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WHOSE XINJIANG? THE TRANSITION IN
CHINESE INTELLECTUALS' IMAGINATION
OF THE "NEW DOMINION" DURING THE
QING DYNASTY

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Whose Xinjiang? The Transition in Chinese intellectuals' imagination of the "New Dominion" during the Qing dynasty

Jia Jianfei

Abstract: Though Xinjiang (literarily the "New Dominion") was incorporated into China's territory permanently in the mid-18th century during Emperor Qianlong's reign, *Jiayu Guan* (嘉峪关) still marked a boundary between Xinjiang and China proper, much like *Yang Guan* (阳关) and *Yumen Guan* (玉门关) in the Han and Tang dynasties. Such a boundary was infused with cultural meaning since ancient times: it separated different cultures, and territories beyond the pass were accordingly not be regarded as part of China. This understanding of cultural boundaries deeply influenced Han Chinese officials and intellectuals; no wonder few Han Chinese supported the Qing emperors' military plans in Xinjiang during the conquest. Even after the Qing conquest of Xinjiang, such conceptions remained relevant and fueled controversy over Xinjiang, lasting to the end of Qing dynasty and even into the Republic. However, these ideas gradually weakened over time, resulting in the re-conquest of Xinjiang during the 1860s and 1870s by Zuo Zongtang (左宗棠), a Han Chinese, the establishment of Xinjiang province in 1884, and the swift development of Xinjiang-studies during the Guangxu reign period (1875-1908). Indeed, the place of Xinjiang in Han Chinese intellectuals' imagination had changed significantly, and this change played a key role in the crystallization of modern China's boundaries.

Keywords: Qing dynasty Han Intellectuals Xinjiang Image of Western Regions

Although Xinjiang (新疆) was incorporated into China's territory permanently only during the Qianlong emperor's reign, the communication between Xinjiang (ancient Western Regions 西域) and China inland (*neidi* 内地) has began since pre-Qin dynasty. But in ancient China, Xinjiang was mere an uncivilized land to ancient Chinese for a quite long time. The author of the "Tribute of Yu" in the *Shang shu* (《尚书·禹贡》) described ancient China's scope as such: "On the east reaching to the sea; on the west extending to the *moving sands* (流沙); to the utmost limits of the north and south, the fame and influence filled up all within the four seas". This was how Han Chinese imagined the world at that time. As for the understanding of "moving sands," some ancient people said it was *Juyan lake* (居延海) in today's *Zhangye* (张掖), Gansu Province, and some argued it was located in *Dunhuang* (敦煌), another place in Gansu Province. *Huwei* (胡渭), a famous Qing scholar, discussed the problem in detail in his *Yu gong zhui zhi* (禹贡锥指); He argued that the

“moving sands” referred to contemporary Dunhuang.¹ No matter where the moving sands were, this narrative of natural boundaries impressed the Chinese world deeply. Later, natural geographical boundaries gradually evolved into cultural boundaries, or the idea that China was not only a territorial, but a cultural entity. This understanding of cultural boundaries deeply influenced Han Chinese intellectuals. The term for territory beyond the moving sands, “*Western Regions*”, suggested a place that rejected Chinese culture, and this understanding remained unchanged through the mid-18th century, when the Qing conquered this place, later referred to as Xinjiang. In the second half of the 19th century, the Qing re-conquered Xinjiang from the occupations of Yakub *beg* and Russia, and Xinjiang was formally made a Chinese province. It was a milestone in the Han Chinese imagining of Xinjiang. The change ultimately had a far-reaching impact on the establishment of modern China’s northwestern boundary.

I

The formation and development of Han Chinese intellectuals’ imagining of Xinjiang was closely related to China’s central government’s rule over the Western Regions, especially during the Han and Tang dynasties.

Zhang Qian (张骞), a famous official of the Han dynasty, first arrived in the Western Regions during the reign of Emperor Wu (武帝) as an emissary of the court. Han. The *Chuguanji* (出关记, *Records of Going Beyond the Pass*), his record of the journey to the Western Regions, was the first reliable account of the region in Chinese, but it has been lost. Fortunately, its main content was included in the *Shiji* (史记), written by Sima Qian (司马迁). Later, the Han dynasty controlled the Western Regions, and records were kept in the former and latter *Hanshu* (汉书), which were compiled by two Han dynasty’s scholars, Ban Gu (班固) and Fan Ye (范曄). These texts are more detailed and reliable, and they remain important materials for understanding and studying the Western Regions to this day.

Although the Western Regions were under the Han dynasty’s control, its geographic location seems to have made it a dreadful place for Han people to go. Ban Chao (班超), an official stationed in the Western Regions for almost thirty years, wrote to the emperor that “I dare not expect to go to *Jiuquan*(酒泉), but only hope I can enter *Yumen Guan* before I die.” His words revealed a wildness of Western Regions, both in geography and in culture, that was distinct from China proper; he also expressed his strong homesickness. Such words strongly influenced later Han Chinese intellectuals’ negative impression of the Western Regions. Although the Han

¹ Hu Wei, *Yu-guan-zhui-zhi*(禹贡锥指), vol.19, Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Press, 1996, pp.692-694.

and Tang dynasties had controlled the Western Regions, to some extent their later withdrawal reflected the influence of such views and feelings. These feelings lingered in the minds of Han Chinese intellectuals throughout the Qing dynasty, and even in 20th century.

The Ming dynasty, the last which was ethnically Han, controlled a territory much smaller than the preceding Han, Tang and Yuan dynasties. Its northwestern border did not go beyond *Hami* (哈密), the Western Regions city closest to Gansu (甘肃), and *Jiayu Guan* marked the Ming's territorial limit.¹ Only later did the Qing dynasty, which was established by the Manchus, replace the Ming, and by 1759 the Qing had conquered the whole of Xinjiang; its western border ultimately extended from Jiayu Guan to the Pamirs (帕米尔) and the eastern edge of Central Asia. There is no evidence, however, that Qianlong's conquest of the Western Regions was a premeditated military activity.² As Wei Yuan (魏源), the famous scholar of the Daoguang emperor's reign, noted, the Qing court originally held no intention of conquering the Dzungar (准噶尔) Mongols, the people inhabiting Northern Xinjiang. Instead, he sent forces to suppress them if they attacked the Qing, and the Qing armies were to withdraw if they subjected themselves to the dynasty; the war against the Dzungars, and the later occupation of Xinjiang, were not the Qing emperors' original intentions.³ Yet though the Western Regions were incorporated into Qing territory, many Qing scholars and officials did not yet regard Xinjiang as an integral part of the Qing, but instead insisted that the Ming's western border, Jiayu Guan, remained the landmark that defined the Qing's northwestern frontier. Such a view, however, could no longer directly influence Qing's decision-making in Xinjiang.

II

In sum, although Qing conquered Xinjiang in the middle of 18th century during Qianlong's reign, many Qing intellectuals had not yet accepted the reality and still regarded Jiayu Guan as both the geographic and cultural border between China proper and the Western Regions. That meant Xinjiang, Qing's "new dominion" beyond the Jiayu Guan, was not only a wild geographic domain, but also land of exotic culture; it separated two different ethnic groups of different cultures. As James Millward, one

¹ *MSLXZSL*(明实录孝宗实录)29, vol.89, HZ7.6.Bingyin, p.1644, Taipei: Taiwan Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jiaoyinben, 1962; *MSLSZSL*(明实录世宗实录),39, vol.48, JJ4.2.Yihai, pp.1222-1223; Zhang Tingyu, *Ming Shi*(明史), vol.204, liezhuang 92, "Chen Jiuchou(陈九畴)", Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974, p.5380.

² Mark C. Elliott, *Emperor Qianlong, Son of Heaven, Man of the World*, Longman, Priscilla McGeehon, 2009, p90.

³ Wei Yuan, *Sheng wu ji* (Records of imperial military achievements), vol.3, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984, p.147.

American scholar of Qing Xinjiang, wrote in *Beyond the Pass*, for those still steeped in the Chinese literary tradition, Jiayu Guan continued to “represent a symbolic, psychological boundary as well: for many in the mid-eighteenth century, as for the author of the *Tribute of Yu*, those shifting sands marked the end of China.”¹ Despite the Manchu Qing’s conquest of the Western Regions and Jiayu Guan’s losing its function as territorial boundary, the function as of cultural boundary very much continued to impress most Chinese literati. Furthermore, the Qing government regarded Xinjiang as a place to exile criminals following the conquest, and this certainly furthered people’s great fear of Xinjiang. Many Qing people emphasized the differences between “inner” (内) and “outer” (外), where inner meant China proper and outer meant beyond the Jiayu Guan.

The most typical saying about inner and outer was what Liu Tongxun (刘统勋), the famous Qing official, wrote in a memorial in 1755: “The inner and outer boundaries must be demarcated (内外之界，不可不分)”, and he argued that the lands from Hami to the west should be abandoned and that a defensive perimeter be established in Hami. Liu Tongxun’s words drew down Qianlong’s anger and Qianlong reprimanded Liu Tongxun sternly: “You should think it over. Since all tribes were made subject to Qing, all of their places belong to us, and Ili is now our borderland. How can you divide them into *inner* and *outer*? (试思，各部自归诚以来，悉已隶我版图，伊犁皆我疆界，尚何内外之可分).” Later, Qianlong again pointed out that from Ili (伊犁) to Yarkand (叶尔羌), all former borderlands had become inner lands (向日之边陲，又成内地). He further emphasized that “Both the Dzungar and Muslim frontiers (回疆) were pacified, and Barkol (巴里坤) and beyond all now belonged to the inner land, so Liangzhou (凉州) and Zhuanglang (庄浪) should not be regarded as borders (准噶尔回疆全行平定，巴里坤以外均属内地，所有凉州、庄浪，不得作为边界)”.² The author of *The Gazetteer of Western Region* (西域图志) also indicated that “China proper and the Western regions had not combined into one family until then (中土之于西域，始合为一家)”.³ However, the unification of Qing territory clearly could not change the imagination of many Chinese literati, who still thought Xinjiang was an uncivilized place (声教不通); lingering ideas about inner and outer relied on such cultural discrimination and distinctions. Thus, although Qianlong punished Liu Tongxun severely — stripped of rank, Liu Tongxun and his

¹ James Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998, pp.36-38.

² *QLDQJZ*(乾隆帝起居注) 14, ed. By Chinese First Historical Archives, Q1.20.9.25, Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2002, pp.278-279; *QSLZ*(清史列传)5, ed. By Wang Zhong-han, Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1987, vol.18, pp.1392-1393; *GXDQHDSL*(光绪《大清会典事例》), vol.1128, 1899, p.4.

³ Fuheng et al., comps. (*Qinding*) *huangyu Xiyu tuzhi* (钦定皇舆西域图志, Imperially commissioned gazetteer of the Western Regions of the imperial domain), vol.1, “tukao (图考)” 1, Taipei: Wenhai Publisher, 1970, p.6.

sons in Beijing were sent to the Ministry of Punishments for interrogation, and all his property was confiscated – there were still others who still maintained that Xinjiang should be abandoned. There are records of these viewpoints in *Gaozong's Veritable Records* (高宗实录). Following the Liu Tongxun case, at least two others, Shi Yizhi (史贻直) and Chen Shiguan (陈世倌), issued similar memorials as Liu Tongxun's.¹ Such proposals reflected the enduring Chinese literati's imagining of Xinjiang, and their ideas resulted in debates over Xinjiang that lasted throughout the Qing dynasty, especially during the 19th century, which had a negative influence on Qing's management of Xinjiang.

It is thus easy to understand why during the Qing conquest of Xinjiang, military operations were opposed by most Qing officials (including Han and Manchu alike). As Qianlong wrote, only the Manchu Grand Councilor (大学士) Fu Heng (傅恒) stood on Qianlong's side.² Those against Qianlong held a number of reservations. One was financial: they argued that military action in Xinjiang would usher in a financial crisis and become an expensive burden. The other centered on cultural discrimination and the lack of identification with the Western regions. Here, the logic was similar to the "fault line war" between civilizations proposed by Samuel Huntington and that has materialized in politics during the late 20th and early 21th centuries.

In line with Huntington's theory, in ancient China the Great Wall, with its conflicts between northern nomadic culture and the farming culture of *Central Plain* (中原) coincided with such a "fault line." In the Qing dynasty, the far western end of this "fault line" was Jiayu Guan. Owen Lattimore similarly argued that the Great Wall line functioned to delimit the geographic field of Chinese history: that the marginal zone along that frontier served as a reservoir where societies sharing qualities of both the steppe and China proper developed and eventually moved on to conquer China, and that Chinese and nomadic history were characterized by interrelated cycles.³ Yet during the Han and Tang dynasties, while the different cultural groups divided by the Great Wall may have displayed differing production and living styles, cultural differences and discrimination between them were not as clear-cut as Chinese intellectuals imagined: prosperous trade along the Silk Road brought frequent exchanges between these different cultures to the east and west.

¹ QSLZ(清史列传)5, vol.18, pp.1392-1393; QGZSL(清高宗实录)7, vol.515, QL21.6. guichou, p.504; QGZSL 7, vol.548, QL22.10. xinyou, p.973; QGZSL 8, vol.601, QL.24.11.jiaxu, p.748.

² Fuheng et. al, comps. (*Qinding*) *huangyu Xiyu tuzhi*, ed. By Zhong Xingqi (钟兴麒), Urumqi: Xinjiang Renmin Chubanshe, 2002, p.3.

³ Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1988, p.512; James Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, pp.5-6.

With the Song and Yuan dynasties, however, and particularly during the Ming and Qing dynasties, other factors reduced cultural interaction dramatically: the changing political situation in the Western Regions; the decline of the Silk Road's function as communication bridge; the rise and development of Islam in the Western Regions until it became the dominant culture in Southern Xinjiang and Central Asia – a culture markedly different from the Confucianism dominating China proper. Thus Jiayu Guan indeed separated two cultural worlds: Islamic Western Regions (outer) and Confucian China proper (inner). Confucianism had matured in China proper over thousands of years of development and was accepted by almost all Chinese dynasties and their rulers (including some dynasties established by ethnic minorities), so that Confucian culture became far-reaching, self-confident and even chauvinistic. Chinese literati deeply influenced by Confucianism were naturally unwilling to identify with the Western Regions, and they inevitably excluded those exotic non-Han peoples or those without Confucian values. They applied discriminative terms to the region's non-Han peoples and cultures. Literati attitudes to the Islamic culture beyond the Jiayu Guan was such that they used the contemptuous terms “dog *Hui*” (犬回) and *chantou* (缠头) (which first appeared during Qianlong's reign and were still in use at dynasty's end). When Qing officials and intellectuals, both Han and Manchus, made note of local people or their cultures, they often used scornful and insulting words. *Qi-shi-yi* (七十一), a Manchu official who came to Xinjiang on the heels of the conquest, wrote in his narrative *Xiyu Wenjian Lu* (西域闻见录) that Torghut Mongol men liked stealing and plundering and their women (as well as Uyghur's women in Kashgar (喀什噶尔)) were shameless prostitutes.¹ In his text, which was written in Chinese, *Qi-shi-yi* argued that their script seemed like a mess of scratching and wriggling: “The Muslim script is like the tracks of birds, like tadpoles (回字如鸟迹, 如蝌蚪)”.²

In the *Huijiang zhi* (回疆志), another text from the early 1770s, the author provided some of the harshest descriptions of Uyghurs:

- The Muslims' natural character (赋性) is suspicious and unsettled, crafty and false. Hard-drinking and addicted to sex, they never know when they have had enough. They understand neither repentance nor restraint, and wild talk takes the place of shame. They are greedy and parsimonious. If husbands, wives, fathers, or sons have money, they each hide it away for themselves. If even one cash falls into a drainage ditch, they have to drain, sift, and dredge until the coin is retrieved. They

¹ Qi-shi-yi, *Xiyu Wenjian Lu* (Record of things heard and seen in the Western Regions), vol.2, in *Zhongguo Xibei Wenxian Congshu: Xibei Minsu Wenxian*, vol.1, Lanzhou: Lanzhou Guji Shudian, 1990, p.182, 200.

² Qi-shi-yi, *Xiyu Wenjian Lu*, vol.7. The translation of Qi-shi-yi's words here quotes from James Millward's *Beyond the Pass*, p.195.

enjoy being proud and boastful, exaggerating their reputation. They prefer ease to industry, considering an opportunity for inactivity and sleep a great boon, and a drunken binge from dusk to dawn a great joy. Their character is lethargic, and they lack foresight. They do not know what it is to learn skills or to store grain, thus they must have someone to rely on in order to survive (回人赋性多疑无定, 狡猾诈伪, 嗜酒耽色, 贪利鄙吝, 不以毁约诳语为耻。夫妻、父子各自藏匿银钱, 以为私蓄, 甚至一钱失坠沟池, 必淘涸捞获乃止。骄淫矜夸, 耽逸恶劳, 以有暇昼寝为享福, 以彻夜醉歌为大快。性懦弱而无远虑, 不知习技艺, 积贮穀米, 故必待有所依而后能存活。)¹

Such descriptions naturally reinforced Chinese intellectuals' discrimination against local people in Xinjiang, widening the gap between people from China proper and Xinjiang locals, especially Uyghur. Ethnic differences, the long distance and arduous environment further broadened the gap between these differing cultural groups.

Northern Xinjiang was the homeland of Oirat (卫拉特 or 厄鲁特) before the Qing conquest. Given the Oirat (and particularly Dzungar) threat to Manchu Qing rule, the Qing state ultimately conquered the region. The Dzungar's population was almost entirely exterminated, emptying northern Xinjiang,² and the Qing rebuilt northern Xinjiang. Southern Xinjiang (Muslim Frontier) was different: the Qing army had not confronted effective resistance from the Turkic-speaking Muslims there, so the social economy had not been destroyed seriously and it maintained stable development. Given this reality, emperor Qianlong used the traditional *beg* (伯克) of southern Xinjiang to rule their localities. There was thus a lack of channels to integrate and communicate between local Uyghur Muslims and people from China proper; it correspondingly resulted in a lack of mutual understanding and the serious cultural gap between them in southern Xinjiang. Such gap were even widening because of the different ruling institutions governing China proper and southern Xinjiang, as well as the ethnic segregation policies (民族隔离政策) applied to Xinjiang. Especially those Han Chinese persisted to hold discriminational views to Uyghur because they thought Han Chinese and Han culture were superior to Uyghur's.

As argued by James Millward, though the Qing conquered Xinjiang, Qianlong did not want to eliminate cultural differences between the regions; he wanted to maintain them. At the same time, much like in parts of Inner Mongolia, he also wished southern Xinjiang to be dominated by Islamic culture without any Confucian influences. Qianlong's idea was to maintain the relative independence of Islamic

¹ Yong-gui, Gu Shiheng, and Su-er-de (永贵、固世衡、苏尔德), *Huijiang zhi*, pp.64-65. The translation of the paragraph of *Huijiang zhi* here quotes from James Millward's *Beyond the Pass*, p.195.

² Qi-shi-yi, *Xiyu Wenjian Lu*, vol.1, p.166.

culture to seal off southern Xinjiang and stabilize Qing rule. Policies implemented in Qing Xinjiang embodied these ideas. The agrarian policies applied in northern Xinjiang to encourage migration from China proper, for example, were not applied in southern Xinjiang, and the Qing government forbade people from China proper move to southern Xinjiang with family members.¹ James Millward argued that the five main cultural groups in the Qing Empire – Manchu, Han, Mongol, Uighur and Tibet – were equal in the eyes of Qianlong. Thus in southern Xinjiang Han Chinese and Han culture were not held superior to Uyghur and Islamic culture.

Emperor Qianlong managed to maintain the five cultural groups' equal status and the boundaries between Han Chinese and local Muslims in southern Xinjiang through a variety of measures, and almost only the legal system was one exception: although those cases of less serious crimes involving Uyghurs should be applied to Muslim law, those cases concerned with familial crimes involving Uyghur, such as a nephew killed his uncle, or a younger brother murdered his older brother, “naturally must be decided according to the statutes and precedents of China proper”, that was the Qing Law (大清律例) which was strongly influenced by Confucian tradition.² Given the situation on the ground, James Millward's view of Qing rule in Xinjiang is more suitable than the old model of the “Chinese world order” proposed by John King Fairbank.³ However, no matter how we conceptualize Qing rule, it should not be ignored that boundaries between different ethnic and cultural groups persisted. Although Xinjiang was conquered and the Grand Unification was formed, cultural boundaries had not completely broken down yet, and it effected the Chinese literati's imagining of Xinjiang, and did so as long as the cultural boundary existed.

Although some people, such as merchants, came to Xinjiang following the Qing army's military action, and the literati imagination was not transformed until the coming of educated officials and exiled intellectuals. It was they who were able to transcend traditional views of the Western regions. With their personal experiences in Xinjiang, they could change Chinese literati views through their writings.

Ji-yun (纪昀) was representative of the early generation of exiled officials. According to Ji-yun, Xinjiang (specifically Urumqi 乌鲁木齐 in northern Xinjiang), was not a wild place inhabited by barbarians, as most Chinese intellectuals imagined,

¹ Jia Jianfei (贾建飞), “Shilun qing zhongqi de nanjiang jinglue zhengce: yi dui neidiren de zhengce wei zhongxin” (Managing policies in southern Xinjiang during mid-Qing: focusing on Han Chinese), *Ouya xuekan*(欧亚学刊) 5, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005, pp.145-164.

² James Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, pp.122-123.

³ In John Fairbank's opinion, the position of different cultural group is different. In his model, Han locates in the core, and Mongolian and Tibetan locates in periphery. John King Fairbank, *A Preliminary Framework, The Chinese World Order: traditional China's foreign relations*, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968, pp.1-19.

but rather a place where the life style was similar to China proper after more than ten years of development: the prosperity of Urumqi had attracted increasing numbers of merchants and farmers as well as other migrants from China proper. Furthermore, the cultural atmosphere in Urumqi had changed gradually, with that of China proper transplanted to northern Xinjiang during the reconstruction. It was so similar to China proper that one almost could not feel any discernable differences at all; many did not want to return to their hometown. As Ji-yun wrote, there were several wine-shops in Urumqi that offered music and performances every day. One could get a seat in them for several strings of copper cash, just like in the Qing capital of Beijing.¹ Such descriptions reflect that the impressions of people with firsthand experience, like Ji-yun, had begun to shift, and the sense that frontier people “did not belong to our ethnic group (非我族类)” had been diluted. To some extent, these people began to identify with former “barbarian places,” people, and culture. Their descriptions shaped a new imagining of Xinjiang.

Under the influences of official and exile descriptions of Xinjiang, including those of Qi-shi-yi, the Mongol He-ning (和宁), Ji Yun, Hong Liang-ji (洪亮吉), Qi Yun-shi (祁韵士) and Xu Song (徐松), Chinese intellectuals’ sense of Xinjiang greatly changed during Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns, when personal experiences in Xinjiang trumped traditional literature. Such shifts have showed unambiguous effects on social and practical matters, which can be gauged from two phenomena: first, the rise and development of Xinjiang studies; second, the changed debate over whether Xinjiang should be abandoned. The debate had started in the Qing court as early as Kangxi’s reign, and it was echoed through almost the rest of the Qing dynasty; the debate between Li Hong-zhang (李鸿章) and Zuo Zong-tang (左宗棠) over “maritime defense (海防)” and “frontier defense (塞防)” was representative in this regard. In the end, Xinjiang was re-conquered by the Qing army after over ten years of occupation by Yakub beg and Russia during the Tongzhi reign, and it became a province, and entirely different from other Inner Asian territories like Tibet and Mongolia.

III

Although the Qing conquered Xinjiang during Qianlong’s reign, in the opinion of many Chinese intellectuals, Xinjiang’s people did not deserve Qing rule and the territory did not deserve defense (人不足臣，地不足守). Some even considered Xinjiang an “useless land” (无用之地), including Wu-long-a (武隆阿), a famous

¹ Ji-yun: Wulumuqi Zashi, in *Ji Xiaolan Wenji* (纪晓岚文集) 1, Shijiazhuang: Hebei Jiaoyu publisher, 1995, p.600.

Manchu official in Xinjiang during the Daoguang reign. He argued in a memorial that the Qing court should not spend any money on it, and advised that the western four cities (西四城) of Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan (和阗) and Yangi Hisar (英吉沙尔) be abandoned; the Qing army could withdraw to the four eastern cities (东四城) of Kucha (库车), Aksu (阿克苏), Ush (乌什) and Karashahr (喀喇沙尔).¹ Many people held the similar ideas. Given this point of view, many Chinese intellectuals seldom held Xinjiang to be worthy of study. Thus, though much was written on Xinjiang following the conquest, almost no authors were Han Chinese. It was in stark contrast with textology during the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns (乾嘉考据学), with only exiled officials, such as Ji-yun, Hong Liang-ji, Wang Da-shu (王大枢), Li Luan-xuan (李銮宣), and Wu Xiong-guang (吴熊光) working on Xinjiang.² Their writings, however, were mainly poems concerned with their life in exile. Aside from them, there were indeed several Chinese intellectuals who had not been to Xinjiang but also wrote poems, such as Chu Ting-zhang (褚廷璋) and Wang Qi-sun (王芑孙), which were based on the official *Xiyu Tuzhi* (西域图志); but all are almost useless for the study of Xinjiang. In addition to the scholars mentioned above, in some historians' works, such as Qian Da-xin's (钱大昕) and Zhao Yi's (赵翼), there were other accounts relevant to Xinjiang. It should be noted that in the last chapter of Qi Zhao-nan's (齐召南) *Shuidao tigang* (水道提纲), there were descriptions of the Western Regions history and geography. Though not very detailed, it has nonetheless been regarded as a milestone study of Xinjiang by Nailene Josephine Chou.³

During and after Jiaqing's reign, the situation changed. Under Qi Yunshi and Xu Song's influences, as well as the changing situation in Xinjiang—Jihangir's rebellion in 1820s, more Chinese intellectuals, including Shen Yao (沈垚), Zhang Mu (张穆), He Qiutao (何秋涛), Gong Zizhen (龚自珍) and Wei Yuan, formed a research group and made Xinjiang a research interest. It reflected the changing place of Xinjiang in literati imagination, and Xinjiang studies developed swiftly thereafter.⁴

These scholars no longer emphasized whether Xinjiang should be incorporated into Qing territory or whether it was necessary for the Qing court to conquer and rule Xinjiang. Instead, they discussed how to rule Xinjiang effectively, how to control

¹ Cao Zhenyong (曹振鏞) et al., comps. (*Qinding*) *pingding Huijiang jiaoqin niyi fanglue* (Imperially commissioned military history of the pacification of the Muslim frontier and apprehension of the rebels's descendants), 6, vol.55, DG7.12. guiyou, Taipei: Wenhai Chubanshe, 1972, pp.3222-3224; Weiyuan, *Sheng-wu-ji*, vol.4, p.188.

² Chou, Nailene Josephine, *Frontier Studies and Changing Frontier Administration in Late Ch'ing China: The Case of Sinkiang, 1759-1911*, Ph.D.diss., University of Washington, 1976, p.49.

³ Chou, Nailene Josephine, *Frontier Studies and Changing Frontier Administration in Late Ch'ing China: The Case of Sinkiang, 1759-1911*, p.49.

⁴ L.J.Newby, The Chinese Literary Conquest of Xinjiang, *Modern China*, Vol.25, No.4.(Oct.,1999), p.468.

the frontier stably, and how to alleviate the social crisis there through effective management. Shen Yao, Gong Zizhen and Wei Yuan were notable representatives of this emergent school. They advocated the Qing court to encourage people from China proper to move to and settle in Xinjiang in order to develop its social economy and reinforce Qing rule in this far western region. Gong Zizhen further proposed that administration should be reformed and Xinjiang made a province like any other. In Gong Zizhen and other's point of view, Xinjiang had already become an integral part of Qing territory, which demonstrates how the position of Xinjiang in their eyes had greatly been improved. At the second half of 19th century, when Zuo Zongtang strongly insisted on reconquering Xinjiang and making it a province, he was deeply influenced by Gong Zizhen and his contemporaries.

IV

The changing Chinese intellectuals' imagining of Xinjiang had a far-reaching impact on the era. The debate over whether Xinjiang should be conquered or not and then should be abandoned or not, which had arisen in Kangxi's reign, had raged on even through the 1860s to 1870s. Those decades witnessed the Tonggan (东干) Hui rebellion in Shannxi and Gansu, which spread to Xinjiang, Yakub beg's invasion of Xinjiang from Central Asia, which led Xinjiang's almost total occupation, and the Russian occupation of Ili. The debate revived, peaking at the end of Tongzhi and early Guangxu reign periods. The debate between Li Hong-zhang's "maritime defense" and Zuo Zong-tang's "frontier defense" was typical in this regard.

Li Hong-zhang argued that the challenge the Qing faced was unprecedented in China's history. He emphasized threats along the southeastern coast was threatened most serious, and thus focused on coastal defense rather than the Northwest, which had been primary for ancient China for thousands of years.¹ In his opinion, Xinjiang was already occupied by Yakub beg and Russia, and Britain had strong interests in Xinjiang as well, and the Qing was not powerful enough to solve the problems there. Li Hong-zhang reiterated that Xinjiang was a financial burden on the court, and he endorsed the view of Zeng Guofan (曾国藩), who said Xinjiang should be abandoned temporarily to local chiefs. Li Hongzhang's idea drew strong supports from men such as Guo Songtao (郭嵩焘), who had served as an ambassador to the European countries.² This group argued that Xinjiang was too far away from China proper, too

¹ Li Hongzhang, *Li wenzhong gong quanji: zougao* (李文忠公(鸿章)全集·奏稿), ed. By Wu Rulun (吴汝纶), vol.21-40, Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1984, p.828.

² Wang Yanwei (王彦威), *Qingji waijiao shiliao* (清季外交史料), vol.11, GX.3.8.13, Taipei: Wenhai

expensive to re-conquer, and the Qing's opponents there were already too strong.¹ Their ideas reflected not only a deficit of information about Xinjiang, but also the strong influence of traditional views about the Western Regions.

Zuo Zong-tang stood against Li Hong-zhang and his thought. He attached great importance to Xinjiang for the Qing, arguing that Xinjiang was extremely important not only to Mongolia, but to the security of the Qing capital itself. He advocated strongly in favor of the recovery of Xinjiang and drew support from Wang Wenshao (王文韶), the governor of Hunan province.

The debate over “maritime defense” and “frontier defense” reflected conflicts between two different understandings to Xinjiang. However, in general, the traditional negative imagination of Xinjiang no longer exerted a great influence on the Qing court's decision-making. Qianlong wrote that only Fu Heng supported his military policy in Xinjiang; during the Tongzhi and Guangxu's reigns, the descendants of Emperor Qianlong found support from numerous important Han Chinese officials, such as Zuo Zongtang and Wang Wenshao. In this sense, the re-conquest of Xinjiang and the establishment of Xinjiang province marked a victory for those who regarded Xinjiang as integral to Qing territory.

On the other hand, although Li Hong-zhang's “maritime defense” arguments failed, the debate also reflected how the position of Xinjiang in many people's eyes was still worse. Indeed, for many supporters of integration, their changing views of Xinjiang were restricted to its northern half. To them, southern Xinjiang remained quite different in culture and customs from China proper, and cultural discrimination did not disappear. The Qing's ethnic segregation policies in Xinjiang only strengthened these predispositions. From the contemptuous terms “dog *Hui*” and *chantou*, to the massacres of Uyghur Muslim and people from China proper during the attack of Khojo's descendents on Kashgar and Yarkand, hostile feelings remained. Even in the late Qing dynasty, when Zuo Zong-tang debated how best to govern southern Xinjiang, one of his deciding guidelines was that Islam should be displaced by Han culture, otherwise southern Xinjiang would not be peaceful. Both Zuo Zongtang and Liu Jin-tang (刘锦棠), the first governor of Xinjiang province, argued that Uighur children should be educated in Confucian texts instead of Islamic ones.²

chubanshe, 1985, pp.201-203, and GX3.9.29, pp.216-217; Archives of Oriental and Indian office in British Library, L/P&S/18/C19, Enclosure No.1, *Memorandum: Conversation between Sir Thomas Wade and the Chinese Minister Kuo*, 23rd June 1877; Enclosure No.1, Letter of T.D. Forsyth to Thomas Wade, 23rd June 1877; Letter of Sir T. Wade to Lord Derby, London, 25th June 1877.

¹ Shi Bu-hua, *Chongding Xinjiang jigongshi*, in Wu Ai-chen, comp. *Lidai Xiyu shichao* (Western Regions poems through history), Urumqi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 2001, p.162.

² Yuan Da-hua, Wang Shu-nan, Wang Xue-zeng (袁大化、王树柵、王学曾) et al., comp. *Xinjiang Tuzhi* (新疆图

In their opinion, Islamic culture seemed to have caused the instability in Southern Xinjiang. Some of their contemporaries, such as Shi Bu-hua (施补华) and Tao Bao-lian (陶保廉), had similar views.¹ These biased education policies proposed by Zuo Zongtang and Liu Jintang, which forced Uyghur children to study Confucian texts, were too simple to resolve cultural differences; they ultimately failed.² Yet what should be noted in their ideas is that they recognized cultural barriers between Han Chinese and Uyghur to be an important cause of instability of southern Xinjiang.

V

James Millward wrote that the exile Qi Yunshi must have felt bemused ambivalence at the moment he passed through the Jiayu Guan, as he recalled Li Bai's famous verse, the "Borderland Moon (关山月)":

The bright moon rising over the Tianshan glides into a boundless sea of cloud.
A ceaseless wind over myriad miles whistles through Yumen Guan. Men of Han
descend the Baideng Road; Tartars scout the bay of Kokonor. From this ancient
battlefield, no one has ever returned!

(明月出天山，苍茫云海间。长风几万里，吹度玉门关。
汉下白登道，胡窥青海湾。由来征战地，不见有人还。)

And with such images fueling Qi Yunshi's imagination, Millward argued that it is not surprising that he found the real Jiayu Guan nothing like he expected.³ The same was true of Xinjiang.

In fact, to those people who had been to Xinjiang, whether Chinese intellectuals, soldiers, or ordinary people, no matter what their motivation, when they passed through Jiayu Guan and entered Xinjiang, they would feel that the Xinjiang they experienced did not match the one of their imagination, the Western Regions of traditional Chinese records like the *Shiji*, *Hanshu*, classic poems, or hearsay. No wonder Shi Shan-chang (史善长), exiled to Xinjiang during Daoguang's reign, noted

志), vol.38, school 1, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe,1992, p.355.

¹ Zuo Zong-tang, *Zuo Wenxiang gong quanji: Zougao* (左文襄公全集·奏稿), vol.53, 1888, pp.2135-2136; vol.56, p.2255, 2261; Shi Bu-hua, *Chongding Xinjiang jigongshi*, in Wu Ai-chen, comp. *Lidai Xiyu shichao*, p.164; Tao Bao-lian, *Xinmao shixing ji* (辛卯侍行记), vol.4, 1897, pp.26-27.

² Jia Jianfei, Ma-ji-ye yu Xinhai geming qianhou yingguo zai Xinjiang shili de fazhan (George Macartney and the development of British influences in Xinjiang around the 1911 revolution), in *China's Borderland History and Geography Studies*, No.1, 2002, pp.64-76.

³ James Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, pp.1-4.

that the customs and landscapes in many places of Xinjiang were just like China proper (酒肆错茶园，不异中华里);¹ expected differences were slight or nonexistent. However to those intellectuals who lacked personal experience with Xinjiang and whose imagination and knowledge of Xinjiang remained limited to ancient records or hearsay, it was hard to cross the gap between expectation and reality.

In this way, it is not difficult to understand why there were so many far-reaching debates about Xinjiang. Neither the Qing conquest of Xinjiang, which led to the achievement of the Grand Unification in territory during Qianlong's reign, nor the establishment of Xinjiang province, which led to the administrative integration of Xinjiang and China proper, completely changed Chinese intellectuals' views of Xinjiang. In extreme cases, such as Tan Si-tong(谭嗣同), executed as a leader in the Hundred Days' Reforms, suggested that the Qing's Inner Asian borderlands, including Xinjiang, should be sold: if it sold Xinjiang to Russia and Tibet to Britain, the Qing court could use the money to pay indemnities to western powers and develop Qing power. If the money was not enough, then Manchuria and Mongolia could also be sold.²

His proposal shows how Xinjiang was still of little importance in the eyes of many Chinese. Until the early 20th century, such ideas about Xinjiang lingered. As Wu Aichen argued, "the reason Xinjiang remained a wild and barren frontier was principally because the ancient Chinese dynasties failed to regard Xinjiang as important as China proper....The land of Xinjiang is so large, and there are so many ethnic groups there. The loss of territory in past days is due to the government's and people's neglect of Xinjiang."³ Fan Chang-jiang (范长江), the well-known journalist during the Republic of China, saw many poems written by countless travelers in the fort of Jiayu Guan in the 1930s. Fan Chang-jiang surveyed these writings and found nine out of ten were on the classic themes: homesickness and the bitter frontier. He quotes one such bit of doggerel in his writings: "the tears couldn't be stopped when outside Jiayu Guan; it is Gobi to the front and the gate of the hell behind (一出嘉峪关，两眼泪不干，往前看，戈壁滩，往后看，鬼门关)" Fan Changjiang commented: "It's as if the Jiayu Guan were the passage between life and death!"⁴ In fact, such a feeling of "bitter frontier and homesickness" reflected how in many people's eyes, Jiayu Guan was still a special symbol marking the boundary between China proper and Western regions, and those lands beyond Jiayu Guan were not yet part of China.

¹ Shi Shan-chang, "Dao wulumuqi", In Wu Ai-chen, comp. *Lidai Xiyu shichao*, p.212.

² Tan Si-tong, *Tan Si-tong Quanji* (谭嗣同全集) 1, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981, pp.161-162.

³ Wu Ai-chen, *Xinjiang Jiyou*, Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1935, p.250.

⁴ Fan Changjiang, *Zhongguo de Xibei jiao* (China's northwest corner), Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 1980, pp.142-143; James A. Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, p.252.

Beyond Jiayu Guan, one entered an exotic place quite different from China proper; there were inevitable fears. In 1941, Song Jinlin (宋进林), from Zhangye, Gansu, and fled to Jiayu Guan to avoid the war, and he also noticed these poems there. According to his tally, there were a total of 436 such poems. As he quoted one: “Today, I am leaving my hometown, leaving my parents, my virtuous wife as well as my son for beyond the pass, I don’t know when I will return (别了父母别家乡，别了贤妻和儿郎。今日要到口外去，不知何时能回还)”¹; and another: “During the journey to Xinjiang, there are eight poor posts, eight rich posts and eight average posts. You would die in the desert if you haven’t meet someone in your journey (穷八站来富八站，不穷不富又八站。如果中途不遇伴，沙漠滩上丧黄泉)”¹.

Such ideas not only reflected the enduring influence on people’s imagining of Xinjiang and the continual influence of a traditional “Han-centered idea” or “China proper-centered idea”. It was a kind of exclusion of other peoples and different cultures. In ancient China, given few channels of communication, the information from traditional texts undoubtedly had strong influences on people’s view of ethnic frontier areas, and such understanding inevitably led to a great gap between imagination and reality. To eliminate the gap, the “Han-centered idea” or “China proper-centered idea” must be first eliminated, and then different cultures and peoples can have the space to coexist equally and harmoniously to minimize potential conflicts between them. In that case, people’s rooted ideas could be changed completely.

¹ Song Wen-xuan, *Sishi niandai Jiayuguan yinxiang (Impression to Jiayu Guan in 1940s)*, ed. By Song Jin-lin, in *Silk Road*, No.3, 2005, pp.57-58.