Re-imagining the Ch'ien-lung Emperor: a Survey of Recent Scholarship

Evelyn S. Rawski
Department of History
University of Pittsburgh

Abstract

In this paper, I survey recent scholarship, particularly the secondary literature in English, to discuss the centrality of the Ch'ien-lung reign in re-interpretations of the dynasty, compare previous generalizations concerning the Ch'ien-lung emperor's active participation in art production and connoisseurship with current interpretations, and assess the implications for our understanding of Chinese history in the new historical literature.

The Chinese historiographical tradition of "praise and blame," which dominated for most of the twentieth century, perfectly expresses the contradictory perspectives on Hung-li's rule. That the reign was a great age was widely acknowledged: it marked the apex of the Ch'ing empire, which incorporated significant portions of Inner and even Central Asia, and provided the historical foundation for the current boundaries of the People's Republic of China. At the same time, scholars, looking ahead to the nineteenth century, blamed Hung-li for causing dynastic decline, citing the high cost of military campaigns which drained the treasury of surpluses, and the widespread corruption perpetrated by Ho-shen under the emperor's protection.

Alternative ways to look at the Ch'ien-lung reign appear, however, in recent scholarship which de-emphasizes the emperor's personal role in shaping important trends during the eighteenth century. The first major theme puts China into the world economic and political system. Other research compares Ch'ing empire-building to the early modern British empire, and lays the foundation for the claim that the Ch'ing adopted technologies of rule from Europe and synthesized their own version of an early modern state. Still other work focuses on China's demographic history, and on the history of its shifting frontiers.

In the 1990s, a series of monographs revived arguments concerning the Manchu nature of the Ch'ing dynasty. Pamela Crossley, Evelyn Rawski, Mark Elliott, and Edward Rhoads published studies spanning the dynasty, from its northeastern origins in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to its final decade preceding the 1911 Revolution. Just how Manchu origins and Manchu consciousness affected Ch'ing rule (and thus, Chinese history), and the

connection of rulership with art patronage, are discussed at length in this article.

Keywords: Ch'ien-lung Emperor, Scholarship, Ch'ing dynasty

During the 1990s, the scholarly world saw a renewal of interest in Ch'ing political history. This interest was stimulated by the publication of a large body of Ch'ing archival documents as well as collections of excerpted documents on various subjects of contemporary interest. As China itself moved into modernity, the Ch'ing seemed to possess the allure of a romanticized traditional past. Publications ranging from academic treatises to semi-popular accounts of the lives of eunuchs, maids, and Ch'ing imperial consorts and even fictional narratives appeared in large numbers and were consumed by a broadly based readership.

Many new publications featured Hung-li, the Ch'ien-lung emperor. Included in histories of the "high Ch'ing," the K'ang-hsi, Yung-cheng, and Ch'ien-lung reigns (1662-1796), he appeared in separate biographies published in the People's Republic of China and in Taiwan, and was also the subject of a multi-volume biographical novel geared to a popular audience.[1] In this paper, I will survey the new scholarship to discuss the centrality of the Ch'ien-lung reign in re-interpretations of the dynasty, compare previous generalizations concerning the Ch'ien-lung emperor's active participation in art production and connoisseurship with current interpretations, and assess the implications for our understanding of Chinese history in the new historical literature.

> The Qianlong reign was a major turning point in Qing history, when the Manchu empire was at its zenith: the territory of the state was the largest China had ever seen, and there was peace and order within the realm... signs of bad government and moral decline became increasingly evident toward the latter half of his reign: his extravagant Ten Great Campaigns squandered vast sums of state revenues while enriching his generals; official corruptions perpetrated... by his favorite, Heshen... and by Heshen's henchmen

1 An example are the fictional volumes (four by 1997) produced by Erh-yüeh-ho 二月河 (Ling Chieh-fang 凌解放), *Ch'ien lung huang ti* 乾隆皇帝 (Emperor Ch'ien-lung). 4 vols. (Cheng-chou: Ho-nan wen i ch'u pan she, 1996, 1997).

> reached unprecedented proportions; and in 1793 a major uprising called the White Lotus Rebellion broke out in the western mountain regions, exposing the deteriorating conditions of the Manchu fighting forces.[2]

This quotation is typical of the Chinese historiographical tradition of "praise and blame," and perfectly expresses the contradictory perspectives on Hung-li's rule. That the reign was a great age was widely acknowledged: it marked the apex of the Ch'ing empire, which incorporated significant portions of Inner and even Central Asia, and provided the historical foundation for the current boundaries of the People's Republic of China. At the same time, scholars, looking ahead to the nineteenth century, blamed Hung-li for causing dynastic decline, citing the high cost of military campaigns which drained the treasury of surpluses, and the widespread corruption perpetrated by Ho-shen under the emperor's protection.[3]

The themes of the "praise and blame" school appear in the biography of Hung-li in *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period* (hereafter *Eminent Chinese*), published almost sixty years ago. In *Eminent Chinese*, the Ch'ien-lung reign is divided into three periods, determined by the chief ministers who served the emperor. The first period of peace and prosperity saw O-erh-t'ai and Chang T'ing-yü dominant at court, while in the second, from 1750-1780, Hung-li was able to dominate Fu-heng and Yü Min-chung and "The Court began the luxurious trend which soon spread throughout the empire."[4] In the last fifteen years of his rule, Hung-li's favorite, Ho-shen, set the tone as corruption spread; "the foundations of government were permanently undermined, and Hung-li's successors were unable to repair them."[5]

The contrast of a bright early phase followed by a dark late phase is featured in many treatments of the Ch'ien-lung reign that were published in the 1990s.[6]

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2 Wen Fong, "The Time of Qianlong (1735-1795)," in *Chinese Painting Under the Qianlong Emperor*, ed. Ju-hsi Chou and Claudia Brown (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1988), pp. 9-10.

3 See, for example, Susan Mann Jones and Philip A. Kuhn, "Dynastic Decline and the Roots of Rebellion," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 10 Part 1: Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 107-62. For a slightly different perspective, see Susan Naquin and Evelyn S. Rawski, *Chinese Society in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), ch. 6.

4 Arthur W. Hummel, ed. *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644-1912)* (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 369.

5 Ibid.

The underlying assumption, derived from the bureaucratic orientation of traditional Chinese historiography, is that Hung-li, left to his own devices, was not capable of ruling effectively: it is the quality of the high-ranking officials that determines the quality of imperial rule. Treating the Ch'ien-lung reign as part of the dynastic cycle model of Chinese history, this framework stresses court politics and pays insufficient attention to external factors that were shaping China's society and economy during the same years.

Alternative ways to look at the Ch'ien-lung reign appear, however, in recent scholarship which de-emphasizes the emperor's personal role in shaping important trends during the eighteenth century. The first major theme puts China into the world economic and political system. André Gunder Frank's study, *ReOrient*, underlines the centrality of China in the global trade flows of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries,[7] and supports the thesis that the Ch'ing cannot be studied in isolation from the outside world. More recently, Kenneth Pomeranz provides abundant evidence concerning the prosperity of the Ch'ien-lung era, and the comparability of the Lower Yangtze economy with the most advanced economies of Europe.[8]

The idea that the Manchu emperors exhibited an "anti-mercantile bias" has also been challenged by detailed archival studies of the finances of the Imperial Household Department, which was in charge of the emperor's personal estate.

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6 Pai Hsin-liang 白新良, *Ch'ien lung chuan* 乾隆傳 (Biography of Ch'ien lung) (Shen-yang: Liao ning chiao yü ch'u pan she, 1990), ch. 2, 9 ; Sun Wen-liang 孫文良, Chang Chieh 章杰, and Cheng Ch'uan-shui 鄭川水, *Ch'ien lung ti* 乾隆帝 (The Ch'ien-lung emperor) (Ch'ang-ch'un: Chi lin wen shih ch'u pan she, 1993), ch. 2, 11 ; T'ang Wen-chi 唐文基 and Lo Ch'ing-ch'iu 羅慶泅, *Ch'ien lung chuan* 乾隆傳 (Biography of Ch'ien-lung) (Peking: Jen min ch'u pan she, 1994), ch. 1, 4 ; Kao Hsiang 高翔, *K'ang Yung Ch'ien san ti t'ung chih ssu hsiang yen chiu* 康雍乾三帝統治思想研究 (Research on concepts of rulership of the K'ang hsi, Yung cheng, and Ch'ien lung emperors) (Peking: Jen min ta hsüeh ch'u pan she, 1995), ch. 3; William T. Rowe, *Saving the World: Chen Hongmou and Elite Consciousness in Eighteenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 45-49 departs from the writers cited here in arguing that the relaxation of the Yung-cheng policies carried out by Hung-li marked a regression from the advances made by his father towards developing an early modern state, i.e. a centralized strong state with enhanced revenues, on the European model: "the relatively weak state that the Ch'ing found itself with when it came to face an expansive and predatory West in the mid-nineteenth century was a deliberate product of the early Ch'ien lung reign (p. 46)."

7 Andre Gunder Frank, *Reorient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

8 Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). See also the recent debate between Philip Huang and Pomeranz in *Journal of Asian Studies*, v. 61, no. 2 (2002), pp. 501-90, and a separate critique of Pomeranz's work by Robert Brenner and Christopher Isett, pp. 609-62 in the same issue.

The Manchu emperors were quick to put their funds into pawnshops in order to ensure a stable source of income for the banners and the imperial household,[9] and well understood the importance of mercantile activity in times of war as well as peace.[10] Finally, studies of private enterprises in the Ch'ing period show no lack of entrepreneurial behavior, given appropriate market opportunities.[11]

Articles comparing Ch'ing policies of rule to the early modern empire created by Britain also contradict the notion that Ch'ing borrowings from the Jesuits were "superficial." Instead they stress the readiness of the Manchu emperors from K'ang-hsi onward to adopt cartographic techniques and other information technologies from Europe in order to expand their administrative powers.[12] Several scholars, writing in a special issue of *International History Review*, have likened the Ch'ing policies to those of the Europeans, and conclude that the Ch'ing were also "imperialists."[13] Other research places the campaigns against the Zunghars that began under the K'ang-hsi emperor and were concluded by the Ch'ien-lung emperor into a long-term process of absorption of the nomads by the sedentary empires of Russia and the Ch'ing.[14] In comparative terms, these works lay the foundation for the claim that the Ch'ing adopted technologies of rule from Europe and synthesized their own version of an early

9 Wei Ch'ing-yüan 韋慶遠, "Ch'ing tai Ch'ien-lung shih ch'i 'sheng hsi yin liang' chih tu ti shuai pai ho shou che -- Ch'ing tai 'sheng hsi yin liang' chih tu hsing shuai kuo ch'eng yen chiu chih i" 清代乾隆時期 '生息銀兩'制度的衰敗和收撤 — 清代 '生息銀兩'制度興衰過程研究之一 (The rise and decline and the yield of 'interest-bearing silver' during the Ch'ien-lung reign -- research on the rise and fall of the Ch'ing 'interest-bearing silver' system), in his *Ming Ch'ing shih pien hsi* 明清史辨析 (Analysis of Ming and Ch'ing history) (Peking: Chung-kuo she hui k'o hsüeh ch'u pan she, 1989), pp. 229-56. See the other essays in this volume, which study the rise of the 'interest-bearing silver' system in the K'ang-hsi reign and its evolution through the Yung-cheng reign.

10 One case study is James A. Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

11 See, for example, Kenneth Pomeranz, "'Traditional' Chinese Business Firms Revisited: Family, Firm, and Financing in the History of the Yutang Company of Jining, 1779-1956," *Late Imperial China*, v. 18, no. 1 (1997), pp. 1-38.

12 Peter Perdue, "Boundaries, Maps and Movement: Chinese, Russian, and Mongolian Empires in Early Modern Eurasia," *International History Review*, v. 20, no. 2 (1998), pp. 263-86. See also Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

13 *International History Review*, v. 20, no. 2 (1998).

14 Fred W. Bergholz, *The Partition of the Steppe: The Struggle of the Russians, Manchus, and the Zunghar Mongols for Empire in Central Asia, 1619-1758: a Study in Power Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993) and Michael Khordarkovsky, *Where Two Worlds Met: The Russian State and the Kalmuk Nomads, 1600-1771* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

modern state.[15]

Analyses of one of the frequently cited factors in Ch'ing decline, overpopulation, provides a complex picture of the dynamics of China's demographic history that challenges previous generalizations. In a series of works, most recently in a monograph summarizing studies of household registers from northeast China, James Lee and his collaborator Wang Feng overturn the received wisdom concerning Chinese demographic trends.[16] Lee and Feng assert that polygyny -- the custom by which well-to-do men had more than one child-bearing wife or concubine -- combined with the practice of female infanticide to ensure that ten to twenty percent of Chinese men were unable to marry. Marital fertility was lower in China than in Europe during the same period, and polygyny actually reduced the number of children who might otherwise have been born.

Lee and Wang do not accept the thesis that uncontrolled population growth led to a crisis at the end of the Ch'ien-lung reign. They argue that the economy kept pace with demographic growth until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, citing Pomeranz's work on the core economic region, the Lower Yangtze, where per capital consumption rivaled levels achieved in Europe in the eighteenth century. Their study challenges the conclusion that population growth was a major cause of the crises of the early nineteenth century.

A similar challenge to the "blame" side of the historiographical tradition has emerged in studies of the White Lotus Rebellion, cited by many as the marker of the beginning of Ch'ing decline. Generalizations that cite population pressure as the cause of political unrest should focus on the economic regions where population density, commercial activity, and landlordism are greatest, but the White Lotus Rebellion instead emerged in a frontier zone, not the densely populated core region. Lee and Wang observe that the periphery is where nutritional levels declined, despite the relatively favorable man:land ratio found there. Frontiers are by definition sites where the arm of government is weaker, so to the extent that civil disorder in frontier regions was the cause of Ch'ing decline, a rather different dynamic to the oft-cited overpopulation thesis is

15 Evelyn S. Rawski, "The Qing Formation and the Early Modern World," in *The Qing Formation in World-Historical Time*, ed. Lynn Struve (Harvard University Asia Center, forthcoming).

16 James Z. Lee and Wang Feng, *One Quarter of Humanity: Malthusian Mythology and Chinese Realities, 1700-2000* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). See also the exchange concerning Lee and Wang's work in *Journal of Asian Studies*, v. 61, no. 2 (2002), pp. 524-31, 591-607.

suggested. Indeed, James Millward has recently argued for putting events such as the White Lotus Rebellion into the context of frontier studies in order to highlight commonalities in the process of frontier settlement that constitute the "political economy of Ch'ing frontier zones."[17]

The Ch'ien-lung emperor was directly responsible for several political crack-downs on government officials and literati. Like his predecessors, he was acutely sensitive to implied or explicit references to his non-Han origins, and quick to suppress anything that had the potential to arouse anti-Manchu sentiments among his subjects.[18] The most famous example of imperial censorship was the literary inquisition of 1774-1796 that Hung-li ordered. This event has been described as "a principal instrument for taming the previous vitality of Chinese political and social thought."[19]

There is no doubt that Hung-li could and did instigate politically-inspired purges that affected the Chinese literati. A precursor of the literary inquisition was the "sorcery scare" of 1768 studied by Philip Kuhn, in which mobs beat up itinerant Buddhist monks in Chekiang province.[20] Because they acted on the belief that the monks were using hair clippings from queues to bewitch people, and the queue was a symbol of the Manchu conquest, the emperor became concerned: were the mob actions a form of disguised anti-Manchuism?

When the mob violence spread to Kiangsu province and beyond, the emperor ordered officials to investigate for evidence of a master plot and a bureaucratic cover-up. The campaign was begun in July and concluded in early November, with no long-lasting impact. According to Kuhn, the sorcery beliefs were the outward expression of social hostilities engendered by commercial prosperity. Official intervention reflected the emperor's keen awareness of the obstacles that government officials could create to block implementation of the imperial will, and represented a never-ending effort on his part to counter

17 James A. Millward, "New Perspectives on the Qing Frontier," in *Remapping China: Fissures in Historical Terrain*, ed. Gail Hershatter, Emily Honig, Jonathan N. Lipman, and Randall Stross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p.125.

18 A very detailed account of the Yung-cheng emperor's response to anti-Manchu agitation is given by Jonathan D. Spence, *Treason by the Book* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2001), which focuses on the Tseng Ching case.

19 F. W. Mote, "The Intellectual Climate in Eighteenth-century China," in *Chinese Painting Under the Qianlong Emperor*, ed. Ju-hsi Chou and Claudia Brown, *Phoebus*, v. 6, no. 1 (1988), p. 24.

20 Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

bureaucratic obfuscation. Kuhn's book acknowledges imperial power but also its inherent limitations, and underlines the persistent struggle between throne and bureaucracy for ultimate control.

Unlike previous studies, which cite the Ch'ien-lung inquisition as an example of autocratic censorship, Kent Guy's monograph argues that the emperor's campaign was not very successful until the government provided incentives for Han Chinese literati to cooperate. In 1776, the government promised to reward those who submitted books for censorship with appointments to local educational offices, and this new policy was responsible for the eventual purge of 2,400 books.[21] Guy concludes that the campaign was the product of the intensive interaction of officials, literati, and the emperor, each pursuing overlapping but somewhat different interests. His interpretation shifts attention away from the emperor as a historical agent to the social context which officials and rulers needed to understand if they wished to successfully implement their directives.

The Ch'ing as a Manchu Enterprise

In the 1990s there was a revival of Manchu history. Pamela K. Crossley stimulated renewed interest in early Manchu history through a series of seminal articles from 1983 onward which explored the Ch'ing foundation myth and its institutionalization during the eighteenth century[22] and traced the historical evolution of the Han-chün (Chinese-Martial) banners.[23] In 1990 she published a study of three generations of Suwan Gūwalgiya in the Hang-chou and Cha-p'u garrisons during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century which re-interpreted earlier generalizations concerning Manchu-Han relations and Manchu

21 R. Kent Guy, *The Emperor's Four Treasuries: Scholars and the State in the Late Ch'ien-lung Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1987), ch. 6.

22 Pamela K. Crossley, "An Introduction to the Qing Foundation Myth," *Late Imperial China*, v. 6, no. 2 (1985), pp. 13-24; "Manzhou yuanliu kao and the Formalization of the Manchu Heritage," *Journal of Asian Studies*, v. 46, no. 4 (1987), pp. 761-90. Later Crossley published *The Manchus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), which covered their history from the ancestral Jurchen down to the twentieth century.

23 Pamela K. Crossley, "The Tong in Two Worlds: Cultural Identities in Liaodong and Nurgan during the 13th-17th Centuries," *Ch'ing shih wen t'i*, v. 4, no. 9 (1983), pp. 21-46 ; "The Qianlong Retrospect on the Chinese-Martial (Hanjun) Banners," *Late Imperial China*, v. 10, no. 1 (1989), pp. 63-107; "Thinking About Ethnicity in Early Modern China," *Late Imperial China*, v. 10, no. 1 (1990), pp. 1-34.

identity in the late Ch'ing.[24]

Orphan Warriors refuted the thesis, put forward by Mary Wright and accepted by many modern Chinese historians, that by the second half of the nineteenth century (the period of the T'ung-chih Restoration), the Manchus were sinicized and had "melded into the general populace."[25] They became "virtually indistinguishable" from the (Han) Chinese, and united with Chinese officials to press for the achievement of the Restoration's goals. Crossley argued that the reverse was true: bannermen, who had hitherto never really constituted an ethnic group, developed ethnic consciousness for the first time in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Manchu ethnicity was the product of banner life in provincial garrisons, where most Manchus lived in isolation from the Chinese population. On this, both Crossley and Mark Elliott, who has published an institutional history of the Eight Banner system, agree.[26] Like Crossley, Elliott rejects the sinicization thesis but unlike Crossley, who emphasizes the historicity and late emergence of ethnicity, Elliott stresses ethnic consciousness as a persistent influence on policy throughout the dynastic period. For Elliott, the banner units were key to a "performative Manchu way"[27] which preserved the separate identity of the conquering elite through several centuries, even after many had lost the ability to speak their mother tongue.

The anti-sinicization position is buttressed by Edward Rhoads' study of the Ch'ing court in its last decade, which provides detailed documentation supporting Crossley's contention concerning the significance of a Manchu consciousness at the end of the dynasty.[28] Rhoads scrutinizes the efforts by Empress Dowager Tz'u-hsi and her successor, Regent Tsai-feng, to not only reverse the post-1861 trend toward decentralization of governmental authority but to "re-imperialize" decision-making processes. Both Tz'u-hsi and Tsai-feng appointed imperial princes to high decision-making posts, reviving the practice of the K'ang-hsi, Yung-cheng, and Ch'ien-lung emperors, who used imperial

24 Pamela K. Crossley, *Orphan Warriors: Three Manchu Generations and the End of the Ch'ing World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

25 Ibid., p. 224.

26 Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: the Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

27 Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, p. 348.

28 Edward J. M. Rhoads, *Manchus and Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861-1928* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).

princes and inner court agencies which bypassed the bureaucratic channels of the outer court and thus the Han Chinese bureaucracy.[29] The many political appeals during the last decade of Manchu rule to eliminate the differences between Manchus and Han are direct proof that the two groups had not become indistinguishable. Rhoads' detailed discussion of anti-Manchu writings underlines this theme in the revolutionary ideology underlying the 1911 Revolution, and provides the context for the massacres of Manchus following the Wu-han uprising of October 10, 1911.

What difference does acceptance of the Manchu origins of the Ch'ing make to our understanding of Ch'ing history, and of the Ch'ien-lung emperor? First, as is clear in the preceding section, it opens up a lively debate on ethnicity which is directly linked to contemporary political concerns with ethnic nationalism. Second, as will be clear in the following sections, it departs from assumptions that the dynastic model is the proper framework in which to analyze the significance of Ch'ing rule, and argues that the Ch'ing significantly altered the ideology and culture of rulership and in so doing laid the political foundations for the events of the twentieth-century.[30]

A Distinctive Ruling Style. Ch'ing ruling ideology was not a mere replication of Chinese paradigms. Previous generalizations about the Confucian commitment of the Ch'ien-lung emperor and the other Ch'ing rulers are not incorrect but rather incomplete as a statement of their complete philosophical and political stances. In *A Translucent Mirror*, Pamela Crossley outlines the creation of a distinctive Manchu ideology of rule, produced by the need to legitimate a conquest regime, from its origins in the late sixteenth century to its fruition in the Ch'ien-lung reign. She focuses on the anti-Manchu case of Tseng Ching to contrast the stances of Yin-chen and his son. Despite his patronage of Confucianism in policies applying to Han subjects, Hung-li rejected the fundamental premises underlying Confucian rulership. Whereas his father, the Yung-cheng emperor, had argued that the Ch'ing deserved the Mandate of Heaven because they had been culturally and morally transformed (a Confucian

29 On the inner court and Manchu governance, see Beatrice S. Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers: The Grand Council in Mid-Ch'ing China, 1723-1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

30 R. Kent Guy, "Who Were the Manchus? a Review Essay," *Journal of Asian Studies*, v. 61, no. 1 (2002), pp. 151-64, and Sudipta Sen, "The New Frontiers of Manchu China and the Historiography of Asian Empires: a Review Essay, *Journal of Asian Studies*, v. 61, no. 1 (2002), 165-77.

theme), Hung-li took the position that "The Ch'ing were fit to rule China because Heaven had backed the struggles of Nurgaci and Hongtaiji (Huang-t'ai-chi) against the Ming," ie that the Jurchen/Manchu success was proof of Heaven's favor.[31]

The ideology that sustained the empire was not Confucian universalism, "but the narrative, ethical, and ideological self-containment of early modern emperorship" constructed by Hung-li over the course of his reign.[32] The diverse peoples of the empire were held together by the emperor himself: "because the emperor's consciousness was an extension of the mind of Heaven, he maintained this connection through an encyclopedic collection of rituals, and he reified Heaven's will in the magnificence of his regime."[33]

The Ch'ien-lung emperor brought a new non-Confucian ideology of universal rulership to its full development. By his reign, the institutional arrangements and social institutions of the Manchu rulers also varied significantly from the Ming pattern. In a 1998 monograph I outlined the non-Han organization of the Ch'ing conquest elite and imperial lineage, and linked its choice of multiple capitals, its pursuit of marital endogamy, and its compartmentalized ritual schedule to a deliberate adoption of the multicultural orientation of its predecessor conquest regimes, the Liao, Chin and Yüan.[34]

The Manchu rulers synthesized Han Chinese and Inner Asian political systems to create a distinctively new kind of ruling structure. Compartmentalization of policies affecting different groups of subjects was paralleled by an administrative division of the empire into the former Ming territories, where the majority of Han Chinese lived, and the newly acquired Inner and Central Asian periphery. Ming bureaucratic structures and Han Chinese officials dominated the governmental framework of the "inner" or Ming regions, while bannermen, mostly Manchus and Mongols but also native elites, dominated the governance of the "outer" or

31 Crossley, *Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Ch'ing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 260. See Jonathan D. Spence, *Treason by the Book* for a new study of the Tseng Ching case which prompted the Yung-cheng emperor's compilation, *Da i chüeh mi lu*, in which the statement in the text was embedded.

32 Ibid, p. 361.

33 Ibid.

34 Evelyn S. Rawski, *The Last Emperors: a Social History of Qing Imperial Institutions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

peripheral regions. The Board of Rites handled tributary relations with Europe, East Asia, and Southeast Asia, but in Hung-li's time the Li-fan yüan (Court of Colonial Affairs) handled relations with the Russians, the Qalqa Mongols, Tibetans, and Uighurs. Whereas audiences with Han Chinese officials took place primarily in the Forbidden City, the Ch'ing summer capital, Jehol (Ch'eng-te) was the site for many of the emperor's interactions with Mongols, Tibetan prelates, and even Uighur notables.[35]

Tibetan Buddhism and the Ch'ien-lung emperor. Some of the most interesting new work centers on Ch'ing imperial patronage of Tibetan Buddhism and the role this patronage played in the expansion and management of the Ch'ing empire.[36] Used as a "counter-philosophy against the state Confucianism of the Chinese ruling class,"[37] by the Khitan Liao (907-1115), Jurchen Chin (1115-1234), Tangut Hsia (ca. 982-1227) and Mongol Yüan (1272-1368),[38] the lineage of Ch'ing sponsorship of Tibetan Buddhism runs in a direct line from Möngke Khan of the Yüan, who appointed a Tibetan state preceptor to his court, through the Yung-lo reign (1403-1424) to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, when several ambitious Mongol leaders sought to use the lama-patron relationship as a vehicle for expanding their political authority.[39]

Beginning with Altan Khan, whose meeting with the head of the dGe lugs pa sect in 1578 set in motion the second great conversion of the Mongols, and

35 Ning Chia, "The Lifanyuan and the Inner Asian Rituals in the Early Qing (1644-1795)," *Late Imperial China*, v. 14, no. 1 (1993), pp. 60-92.

36 Xiangyun Wang, *Tibetan Buddhism at the Court of Qing: the Life and Work of lCang-skya Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje (1717-1786)* (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1995); see also her "The Qing Court's Tibet Connection: Lcang skya Rol pa'i rdo rje and the Qianlong Emperor," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, v. 60, no. 1 (2000), pp. 125-63.

37 Karl Wittfogel and Feng Chia-sheng, cited in Anatoly M. Khazanov, "The Spread of World Religions in Medieval Nomadic Societies of the Eurasian Steppes," in *Nomadic Diplomacy, Destruction and Religion from the Pacific to the Adriatic*, ed. Michael Gervers and Wayne Schlepp (Toronto: Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, 1994), p. 24.

38 Ruth W. Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996) ; Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997) ; Herbert Franke, "The Chin Dynasty," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 313-15 ; Walther Heissig, *The Religions of Mongolia*, trans. Geoffrey Samuel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 24-25.

39 For an account from the Mongol perspective, see Patricia Berger, "After Xanadu: the Mongol Renaissance of the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," in *Mongolia: the Legacy of Chinggis Khan*, ed. Patricia Berger and Terese Tse Bartholomew (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 1995), pp. 50-75.

continuing with the adherence of the Qosot ruler Guši Khan, the dGe lugs pa put its hierarch on the throne and replaced the Sa skya pa as the most powerful Tibetan sect. Mongol leaders across the breadth of Inner Asia vied with one another to endow monasteries, sponsor publications of sacred texts, and promote the faith.

An added attraction, from their perspective, was the concept of a reincarnate lineage of hierarchs. This concept, which seems to have first appeared in the Karma pa lineage during the late thirteenth/early fourteenth century, was adopted by other major religious orders in Tibet, and combined with an earlier notion that some individuals, especially high-ranked lamas, were "emanations" or incarnations of bodhisattvas or Buddhas.

Secular rulers adapted the notion of reincarnate lineages for their own political purposes. The Yüan rulers inserted the lineage of Chinggis into a Buddhist framework; Chinggis became a protective deity of Tibetan Buddhism. Others conflated the notion of a reincarnate lineage with the Chinese concept of an orthodox line of succession, or *cheng-t'ung*. Ligdan Khan, the last Chahar Mongol ruler, styled himself (in Mongolian) "the Saintly, Ingenious Chinggis, Dayiming, the Wise, the One Who Completely Vanquishes Directions, the Powerful Cakravartin, Great Tayisung, the God of Gods, Indra of the Universe, the Dharma King Who turns a Golden Wheel."[40]

This was the context in which Nurgaci and his successor Hongtaiji courted Sa skya pa prelates. The Ch'ien-lung emperor followed the precedents set by his grandfather the K'ang-hsi emperor and expanded the relations between the court and Lhasa as well as the Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy in Mongolia, as demonstrated in Xiangyun Wang's fine dissertation.[41] Not only did the Ch'ing subsidize monasteries in Qalqa and Inner Mongol territories, they successfully imposed themselves as the arbiters of the Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy, conferring titles (and recognition) on prelates of different orders and using the lCang skya Khutukhtu, Rolpaidorje, as an intermediary for negotiations with the Tibetans and the Mongols.

The Ch'ien-lung emperor's personal interest in Tibetan Buddhism has also been the subject of considerable study. The translation into Chinese of a Tibetan-

40 Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, pp. 244-47.

41 Wang, "Tibetan Buddhism at the Court of Qing."

language biography of Hung-li's Buddhist teacher, Rolpaidorje alerted Ch'ing scholars to the importance of comparing materials in the Tibetan as well as Chinese historical record.[42] The biography of Rolpaidorje describes Hung-li's religious studies and the consecration rituals in which he took part; the evidence of chapels, tombs, and other kinds of concrete material artifacts from the Ch'ien-lung era supports the conclusion that he was a serious student.[43]

Hung-li and Art Production. Here I need do no more than refer to the Ch'ien-lung emperor's well-known interest in connoisseurship and his status as the empire's foremost art collector. One of the emperor's "two most enduring accomplishments in the field of collecting" was the palace art collection, which "included nearly every significant extant work of art produced through the Yüan dynasty."[44] Scholarly evaluations often cite flaws in the emperor's discrimination, analyze the weaknesses of his connoisseurship, and bemoan Hung-li's propensity to cover paintings with his seals and inscriptions,[45] although the emperor's inscriptions were considered to increase the value of the object.[46]

Recent research highlights the political rather than the aesthetic perspective in evaluating Hung-li's connoisseurship. "The early Ch'ing emperors used the arts as tools for the glorification of the state."[47] Patronage of the arts involved much more than the gratification of aesthetic taste. The Chinese paintings that

42 T'u-kuan Lo-sang ch'üeh-chi ni-ma 土觀洛桑卻吉尼瑪, *Chang chia kuo shih Lo pi to chi chuan* 章嘉國師若必多吉傳 (Biography of the lCang skya khutukhtu Rol pa'i rdo rje). Trans. by Ch'en Ch'ing-ying 陳慶英 and Ma Lien-lung 馬連龍 (Peking: Min tsu ch'u pan she, 1988) ; Luciano Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century: History of the Establishment of Chinese Protectorate in Tibet* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972).

43 Michael Henss, "The Bodhisattva-Emperor: Tibeto-Chinese Portraits of Sacred and Secular Rule in the Qing Dynasty," *Oriental Art*, v. 47, no. 3 (2001), pp. 2-16 ; v. 47, no. 5 (2001), pp. 71-83.

44 Harold L. Kahn, "A Matter of Taste: The Monumental and Exotic in the Qianlong Reign," in *The Elegant Brush: Chinese Painting Under the Qianlong Emperor, 1735-1795*, ed. Ju-hsi Chou and Claudia Brown (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1985), p. 295 ; Quotation from Wen Fong, "Imperial Patronage of the Arts Under the Ch'ing," in *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei*, ed. Wen C. Fong and James C. Y. Watt (New York and Taipei: Metropolitan Museum of Art and National Palace Museum, 1996), p. 555.

45 Kohara Hironobu, "The Qianlong Emperor's Skill in the Connoisseurship of Chinese Painting," in *Chinese Painting under the Qianlong Emperor*, pp. 56-73.

46 Jan Stuart, "Imperial Pastimes: Dilettantism as Statecraft in the 18th Century," in *Life in the Imperial Court of Qing Dynasty China*, ed. Chuimei Ho and Cheri A. Jones, *Proceedings of the Denver Museum of Natural History*. Series. 3. no. 15 (1998), p. 58.

47 Wen C. Fong, "Imperial Patronage of the Arts," p. 555.

dominate evaluations of his connoisseurship were only one type of the many objects that the Ch'ien-lung emperor spent his time contemplating and collecting. Hung-li implemented his ideology of rulership in his eclectic collecting activities: Western clocks and Tibetan Buddhist objects (see below) might not fit into the Chinese literati's definition of art, but these objects were symbols of his universal charisma, which extended to Europe (why, otherwise, would Jesuits come to serve in his court?), penetrated Tibet and Mongolia, and through the tributary network went as far east as Japan. The "tuo-bao-ko" or treasure-cabinets, also in the National Palace Museum collection, which housed objects in different media from different periods and even different countries were a miniaturized microcosm of the entire imperial collection, which is said to have numbered over a million objects in the Ch'ien-lung reign.[48]

Studies of the emperor's role in the production of art objects underline the significance of art for his rulership. Like other rulers Hung-li commemorated important achievements by commissioning art works. He had portraits of outstanding warriors and officials the campaigns against the Zunghars displayed in the Tzu-kuang-ko, which was used for banquets and military reviews. He ordered European copper engravings of the great military victories of his reign.[49] To commemorate the return of the Torghut Mongols from Russia in 1771, he had the "Wan-fa kui-i t'u" painted.[50] Depictions of tributary envoys gave visual evidence of the emperor's charisma, just as the building of a European villa, the Yüan ming yüan, gave material expression to his ability to command the services of European architects and artists.[51] The objects commissioned reflected the territorial expanse of the empire, from Hindustan jades, which Hung-li highly esteemed,[52] to Tibetan Buddhist religious objects (see below), and objects in painted porcelain, champlevé, and painted enamel,

48 James C. Y. Watt, "The Antique-Elegant," in *Possessing the Past*, pp. 547-53 ; Crossley, *Translucent Mirror*, p. 281.

49 Ka Bo Tsang, "Portraits of Meritorious Officials: Eight Examples from the First Set Commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor," *Arts Asiatique*, v. 47 (1992), pp. 69-88.

50 Ku kung po wu yüan故宮博物院, *Ch'ing tai kung t'ing hui hua* 清代宮廷繪畫 (Ch'ing dynasty court painting) (Peking: Ku kung po wu yüan, 1995), plate 141, p. 234

51 Wei Tung畏冬, "'Huang Ch'ing chih-kung t'u' ch'uang-chih shih-mo" '皇清職貢圖'創製始末 (On the creation of the 'Foreign Envoys Bearing Tribute'), *Tzu chin ch'eng* 紫禁城, v. 72 (1992), pp. 8-12; Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, ch. 1.

52 Kuo li ku kung po wu yüan 國立故宮博物院, *Ku kung suo ts'ang Hen-tu-ssu-t'an yü ch'i t'e chan t'u lu* 故宮所藏痕都斯坦玉器特展圖錄 (Catalogue of a special exhibition of Hindustan jade in the National Palace Museum) (Taipei: Kuo li ku kung po wu yüan, 1983), pp. 85-93.

which incorporated European techniques.[53]

The archival records show that Hung-li and his predecessors closely supervised the European, Chinese, Tibetan, and other artisans employed in thirty-eight workshops under the Imperial Household Department to produce everything from textiles, glass, enamels, leather objects, icons, paintings, metal objects, furniture, and printed books for court use and the gift exchanges that were an integral part of the system of Ch'ing rulership. According to Jean-Denis Attiret, writing in 1743,

> Everything which we paint is ordered by the emperor. To begin with, we prepare the drawings; he looks them over, has them changed, corrected, as seems best to him. Whether the correction be good or bad we have to submit to it, without daring to say a word.[54]

Yang Boda has presented parallel examples of the imperial orders to reproduce jade pieces illustrated in antique catalogues.[55] Hung-li's interest in the production of palace art was not superficial. Whether in the manufacture of glass, paintings, or Buddhist statues, the emperor took a hand, not simply at the beginning and the end, but also in the midst of the process of creation, ordering sometimes minute changes to the object.[56]

The Ch'ien-lung emperor's eclectic art production reveals another consequence of the imperial expansion over which he and his predecessors had presided, namely its syncretic nature. Through the influence of Castiglione and other Jesuit painters, a new Sino-Western style that differed from either Chinese

53 Yang Boda, "The Characteristics and Status of Guangdong Handicrafts as seen from Eighteenth Century Tributes from Guangdong in the Collection of the Former Ch'ing Palace," in *Tributes from Guangdong to the Qing Court* (Hong Kong: The Palace Museum, Peking and the Art Gallery, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1987), pp. 39-67.

54 Cited in George Loehr, "European Artists at the Chinese Court," in *The Westward Influence of the Chinese Arts from the 14th to the 18th Century*, ed. William Watson, and Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, University of London (Colloquies on Art and Archaeology in Asia, no. 3) (London: Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, 1976), p. 35.

55 Yang Boda, "Emperor Ch'ien Lung's Collection in the Palace Museum, Peking," *Arts of Asia*, v. 22, no. 2 (1992), pp. 81-94.

56 Peter Y. K. Lam, "The Glasshouse of the Ch'ing Imperial Household Department," in *Elegance and Radiance: Grandeur in Ch'ing Glass, The Andrew K. F. Lee Collection* (Hong Kong: The Art Museum, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2000), pp. 37-59 ; Terese Tse Bartholomew, "Sino-Tibetan Art of the Qianlong Period from the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco," *Orientations*, v. 22, no. 6 (1991), pp. 34-45 ; Chu Chia-chin 朱家溍, "Ch'ing tai yüan hua man t'an" 清代院畫漫談 (Ch'ing dynasty court painting), *Ku kung po wu yüan yüan k'an*, v. 5 (2001), pp. 1-6.

or European painting style emerged and eventually spread beyond court circles.[57] Attempts to reproduce Hindustan-style jades in the palace workshops incorporated elements from Chinese and Hindustan traditions, but the Chinese demand also influenced Indian jade-carvers to adopt more Chinese forms and motifs into their products.[58] The insertion of "Occidentalism" into Ch'ing palace production during the Ch'ien-lung reign is strikingly apparent in examples of enamel-decorated porcelains, painted enamel on copper, and cloisonné and painted enamel snuff bottle in the National Palace Museum collection.[59] The Ch'ien-lung emperor's large collection of European clocks -- both imported and produced in palace workshops -- included many executed in the *chinoiserie* style that swept Europe in the 1750s and 1760s, reminding us that China was as exotic an object to Europe as Europe was to the Ch'ing.[60]

The Ch'ien-lung emperor also undertook large-scale building projects. He invested significant sums in rebuilding crumbling temples and other edifices in Peking.[61] According to Philippe Forêt, Hung-li's building projects in his summer capital, Jehol (Ch'eng-te) were a direct expression of his concept of emperorship, demonstrating the emperor's "desire to transmit an architectural message of diversity and unity,"[62]

In many ways, Ch'eng-te was a concrete manifestation of the idea that

57 Yang Po-ta 楊伯達, "Shih pa shih chi Chung Hsi wen hua chiao liu tui Ch'ing tai mei shu ti ying hsiang" 十八世紀中西文化交流對清代美術的影響 (The influence on Ch'ing art of Sino-Western cultural exchange in the eighteenth century), *Ku kung po wu yüan yüan k'an*, v. 4 (1998), pp. 70-77 ; examples can be found in Jan Stuart and Evelyn S. Rawski, *Worshiping the Ancestors: Chinese Commemorative Portraits* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), Fig. 2, 3, 6.3: see text, pp. 148, 173.

58 *Ku kung suo ts'ang Hen-tu-ssu-t'an yü ch'i*, pp. 93-101.

59 Watt, "The Antique-Elegant," pp. 513-19, 520 ; Kuo li ku kung po wu yüan 國立故宮博物院, *Ch'ing kung chung fa lang ts'ai tz'u t'e chan* 清宮中琺瑯彩瓷特展 (Special exhibition of Ch'ing dynasty enameled porcelains of the imperial ateliers) (Taipei: Kuo li ku kung po wu yüan, 1992), plates 131, 135, 141, 143, 144, pp. 260-61, 268-69, 275, 277 and 278 respectively. The mother and son motif appears in a Chinese as well as European style in these porcelains: the piece in Plate 131 can be compared with its Chinese counterpart in plate 119, pp. 236-37 and plate 145, p. 279.

60 Catherine Pagani, *Eastern Magnificence & European Ingenuity: Clocks of Late Imperial China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

61 Tai I 戴逸, "Ch'ien lung ti ho Pei-ching ti ch'eng shih chien she" 乾隆帝和北京的城市建設 (The Ch'ien-lung emperor and the establishment of Peking), in *Ch'ing shih yen chiu chi* 清史研究集 (Collection of Ch'ing historical researches), ed. by Chung-kuo jen min ta hsüeh Ch'ing shih yen chiu so (Peking: Kuang ming jih pao ch'u pan she, 1988), v. 6, pp. 1-37.

62 Forêt, *Mapping Chengde: The Qing Landscape Enterprise* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), p. 118.

imperially directed production of literature, architecture, and art both manifested universal rulership but also acted as a "glue" that cemented the disparate cultures of Ch'ing subjects. Ch'eng-te was a carefully crafted congeries of mountain, lake, and prairie settings which drew on Han Chinese, Mongol, and Tibetan cultural elements. At Ch'eng-te, Hung-li created the appropriate setting for a bodhisattva, who was "none other than the emperor himself."[63]

The reference is to the tangkas which depict the Ch'ien-lung emperor as Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva of wisdom.[64] These tangkas were only a small portion of the Tibetan Buddhist objects produced in the palace workshops during the Ch'ien-lung reign and recorded in documents housed in the First Historical Archives, Peking. Annual inventories found in the archives show that there was an extensive network of gift exchange in Tibetan Buddhist tangkas, offering vessels, illustrated sutras, and Buddha images of various kinds between the emperor, Tibetan prelates, Mongol nobles, and members of the imperial family.[65] Objects made in the workshops were also installed in the Buddhist chapels that Hung-li built for his own use, located in the northwest quadrant of the Inner Quarters.[66]

What is the meaning of such works? One response is to reject them because they fall outside existing art traditions, and many catalogues and exhibitions of Ch'ing official art continue to ignore these objects which represent a hybridization of different cultural elements that were pulled together by the Ch'ien-lung emperor himself. Perhaps many connoisseurs reject them on aesthetic grounds. From a historian's perspective, however, the significance of

63 Ibid., p. 11.

64 The first scholar to discuss this aspect of Ch'ing emperorship was David Farquhar, "Emperor as Bodhisattva in the Governance of the Ch'ing Empire," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, v. 38, no. 1 (1978), pp. 5-34. See Plate 5.2, p. 120 in Jan Stuart and Evelyn S. Rawski, *Worshiping the Ancestors: Chinese Commemorative Portraits* for a tangka of this kind that has recently entered the public domain. For an interpretation of this kind of piece that emphasizes its multiple layers of meanings, see Patricia Berger, *Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

65 As far as I know, there has been no comprehensive study of the materials filed as "Miscellaneous palace items" (*kung chung tsa chien*) catalogue numbers 467-4-85/311-318 in the First Historical Archives. For a description of some of these items, see Terese Tse Bartholomew, "Sino-Tibetan Art of the Qianlong Period."

66 On the chapels, see Wang Chia-p'eng王家鵬, "Chung cheng tien yü Ch'ing kung Tsang ch'uan Fo chiao" 中正殿與清宮藏傳佛教 (The Chung cheng hall and the Tibetan Buddhist faith in the Ch'ing palace), *Ku kung po wu yüan yüan k'an,* v. 3 (1991), pp. 58-71, and his "Ku-kung Yü-hua ko t'an yüan" 故宮雨花閣探源 (On the origins of the Yü hua pavilion in the palace), *Ku kung po wu yüan yüan k'an*, v. 1 (1990), pp. 50-62.

these objects lies in the entirety of the emperor's art patronage. The determined pursuit of all genres, in all traditions, suggests that one should view Hung-li's collecting activities as an expression of his philosophy of rulership. Just as he unified diverse subjects in his person, so his commissions and collecting of objects was intentionally multi-cultural. The display of objects from many different regions and cultures was a concrete expression of universal monarchy.

As Wu Hung has demonstrated, inspecting some Ch'ing paintings through a political lens can provide unexpectedly rich layers of meaning. Paintings of twelve Chinese beauties can be read as a concealed message regarding the possession by Manchu rulers of the fruits of feminized Han culture, and Castiglione's depiction of the Yung-cheng emperor and the young Hung-li in "Spring's Peaceful Message," can be said to represent the succession and also raise questions concerning the rulers' relationship to Han Chinese culture.[67] The recurrence of disguise, symbolic representation, and obliqueness that Wu Hung finds in "Spring's Peaceful Message" and "One or Two?" is evident in the emperor's Tibetan Buddhist art creations, and in many other media, which play on one medium masquerading as another, and different cultural styles being placed in close juxtaposition, giving rise to multi-layered structures of meaning.[68]

Conclusion

Recent scholarship has downgraded the traditional historiographical emphasis on ascribing major events, both positive and negative, to the actions of the ruler. Various studies have examined the oft-cited causes of Ch'ing dynastic decline that were blamed on the Ch'ien-lung emperor's misrule such as over-population and popular unrest to underline the degree to which these events rested on much larger trends that not even the ruler could control. On subjects such as the literary inquisition, scholars have underlined the extent to which censorship and imperial autocracy rested on the voluntary cooperation of segments of the Han Chinese elite.

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67 Wu Hung, "Beyond Stereotypes: the Twelve Beauties in Qing Court Art and the 'Dream of the Red Chamber'," in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, ed. Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 306-65 ; Wu Hung, *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 226-231.

68 Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*, for extensive discussion of the messages embedded in the Buddhist art created at the Ch'ien-lung court.

New publications have also put the Ch'ien-lung emperor into a context that recognizes his important role in consolidating Manchu identity and in creating a new ideology of rulership that departed from the Confucian model. In this paper we suggest a framework into which reviews of the emperor's connoisseurship and art patronage should be integrated. Finally, evaluations of the Ch'ien-lung reign should rely not simply on the Chinese perspective, but also incorporate the Inner Asian one.

The Ch'ing Impact on Inner Asian Culture. The *pax Manjurica* that prevailed for the second half of the Ch'ien-lung reign greatly influenced the cultural development of the Inner Asian worlds that were now part of the Ch'ing empire. By bringing elites from widely disparate regions together and by subsidizing cultural projects, the Ch'ing rulers, and Hung-li in particular, played a direct role in the literary and artistic efflorescence that took place during his reign. The compilation of multi-lingual dictionaries, translation of Buddhist sacred texts, and other projects bridging linguistic and cultural divides began much earlier but came to its climax during this period. In addition to enormous works, such as the *Ode to Mukden* composed by Hung-li himself, the most important cultural contributions were made by educated Mongols, often in the service of the Ch'ing court.[69]

Schools were established in the Inner Mongol banners, and Mongols were eligible to sit for special examinations in Manchu and Mongolian, with those passing the examinations offered the prospect of appointment. By the early part of the Ch'ien-lung reign, there were nearly two thousand monasteries and temples in Mongolia, and many hundreds more serving the Tibetan and Mongol population in the present-day provinces of Tsinghai and Sinkiang. In the monasteries, young boys studied Tibetan, which was the prestige language.[70] Mongol monks translated many Tibetan texts and also wrote biographies of religious notables, church chronicles, and philosophical dissertations in Tibetan. New historical works in Tibetan and sometimes in Mongolian, drawing on Tibetan and Chinese sources, were written during the eighteenth century.

69 Pamela K. Crossley and Evelyn S. Rawski, "A Profile of the Manchu Language in Ch'ing History," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, v. 58, no. 1 (1993), pp. 63-102. On the *Ode to Mukden*, see Crossley, *Translucent Mirror*, pp. 268-69.

70 Evelyn S. Rawski, "Qing Publishing for the Non-Han World," *in Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. Cynthia Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (University of California Press, forthcoming).

Gombojab (ca. 1680-1750), who served for a time as director of the Tibetan school in Peking, wrote a history of Buddhism in China (*Ja-nag choin-jun*, 1736), that introduced Chinese primary sources to Tibetan readers. He was also the author of an influential work in Mongolian which traced the genealogy of the Chinggisid descent line.[71]

Imperially commissioned multi-lingual works were published by the Wu ying tien hsiu shu ch'u (Book Compilation Office), an agency under the Imperial Household Department (Nei wu fu), and were known as "palace editions" or *tien k'o*. Books in Manchu, Mongolian, and Tibetan were published in major Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, in Mukden (Sheng-ching), and in the larger banner garrisons scattered throughout the empire, but the largest producers were commercial firms in Peking. These book firms were located at several sites in the Inner City, reserved for bannermen, such as the neighborhood of the Song-chu ssu, the official residence of the lCang skya khutukhtu, and the neighborhoods of the Lung-fu ssu in the eastern quadrant and the Hu-kuo ssu in the western quadrant of the inner city.[72]

Increased literacy and the expansion of book culture had direct but slightly different consequences on the enhancement of Tibetan and Mongolian culture. Elsewhere I have argued that Tibetan culture, which profited from the monastic publication of religious texts, continued to be as much influenced by Indian as by Chinese themes and elements.[73] Tibetan prelates were thus not necessarily more likely to be knowledgeable about Chinese culture during the Ch'ien-lung reign than before.

Mongolian literature by contrast bridged the Tibetan-Chinese divide, with a substantial portion of work devoted to Tibetan Buddhism but another portion oriented to Chinese texts. Moreover, literate Mongols had access to a wide array of Chinese-language materials through multi-lingual Manchu editions, even if they did not read Chinese. The Ch'ien-lung reign thus contributed directly to a cultural efflorescence in Mongolia, which gave the Mongol elites a much better sense of Chinese culture but also a greater dedication to Buddhism and an emerging sense of their own history and identity.

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71 Sh. Bira, *Mongolian Historical Literature of the XVII-XIX Centuries Written in Tibetan*, trans. Stanley N. Frye (Bloomington: The Mongolia Society and the Tibet Society, 1970), pp. 32-40 ; Walther Heissig, "Mongolische Literatur," *Handbuch der Orientalistik* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964), p. 266.

72 Rawski, "Qing Publishing."

73 Ibid.

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