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Cover illustration  Takabatake Kashō, “My skin was like Jade when I left my country”; Yamauchi Hideo, young hero of the “Song of the Mounted Bandit.” Reproduced with permission of Yayoi Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan

Errata  In recent issues Yan Zhenqing's 颜真卿 name was mistakenly given as 颜侦卿 due to a change of fonts. We apologise for this error.

In the previous issue of *East Asian History* (No.29), in the article “In Search of Smokers” by Xavier Paulès, the caption on Figure 4, page 120, should read “Occupation of the population of Cantonese adult males in 1928.”
The editor and editorial board of *East Asian History* would like to acknowledge the contribution that two colleagues have made to the creation and evolution of our journal over the years.

Professor Mark Elvin, who took up a position as Professor of Chinese History at The Australian National University in February 1990, was the inspiration behind and instigator of *East Asian History* in its present form. With his encouragement and support we redesigned *Papers on Far Eastern History* and re-launched it as *East Asian History* in 1991. Mark retired from the department in December 2005.

Helen Lo, who began work with us in September 1987, was the designer and editorial assistant of *East Asian History* from its inception until her retirement in June 2005. She was the artist behind the style of the journal and her contribution is sorely missed.
BORDERLANDERS BETWEEN EMPIRE AND NATION: 
BANNER PEOPLE IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY 
MANCHURIA

Shao Dan

I suggest that we gather banner people in the Eastern Provinces and give them military training. We should use the Eastern Provinces as a temporary place for our emperor to rest and for banner people to make a living.¹

Manchuria came to the world’s attention in the early 1930s with debates between the governments of China and Japan over the legitimacy of Manchukuo.² Interventions in newspapers and journals focussing on two major questions—did Manchuria belong to China in the past? and Could China or Japan more authentically claim sovereignty in the present?—effectively recast these debates into the so-called “Manchuria Problem.” While the former question concerned the historical place of Manchuria in China, the latter addressed the authority of agents in nation-building and state-formation in the region. Similar questions continue to be posed in relation to Tibet, Taiwan and Xinjiang; but today even the name “Manchuria” has given way to “Northeast China” (Dongbei 东北). Indeed, the history of Manchuria as a contested borderland (bianjiang 边疆) has received relatively little scholarly attention compared with Tibet and Xinjiang in “Borderland Studies” outside China, in all likelihood because it has been more successfully integrated into the Chinese nation-state. Studies of the Manchurian region have been limited by an adherence either to contemporary national borders or periodizations marked by pivotal dates in Chinese and Japanese history (1911, 1931/32 or 1945) or both. In this way, the repositioning of Manchuria in the political mapping of East Asia has been overlooked. This article will examine how Manchuria became transformed from being the “remote homeland” of the Manchus

This article is adapted from a chapter of my book manuscript, "Remote Homeland, Recovered Borderlands: Manchus, Manchukuo and Manchuria, 1909–1985." I would like to thank the editors of East Asian History for the revisions of, and comments on, this article.


2 Such as F.M. (Frederic Morley) Cutlack, The Manchurian Arena: An Australian View of the Far-Eastern Conflict (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1934); S. Dashinsky, Japan in Manchuria (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1932); and John R. Stewart, Manchuria since 1931 (New York: Secretariat, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1936). Japanese writings such as travel accounts and academic research about Manchuria are numerous; see Joshua Fogel, The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China, 1862–1945 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996). Regarding the transliteration of the name for the political / OVER
to become a “contested borderland,” how this process affected the experience of the banner peoples, and how Manchu identity was reconfigured in the early twentieth century.\(^3\)

Manchu rulers treated Manchuria as the sacred homeland in their edicts, policies and literary works, and the region was still regarded in the early twentieth century as a possible base for Manchu restoration and a place of refuge for banner people (as indicated in the epigraph to this article). Manchuria’s transformation from the legendary homeland of the Manchus to a historical borderland and then to an “inseparable” part of China’s national territory provides clear contrast to the model of a “homeland-borderland-bordered land” trajectory often seen in theories of frontiers and borderlands. Such theories have been one of the major analytical tools in European and US history, and they have had considerable influence on studies of East Asia.\(^4\) Perspectives from so-called “minority populations” whose homeland is redefined as a borderland in changed historical settings require more scholarly attention. I will focus here on the consequences of this homeland-borderland transformation as reflected in peoples’ experiences in and expressions of Manchuria. The Manchurian case thus provides an opportunity for examining the importance of place in relation to people’s experiences during national and ethnic identity formation and transformation.

Previous historical studies of China’s transformation from an empire to a modern state have provided insightful analyses of changes and continuities in the economic, political, military, legal, intellectual and cultural spheres both at the centre and in local areas, and these works provide the historical and theoretical foundations for the present study.\(^5\) The following

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\(^3\) It is necessary to briefly trace the history of the banner system and Manchus in the Qing before further discussion of banner people, qizu 羣族, and Manchus. It is difficult to give an accurate definition of who constituted the banner system and Manchus in the Qing. When ethnicity as a primary analytical tool is applied to the studies of banner people, Pamela K. Crossley not only discusses the use of ethnicity as an analytical tool and a research subject in China studies but also questions the historicity of using “ethnicity” to study Manchu identity in the Qing dynasty. See Pamela Crossley, “Thinking About Ethnicity in Early Modern China,” *Late Imperial China* 11.1 (June 1999): 1–35.

\(^4\) Turner’s frontier theory was introduced to China studies from the early twentieth century. Chinese historians have also debated over how to translate “frontier” and “borderlands” into Chinese. The most common Chinese equivalent for both is “bianjiang,” which literally means “peripheral frontier borderland.” Any historiographical explanation for the inattention to recent developments in Western studies of borderlands by Chinese historians requires further discussion, which this paper will not engage in. Nevertheless, Chinese historians have appeared to overlook the new approaches, new theoretical frameworks, and new voices in borderland theories and approaches that have been developing during the past decades in the fields of European and American history, such as Peter Salins’ studies on the Pyrenean frontier of France and Spain, László Kürti’s work on the contestation between Hungary and Rumania over the Transylvanian borderland, or the thought-provoking debates among US historians in the early 1990s stimulated by Stephan Aron and Jeremy Adelman’s article on borderlands, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History,” *American Historical Review* 103.4 (June 1999): 814–41.

questions add to our understanding of the relationship between the legacy of the Qing empire and the formation of contemporary China: How did the process of moving from a homeland to a borderland influence banner peoples' experiences in Manchuria during and after the 1911 Revolution? Did the Qing empire view banner people in Manchuria differently from those in China proper and, if so, was their treatment also different? And, how was Manchu history used to legitimize both the separation of Manchuria from China and Puyi's nominal leadership in Manchoukuo? By considering the particular position of Manchuria in the political mapping of the Qing dynasty, the expressions and experiences of banner peoples' identity transformation in Manchuria will provide another side to the story of China's transformation from empire to modern state, with the concomitant shift from an imperial discourse to a rhetoric of nationalism.

**Manchuria: From Remote Homeland to Contested Borderland**

Manchuria was understood as the Manchu homeland during the Qing dynasty. However, to most Manchus living in Beijing and China proper at that time, Manchuria was a remote homeland, a distinct and distant place in the Qing empire. After the Qing conquered China in 1644, most banner people emigrated from Manchuria into China. Within twenty years of the conquest, the Manchu homeland had been abandoned, as a 1661 report from a local official described: “I saw abandoned towns and fortifications, collapsed houses and walls. On the vast expanse of this fertile land, there is no population (youshu wuren 有土无人).” To populate the vacant lands, emigration from China was encouraged during the early Qing; however, Han immigration into Manchuria was forbidden in 1740. This was in an attempt to protect the interests of local peoples whose connections with the Qing regime from the late Ming on qualified them to have an affiliation with the Manchu rulers.

Manchuria was more than simply a distinctive feature of the Qing empire in literature and on maps. Its special position was maintained through an administrative system separate from that of China proper, as well as by a series of policies that categorized banner people resident there differently from the rest of the banner system. The distinctive administrative system in Manchuria has been examined thoroughly by other scholars; here I will introduce the major Qing policies and their effects on banner people.

During the high Qing, Manchu emperors vigorously promoted the idea of Manchuria as their sacred homeland or the “place where the dragon arose” (longxing zhi di 龙兴之地). Beijing was, of course, the capital of the Qing dynasty but Shengjing 盛京 (present-day Shenyang, also previously known...

9 For details on the administrative system, see writings from the Qing such as Xu Shichang, *Dongsansheng zhang hui* [Administrative strategies in the Three Eastern Provinces] (Taipei: Wenhai Chubanshe, 1965), hereafter *DSSZL*, Xu Shichang, *Tuigeng tang zhangshu* [Memorials and writings of Xu Shichang] (Taipei: Chengwen Chubanshe, 1968), hereafter *TXG*, Saying’e, *Jilin waiji* [Unofficial records on Jilin], in *Zhongguo bianjiang shi* [A history of exiles’惩罚] (Shenyang: *Qingdai dongbei liuren shixuan* [Selected and annotated of poems by Qing exiles in the Northeast] (Shanghai: Kaimin Shudian, 1948). as Fengtian  奉天 or by its Manchu name of Mukden) served as their “secondary capital” (*peijie* or its Manchu name of Mukden) or “residence capital” (*liujing* 留京) in Manchuria and had been the capital of the Manchus before their conquest of China (see map, Figure 1). While the Six Boards were established in Beijing, five of them had counterparts in Shengjing, the Boards of Revenue, Rites, War, Justice and Works. The offices of the Generals of Shengjing (which had, as noted above, previously been known as Fengtian), Jilin 吉林 (previously Ningguta 寧古塔) and Heilongjiang 黑龙江 were set up during the Qianlong 乾隆 and Kangxi 康熙 reigns. These Five Boards and the generals’ offices were in charge of banner soldiers and people in the early years. A different but parallel governmental system (*zhouxian* 州县) was later set up to administer civilians (*minren* 民人). The first civilian administrative institution in Manchuria was set up in 1653, nine years after the Qing court had settled its new capital in Beijing.

From the mid-nineteenth century onward, Manchuria was regarded more as a part of the territory of the state as a whole than as the preserved homeland of the Manchus. This was not an overnight change. In fact, Manchuria’s prominent status in the Qing empire had already been compromised by the obviously contradictory policy of exiling criminals to Manchuria, which began in the mid-seventeenth century. From the time of the Shunzhi 顺治 reign, only a few years after the Manchus had conquered Beijing, many people convicted for their political views were sent to Manchuria. These exiles were banished not only to remote and barren places, but also to major towns such as Ningguta, Ula X拉, Tieling 铁岭 and Shengjing itself.10 The choice of “the place where the dragon arose” as a site of punishment for exiles reflects the dramatic discrepancy between the Qing rulers’ view of Manchuria as a place of hardship and their rhetorical respect for Manchuria as their sacred homeland.11

The Manchu rulers neglected Manchuria after they settled in Beijing. Beijing, their new home, was so exciting and comfortable that they no longer wanted to develop their homeland or “return” home.12 Local élites in the early twentieth century were clearly aware that Manchuria was being ignored by the court. In 1910, a representative of the Petition for Opening the Parliament Movement (*Fengtian guobui qingyuan yundong* 奉天/1.4. Dingmao, Wuchen).
said to Governor-General Xiliang 锡良, “General, in your memorial please ask the Emperor not to forget his native place [laojia 老家].”

The Qing court had failed to build up strong defenses in their homeland and this led to border crises late in the dynasty. The Qing court was so weak in Manchuria that they could not even protect the Imperial Palace in Shengjing, where the earliest Manchu emperors had lived and worked, from foreign occupation. In 1900, the Russians, who had maintained a strong presence in Manchuria, occupied several important towns and cities (including Shengjing) under the pretext of pacifying the Boxers and protecting the railways. They stationed soldiers at the Imperial Palace of Shengjing for about two and a half years (1900–03) and a huge number of treasures of the Manchu royal clan were found to have been lost after the Russians withdrew.

As a consequence of their victory in the Russo-Japanese War, under the terms of the Treaty of Portsmouth (1905), Japan not only received Russian recognition of its status in Korea but also gained possession of Lushun 旅顺 and Dalian 大连 as a bonus. Western powers recognized Japanese rights to expand into Northeast Asia. In addition, the Katsura-Taft Agreement was signed between the USA and Japan in 1905, under which the USA supported Japan's suzerainty over Korea in exchange for Japan's recognition of US rights in the Philippines. Great Britain became Japan's ally in the same year. Two years after the Treaty of Portsmouth, Russia and Japan again divided up their interests in Manchuria, this time as partners rather than as enemies.

Under the pressure of domestic chaos and foreign invasion, the Qing empire was based less and less on “ethnic sovereignty” as it became transformed into a state defined by “territorial sovereignty” in the nineteenth century. The disappearance of ethnic considerations was reflected in a series of major changes in the concepts and practices of diplomacy, military affairs, politics, ethnic relations and general administration. Experiencing “misfortunes one after another, and the consequent damage unprecedented during the previous two hundred years,” Qing officials began to realize the importance of incorporating Manchuria into the state system. In order to safeguard the northeastern borders against foreign forces, the court made a series of administrative changes in the last decade of the dynasty to include the Three Eastern Provinces in the same administrative system as China proper. Shenyang was not the secondary capital of the Qing any more, but simply the capital of a province. The process of integrating Manchuria into China included economic and administrative reform as well as policies encouraging emigration.

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15 Xu Shichang, quoted in Zhang Shouzhen’s Qing ji Dongsansheng de wai buan yu gai zhi, p.33.
16 Robert H.G. Lee, The Manchurian Frontier in Ch'ing History (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), Zhang Shouzhen, Qing ji Dongsansheng de wai buan yu gai zhi. Deep concern over foreign encroachment was repeatedly reported in memorials from governors and generals who had once served in the Northeast (see Xu Shichang's DSSZL and Cheng Dequan's Cheng jiangjun [Xueloul shoujiang zou-gao [Memorials on governing Heilongjiang from General Cheng], in Jindai Zhongguo sbiluocongkao [Series of historical documents on modern China] (Taipei: Wenhai Chubanshe, 1968), and in Fengtian tongzhi [Fengtian gazetteer], juan 44, dashi, Guangxu chao donghua lu [Records from within the Eastern Gate in the Guangxu reign], Xuantong zhengji [Political records of the Xuantong reign], Qingchao xu wenxian tongkao [Continued general history of institution and critical examination of documents and studies of the Qing Dynasty], juan 26, bukou 2.
17 For more details, see Lee, The Manchurian Frontier.
Figure 1: Ijūin Kaneo, *Map of Shengjing City and Neighboring Areas, Fengtian fu [Fengtian fu Shengjing cheng neiwai tu]* (Liaoning, 1882). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
Banner People in Manchuria

Though the Manchu rulers failed to help their homeland to prosper or to defend it against foreign invasion, they succeeded in preserving it as a distinct place, inseparable from the empire. They formulated a series of policies so as to maintain Manchuria as their preserve and to protect the interests of banner people resident there. Manchuria’s place in the political mapping of the Qing empire is distinctive largely for three things: its administrative system, its ritual importance, and the status of the banner community and its relations with civilians. The former two aspects have been well explored. Here I will focus on the third, which determined its specific position in China’s political and national reconstruction as well as in the international contestation over the region during the first half of the twentieth century.

Banner people in Manchuria were treated differently from banner people in China proper. One way this was so related to the demobilisation policy (chuqi weimin 出旗为民), which required Han banner people in the local garrisons to leave the banners. Although this policy was adopted and implemented to ease the financial pressure caused by the rising banner population, the policy was never applied to Han banner people in Manchuria. Some scholars believe the reason for this was that the source of their provisioning was different. It is my contention that Manchuria’s special position in the Qing empire was also a major reason. This study suggests, however, that the Manchurian’s special position in the Qing empire was another important reason.

While banner people in China proper were not permitted to live outside the walled Manchu cities or travel beyond certain areas, banner people in Manchuria who violated the same rules enjoyed more lenient treatment. For example, the Qianlong emperor pardoned some banner people who left their garrison post in Shengjing and moved to Jilin supporting themselves by farming, for two reasons: first, that Jilin was no different from Shengjing because both were places the country had “taken root” (genben zhi di 根本之地); and second, that the banner people there had all been servants of the court for generations (shibu 世仆). The “Manchu Way,” though gradually disappearing to various degrees in most Manchu communities in China proper, was better preserved in Manchuria. Banner soldiers in Manchuria were supposedly better trained and qualified, and ready to serve the court’s military needs. The court drew forces from banners in Manchuria to suppress uprisings in other areas many times in the late Qing. Official edicts and memorials on campaigns at Jinchuan, Zunghar and other regions also reported the deployment and the achievements of banner soldiers from the Three Eastern Provinces. The Manchu language was used for a much longer time in Manchuria than in Beijing or provincial garrisons in China proper. The Qianlong emperor,
therefore, once ordered that nannies for the princes should be selected from the wives of imperial guards and officials who were from the Three Eastern Provinces but were currently living in Beijing. In the Daoguang 道光 reign, however, when the emperor’s children needed nannies who spoke Manchu, it would seem that no qualified women could be found in Beijing, as the court had to ask the General of Jilin to select local women and send them there.24 Similarly, an imperial guard from Beijing recalled that his colleagues who came from the Northeast were quite different because few of the newcomers had mastered the Han language and therefore few could be assigned to the Green Standard (liyin) Army.25

Nevertheless, facing the changes that occurred in the last few decades of the dynasty, the court not only had to reform the banner system but also had to provide a different and better life for banner people in Manchuria. Although it is commonly believed that the administrative reforms in Manchuria came as a result of moves that led towards a constitutional monarchy in the early twentieth century, earlier reports from the Northeast had advocated reform and expressed deep concerns over both the livelihood of banner people and penetration by the two aggressive neighboring countries. Chongshi 崇实, the General of Shengjing during the early Guangxu 光绪 reign (1875–1908), sent a memorial in 1875 describing the chaotic administrative situation and the financial problems of the province of Fengtian, and suggesting measures for solving the problems caused by the separation of administrative systems between banner and civilian affairs. His suggestions were implemented and followed in Jilin Province, where the major target of reform was also the administrative system.26 These late nineteenth-century efforts obviously had little effect on the problems of banner livelihood or foreign invasion, however, and larger-scale reforms were initiated to defend China’s northeastern frontiers in the early twentieth century.

In 1905, the Five Boards of Shengjing were abolished, marking a major change in the status of Manchuria in the political remapping of the Qing empire. With the abolition of the Five Boards, Shengjing was no longer the secondary capital. An edict issued on 20 April 1907 announced that the Shengjing General was to be renamed the Governor of the Three Eastern Provinces, and the administrative system in Manchuria was made to conform to the model of provinces in China proper. The rights and powers of banner offices were substantially limited. Apart from matters of ritual, banner registration, banner land and banner military issues, banner officers could not interfere in local administrative affairs even when banner people were involved.27

Xu Shichang 徐世昌 (1858–1939) was appointed

23 Qinding Siku Quanshu (Wenyuan ge), shibu, jishi hengmo lei, “Qinding pingding jinchuan fanglie” [Imperially compiled compendium on the campaigns pacifying the rebellions at Jinchuan], juan 15, 17, 22; “Pingding Zhuri’ger fanglie” [Compendium on the campaigns pacifying the Zunghar rebellion], qianbian, juan 43; “Qindingjiaobu Linqing nifei jilue” [Imperially compiled compendium on campaigns pacifying the rebellious bandits at Linqing], juan 8. According to “Qinding jiaobu Linqing nifei jilue,” juan 12, 50 soldiers from the Three Eastern Provinces who were skilled in archery were rewarded with silver and honor for their contribution in the battle.

24 Liu Xiaomeng, “Huangdi de rumu” [Wet nurses of the emperors], unpublished paper.

25 Yigeng, Shiwei suoyan [Casual conversations between imperial guards], 6b, 3a, in fiameng xuan congzhub. Yigeng’s information on why banner people from the Three Eastern Provinces were not assigned to the Green Standard Army is confirmed by an edict from Qianlong. This edict also reveals, however, that the second generation of people from the Northeast could be assigned to the Green Standard Army. QL34.9.29, Qinding Baqi tongzhi [Comprehensive history of the Eight Banners] juan shou 12: 30a–31a; in Qinding Siku Quanshu (Wenyuan ge), shibu, zengshu lei, jinzheng zhibu.

26 See the memorial on seven problems in Manchuria sent by Chongshi, “Guangxu chao Donghua lu,” GX1.7. Wuwu (24 August 1875) in Fengtian tongzhi, juan 44, 13b–20h, pp.902–906. See also a brief summary of Chongshi’s memorial in Diao Shuren, “Shilun Qingmo Dongbei” [An initial study on the Northeast during the late Qing], in Ming Qing Dongbei shi yanjiu lun ji [Essays on the history of the Northeast in the Ming and Qing dynasties] (Changchun: Jilin Wenshi Chubanshe, 1995), p.211. Also see Lee, The Manchurian Frontier in Qing History, pp.151–2.


/county], juan 8, 13a, “Requisition.” Similar requisitioning of banner soldiers from Manchuria is also recorded in Qing Shigao [Draft standard history of the Qing, Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1986] (such as “two thousand soldiers from Shengjing were sent ... to Sichuan to suppress bandits in Benji,” juan 16, benji 16, Renzong, JQ 4;
Governor-General and Imperial Commissioner of the Three Eastern Provinces, and his office was in charge of a series of reforms in the Northeast. The salient feature of his reforms was the abolition of the dual-track administrative system that had treated banner people and civilians separately. As a result, the northeastern area was no longer the reserved homeland of the Manchus but a part of the new administrative system of the state of China under the Qing government. In addition, the emigration of farmers from China proper was advocated once again: “Hiring people to populate, cultivate, and settle the frontier area” (zhao min shibian, kaiken xingtun 招民实边，开垦兴屯) became one of the key measures the Qing court adopted to deal with the crisis of Russian and Japanese encroachment in the Northeast.

While the remote Manchu homeland was integrated into the state of the Great Qing, the government also revoked previous restrictions on the choice of occupation, place of residence and sale of land by banner people across the country. As major measures to solve the “Eight Banner Livelihood Problem” (baqi shengji wenti 八旗生计问题), Qing reformers sold banner land to gain funds, set up offices of banner affairs, and established banner factories to train banner people. The “Eight Banner Livelihood Problem” was not new; it had been identified both by scholars and by the Qing court since the Qianlong reign. However, in the last decade of the Qing, measures to solve the problem did not aim at reviving the banner system or the root of Manchu rule but were rather directed at reviving the state.

The most serious challenge to the livelihood of banner people was that their “iron rice-bowl”—the stipends and provisions they received from the central Qing government—became empty. Although the Qing court never issued an official edict to dismantle the banner system, and some banner offices and garrisons were not dismissed until about a decade after the Republic of China was established, provisions for banner people in some garrisons existed only in name from the last years of the Guangxu reign. Owing to financial problems, the Qing government had to sell banner lands to support banner affairs. The “Prohibition against Banner People Selling Banner Land to Civilians in Fengtian” was lifted in 1905, and the resultant trading of land marked a major step in the collapse of the banner system in Manchuria. More and more lands were transferred to civilians, resulting in more and more land disputes between banner people and civilians.

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28 Donghua lu, 5629, GX33.3.12.
29 For more details of the administrative reforms in the Northeast in the late Qing, see Diao Shuren, Ming Qing Dongbei shi yanjiu lun ji [Essays on the history of Northeast China in the Ming and Qing dynasties] (Changchun: Jilin Wenshi Chubanshe, 1995), pp.210-16; Shao Shijie, “Qingmo Jilin qiu guage shuhua” [A general study on the late-Qing reform of banner affairs in Jilin], in Lishi dang'an [Historical archives] 39 (March 1990): pp.98-101; Zhao Zhongfu, “Qingmo Dongsansheng heibu de kaifa yu hanhua” [The development and Hanization of the northern region of the Northeast in the late Qing], Zhongyang yanjiu yuan jindaishi zhidu yanjiu, pp.180-92.
30 Xu Shichang, “Michen kaocha Dongsansheng qingxing zhe,” TGZZS, juan 5, lu-34a; Zhang Shouzhen, Qing ji Dongsansheng di wa buan yu ga zhi, pp.87-91.
31 Numerous works on the banner people's livelihood problem explain Qianlong's efforts to solve it. For a concise explanation, see Ding Yizhuang, Qingdai baqi zhuang yanjiu ji [Essays on the history of the Eight-Banners Handicrafts Factory, and relevant issues concerning the collection of fees and recommendation of candidates], Xingjing xian gongshu, no.25604, eleventh month of 1910; Governor-General and Imperial Commissioner of the Three Eastern Provinces, and his office was in charge of a series of reforms in the Northeast. The salient feature of his reforms was the abolition of the dual-track administrative system that had treated banner people and civilians separately. As a result, the northeastern area was no longer the reserved homeland of the Manchus but a part of the new administrative system of the state of China under the Qing government. In addition, the emigration of farmers from China proper was advocated once again: “Hiring people to populate, cultivate, and settle the frontier area” (zhao min shibian, kaiken xingtun 招民实边，开垦兴屯) became one of the key measures the Qing court adopted to deal with the crisis of Russian and Japanese encroachment in the Northeast.

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30 Xu Shichang, “Michen kaocha Dongsansheng qingxing zhe,” TGZZS, juan 5, lu-34a; Zhang Shouzhen, Qing ji Dongsansheng di wa buan yu ga zhi, pp.87-91.
31 Numerous works on the banner people's livelihood problem explain Qianlong's efforts to solve it. For a concise explanation, see Ding Yizhuang, Qingdai baqi zhuang yanjiu ji [Essays on the history of the Eight-Banners Handicrafts Factory, and relevant issues concerning the collection of fees and recommendation of candidates], Xingjing xian gongshu, no.25604, eleventh month of 1910;
The establishment of the Office of Banner Affairs was another symbol of the demise of the Eight Banner System as a tightly organized military and administrative organization. In 1907, for example, when the office of the Jilin General was dissolved and Jilin became a province, the Office of Jilin Provincial Banner Affairs was set up. Its duties included ritual practice and offerings of sacrificial goods, the appointment of banner officials, the recruitment of banner soldiers, the distribution of provisions and salaries to banner officials and soldiers, the management of banner lands, the registration of banner populations, planning for the banner people's livelihood, the establishment of factories, the provision of professional training for banner people, and assistance for banner people's agricultural businesses. The Eight Banners in Manchuria relinquished the onerous duty of border and frontier defense. These marked the end of the banners as the military expedient for the Qing state as well as the transition of Manchuria from the preserved homeland of the Manchus to provinces of China. With their military obligation relinquished, banner people were transformed from the emperor's men into a special social group with a particular ethnicity—a process that took place over a long period of time through the Qing.\textsuperscript{34}

In the early twentieth-century, banner people were forced to redefine their identity without the banner system, but with its legacy. They lived through the collapse of the banner system, the formation of the Chinese state, and the transformation of Manchuria from the base of the Manchus to a contested borderland. With the decline of the banner system and the loss of their homeland, did banner people lose their group feeling as the Manchu rulers had lost their sovereignty over China?

\textit{Banner People, Qizu, and Manchus}

The experience of the Manchus after the 1911 Revolution was significant in the formation of present-day Manchu ethnic identity, but it remains a taboo subject in research on the revolutionary foundations of Republican China. The gradual dissolution of the banner system from the late nineteenth century provided the basis for banner people to disregard internal distinctions and begin to perceive themselves as an ethno-group of “banner people” (qizu 旗族) with a stronger group attachment. This was a key stage in the formation of the present Manchu community in the modern state of China.

Suffering from the loss of support that came from the dissolution of the banner system and sharing common experiences of discrimination after 1911, banner people used the new term qizu to refer to themselves. The character \textit{zu} 族 of qizu defined banner people as an ethnic community, and had different connotations from the term that was previously used (qiren 旗人 or banner people). Banner people’s organizations and their publications

\textsuperscript{34} Shao Shijie, “Qingmo Jilin qiwu gaige shuhui.”
For example, a journal was titled *Qizu*, and there were associations named “Qizu gongjing hui” and “Gonghe qizu shengji tongren hui.”

The 1925 edition of a local gazetteer of Xingjing (where the Nurhaci enthroned himself as the Khan of the Later Jin and where the sacred Yong Mausoleum of the Aisin Gioro ancestors is located) also used *qizu* to refer to all the Manchu, Han and Mongolian banner people. Shen Guomian, *Xingjing xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Xingjing County] (n.p., 1925).

In the early twentieth century, *qizu* (literally “group of banner people”) often referred to all banner people. Although the members of the banner system did not share a common “blood lineage” (*xuetong*), as Han banner person Zhang Furong argued, they had been assimilated and integrated into one group of people and shared in language, script, religion, customs and spirit. Zhang treated Manchu, Han and Mongol groups as racial communities (sub-divisions of *qizu*), but characterized the *qizu* as an ethnic community. He asked, “Among those dressed like beggars, living in poor health, begging for help and wandering around, who can tell whether they are Han, Manchu or Mongol? [They] have similar experiences, similar situations.” The author of the argument above did not consider his Han banner membership equivalent to being Manchu. He defined himself as a member of *qizu*, which includes sub-racial groups of Manchu, Han and Mongol banner people. Zhang Furong, “Qizu jie” [Explanation of *qizu*], in *Qizu cunwang yida wenti*, pp.37-8.

In early Republican China used *qizu* as the name of their ethnic group, which included all banner people. However, *qizu* no longer exists in the vocabulary of today’s Manchus. *Manzu* (the Manchu ethnic group) has replaced *qizu* and includes banner people from various origins, such as some descendants of Han banner people.

Though *qizu* is an obsolete word in modern Chinese, it is an appropriate term to characterize today’s Manchu ethnic group, which includes people from various banners. From the late Qing, and especially after the 1911 Revolution, banner people began to form stronger feelings of group attachment to banner identity under various pressures, ranging from a decline in political and social status to extreme poverty, despite their diverse ethnic origins. Their ethnic identity as *qizu* was formed in a passive way, as they shared common problems (such as lack of banner provisions and job skills) and the experience of humiliation and discrimination, often being excluded by non-banner people in society and politics. Consequently, the vicissitudes of life shared by banner people led the previous boundaries within the banner system (which had themselves sometimes shifted) to become blurred.

Questions about how the Eight Banners system separated banner people from Han society in China proper in the early and mid-Qing periods are less relevant to that region in the late Qing and in Manchuria for three major reasons. First, efforts to maintain Manchu sovereignty proved a failure in the last years of the Qing. Second, the flow of Han individuals between banners as well as the fusion with other ethno-groups (Mongol and Han banners formed a large proportion of banner people, after all) is complex and cannot be dismissed. Third, relations between banner people and the broader community cannot be always delimited as a banner/Han dichotomy. Such a binary framework was based on the assumption that Han society and culture were the “solvent” in which Manchus tried to maintain their rulership and superiority, but this is too simplified a model to explain banner relations with local society in areas where Han culture and population was not dominant (such as Mongolia and Xinjiang) or where Han people themselves were at first “guests” (such as Manchuria). Owing to linguistic limitations, I must leave the question of banners in Xinjiang and Mongol banners to other scholars. I will focus only on Manchu and Han banner people, and those in Manchuria in particular, during the early twentieth century.

Unlike banner people in local garrisons in China proper, banner people in Manchuria did not face large-scale military violence or anti-Manchu sentiment during the 1911 Revolution. The most important difference between the two groups was that a large proportion of those in Manchuria did not reside within a walled Manchu city (as those in major cities of China proper did) such as Xi'anfu or Hangzhoufu. More encounters were possible between banner and civilian communities,
which enhanced communication and familiarity between the two groups in Manchuria. By the same token, more contact can also reinforce people’s consciousness of the difference between “us” and “them.” This may explain why Han banner people in Manchuria were often identified differently from both Manchu banner and other Han people, being called banjun 汉军 in the early twentieth century (see Figure 2).³⁷

Another important difference is that in rural areas in Manchuria, especially in Jilin and Heilongjiang, the members of civilian society were not purely Han or Manchu, or indeed originally Han or Manchu. Most Han were migrants, latecomers to the local community. These Han civilians still had strong ties, both emotional and material, to their home places back in Shandong 山东, Zhi 河北 or Hebei 河北. Banner garrisons in China proper were positioned in local civilian societies with Han majorities, and thus banner people were perceived as outsiders. In addition, the distinctiveness of banner people in Manchuria in terms of occupation was not as sharp as that in China proper. A large proportion of banner people in Manchuria farmed their land or hired Han and Korean peasants as tenants; this was not much different from Han migrant society, especially in rural areas. Against such a social backdrop, anti-Manchu rhetoric and appeals to regain Han sovereignty from Manchu invaders could hardly work in Manchuria.

The 1911 Revolution in the Northeast was more like a set of nominal

³⁷ A Manchu group in Liaodong still call themselves suiqi ren 随旗人, a more expressive label for distinguishing their community from both Manchu banner and civilian societies. Ding Yizhuang, Guo Songyi, James Lee and Cameron Campbell, Liaodong yimin zhong de qiren shehui: lishi wenxian, renkou tongji yu tianye diaocha [Banner society in Eastern Liaoning: historical texts, population census and fieldwork investigations] (Shanghai: Shanghai Shehui Kexueyuan Chubanshe, 2004). See also Michael Szonyi’s discussion of the consequences of the military household system in the Ming dynasty for identity formation in his Practicing Kinship: Lineage and Descent in Late Imperial China (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002).

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**Figure 2**

A list of applicants for adding a Han family name. Archives of the Governor of Fengtian [Fengtian shengzhang gongshudang], 18 July 1913. JC 10–25581. Microfilm, 841–844. The two entries on the left are Han bannermen.
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changes in governmental institutions than any fundamental shift from an “old” to a “new” system. Both revolutionaries and Qing officials in the Northeast avoided rhetoric or policy that could provoke tension or hostility between Manchus and Han. Revolutionaries in Manchuria set up rules for their soldiers that were very different from the threat of capital punishment for hiding Manchus in Wuchang. As cited in the Shengjing Times (Shengjing shibao 盛京时报) of 6 December 1911, the third of the six “Regulations on Soldiers” reads: “Those who kill Manchus will be killed.” Revolutionaries in Manchuria mobilized much less violent—if indeed violent at all—anti-Manchu rhetoric or policies to stimulate hostility against banner people. The major local revolutionary organization was the Fengtian United Promotion Association (Fengtian lianhe jiejinghui 奉天联合激进会). Its leaders, most of whom were members of the Tongmenghui 同盟会, claimed two major aims: first, to rise in response to the revolutionaries in the south and hold back the forces in the Northeast in order to “dissuade the Qing emperor from returning to the East” (shii Qingdi bugan donggui 使清帝不敢东归); and second, to establish a republican political entity made up of Manchus and Han. Revolutionaries in Manchuria tried to convince the local people that the revolution was not about anti-Manchu racism and blamed the Qing government for spreading rumors about anti-Manchuism on the part of the revolutionaries.

Zhao Erxun (1844–1927), a Han banner person, was appointed Governor-General of the Three Eastern Provinces as well as Imperial Commissioner in the third month of 1911. He initiated the organization of the Fengtian Peace Maintenance Association (Fengtian hao’an gonghui 奉天保安公会) and Fengtian Citizens’ Peace Maintenance Association (Fengtian guomin hao’an fenhui 奉天国民保安分会) in order “to protect local security and safety; the life and property of all original inhabitants and people from other provinces and countries, whether they be Manchu, Han, Hui or Meng, are under the protection of this association.”

Out of his concern about borderland contestation over Manchuria, Zhao Erxun also maintained a balance between suppressing the revolutionary movement and stirring up Manchu-Han tension. In a letter to the revolutionaries of the Wuchang Uprising, he warned them not to divide the country with Manchu-Han hostility and not to forget the humiliation China had suffered from ceding land and paying indemnities to foreign countries. He also warned them, “Though you people have the power to stir up trouble, the court is not incapable of calming them down.”

Zhao also tried to maintain a certain balance between the weakening Qing court and the revolutionaries, and this led to suspicion of his intentions. His officials in Fengtian Province were accused of lynching students and people who had their queues cut off. This accusation was even
reported to Yuan Shikai 袁世凯, who sent a telegram to Zhao requesting an investigation. In his reply, Zhao denied the accusation and explained that people in the Northeast had the freedom to decide whether or not to have their queues cut. Whether or not the accusation was accurate, it reflected the revolutionaries’ suspicions of the local government in the Northeast. Newspapers in Beijing and Tianjin were reported to be actively spreading rumors about the northeasterners’ intention to oppose the Republic, citing three reasons: first, members of the Royal Clan Party (Zongshe dang 宗社党) had gathered at Lushun 旅顺 and Dalian 大连 under Japanese protection; second, the military forces of the Northeast had not made contact with local revolutionary troops in other provinces; and third, political leaders in the Northeast had stated their intentions to maintain the current situation and not to follow new policies. Zhao’s policy of allowing people to choose their own hairstyle reflected another aspect of the difference between the Northeast and China proper, where people were generally forced to cut off their queues after the 1911 Revolution. This queue issue added weight to widespread suspicions about the Northeast’s possible move against the Republic. An adviser of Zhao’s, after a visit to Tianjin, even suggested that in order to quell suspicion, Zhao should cut off his own queue and order all his troops to follow suit.42

Suspicion of the Northeast was not based entirely on rumors. The court did, in fact, maintain a hope that the military forces of the banner people from the Northeast could help the dynasty out of trouble, as they had before.43 The rulers still wished to follow the precedent of using the Northeast as a personnel pool from which military forces could be drawn to suppress rebellions in China proper. In addition, some members of local northwestern elites, such as Yuan Jinkai 袁金恺, openly opposed the Republic and proposed that a temporary emperor be selected from the royal clan if the Xuantong emperor could not return to the Three Eastern Provinces. Some local officers also made efforts to organize troops to “Protect the Emperor” (qinwang 勤王).44 The image of the Northeast as a possible base from where Qing restorationists could arise was clear in the eyes of the revolutionaries.

Zhao and his local officials also succeeded in maintaining the old order even after they had recognized the Republican government. In March 1912, Yuan Shikai agreed that governmental officials appointed by the Qing in the Northeast, despite changes in their official titles, should remain in their offices and that all administrative and military systems should remain unchanged.45 Of course, such a maintenance of the old order did not help to quell suspicions in the south that the Northeasterners were conservative, if not counter-revolutionary. A confidential telegram from Yuan Shikai to Zhao warned that because the southerners believed a rumor about Fengtian Province’s refusal to recognize the Republic and raise the five-colored national flag of the ROC, the southern government had already

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42 “Fengtian tepai guwenyuan Pan Hongbing deng zhi Zhao Erxun han,” [A letter to Zhao Erxun from Fengtian envoys Pan Hongbing and others], 25 April 1911, QDSC, pp.245–6.
sent someone to Fengtian to investigate the situation. Clearly the result of the 1911 Revolution in the Northeast was not satisfactory to the southern revolutionary government.

Chinese scholars have usually regarded the 1911 Revolution in the Northeast as having failed because “feudal” forces continued to control the area, or because of Zhao’s superior control of the military forces and tactical and political skills. I would like to suggest a further reason for the fact that there was less violence and change in the Northeast. The northeastern region had been perceived as a distinct and distant place throughout the Qing, and the relations of banner people with civilian society there were much less tense there than in China proper. In addition, because Han banner people in Manchuria (unlike those in China proper) were not expelled from the banners, they served as a buffer community between Manchu banner people and Han civilians. They had been integrated into the banner system but had not been completely transformed into Manchus; they maintained their Han identity but without identifying themselves with the Han civilian community. Even among Han banner people, there were differences between institutional subidentities. Not all people with Han origins in the banner system were Han banner people or “Han martials” (hanjun). Some were bondservants (boi) of the Imperial Household Department (neiwufu 内务府). Han banner people in Manchuria sometimes distinguished themselves by calling themselves the “outer eight banners” (wai baqi 外八旗). Unlike banner garrisons in China proper, which were physically separated by the walled “Manchu Cities” from civilian society, banner people and civilians (not only Han, but also people of other ethnic origins) lived together in rural areas in Manchuria. Even in urban areas, separation between banner and civilian communities was not at all strict. Therefore the local civilian population, which had close economic, social and even kin relations with banner people, could hardly be attracted to revolutionary action by anti-Manchu rhetoric.

What is more, there were banner people among the revolutionary leaders in Manchuria, such as the well known Zhang Rong 张榕 (1884–1912, Han banner), Baokun 宝昆 (1880–1912, Manchu banner) and Bao Huanan 鲍化南 (1876–1926, Manchu banner). They opposed the Qing government but did not oppose banner people or Manchus. The revolutionaries in the Northeast were not able to mobilise anti-Manchu or ethno-nationalistic rhetoric to stir up popular support, and this helps to explain the difference between Manchuria and China proper in the 1911 Revolution.

As a result, although Manchus in Beijing reported more anti-Manchu sentiment and incidents after the 1911 Revolution, Manchus in the Northeast provided few reports on anti-Manchuism during the ROC. This absence of Manchu-Han tension in Manchuria in the 1910s, in addition to the mixing of banner people and civilians in local life over time, can
explain why “talking only of the difference between banner people and the civilians and not between Manchus and Han” (zhilun/danlun qimin, bufen manban 只论/但论旗民, 不分满汉), though a common saying in Beijing area, was not common in Manchuria.\(^{51}\)

**Between Qing Empire, Republic of China and Japanese Empire**

Manchuria was not only special in the eyes of the Qing rulers; it was regarded as Manchu land even by advocates of anti-Manchu revolution such as Zhang Binglin 章炳麟 (1869–1936). In a 1901 article he explained:

Today's anti-Manchuism is like the effort to reclaim one's own house and land from occupiers by appealing to boundaries defined in old contracts. Therefore, [driving the Manchus out] is just regaining what we used to have. They can still have their Three Eastern Provinces as autonomous areas for Manchus [Manzhoul].

Zhang defined his anti-Manchuism as “making them live in their own houses, farm their own land, and make their own living in their way. Just don't let them come to our Han land.”\(^{52}\)

Contrary to Zhang’s implication, banner people in Manchuria had less and less land to farm. They faced competition with civilians for land and natural resources. As Liu Xiaomeng has pointed out, Han immigrants were more skilled farmers and thus won the competition with banner people for land. Even before the abolition of prohibitions against the trading of land to civilians, banner people had lost control over enormous amounts of banner land to Han tenants. The banner people’s loss of land in Manchuria remained a long neglected problem. Although, after 1668, the court began to limit immigration into the place of origin of the Manchus and of the Aisin Gioros, civilians still rushed to the area. The civilian population of Fengtian prefecture, for example, rose from 7,953 in 1668 to 23,796 in 1734. In 1740, an edict was issued forbidding immigration to the Northeast, but in reality the official prohibition did not stop the movement of civilians into the Northeast. Data in the Shenjiang gazetteer reveal that migrants simply changed their destinations from Liaodong 辽东 to distant places such as Tieling and Jinxian 锦县 or to areas north of the Willow Palisade under the Jilin General. The amount of cultivated land under civilian control also rose from 273 to 11,619 qing 颃 between 1734 and 1780.\(^{53}\) The proportion of civilian land to banner land was 1:3 in 1734, and 1:2 in 1780. As noted, although the sale of banner land to civilians had been forbidden, banner land was still transferred into civilian hands by various measures such as illegal leasing or farming under the names of banner people (jiru qiren mingxia siken 记入旗人名下私垦). Leasing land to civilians became common from the time of the Qianlong reign.

\(^{51}\) I have not so far found any reference to this saying in any local gazetteers or writings on banner people in the Northeast, though the saying is frequently used in writings on banner people in Beijing, and is quoted in some recent English publications on banner people without specifying the differences in localities.

\(^{52}\) In Zhang’s eyes, Manchus were aliens even in comparison with the Japanese. Zhang argued that Japanese and Chinese written characters were similar but Qing scripts were different; and while the Chinese and Japanese had similar customs and habits, the Manchus did not. Thus, although the Japanese were closer to the Chinese than to the Manchus, Japanese occupation of Chinese land could not stop the Chinese desire to maintain sovereignty and independence. “How could Chinese surrender to Manchus?” asked Zhang. Zhang Binglin, “Zheng chouman lun” [Rectification of anti-Manchu theories], from Guomin bao 国民報 4 (10 August 1901). In Zhang Nan and Wang Renzhi, eds, Xinhai geming qian shinianjian shilun xuanji [A collection of news commentaries on current affairs during the ten years before the 1911 Revolution] (Beijing: Shenghuo Dushu Zinzhi Sanlian Shudian, 1960–77), pp.94–9.

\(^{53}\) One qing is equivalent to 16.5 acres.
Lease contracts reveal that the rate for leasing was very low, and Manchus were not usually able to redeem the land. In 1780, for example, banner land leased to civilians in Fuzhou was as much as 34.43 percent of the total banner lands. In late Qing and early Republican times, banner land was sold at low prices to Han civilians, especially migrants from Shandong. According to Liu's research, poverty had been a serious problem for banner people in the Northeast ever since the Qianlong reign because of the lack of land. Their "iron rice-bowl" of provisions and stipends from the banner system did not protect them from poverty but did alienate them from both land and labor.

It was very difficult to resolve the banner people's livelihood problem. Without land, sufficient provisions, a favorable social environment or job skills, banner people struggled with extreme difficulty to make a living during the late Qing and early Republican years. Neither the Office for Banner System Reform (Biantong qizhi chu 变通旗制处) of the late Qing nor the Office of Banner Affairs (Qiuwu chu 旗务处) nor the Republican government’s Office for the Livelihood of the Eight Banners (Baqi shengji chu 八旗生计处) solved any problems for the banner people. One major reason is that their general strategies were formed without consideration of specific local situations. Another reason was that the government’s Office for the Livelihood of the Eight Banners was not recognized as a formal administrative unit by the Republican congress; it therefore had no administrative or financial power at all to solve the problems of the Eight Banners.

Although the Articles of Favorable Treatment between the Manchu imperial household and the Revolutionary Army promised to continue distributing provisions to banner people, the Republican government and warlord regimes never resolved the financial problems they had inherited from the Qing dynasty. In a 1916 report, a Manchu company commander of the Bordered Yellow Banner petitioned the Governor of Fengtian Province for stipends to help banner people with heavy debts accumulated as a result of usury. In the Guangxu reign, his company had received a loan from the Guangning Commandant (shouwei 守尉) to pay provisions to banner people. As contracted, the loan was to be returned in installments withdrawn from future banner provisions at a special monthly interest rate. However, banner people of this company could hardly make a living, hence he suggested that payment to the lender be deferred and stipends be given to banner members for basic living expenses.

Petitions for provisions to the government were often rejected. For example, the head of the Gioro clan appealed for provisions in 1916. He reported that his people lived in extreme hardship and he appealed for provisions in order to save people from having to go into exile, and to save lives. His entreaty was sent to the Bureau of Finance but the bureau refused it: the financial situation in recent years had been extremely
difficult, and they could not obtain money even for banner soldiers. In addition to financial difficulties, official corruption made the situation even worse. Sometimes provisions and stipends were delayed for months.

The rise in the number of unassigned (xiansan 闲散) (and unpaid), banner people was another serious problem. The positions provided in state-run banner factories were very limited considering the large number of unassigned banner people in the last few years of the Qing. For example, in 1909, out of the 290,567 Manchu banner people in Fengtian, 276,540 were unassigned. Out of the 254,149 Han banner people, 250,121 were unassigned, and 127,773 of the 129,391 Mongol banner people were unassigned.

Despite all the rhetorical—and real—violence and discrimination against Manchus and other banner people, the 1911 Revolution did not drive the Manchus back to Manchuria but it did deepen misconceptions among the general Chinese population in China proper that all banner people were Manchus. It is difficult to study the situation of the Manchus after the 1911 Revolution without taking all banner people into consideration. The hardship of their lives had considerable but different impacts on banner members. Some, as discussed above, formed a stronger feeling of group attachment to qizu and a belief in their self-reliance. On the other hand, some Manchus began to deny their Manchu, or even banner, origin.

In order to hide their banner identity, quite a few banner people added Han family names to their Manchu names after the 1911 Revolution, or registered themselves as Han after 1949. Although few studies can be quoted on this topic, relevant archives from that period are not rare. The Bulletins of Government (Zhengfu gongbao 政府公报) in the years immediately after the 1911 revolution recorded many cases of Manchus applying for name changes all over China. For example, on 12 September 1911, 41 banner people from the Army Preparatory School of Zhili applied for Han names and received approval from the government. Among the applicants were Manchus, Mongols and banner people from the Han banners, as well as banner people with Han names under the Imperial Household Department.

What is noteworthy is that applications for Han names were also made in the Northeast where Manchu-Han relations were comparatively less tense than in China proper. Although the 1911 Revolution with its anti-Manchu rhetoric never caused high casualties among the banner people


62 Furui, of the royal household, accused a Commander-in-Chief of robbing banner people of basic provisions. Fengtian shengbang gongshu, JC10. Microfilm no.1042/13162, Liaoning Provincial Archives.

63 “News from Jingxian Banner: Jingxian soldiers ask for provisions delayed for months,” Shengjing shibao [Shengjing Times], 3 September 1915. Xingjing, Fuxian, and Youyan also had trouble distributing provisions to banner people (28 September 1915).

64 “Fengtian baqi renkou zhiye fenbie tongji” [A chart on the banner population and their professions], Fengtian qiwuchu dang, JB 8, Liaoning Provincial Archives.

65 A report by Ruilu, the Commander of the 34th troop, reads: “I used to be a commoner but was recruited into a Han banner. In the late Qing people from China proper emigrated to Heilongjiang Province under the policy of training farmers as soldiers because of the lack of labor and soldiers in the frontier areas. These immigrants were farmers in spring and summer, received military training in autumn and hunted in winter. Those who were qualified were selected for the banners. Those selected changed their given names into family names, while those who were still farmers and merchants kept their original family names. This has been a popular custom. My original family name is Ma. Please allow my name to revert to Ma. This is perhaps the first appeal in Heilongjiang Province. All those who have applied for renaming should report to the Governor and register with the Department of Army, giving reasons.” Zhengfu gongbao gongwen [Government newsletter: official documents], no.217 (14 September 1912). Quoted in Ding Yizhuang and Shao Dan, “Lishi shishi yu duochongxing xushi: Heilongjiang sheng Qiqihar shi Fuyu xian Sanjiazi cundiaocha baogao” [History and narratives: fieldwork report from Sanjiazi village, Fuyu county, Qiqihar city, Heilongjiang province], Guangxi minzu xueyuan xuebao 24.2 (March 2002): 26–33.

in Manchuria as it did in banner garrisons in China proper, identity consciousness and anxiety also featured among banner people in Manchuria. Many case reports are collected in the archives of the Office of the Fengtian Provincial Chief, held in the Liaoning Provincial Archives. One common feature of these reports is that the “harmony of the five ethnic groups” or “one family of five ethnic groups” was used as the basic reason for applicants wishing to change their names. For example, one report claims that, “since the Republican state is a family of the five ethnic groups without distinction, there should be no distinction in ways of naming.” Therefore, Xilin’a 希林 阿 was renamed Xilin 希林, and added the surname Guan 关. The irony of such reasoning is that if ethnic harmony were anything more than a fiction, it would not have been necessary to hide Manchu or banner origins by the changing of names. The motivation behind the name changes was assuredly the fear of being discriminated against due to banner origins or Manchu identity.

A document titled “Approval of the Application of the Banner Students (旗生 旗生, qiseng 旗生) of the No.1 Reserve School for the Army to Add a Han Family Name” also shows that both high-ranking banner officials and commoners applied for Han family names. To disqualify imposters, the document ruled that an applicant should show his “Descriptive ID Card” (tupian 图片), which described his likeness, from his banner dossier. If the banner had been dismissed, or if his banner commander was too distant to be contacted, the applicant should find at least four guarantors from among his townspeople who were also registered students of the school. A list of names was attached to this approval notice for further checking. This list includes banner students from various banners, both Han and Manchu.

Apart from a belief in the self-reliance of banner organizations or the denial of their banner identity, banner people had other strategies for coping with economic hardship and ethnic discrimination. Among the banner people there were some who sought a solution from outside China. The restorationists, such as the members of the Royal Clan Party, tried to establish an independent Mongolia-Manchuria regime with Japanese support. This group of former banner people collaborated with or served in the Manchoukuo government. “The Northeast does not want to be separated from China,” they argued; “it is China that abandoned the Northeast.”

The Republican government was criticized for stimulating ethnic tensions because it failed to help banner people improve their economic conditions and alienated Manchus politically. Although most active restorationists were upper-class Qing loyalists, the “Livelihood Problem” of the banner people was used as an excuse for pursuing independence for Manchoukuo. An editorial in the Shengjing Times, quoting from the
Newspaper to Benefit the World (Yishi bao 益世报), pointed out that “the banner garrisons in Beiping and various provinces, who are waiting for help in earnest, will answer the call for Manchu self-determination in Jilin and move eastward to their original land.” The editorial concluded that after the Mukden Incident the central government had taken no measures to solve problems at all, and had taken no responsibility to protect banner people or Manchuria. Although this editorial is clearly a piece of propaganda, the idea of using Manchuria as a base for the restoration of banner people did attract the sympathies of both elite and common banner people. Memoirs and autobiographies by Manchu royalty and nobles published after 1949, as well as interviews in the ethnic survey conducted in the late 1950s and early 60s, show that some never denied their attraction to such a dream.

Manchuria became an idealised refuge not only for Manchus but for all banner people. Archives from the era reveal the lure of this idea for the suppressed and alienated banner people. Zhang Furong, a Han banner person and an assistant to Tang Shaoyi 唐绍仪 when Tang represented Yuan Shikai’s Diet in negotiations with the Revolutionary People’s Army in Shanghai after the Wuchang Revolt of 1911, believed that Manchuria could provide a basic resolution to the problems of the livelihood of banner people. He suggested that banner people emigrate to Shengjing, Heilongjiang and Ningguta in Manchuria to organize farms and cultivate frontier lands there. He listed five historical precedents from the Qing dynasty to support his suggestion. A further example of this kind of thinking can be found in a 1912 petition to the Governor of the Three Eastern Provinces, where the author (Tong Peng 佟鹏, a self-designated “Dare-to-die man”) expressed his anger at banner people being “cruelly tortured and killed.” Making a comparison between banner people and Jews, he expressed his concern over the misfortunes of banner people: “even if banner people do not become extinct, we will be in a worse situation than the Jewish people.” He suggested, as quoted at the beginning of this article, that banner people use the Eastern Provinces as a temporary place for their emperor to settle and for them to make a living.

Such ethno-nationalist sentiments among banner people were so strong that the Chiang Kai-shek government was fully aware that they posed a danger to the Guomindang’s (GMD) aim of nation-building and state unification. Before Puyi left Tianjin for the Northeast following the arrangements of the Japanese army, Chiang sent Gao Youfang 高佑棠, a member of the Supervision Committee, to meet him in Tianjin to talk him into moving out of the Japanese concession. Chiang offered five suggestions for possible cooperation between Puyi and the Guomindang. The fact that he also promised to help improve the living conditions of the banner people in Beiping indicates that their living conditions were

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71 Editorial, SJSB (29 February 1932), p.[81]–[319].
72 Ibid.
73 Zhang Furong, Qizu jie, pp.24–36.
74 Zhao Erxun Archives, The First Historical Archives of China, Microfilm 108.
a well-known problem, serious enough to be taken as one of Chiang's bargaining chips in his negotiations with Puyi. Puyi expressed his distrust of the GMD when he implicitly refused to move out of the Japanese concession as they wished. He also clearly expressed his dissatisfaction with the GMD's treatment of the Manchus and his own family. He was angry that the raid and desecration of the Manchu royal mausoleum had occurred without serious investigation or punishment of the known criminals.\textsuperscript{75} He refused Chiang's offer of preferential treatment for the Manchu royal family. The GMD government had foreseen the danger of the Japanese use of Puyi's Manchu background to appeal to ethnic sentiments. When Gao was asked by a journalist why the Central Government was paying so much attention to Puyi's moving out of the Japanese concession, Gao replied:

\begin{quote}
The League of Nations is not happy with the Japanese. The Japanese have no way out. If they establish an independent nation in the name of Manchu autonomy in the Northeast, which is the homeland of the Manchus, the Japanese can manipulate it behind the scenes. Furthermore, many new states were established after the First World War in Europe under the name of restoration of a nation. World powers could not stop them from doing so.\textsuperscript{76}
\end{quote}

Gao's prediction came true in 1932. During the Lytton investigation, the Manchoukuo government emphasized that “Manchuria belongs to the Manchus” in their argument for Manchoukuo’s legitimacy. A review of documents furnished to the Lytton Commission defined Manchus as “the mixture of Manchu, Mongol and Chinese bannermen” who formed a large proportion of the local population.\textsuperscript{77} Although this definition is perhaps a result of the commission members’ confusion over banner identity and Manchu identity, it is very accurate in describing the components of the contemporary \textit{Manzu} community. Nevertheless, as this article has argued, the transition from banner identity to Manchu-Chinese in the Northeast is more complicated. The conceptualisation of \textit{qizu} is a key stage in the transformation.

The idea of the \textit{qizu} gradually disintegrated as its components claimed different ethnic affinities with the passing of time. Unlike banner people in other areas, those in Manchuria had a distinct experience of their identity reconfiguration in the 1930s–40s, as a result of both the comparative isolation of Manchuria from the newly founded Republic of China and the state-formation efforts of Manchoukuo. Some had a strong consciousness of regionalism. Some were die-hard restorationists. Some became determined anti-Japanese nationalists. Although both the Chinese and Japanese sides selectively borrowed results from research on ethnology and the history of Manchus and Manchuria in their debates over Manchoukuo’s legitimacy, banner identity was seldom used to support any argument in the Manchoukuo era. All Manchu, Mongol and other non-
Japanese people were Manchurians to the Japanese, as is revealed in most census records from the period.\(^{78}\) The Japanese authorities were never supportive of Puyi’s dream of restoring a Manchus’ Manchuria. The rhetoric used by the Manchoukuo government was “Manchuria for the Manchurians.” In reality, Manchus, together with other banner people in Manchuria, did not recover from their poverty or other predicaments in Manchoukuo, even though their former master, the Xuantong Emperor, was the Chief Executive and Emperor, in name at least.\(^{79}\)

As official anti-Manchu sentiments faded in the 1950s, banner people, regardless of whether they had Han or Mongolian origin, could claim “Manchu” as their ethnic identity. However, many Manchus chose to register as Han as a result of the unpleasant lessons they had learnt during the first half of the twentieth century.\(^{80}\)

\textit{Conclusion}

Manchuria occupied a distinctive position in the Qing Empire and the early ROC and this positioning complicated the identity reconfigurations of banner people resident there. This study of Manchus in early twentieth-century Manchuria reminds us that changes in the relations between individuals and communities at different levels, as well as those between a group and the broader community, are about emplacement and displacement. The relations between Manchus and China can be summarized as follows. First, Manchus were in a betwixt-and-between situation in the period after the Qing empire had collapsed but before newly established ROC had built the new nation. Although Manchus had identified themselves as part of both the Qing empire and the Chinese nation in the last years of the dynasty, they were still regarded as aliens or Tartars. Banner people with ethnic origins other than Manchu also had trouble placing themselves in the changed social context after 1911. Their former ties to the Manchu royal clan complicated the processes by which they reconfigured their relationship to the newly defined nation-state. Second, although the Qing rulers incorporated their original homeland into China’s geo-body in the early twentieth century, Manchuria had already been a contested borderland between forces that were militarily superior to the Qing. Facing competing definitions of Manchuria’s place in East Asia, both Chinese and Japanese political forces had to seek answers to the following questions: what was the importance of the region to their regime? And how could they keep Manchuria under their sovereignty? Different political forces, domestic and foreign, provide different answers.

To banner people, the competing projects of nation-building and state formation in the early twentieth century were not simply about constructed

\(^{78}\) Such as Manshū teikoku genjū kokō tōkei [Statistics of the current population in imperial Manchoukuo, Shinkyo, 1936, 1937, 1939–41.

\(^{79}\) See “Manzu shehui lishi diaocha ziliao” and Manzu shehui lishi diaocha.

\(^{80}\) There were 2.4 million people registered as Manchus in 1953. In 1978, the number reached 2.65 million. In 1987, it reached 7 million. In 1993, the figure was 9.82 million (Elliott, \textit{The Manchu Way}, p.43). In 2000, the Manchu population was 10,682,262. Zhongguo 2000 nian renkou puchazi liao [Records of China’s 2002 national census] (Beijing: Zhongguo Tongji Chubanshe, 2002).
Though “Manzu” is usually translated as “Manchus,” I prefer to keep it in pinyin form to emphasize the difference between the collective identity of Manchus in the Qing dynasty and that of “Manzu” in the PRC. Though banner identity is no longer an effective population category in China today, many people who register as Manzu still remember that they are the offspring of banner people, including those from Han or Mongol banners.

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Cultural or symbolic marks but were matters of real concern in their lives. They had to reconfigure who they were—and who they wanted to be perceived to be—under different political regimes. Their concerns over identity were closely related to the problem of their livelihood, confusion about their rights and obligations, and even matters of life and death.

Were banner people Manchus? Are banner people Manchus? These questions underestimate both the internal complexity of ethnic subdivisions within the Qing banner system and the local situations of banner communities. We need to ask how the contemporary Manzu community developed from groups of banner people in the Qing. While many of those outside the banners perceived all banner people as Manchu during the Qing, people within the system identified themselves with the labels of Manchu, Mongol or Han banners, and with other types of subdivision such as garrison locations. Revolutionary anti-Manchu rhetoric contributed to the development of internal cohesion among banner people of different ethnic or class origins. In other words, banner people had to redefine themselves in terms of others’ designations when they faced challenges and discrimination, either officially or unofficially. After the collapse of the Qing, banner people were forced out of the shell of the banner system to encounter an unfriendly, if not always hostile, society in China proper. Those in Manchuria had to adjust their perception of their relationship to the state from being subjects of the Qing empire, to being either qizu or Manchu-Chinese under the ROC, Manchus, or Manchurians in Manchoukuo. Banner people in Manchuria were categorized into overlapping and sometimes different ethnic and national groups when states succeeded each other before, finally, the winner in the international and domestic contestation over this borderland could redefine the place of Manchuria in its regime.

Since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Manchuria has been firmly included in Chinese national territory and “Manzu” has been an officially recognized ethnic group since 1952. However, although the Manzu are one of the largest ethnic groups, and Northeast China has the largest proportion of the Manzu population, the first Manchu autonomous county, Xinbin 新宾, did not exist until 1985.