese officials who had entered government service

[9] On the system of hereditary officials, see Matsuura Shigeru, "Tenmei nenkan no seishoku seido ni tsuite" [The System of Hereditary Officials in the Tianming Era], *Toyo-shi Kenkyu* 42: 4 (1984), Sections 2 and 3.

through the civil service examinations, even if they held high posts, the titular ranks indicative of their status were kept far lower than those of bannermen, let alone those of banner princes. Furthermore, the Chinese were not eligible for the status of *wanggong,* and therefore in the world of titular ranks, which might at first sight seem like a manifestation of the traditions of Chinese dynasties, the position of the Chinese was exceedingly low.

Secondly, bannermen were a source of civil and military officials and were in charge of the administration of the empire as a whole. Though the organization of the bureaucracy during the Qing was virtually identical to that of the Ming, bannermen were appointed to the more important positions, and the scope of their involvement in government extended to the whole empire. What is more, they served not only the Manchu emperor but also the banner prince to whom they were subject. This was clearly pointed out by the missionary Adrien Greslon about twenty years after the Manchu conquest.[10]

> It is not only soldiers, but also most of the Civil and Military Mandarins and a large number of people, who are subject to these eight banners.… Those who are engaged in this manner have two great advantages. The first is that they are assured of the Princes' protection, and for this reason there is no one who dares to offend them. The second is that they are easily elevated to official positions, and these two great advantages mean that they consider themselves fortunate to be engaged.

Thus, the Eight Banners guaranteed bannermen protection by the banner prince and also career in government service. Although formal government institutions appeared to have been inherited from the Ming without alternations, the master-servant relationship was embedded in them. As is shown here by the reference to "most of the Civil and Military Mandarins" (*la pluspart des Mandarins de Lettres, & d'Armes*) and by Parennin's earlier mention of "considerable Mandarins" (*Mandarins considérables*), the Eight Banners functioned as a source of personnel for official posts, especially those of high-ranking officials. In contrast, Chinese officials recruited through the civil service examinations were

[10] Adrien Greslon, *Histoire de la Chine sous la domination des Tartares: Ou l'on verra les choses les plus remarquables qui sont arrivées dans ce grand Empire, depuis l'année 1651, qu'ils ont achevé de le conquerir, jusqu'en 1669* (Paris: Jean Hénault, 1671), p. 119.

until the nineteenth century not permitted to involve themselves in the administration of areas outside the former territory of the Ming, and the extent of their influence was restricted. The Eight Banners infiltrated the machinery of rule through personnel appointments and held the real power underpinning Qing rule.

Thirdly, the Eight Banner system was adopted not only as an organization for the Manchus themselves, but also as a model for ruling the empire. As its territory expanded and the numbers of Mongols and Han-Chinese grew, initially, as we saw earlier, Mongol divisions and Chinese-martial divisions were established within the Eight Banners. Next, as groups of some size subjected to the Qing or Manchu, they were organized in the same manner as the Eight Banners and placed outside the Eight Banners.[11] The Mongol forces that had submitted while remaining on their pasturelands, such as the Khorchin tribe of Inner Mongolia, were organized into *ǰasaγ* (*zhasake*) banners, modeled on the Eight Banners and so subordinated to Manchu rule. The *ǰasaγ* banners consisted of a hierarchy like that of the Eight Banners, and they were placed under the command of Mongol princes who were appointed hereditary *ǰasaγ,* corresponding to banner princes. In addition, the forces under the Ming commanders Kong Youde, Geng Zhongming, and Shang Kexi, which had surrendered as army units, were reorganized into organizations similar to the Eight Banners; they were named *Tianyoubing* and *Tianzhubing*. These constituted what might be described as the ninth and tenth banners, and the above three commanders were known as the Three Submissive Princes (*san shunwang*) and were treated equally with the banner princes of the Eight Banners. Later they were joined by the renowned Wu Sangui, and when Kong Youde was killed in battle, they became the Three Feudatories (*sanfan*).[12]

[11] On the Mongol *ǰasaγ* banners, see Kusunoki Yoshimichi, "Tenso gonen Dairyo-ga kojo-sen kara mita Aishin-koku seiken no kozo [The Composition of the Aisin Régime as Seen from the Battle for Dalinghe in the Fifth Year of the Tiancong Era], *Toyo-shi Kenkyu* 59: 3 (2000), pp. 1-34; Oka Hiroki, *Shindai mongoru meiki seido no kenkyu* [Study on *Ciγulγan* and *Qosiγu* of Qing Era Mongolia] (Tokyo, Toho Shoten, 2007).

[12] On the Chinese feudatory princes, see Kanda Nobuo, "Heiseio Go Sankei no kenkyu" [Wu Sangui, the 'West-Pacifying Prince'], in Kanda Nobuo, *Shincho shi ronko* [Studies on Qing-Manchu History: Selected Articles] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Publishers, 2005), pp. 193-243 (first published, 1952); Hosoya Yoshio, "The Han Chinese Generals Who Collaborated with Hou-Chin Kuo," *Acta Asiatica* 53 (1988), pp. 39-61.

Among these, the army units under the Chinese feudatory princes (*fanwang*) were disbanded after the rebellion of the Three Feudatories and incorporated into the Chinese-martial banner, but in Inner Asia the *ǰasaγ* system was steadily expanded as Qing conquests advanced. While there were some regions, such as Mongolia, where the *ǰasaγ* system was deployed over the entire area and other regions, such as Tibet and East Turkestan, where it was restricted to certain areas, it was at any rate a world virtually unrelated to Ming-style government organization. Further, not only were local forces organized in a manner similar to the Eight Banners, as in the case of the *ǰasaγ* banners, but some local groups were directly incorporated into the Eight Banners, and Eight Banner garrisons were also dispatched from the Eight Banners to localities throughout the empire.[13] In other words, all parts of the Qing Empire were to a greater or lesser extent connected to the Eight Banners.

In this fashion, the structure and characteristics of the Eight Banner system went beyond the confines of the Eight Banners and were closely related to the structure and order of the Qing Empire as a whole. In Figure 1, I have therefore put into the form of a diagram the administrative structure of the Qing Empire as seen from the perspective of the Eight Banner system. The solid horizontal line marks the division between ruler and ruled within each group, while the dashed line indicates the division between those of *wanggong* status and the officials and subjects below them within the ruling class. The five blocks, with the Manchus at the centre, indicate the main constituent parts of the empire, with the shaded section marking their core, i.e., the Eight Banners. As we saw earlier, the Eight Banners at the centre, led by banner princes of the imperial family, were an organization for unifying the Manchus, and there were also Mongol divisions and Chinese-martial divisions. Outside these were the *ǰasaγ* banners of Inner Mongolia and the army units of the Three Submissive Princes, and even after the abolition of the Three Feudatories the *ǰasaγ* system was gradually applied to regions in Inner Asia such as Outer Mongolia, Qinghai, Tibet and East Turkestan. Members of the chieftain class in these regions were granted princely titles of the same grade as members of the imperial family, and in contrast

[13] On the Eight Banner garrisons, see Ding Yizhuang, *Qingdai baqi zhufang yanjiu* [A Study of the Qing Eight Banner Garrison System] (Liaoning: Minzu Chubanshe, 2003; 1st edition, 1992).

Figure 1. The Structure of Qing's Imperial Rule

Qing Emperor
< mañjuśrī Khan and *cakravartin* >
Protector
Patron
Great Khan
Khan
Emperor
Princes (Wang-Gong)
Subordinates holding the privilege
Kazakh Sultan or Khan
Turkic Princes and Begs
Tibetan Princes and Lamas
Mongol Princes
Imperial Banner Princes
Three Feudatories
Korean King
Ryukyu King
Mongol
Manchu Bannermen
Chinese martial
Bureaucrats and Local Elites
The rulers
Kazakh Nomad
Turkic Muslim
Tibetan
Mongol
Manchu
Han-Chinese
Korean
Ryukyu
The ruled
(Shamanism)
Islam
Tibetan Buddhism
Confucianism
Outer Feudatories (*Wai-fan, Fan-bu*)
Kazakh Khanate
Qing Empire
Chosŏn Kingdom
Ryukyu Kingdom
: The Eight Banners

to banner princes of the imperial family, known as "inner" princes, they were known as "outer" princes or outer feudatory princes, and their groups and territories were called Outer Feudatories (*waifan*).[14] It is often mistakenly considered that the Court of Colonial Dependencies ruled over these Outer Feudatories, but it did no more than manage their affairs, and the Mongol princes, equal in status to banner princes, occupied a superior position. On the other hand, it could be said that it was in the former territories of the Ming, where there was no status group of imperial princes and non-hereditary officials recruited through the civil service examinations directly serving the emperor, that a completely different principle of rule was applied, even though it goes without saying that these regions were overwhelmingly preponderant in terms of population and economic power.

Thus, in one respect the Qing Empire was a confederation of "inner" princes of the Aisin Gioro clan in command of the Eight Banners and "outer" princes headed by the Mongol princes, while in another respect it was a Chinese dynasty, whose emperor ruled over the entire population, and these various aspects were integrated in the person of the Manchu emperor. Further, as is shown on both sides of the diagram, tributary states could also be regarded as an extension of this, for local chieftains who ruled over their own retainers and subjects were treated as being of the same rank as the princes (*wanggong*) of the empire, insofar that they were granted princely titles and rendered homage to the emperor.

The emperor who unified these various parts of his empire possessed a multifarious character for responding to each of these parts. The Qing emperor was the khan of the Manchus in command of the Eight Banners, the Chinese emperor who had inherited his legitimacy from the Ming, a great khan who had succeeded to the Mongol empire, a patron of Tibetan Buddhism, and, though not a Muslim himself, a protector of Islam. In addition, he was regarded not only by the Chinese under

[14] Oka Hiroki, "The Mongols and the Qing Dynasty: The North Asian Feature of Qing Rule over the Mongolia," in T. Yoshida and H. Oka, eds., *Facets of Transformation of the Northeast Asian Countries,* Northeast Asian Study Series 1 (Sendai: Tohoku University, 1998), pp. 129-151; Kataoka Kazutada, "Choga kitei kara mita shincho to gaihan, chokokoku no kankei" [The Ch'ing Dynasty System as Seen from Its Policies Towards "Waifan" and Tributaries], in Kataoka Kazutada, *Chugoku Kan'in Seido Kenkyu* [A Study of the Official Seal System in Imperial China] (Tokyo, Toho Shoten, 2008), pp.367-384 (first published, 1998).

his rule, but also by people in the countries of East Asia, as a Chinese emperor who venerated and promoted Confucianism, while in the world of Tibetan Buddhism he was looked upon by Manchus, Mongols and Tibetans as an incarnation of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī and a wheel-turning sage-king (*cakravartin*).[15] However, it needs to be noted that, unlike alliances under a single monarch in Europe, this composite and multifarious character of the emperor cannot be clearly divided. It was for this reason that the Qing emperor was able to unify diverse regions and peoples. To put it another way, it could be said that the emperor had many different faces, but others saw only the face that was turned in their direction.

THE QING EMPIRE AS A CENTRAL EURASIAN STATE

As has been seen in the above, it is possible to delineate the structure of rule in the Qing Empire as having been put together with the order of a Manchu dynasty, based on the Eight Banner system, as its basic framework. It is inconceivable that the Eight Banners with the characteristics outlined above would have had their origins in China's military organization or its bureaucracy, but it is also difficult to explain them solely in terms of Jurchen-Manchu traditions or Nurhaci's inventiveness. That being so, where did the organization and characteristics of the Eight Banners originate and how can they be characterized?

In the past, similarities with the nomadic armies of Inner Asia have been pointed out with respect to the hierarchical structure of the Eight Banners, extending from the company (*niru*) to the division (*gūsa*). But in my view, the similarities do not stop here, for the nomadic armies and their state organization possessed a number of characteristics — (1) a hierarchical military and administrative organization, (2) the monopolization of the right to rule by the imperial family and the

[15] See Ishihama Yumiko, *Chibetto bukkyo sekai no rekisiteki kenkyu* [A Historical Study of the World of Tibetan Buddhism] (Tokyo: Toho Shoten, 2001); Idem, "The Image of Ch'ien-lung's Kingship as Seen from the World of Tibetan Buddhism," *Acta Asiatica* 88 (2005), pp. 49-64.

shared possession of all subjects under its rule, (3) a system of left and right wings, and (4) the existence of an imperial guard — and the characteristics of the Eight Banner system are found to coincide with all of these. That is to say, the similarities are not limited to mere organizational similarities, and the Eight Banner system possessed features that were thus shared in essence and across the board with the nomadic military and administrative organizations of Inner Asia and, more broadly speaking, Central Eurasia.

More specifically, the hierarchical organization and system of left and right wings were a tradition going back to the Huns, but the concentration of power in the sovereign and his family and a highly developed governing structure and system of document-based administration which underpinned this power were characteristics that became noticeable in the Mongol empire and were also adopted by subsequent dynasties, i.e., the Timurid Empire, which took over from the Chaghatai khanate, and the Safavid Empire and Mughal Empire, which grew out of the Timurid Empire, among which can be included the Ottoman Empire. Until now, these have either been considered separately in the fields of Iranian history, Indian history and Turkish history, or else have been treated as Islamic states, and they have at any rate been differentiated from the Qing, which has been regarded as a "Chinese dynasty." But if one reconsiders the structure of rule in the Qing Empire with a focus on the Eight Banners, it should be possible to compare these other empires to the Qing as a successor to the Mongol empire.[16] Let us therefore reexamine the points listed above.

(1) Hierarchical Militaryand Administrative Organization

The hierarchy was a traditional method of organization dating from the time of the Huns, but its organizational techniques developed considerably in the Mongol empire. In the Mongolian *mingγan* system, existing tribes were not organized in their existing form; instead they were

[16] The notion of successor states to the Mongol Empire has been put forward and developed by Saguchi Toru, Okada Hidehiro, Sugiyama Masaaki, and others. However, the idea of including the Qing Empire among these has not yet gained wide currency, and no attempt to corroborate this has been made. For a comparison of the Safavid, Mughal, and Ottoman Empires, see Sudipta Sen, "The New Frontiers of Manchu China and the Historiography of Asian Empires: A Review Essay," *Journal of Asian Studies* 61: 1 (2002), pp. 165-177.

broken up and then reorganized into 1,000-man battalions (*mingγan*).[17] In the case of the Eight Banners too, the various forces that had previously been in rivalry and conflict with Nurhaci were first disbanded and then reorganized into companies (*niru*) and relegated to the position of subordinates of banner princes. However, in neither the Mongol Empire nor the Qing were the positions of the former tribal chieftains and the integration of the former forces completely lost, and these were carried over in the appointment of former chieftains as battalion commanders and company captains. There could thus be said to have been the two aspects of tradition and innovation.

(2) Monopolization of the Right to Rule by the Imperial Family and the Shared Possession of All Subjects under Its Rule

In the Eight Banner system, the qualification for becoming a banner prince was restricted to direct descendants of Nurhaci and his brothers, and there were no banners commanded by leaders from outside the Aisin Gioro clan. In the case of the Mongol empire too it was only direct descendants of Chinggis Khan, such as Chaghatay and Hülegü, who possessed independent territories, and after the Mongol period it was again only descendants of Chinggis Khan who could take the title of khan. In the Timurid Empire too, the descendants of Timur were likewise given lands and retainers and each had his own base, and this system was carried over by the Mughal Empire. Background factors in this were traditional thinking, which regarded the state as the common property of the imperial family and the increasing strength of regal authority from the Mongol period onwards, which made it possible for the imperial family alone to monopolize this common property. At the same time, these customs were incompatible with primogeniture and the institution of a crown prince, which attached excessive importance to one person in a particular position within the family, and in neither the Qing nor these states starting with the Mongol Empire were any such laws of succession established.[18]

.[17] Honda Minobu, *Mongoru jidai shi kenkyu* [A Study of the History of the Mongol Period] (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1991), chap. 1.

[18] There was a crown prince during the Yuan dynasty, but unlike in China, the crown prince could not automatically succeed to the throne; instead he had to be selected at a council of members of the imperial family.

(3) System of Left and Right Wings

The Eight Banners were divided into those on the left wing, in the east, and those on the right wing, in the west, and their disposition was fixed. The left wing consisted of the Bordered Yellow Banner, Plain White Banner, Bordered White Banner and Plain Blue Banner, while the right wing consisted of the Plain Yellow Banner, Plain Red Banner, Bordered Red Banner and Bordered Blue Banner. When these were arranged from north to south, the two Yellow Banners were positioned in the north, the two White Banners in the east, the two Red Banners in the west, and the two Blue Banners in the south.[19] This arrangement was shared with battle formations, hunting formations, the layout of the banner pavilions in the Imperial Palace at Mukden, and the arrangement of residential quarters in the Inner City in Beijing. This means that, for the Eight Banners and the Manchu-Qing Empire, the system of left and right wings was not just a battle formation, but also a political, social and ritual framework.

This characteristic too was a tradition of nomadic military and state organization that went back to the Huns. The Mongol empire too adopted a form of deployment whereby the *ulus* of the great khan's younger brothers and sons were drawn up on the left and right wings respectively, with the great khan in the centre, and this set-up was followed both on ritual occasions and at times of military action.[20] Likewise, in the Timurid Empire and Moghulistan khanate a system of left and right wings based on a hierarchical structure was the basic form of state and military organization.[21] Further, in the early Safavid Empire, which was at the time strongly imbued with the character of a nomadic state, the Turkic-Mongol nomadic tribes called Qizilbaš, who supported the shah, were divided into left and right wings, which formed the army.[22]

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[19] See Elliot, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

[20] Sugiyama Masaaki, *Mongoru teikoku to Dai Gen urusu* [The Mongol Empire and Dai-ön ulus] (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2004), chap. 1 (first published, 1978).

[21] Mano Eiji, *Baburu to sono jidai* [Babur and His Times] (Kyoto: Shokadoh Book Sellers, 2001), pt. 2, chap. 5 (first published, 1966) & pt. 3, chap. 4 (first published, 1969).

[22] Haneda Masashi, "Safavi-cho no seiritsu" [The Founding of the Safavid Dynasty], *Toyo-shi Kenkyu* 37: 4 (1978), pp. 24-56.

(4) Existence of an Imperial Guard

In the Qing, both the emperor and banner princes possessed groups of bodyguards called *hiya,* who were selected from those under their command, and these formed the core of their personal staff. The *hiya* in the Qing shared their characteristics with the bodyguards in the Mongol Empire known as *kešig*. Furthermore, insofar as the people attending on the sovereign not only served as guards and aides, but were also a source of high-ranking government officials, they were similar to the "sultan's slaves" (*kapı kulu*) in the Ottoman empire and the "king's slaves" (*gholâm*) in the Safavid Empire.[23]

As is evident from the above, even though the Manchus were not nomads, their military and state organization bore a very close resemblance to the nomadic and semi-nomadic states of Central Eurasia, especially the Mongol Empire and its successors. How, then, should one regard their relationship with the enormous Han-Chinese society under their rule? The Qing took over the administrative machinery and institutions of the late Ming more or less as they were and continued to hold civil service examinations for the appointment of administrative officials; for this reason the Qing is looked upon as a Chinese dynasty that followed on from the Ming.

But the Qing followed a basic principle of giving precedence to the Manchu language, with higher-level administrative documents being written in Manchu accompanied by a Chinese version, and, as was described earlier, in the decision-making process and the scope of their official powers, the areas in which Chinese officials recruited through the civil service examinations could become involved were far more constrained than those of bannermen officials. In appointment to official posts too, Chinese were divided into civil officials and military officials depending on the route through which they had initially entered government service, whereas bannermen were appointed regardless

[23] Suzuki Tadashi, *Osuman teikoku no kenryoku to erito* [Power and the Elite in the Ottoman Empire] (Tokyo University Press, 1993); Haneda Masashi, "Koruchi ko: 16 seiki iran no konoehei seido" [The Qurci: A Study on the Iranian Imperial Guards in the Sixteenth Century], *Shirin* 67: 3 (1984), pp. 1-23; Maeda Hirotake, *Isramu sekai no dorei gunjin to sono jitsuzo: 17 seiki safavi-cho iran to kokasasu* [A History of "Slave Elites" in the Islamic World: Safavid Iran and the People of Caucasia in the 17th Century] (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2009).

of the type of post; and high-ranking bannermen officials could be appointed to positions such as grand secretary (*neige daxueshi*) or minister (*shangshu*) of one of the Six Boards (*liubu*) and also take up posts such as banner commander (*dutong*) or garrison general (*jiangjun*), sometimes at the same time. In other words, although the society and culture of the permanent population, which was in the overwhelming majority and had its own traditions, was respected and provided personnel for government, this should be regarded as no more than coexistence and utilization. The Manchu rulers held the real governing power.

Surveying Central Eurasia, one can see that the problem of how to govern a permanently settled society consisting of a vast population speaking a different language and belonging to a different culture was shared with other states. In the Safavid Empire the relationship between Turkic nomadic military officers and the Tajiks, or Iranian officials and clerks, can be compared to the above relationship between bannermen and Chinese officials recruited through the civil service examinations, and the same can be said of rule over Hindus in the Mughal Empire and over Arabs and the Balkans in the Ottoman empire. Although the language of the majority was also used in these empires, a system of document-based administration using the language and script of the ruling minority was implemented, and this minority had exclusive control of decision-making.

When viewed in this light, it could be said with respect to both political and military organization and the state as a whole that the Qing empire was not only the successor to the Ming, but was also a successor to the Mongol empire and was a parallel state to other contemporary empires. The Mongol historian Oka Hiroki has presented a model of a segmentary and multistratified state and social structure possessing a hierarchical structure, in which each unit nonetheless has a high degree of autonomy, and he calls this the "North Asian Khanates."[24] The Eight Banners are precisely an example of this, and the character of the Qing Empire, centered on the Eight Banners, should be looked upon as a type

[24] Oka Hiroki, "Tohoku Ajia ni okeru yubokumin no chiikironteki iso [The Position of Nomads in Northeast Asia in Terms of Area Studies], in Oka Hiroki and Takakura Hiroki, eds., *Tohoku Ajia chiiki-ron no kanosei* [Possibilities of Northeast Asian Area Studies] (Sendai: Tohoku University, Center for Northeast Asian Studies, 2002), pp. 19-33.

similar to the Central Eurasian states.[25] What is referred to here as a "Central Asian state" is a concept broader than a nomadic state and may be defined as a state in which a group possessing nomadic military power and a means of organizing its authority has control of military affairs and politics, governs the diverse permanently settled societies under its rule with as little interference as possible, and aims for coexistence with and utilization of its members through appointment to official posts.[26] When considered in this manner, the state of the Manchus, who were not nomads, can also be broadly positioned within the context of Central Eurasian history.

At the same time, one can also point to the following features as examples of Manchuness: (1) the constituent units of the ruling group were not individual members of the imperial family and their lands, but an organization called "banners," and for this reason the ruling group was not easily affected by questions of succession or rewards and punishments involving the families of individual banner princes and thus maintained stability as an organization; and (2) since the Manchus were not nomads, they had always been accustomed to settled habitation and also adopted policies aimed at concentrated settlement and did not apportion their lands,[27] as a result of which no rebellions at all broke out among the imperial family, and it became possible to exercise long-term centralized political leadership. These features were all based on the Eight Banner system, and when viewed in this light, the Qing empire ought to be regarded as a Central Eurasian state, and the Eight Banner system can be described as a Manchu form of Central Eurasian political and military organization.

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[25] See Sugiyama, "The Ch'ing Empire as a Manchu Khanate," pp. 38-40.

[26] The notion of Central Eurasian states has been proposed in Moriyasu Takao, "Uiguru kara mita anshi no ran" [The Rebellion of An Lu-shan (755-763) from the Uighurs' Viewpoint: With special reference to an Uighur document Mainz 345], *Nairiku ajia gengo no kenkyu* [Studies on the Inner Asian Languages] 17 (2002), pp. 117-170, especially section 1; *Shiruku rodo to To Teikoku* [The Silk Road and the Tang Empire] (Kodansha Publishers, 2007), pp. 307-310; Sugiyama Masaaki, "Teikoku-shi no myakuraku: rekishi no naka no moderuka ni mukete [The Coherence of Imperial History. Quest for a Model in History], in Yamamoto Yuzo, ed., *Teikoku no kenkyu* [A Study of Empire] (Nagoya: Nagoya University Press, 2003), pp. 67-70.

[27] Du Jiaji, "Qingdai zongshi fenfengzhi shulun" [On the Investiture System of the Qing Imperial Family], *Shehui Kexue Jikan* 4 (1991), pp. 90-95.

Conclusion

It is true that, when viewed from the perspective of Han-Chinese, the Ming and the Qing seemed much the same apart from hairstyle and clothing. But one should not overlook the fact that this was not the case, when they were considered from other angles. Under Chinese-style administrative institutions and a Confucianist theory of legitimacy, the Eight Banners held the key to rule of the Qing Empire, and the Eight Banner system possessed features distinctive of nomadic social, political and military organizations in Central Eurasia. When considered in this light, regardless of how enormous Han-Chinese society under its rule may have been, the Qing empire can be regarded as a type of Central Eurasian state, that is, an East Asian form of a Central Eurasian state.

It goes without saying that the Qing empire differed markedly in a great many respects from the Mongol, Timurid, Safavid, and Mughal Empires, but we ought not to disregard the similarities. In recent years, there has been an emphasis on the viewpoint that would not simply position these dynasties as separate dynasties in, for example, Iranian history or Indian history, but would attach importance to their nomadic and Inner Asian characteristics, and by understanding them more broadly as Central Eurasian states, it should be possible to draw the Qing too out onto the same stage. Moreover, an attempt to do so would also contribute to the study of empires in world history. When one compares in particular the Qing Empire and the Ottoman Empire, they can both be regarded as empires with a strongly non-nomadic character but also possessing Central Eurasian features. One could further say that the history of the late Qing can be explained as the process of a shift from a Central Eurasian state to "China," as part of the world of East Asia. But one must not forget the original shape of the Qing Empire.

Chinese Character Glossary

Aixin Jueluo 愛新覚羅
bafen 八分
baoyi 包衣
Beijing 北京
canling 参領
Dai Qing guo 大清国
dutong 都統
fanwang 藩王
fuguo gong 輔国公
Geng Zhongming 耿仲明
gushan 固山
gushan ezhen 固山額真
heshi beile 和碩貝勒
heshi qinwang 和碩親王
hou Jin guo 後金国
huwei 護衛
jiala 甲喇
jiangjun 将軍
Jianzhou 建州
junjichu 軍機処
Kong Youde 孔有徳
lifanyuan 理藩院
liubu 六部
Li Zicheng 李自成
Ming 明
neige daxueshi 内閣大学士
neiwufu 内務府
niulu 牛彔
Qing 清
Qinghai 青海
sanfan 三藩
san shunwang 三順王
Shang Kexi 尚可喜
shangshu 尚書
shiwei 侍衛
shizhi 世職
Shunzhi 順治
taiji 台吉
Tianyoubing 天祐兵
Tianzhubing 天助兵
waifan 外藩
wanggong 王公
Wu Sangui 呉三桂
xunfu 巡撫
Yongzheng 雍正
zhasake 扎薩克
zongdu 総督
zuoling 佐領