

Protecting the “Children”: Early Qing’s Ethnic Policy towards Miao Frontier

A Historical Study of Multiethnic China

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ABSTRACT: As alien conqueror ruling China in its last imperial period, Manchu regime has succeeded in creating many a new policy in dealing with its ethnic problems both inside and outside. Confronted with the multi-ethnic Southwest borders, Manchu regime in its early time managed to design complex administrative and military apparatus by which to absorb and sinicize the ethnic minorities of the area. Consisted of three interlinked parts, the policy in the name of “protection of the subjects” played a vital role in the long-range stabilization and governance of the Miao frontier. It will be argued that the process of acculturation, or sinicization of the Miao tribes from “raw” to “cooked” can viewed as the component of early Qing’s ethnic policy, and thus helped to account for the success of the minority Manchu’s long-time rulership.

Key Words: Manchu ethnic policy Miao frontier sinicisation

Introduction

Comparing with other East Asian states, such Japan and Korea, China is differentiates itself by its multiethnic relations with diverse groups. More and more scholarly attention since the 19th century has been paid to the characteristic of China. To better understand the huge multiethnic community as a whole, some historians choose Manchu Qing, the last dynasty of the imperial period, as an effective example to view China’s ethnic connections both historically and comparatively.

In reenvisioning Qing under the west scrutiny, Luara Hostetler pointed out in her pioneering

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work that Qing dynasty in its early period is committed to the land expansion in the same way that the west imperialist countries colonizing their overseas territory¹. During the reigns of the first three generations of emperor, the territorial expansion is fused with ethnic problems on the border as well as the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Not unlike the preceding imperial despots, the Manchu monarch assumed patriarchal father's position in relation with the people, as if they were underage children. Of the subject in the Manchu empire, the ethnic minority groups, albeit denigrated as barbarians, were by all means more vulnerable and needful than the dominant Han. In comparison with the inferiority of the minority groups, Manchu demonstrated its racial superiority, produced a self-made image as the saviour of China, and justified the civilizing project to the peripheral people. Coupled with the military conquer of the border regions, the rhetoric of protection these subjects was reiterated in early Qing's official discourse.

It is clearly evident in the case of Guizhou province, the place where the Miao inhabited as the primary minority group, and thus was defined as Miao frontier². The sophisticated racial and cultural problems facing early Qing dynasty has made the Miao frontier "barbarians" a good subject for anthropologists and historians interested in the way that the alien Manchu dynasty treated them. In the official discourse, the traditional dismissive and contemptuous description of the frontier indigenes labeled them as savages and as victims to be rescued by the central government. This naturally leads one to wonder, how did the Manchu regime, as an alien conqueror, declared itself as the upholder of Chinese value and managed to protect those less civilized border children by means of sinicization³?

To answer this question, the essay centers on the continuity and change of early Qing's ethnic policy towards the newly opened southwest borders especially the Miao frontier in Guizhou and Northeast Yunnan. The policy consisted of three inter-linked themes: firstly, removing the intermediary native chieftains and replacing them with standard imperial officials (*gaitu guiliu* 改土歸流) in order to save the frontier minorities from *tusi*'s exploitation; secondly, imposing the quarantine policy which banned the interaction between the Han frontiersmen and the non-Han minorities to prevent the latter from being polluted by the certain detrimental elements of Han culture; and thirdly, using the Confucian educational programme to uplift the uncivilized barbarians out of ignorance, and culturally absorb them into the universal empire.

In seeking to improve our understanding of the policy implementation, the essay will shed light on early Qing's construction of a consolidated and multi-ethnic empire when the alien Manchu ruled the country. It will be argued that early Qing's ethnic policy toward Miao frontier dressed itself in the lofty statement of protecting the subjects as children (*chizi* 赤子). The metaphor of protection, illustrated by Yongzheng emperor's *Awakening from Delusion* (*dayi juemi lu* 大義覺迷

¹ Luara Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China*, The University of Chicago Press, 2001.

² Roughly speaking, Miao frontier refers to the Southwest provinces of China where multi-ethnic groups inhabit. But to define it in a more accurate way, southeast and northeast of Guizhou, as well as west parts of Hunan are all within Miao frontiers. Comparing to the geographical frontiers of northwest and southeast China, Miao frontier is primarily referred to as a "cultural frontier", corresponding to the "interiorizing project" of the dynasty. In spite of various descriptions however, scholars have yet to get a final conclusion of the exact definition of the Miao frontier.

³ This is tied up with the questions of Chineseness, nationalism, and ethnic pride. For a recent comprehensive restatement of this problem, see Ho Ping-ti "In Defense of Sinicization: A Rebuttal of Evelyn Rawski's 'Reenvisioning the Qing'", in *Journal of Asian Studies*, 57:1 (February 1998), pp. 123-55.

錄) has supplanted the traditional theme of Hua-Yi-Distinction (*huayi zhidian* 華夷之辨), eschewing the embarrassment of being barbarians (*yi* 夷) ethnically and being outsiders culturally, at the same time, justifying Manchu's emperor-centered rulership. With the border policy of this kind, Qing gradually achieved the goal of intensifying the state direct control over the southwest border in the reign of Kangxi (r.1662-1722) and Yongzheng emperors.⁴ By partly inheriting the late Ming heritage, the southwest frontier policies succeeded in setting the foundation for the Qing political map, exerting great influence upon the empire-building enterprise, and finally have the Miao frontier interiorized into "China" both politically and culturally.

Unfortunate subjects: the abolition of native chieftains

Developed on the base of the centuries-old loose rein (*jimi* 羁縻) tradition, the native chieftain system (*tusi zhidu* 土司制度) has been seen as a reliable and cost-effective way to govern the multi-ethnic southwest frontier since the early Ming dynasty.⁵ It served to extend the central authority to the territory out of court's direct reach in the same way the jasaks and begs functioned in Inner Asia. This extra-bureaucratic institution under the leadership of local headmen was an important component of the state in the political incorporation of southwest peripheral during Shunzhi (r.1644-1661) and Kangxi reigns, when Yunnan and Guizhou reduced to the haven of Ming loyalists and rebels. Still in its infancy at this stage, the Manchu army could not have wiped out the South Ming court and defeated Wu Sangui's rebellion (1673-1681) without the assistance of the native chieftains.⁶ In the reconstruction in Yunnan and Guizhou after eight-year civil war, Beijing largely relied on these sub-prefectures officials to restore the local order. In spite of some sporadic endeavors to weaken *tusi* power at this juncture, Kangxi emperor chose to continue using the native chieftains to rule the indigenous population, owing to the lack of strength to establish the direct control over intermediaries of the southwest.

The state-native chieftain relationship underwent a dramatic change in the hand of energetic Yongzheng emperor (r.1723-1735), who imposed a ruthless policy to break up the tradition of joint administration and start to rule his frontier children directly. Known as *gaitu guiliu*, the strict regulation had been applied to abolish the *Tusi* system and to replace it with appointed rotating officials, aiming at bypassing the semiautonomous *tusi* institution and eventually extending direct state control to the peripheral. This policy did not generate in a vacuum. The advent of High Qing⁷ made possible the stretch of civil administration to the frontier areas. Apart from that, the need to exploit the rich copper deposits in southwest also stimulated the imperial interest towards Yunnan and Guizhou.⁸ Government monopolies to the lucrative

⁴ A widely accepted assumption holds that after southwest provinces of Yunnan and Guizhou had been permanently added into China by Yuan dynasty, they were at once amalgamated and digested racially and culturally. However, this assumption is highly debatable. The whole process of incorporating frontier colonial zone was far from being complete even after the military conquest and the ensuing acculturation. See J.E. Spencer "Kueichou: an Internal Chinese Colony", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol.13(1940), pp.162-172

⁵ Wu, Yongzhang, *Zhongguo Tusi Zhidu de Yuanyuan yu Fazhan Shi*, (The Origins and Historical Development of China's Native Chieftain System), (Chengdu, 1988), p.88

⁶ Lawrence D. Kessler, *K'ang-Hsi and the Consolidation of Ch'ing Rule, 1661-1684*, (Chicago, 1976), pp.74-86

⁷ The word "High Qing" is created by Ho Ping-ti, who in his many works demonstrated Qing as a dynasty with unique significance in Chinese history as a whole. Ho views the eighteen century as the climax of Qing dynasty, the "pax sinica", which originated from the defeat of Ming dynasty in 1683, and ended in the 1790's anti-Manchu rebels as well as political corruption. (Ho Ping-ti, *Studies of Population of China*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1959; "The Significance of Ch'ing Period in Chinese History", in *Journal of Asian Studies* 26.2: 189-195.)

⁸ Susan Naquin and Evelyn S. Rawski *Chinese Society in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, 1987).pp.199-200

industries of mining in Miao frontier were reinstated during the length of the Qing. Surprisingly however, although the two reasons for the abolition of tusi system were potent and justifiable enough, the central government of Beijing eschewed mentioning them too much. Instead, the emperor accentuated the miserable circumstances of the local population under the rule of headmen, and presented himself as the saviour, since for a monarch, Han or non-Han, the welfare of subjects is the emperor's first care; the guard of them from all harm, both moral and physical, is his duty. This was perfectly demonstrated in Yongzheng's edict:

"The barbarians living under the native chieftain rule are continually subjected to unspeakable cruelties. Thus I have ordered my provincial officials to recommend plans that will abolish the native chieftainships and bring the barbarian population under Beijing's administrative control. I take this action only because the unfortunate people living in these frontier areas are my innocent children. I hope to free them of such hardship and make their lives safe and happy. Under no circumstances am I expanding the size of my empire simply because of some misguided notion that there are people and land in these areas that I can use".⁹

This depiction was accurate in mirroring the catastrophe stemmed from the upgrading violence amongst the native chieftains in these newly pacified areas. After Three Feudatory Wars (1671-1683), the configuration of the southwest tribal society was largely reshaped due to some significant reforms imposed by the Manchu authority. As a reward for tusi's loyal support of Manchu army in the preceding warfare, educational opportunity of attending Confucian public schools were given to the male members of the native chieftain families. The granted educational prerogative forged the educated tusi members as the cultural monopolists, creating a new class of elite of frontier society. A concurrent project was the systematic revision of the inheritance system. The whole process of selection of native chieftains was no longer a matter within the local community, but became more and more closely related to the decision of Beijing. The power of the tribal leaders was deliberately divided in the new inheriting regulation which granted the hereditary ranks and titles not only to the legal son of tusi, but also to the sons of tusi's concubines. While effectively reduced the possibility of tribal revolts, this fragmentation of power also gave rise to the inter-and-intra-chieftain struggles.¹⁰

More often than not, native chieftains were portrayed as the culprit of the frontier disorders in Yongzheng period. The instability and the unfortunate circumstances of the non-Han subjects proved the justification and imperative of eliminating the tusi system which failed to bring the area its due benefits of peace and prosperity. The headmen ruled the local population in an oppressive way which was in sharp contrast with Confucian ideal of governance. Lest being despised as the barbarian conquerors, early Manchu emperors were desperate to demonstrate their benignity and refinement of rulership to their subjects.¹¹ The key of the Confucian lenient rulership was to love the subject as children. Therefore, how could the Manchu emperor, as the father of the country, sit by and let the tragedy happen?

⁹ Emperor Yongzheng, The Veritable Records of the Yongzheng Reign (*Da Qing Shizong Xianhuangdi Shilu*), 64/20b-21a. Quotation taken from John E. Herman, "Empire in the Southwest: Early Qing Reforms to the Native Chieftain System", *The Journal of Asia Studies*, Vol.56, No1, (Feb., 1997), p.47

¹⁰ For more on inter-chieftainship violence, see Herman's "The Cant of Conquest: Tusi Offices and China's Political Incorporation of the Southwest Frontier", In *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China*, Crossley, Siu, Sutton (ed.), pp.135-168

¹¹ Tien Ju-k'ang, *Male Anxiety and Female Chastity: A Comparative Study of Chinese Ethical Values in Ming-Ch'ing Times*, (Leiden, 1988), p.126

After a long period of heated debate regarding the abolishing-or-retaining of chieftainship, consensus was achieved in favor of extermination in Yongzheng reign. Ortai (1680-1745) was appointed as the official guardian of the frontier and shouldered the responsibility of saving the ethnic minorities in the southwest of empire from the calamities.¹² Cooperated with Yue Zhongqi (1686-1754), he succeeded in converting the native rule into the regular administration, and later, in suppressing a series of tribal uprisings in Yunnan and Guizhou. Taking account of the circumstances of situation, Ortai devised different treatments towards native chieftains in different provinces. In Guizhou, the walled towns were built in the newly established sub-prefectures of southeast in order to house seven new garrisons by 1731.¹³ Central administration had almost completely weakened the power of the native chieftains, and incorporated this province into Chinese land politically. It is precisely in the early Qing period when the Miao frontier laid the geographical foundation for the present Guizhou province. In comparison with Guizhou where the *tusi* were completely abolished, the native chieftain system in Yunnan and Sichuan showed a different picture. Although the strict abolition was also enforced in these zones, some of the *tusi* were retained to be the buffers of China-Burma and China-Annam borders.¹⁴ In later period, they even served to guard the frontier against Britain and France.

However brutal, bloody, and short-lived, it is fair to say that Ortai's aggressive policy cleared the ground for Beijing to put the indigenous tribes under the direct governing as a part of the provincial administrative system, and thus played an important role in the empire-building work.

Nevertheless, extermination of the *tusi*, together with the direct control of the central government by no means marked the complete integration of the frontier. It took a long period of time after the military conquest to turn the newly opened up colonial zones into inner territory. In this process, two contributing factors resulted in the political as well as cultural incorporation: the influx of Han immigration and the peaceful means of acculturation through Confucian Education.

Innocent subjects: quarantine policy

After the defeat of the Ming dynasty in 1644, Chinese economy grew steadily throughout the reigns from Shunzhi to Qianlong, and down to the 18th century, of what Ho Ping-ti dubbed “*pax sinica*”.¹⁵ Amongst the massive transformations that spurred by the vigorous economic recovery, the population explosion and the interregional migration are key influential factors when it comes to the making of Miao frontier in early Qing. Under the demographic pressure, unprecedented numbers of Han immigrants flooded into the new territory from adjacent Sichuan and Hunan provinces at the turn of seventeenth and eighteenth century. Green light was given to the Han immigration by the government, because years of mass scale warfare left large tracts of depopulated land in Yunnan and Guizhou. Ortai enticed the pioneers to the two provinces with travel funds, grants of seed and land, and tax breaks.¹⁶ In 1736, Zhang Guangsi (?-1749),

¹² Arthur W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, (Taipei, 1975), p.601

¹³ Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China*, (Chicago, 2001) p.124

¹⁴ Ibid, p.231

¹⁵ Ho Ping-ti, *Studies of Population of China*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1959

¹⁶ C. Pat Giersch, “A Motley Throng: Social Change on Southwest China's Early Modern Frontier, 1700-1880”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.60, No.1, (Feb.,2001) p.74

the governor-general of Guizhou, advocated in his memorial the promotion of Han-immigration and the resettlement of these abandoned land for the purpose of not only recovering the frontier economy from devastation, but also transforming the uncivilized Miao. The military agricultural colonization was taken as a useful apparatus to develop economy in southwest border after the conquest of land and to complement the direct state control. The agricultural settlements were established around garrisons; military farmers were assigned with land as well as duty to guard.

However, while guaranteed the stability of the remote area, the military farm exacerbated the already tense relationship between new settlers and their aborigine neighbours. The garrison soldiers and civilians treated the aborigines in a cruel way, and the exploitation of the Miao had almost become the daily occurrence in this area. The accumulated grievance and complaint of the minorities stirred up the local unrest. Consequently, the rebellion targeting at Han settlers is just a matter of time.

Paralleling the immigration approved by imperial authorities for the purpose of developing border economy, illegal settlement arrived in unprecedented numbers. It was a long existing phenomenon in the Southwest. More or less as the scapegoat of the disorder of the frontier, the Han immigrants together with the immigration policy were opposed by many officials who saw them as the source of various frontier ills. The constitution of the frontier Han Chinese, predominately grass-root, helps to explain the official resentment to their gradual penetration. One type of newcomers comprised of merchants, adventurers, and religious adepts. Unlike the permanent settlers, these groups of people mainly involved in the illegal and lucrative enterprise such as trafficking in opium and salt. They are socially destabilizing, containing certain potential disturbance to the status quo, and the mobile nature of them posed great threat to the already unstable frontier area. Another type was lawbreakers and criminals who took refuge in Han-Chinese hamlets of Miao and Yao areas. Some of them served the native chiefs for living, helping the tribal leaders to collect taxes, and acting as runners or messengers.¹⁷ By swindling the property from the tribal people, instigating the lawsuits to ruin the innocent tribesmen, their empowerment in local community posed threat to both local *yamen* authority and to minorities. From official point of view, this part of frontier Han Chinese was treacherous people (*hanjian* 漢奸), and was categorized as cultural criminal and political traitor. It was precisely these bad Han who should be responsible for the moral decay of the frontier inhabitants, for they were incited to commit evil deeds such as stealing, robbery and murder, which unavoidably resulted in the sub-ethnic violence.¹⁸

Yet in spite of the promotion of Han immigration to the southwest provinces for economic purposes, Manchu kept skeptical about the subversive Han frontiersmen. Faced with the upgrading local turmoil, the court's priority was pinned down as safeguarding the innocent and vulnerable Miao from the engulfment of the detrimental influence brought about by Han. Only by this way, could the deteriorating relations between the Han-Chinese and the tribesmen be soothed and anti-government rebellion be quelled. In this respect, the quarantinism was deemed as a favorite solution. First formal step was taken in 1708 and got regulated in detail in the following decades. Neither Han Chinese nor Miao were permitted to cross the line of the

¹⁷ Herold J. Wien, *China's March towards the Tropics*, (Yale, 1954) p. 252

¹⁸ Xu Jiagan, *Miaojiang Jianwen Lu* (Travel Records of Miao Frontier) 1878. (Reprinted by Guizhou, 1997), p.217.

military posts without permits.¹⁹ Interethnic trade was not banned, since the two-way commercial interaction was essential to the frontier community, but strict regulation was imposed on trade, stipulating goods and the names of the owners should be reported at the military posts.²⁰ Paralleled with that, the mutual surveillance system (*baojia*保甲) were used as an effective approach to prevent Han-Chinese from infiltrating indigenous people and teaching them bad way.

The throne's attitude towards quarantine policy in southwest China saw a fluctuation during the early Qing period. Kangxi's strict enforcement of ethnic segregation was followed by an apparent relaxation in the hand of expand-minded Yongzheng. Several decades later, a series of Miao uprisings in the late Qianlong reign prompted the tighter enforcement of quarantism. Despite of the fluctuation, however, the separation policy remained to be a persistent theme throughout the Qing dynasty.

What, one may wonder, resulted in the implementation of quarantine policy if the Manchu regime's real intention is to sinicize the border minority? On the surface, the frictions between intruders and the indigenes caused by the influx of outsiders, as it showed in the preceding sections, naturally produced the recourse of extreme segregation for security sake. Besides, the ethnic insecurity of Manchu may also help account for the policy. In Manchu eyes, the close relationships between Han-Chinese and tribal people in the remote land beyond official power provided the possibility for the collusion against Manchu rule in China. However, these are inadequate as satisfactory explanation. A much deeper motivation of Qing's adoption of this policy rests on the worst fear of Han and non-Han ethnic mixture, which would result in a blurring boundary, a dangerous sign throughout Chinese history that repeatedly ruined the thousand-year-long ruling model, with the emperor being the center, and "tribes" (*siyi* 四夷, *jiuyi* 九夷) surrounded. Therefore, regardless of their ethnic status, both Han and Manchu officials believed that the mingling of the civilized and the uncivilized would inevitably polluted the guileless and straight-forward nature of the less civilized people. To make matters worse, it leads to the "turning native" of the Han Chinese, upon which Confucius frowned. The actual state of affairs precisely supported the concern of this kind. Far more frontier Han-Chinese had acculturated to tribal life through intermarriage than the tribesmen to Han civilization.²¹ This explains why Manchu on the one hand urged ethnic quarantine policy for defending cultural boundaries in the guise of "protection" among frontier inhabitants, and on the other, sought to secure the Confucian civilizing programme of non-Han as the response of the embarrassing reversion of savagery.

Educable subjects: the civilizing project

Revered as national orthodoxy, the Neo-Confucianism of Song dynasty has taken the place of prevailing School of Mind (Yangming School) in Ming dynasty, and saw a recovery of vitality during the early Qing dynasty. Manchu insecurity, both culturally and racially in face of the late Ming heritage, may help to explain the official enforcement of Confucian norms from up to

¹⁹ Donald S. Sutton, "Ethnicity and the Miao Frontier in the Eighteenth Century", *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China*, Pamela K. Crossley, Helen F. Siu and Donald S. Sutton (ed.) (California, 2006), p.198

²⁰ Ibid, p.200

²¹ William T. Rowe, "Education and Empire in Southwest China: Ch'en Hong-mou in Yunnan, 1733-38", p.13, in *Education and Society in Late Imperial China*, Vol.1

bottom. Throughout the Qing dynasty, the Manchu ruling elite, often termed as “barbarian outsiders” by Confucian standard, insisted in using the traditional ethical code to publicly demonstrate to their Han and non-Han subjects their inheritance of orthodoxy. In sponsoring a series massive scholarly projects culminating in the great Four Treasures Collections, the early Qing ruling elite enforced a rigid orthodoxy of Cheng-Zhu school, paving the way for the scholarly renaissance of the High Qing in eighteenth century.

To place the ethnic policy of the Miao frontier under this historical context, it is clear that the sinicisation enterprise, as Steven Harrell termed “Confucian civilizing project”, was taken as a relatively ideal way to save the barbarians from the dire situation of ignorance, and therefore it was proven to be a consisting part of the state cultural map as a whole. The proposal of moral transformation of barbarians via education (*jiaohua*教化) was reiterated especially in Yongzheng reign. Many of the eighteen-century literati believed in the universal appeal of Confucian education, and were particularly interested in putting the programme of civilization into practice by reviving the ancient school.²² Economically speaking, the cost of previous forceful control was much too great. In comparison, ruling frontier through moral examples and education is a less expensive means of linking the localities with central state. Let alone this materialistic impetus, however, the most reliable index of good governance in almost every era is the conduct of civilizing project.²³ This task seemed much more urgent in Qing dynasty than it had before. Presiding over the multi-ethnic vast empire, Manchu felt both political and cultural imperatives to legitimate their rulership over China. Nothing could be better than presenting themselves as the protector of Confucian orthodoxy. Educational programme targeting at the less civilized minority groups realized the Confucian art of governance, and was taken as a potent weapon in defending the anti-Manchu voice. Whatever may have been their personal attitude towards Confucianism, emperors in early Qing without exception chose to sponsor the neo-Confucianism in court and to enforce the civilizing programme in frontier.

Seen in a broader context, the Confucian project seems to be more applicable to south and southwest China than to Inner Asia.²⁴ One of the explanations to this complicated phenomenon is the predominance of the Han officials in southern frontier. Hoping to remedy the deficiency of the quarantine policy, they resorted to the instrumental value of civilizing power of Confucianism, and stressed that there is possibility for the barbarians in frontiers to be civilized through education. Only in this way, they argued, were the frontiers be pacified and the inhabitants protected.

The presupposition of the education scheme is twofold. On the one hand, the assimilationists assumed that Confucian social mores enjoyed a universal applicability, and could be widely used in the enterprise of guiding and transforming the barbarians. Bizarre customs as well as the primitive social structure were to be replaced with refined public morals, and in time, the frontier

²² A. Woodside, “The Political Inevitability of School Reform in Late Imperial China”, in *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1699-1900*, Benjamin A. Elman, Alexander Woodside(ed.), Berkeley, 1994, (Vol.2) p. 35

²³ William T. Rowe, *Saving the World: Chen Hongmou and Elite Consciousness in Eighteenth-Century China*, (Stanford, 2001), p.406. Steven Harrell defined the “Confucian civilizing project” in terms that all people could be civilized by absorption of Chinese moral principles. The more civilized barbarians were “cooked” whereas the less one were “raw”. For a division between “cooked” and “raw”, see Norma Diamond, “Defining the Miao: Ming, Qing, and Contemporary Views”, in *Cultural Encounters on China’s Ethnic Frontiers*, Steven Harrell (ed.), (Hong Kong, 1994), pp.17-18 and p.101

²⁴ John E. Herman, “Empire in the Southwest: Early Qing Reforms to the Native Chieftain System”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.56, No1, (Feb.,1997) p.49

minorities would eventually become like the Han. On the other, the peripheral minorities are by nature educable; as the children of the emperor, they should be properly rectified and guided, and there is no reason to put them outside the net of cultural uniformity. Therefore, once the Confucian school was provided to the minorities, the inherent educability of aborigines may get activated, and eventually the local social practice would be elevated, as envisaged in Kangxi's Edict in 1670.

The community schools (*shexue*社學) had been set up in some tribal areas during the Ming, and the school founding enterprise is an apparent continuity of early Qing frontier policy, enforced by three generations of emperors with different emphasis. In the Qing's conquering of Chinese southwest border, the establishment of the state-sponsored Confucian education system received very strong endorsement from the court. To some extent, Manchu not only inherited this tradition but also amplified it to imperial assimilating project. In 1658, governance of the frontier through Confucian education has been put into use when Manchu troops marched southwards to Burma through Yunnan and Guizhou in search of Emperor Yongli (Zhu Youlang), the last ruler of Southern Ming (1644-1662). Shunzhi emperor's decree urged the officials of these provinces to make the educational chance accessible to the indigenous frontier elites in order to win their hearts during the second half of the seventeenth century. The native chieftains in the southwest areas managed to help Qing's suppression of the Southern Ming loyalists and the following Wu Sangui rebellion. As the reward of their loyalty, the central government gave the education opportunity to the native chieftain families. Heirs of the ruling family were sent to public school to study Han-Chinese ceremonial practices.²⁵

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, educational opportunity was no longer the prerogative of the frontier elites. In stead, it was expanded to the common minority people. In 1705, Kangxi emperor ordered the local magistrates of Guizhou province to build the officially sponsored community school in each county.²⁶ The development of rural school in southwest aims at providing the elementary education to the mass of non-Han commoners, and was a reflection of Beijing's long-term strategy of incorporating frontier populace in cultural terms.

Like his father, Yongzheng showed a special interest in the frontier education. While enforced the military conquer of the southwest, he did not neglect alternative peaceful means of acculturating the barbarians. A series of edicts in 1720s ordered the establishment of schools in not only Yunnan and Guizhou, but also in other border provinces like Sichuan, Hunan, Guangxi and Guangdong.²⁷ It is worth noting that the ethnic policy in Yongzheng reign was marked by emperor's unique cosmopolitan orientation. He held that the ethnic distinction could be transcended by a homogenizing process of civilization. In the case of southwest frontier, minority groups were expected to be brought into the mainstream of universal Qing culture through the Confucian education. With little doubt, this quest of a greater cultural and moral integration was the mainspring behind the nation wide school founding enterprise.²⁸

It is almost impossible to speak of school-building enterprise at the turn of Yongzheng and

²⁵ Herold J. Wien, *China's March towards the Tropics* (Yale, 1954), p. 226

²⁶ Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (Chicago, 2001), p.116

²⁷ William T. Rowe, "Education and Empire in Southwest China: Ch'en Hong-mou in Yunnan, 1733-38", in *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1699-1900*, Benjamin A. Elman, Alexander Woodside (ed.), Berkeley, 1994, Vol.1, p.18

²⁸ Alexander Woodside, "Some Mid-Qing Theorists of Popular Schools", *Modern China* Vol. 9, No. 1 (Jan., 1983), p.22

Qianlong reigns without mentioning Chen Hongmou, a Han official who was the governor-general of Yun-Gui from 1733-1738. It was Chen Hongmou who pushed the educational programme in Yunnan to its zenith. By the time he left in 1738, near seven hundred schools had been founded or revitalized.²⁹ Deeply influenced by the neo-Confucianism ideology, he believed in the universal moral sense and rationality of every human being regardless of social status and ethnic background. All men are basically good, and the innate goodness could be elevated through the instruction operated by state. This vision of human nature applied to tribesmen as well. Just as children were more needful than were adults, he argued, so too were indigenous people more needful than Han-Chinese.³⁰ Upon his arrival, he stressed the locality of the public schools should not be exclusively in major urban areas and Han-dominated counties, but rather, they are to be founded in remote district where minority groups inhabited in order to better extend the imperial educational programme to them. In breaking the cultural elitism prevailing among the intellectual officials, Chen Hongmou sought to demonstrate the universal civilizability of ethnic populace. His school education was offered for all local male children, not only the frontier elites. Under the leadership of Chen Hongmou, the public school system in Yunnan met with much success, and became a national model especially in the tribal areas in Yongzheng reign.³¹

Therefore, the civilizing project of the frontier minorities on the one hand is a consisting part of the national systematic sinicisation, wining the allegiance of the Confucian elite. On the other, education in this area managed to shape the identity, both local and national, of the common people while remaking the Miao frontier. Southwest inhabitants were not merely passive receptacles of state control, but rather, they developed the identification with orthodoxy norms of behaviors and patterns of thought in reaction to the encounter of the civilizers and the civilized. In this sense, the local ethnic groups played a bigger role than scholars have tended to assume when it comes to turning the “raw” barbarians into the “cooked”, and the newly-opened land into the interiorized territory.

Conclusion

Early Qing's ethnic policies aiming at interiorizing the southwest border had roots in earlier

²⁹ Fairly speaking, although Chen Hongmou spent most of his official life in Qianlong reign, he actually stood out of Qianlong emperor's racist attitude. The pragmatic civilizing campaigns under the supervision of Chen Hongmou in 1730s concentrated on how to achieve cultural and political integration, and obviously was a product of Yongzheng-era cultural homogenization.

³⁰ William T. Rowe, *Saving the World: Chen Hongmou and Elite Consciousness in Eighteenth-Century China*, (Stanford, 2001) p.424

³¹ Things had changed from 1736 after the new emperor ascended the throne. Qianlong emperor (r. 1735-1795) abandoned Yongzheng's strategy of assimilation, and reiterated “ethnic modes of rulership”. The preservation of cultural diversity relied on a clear ethnic distinction of different races existed in the universal empire. Confucian uniformity gave way to ethno-cultural prejudices. To rule through educational means, in Qianlong's eyes, was far from being an ideal way to consolidate the empire. While originally the charitable and public schools were expected to serve to civilize the fierce and wild nature of the minorities, in the majority of cases, they just gave rise to the chance of local rebel and unrest. In 1751, Qianlong ordered the closing of the schools in non-Han areas for security consideration. According to the edict of emperor, a little literacy cannot help the Miao to comprehend the Four Books and appreciate the sophisticated Confucian morality. Rather, after they are taught to read, they can very easily be influenced by the novels and other heterodox writings. (See Hsiao, Kung-chuan, *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century*, Seattle, 1960, p.251) Seen from this perspective, education of savages did nothing but stimulated instability and threatened the imperial peace. Ostensibly, the primary reason for the closing of schools was to protect the susceptible minorities from the influence of heterodoxy, as it was claimed in Qianlong's edict; however, what ran beneath the official statement was the shift of attitude towards minority groups. During the first fifteen or so years of his reign, Qianlong emperor systematically reversed the policy that had been set by his father and imperial predecessor. However, just as his father and grandfather disguised their ambition of intensifying state control over frontier in the mask of “protection”, so did Qianlong emperor dressed his racial superiority in the same cloak.

period, but it is during Shunzhi, Kangxi and Qianlong reigns that it began to gain the momentum. In comparison with the Mongolia and Tibetan border, southwest provinces and especially Miao frontiers showed another picture. As a whole, it is horizontally open, and vertically deep, whereas the northern border is wide on the surface, but isolated by nature.³² This may in part account for the different policies the court made in treating different ethnic problems of different areas around China, and moreover, this may account for the primacy of acculturating and sinicizing the Miao frontier, the reason underlying the metaphor of protection.

Three primary ethnic policies of Miao frontier were not mutually exclusive. The elimination of native chieftainship in southwest provinces played a key role in the pacification of the last-Ming loyalist resistance movement, and made it possible for the early Qing court to seize the local power from the hands of intermediary tribal rulers, and to stretching the state control to its farthest reaches in Southwest. As soon as the administrative incorporation in this area was secured, the quarantine policy and educational programme, aiming at controlling the indigenous population (*zhi turen* 治土人), functioned as two sides of a coin. The policies were backed by the rhetoric of protection which mirrored the inherent Manchu cultural and racial superiority burgeoning in the early Qing. In seeking to colonise the Miao frontier by means of forced assimilation, the court discarded the ruling model of “laissez-faire”, and shrouded its real intention of consolidating direct state control over border in this oft-repeated slogan. It is highly debatable that to what extend the frontier minority groups were “protected”, but one thing is certain: these inter-colonial policies were parts of the laborious and skillful work of the empire building carried out by Manchu rulers. Furnishing further evidence of the acculturation, the actual implementation of the policies served to turn the Miao border into internal colony, and helped to achieve the full integration of this area into the geographic and ethnic entity of Qing dynasty.

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³² Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 207

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Glossary

baojia 保甲

chizi 赤子

Chen Hongmou 陳宏謀

dayi juemi lu 大義覺迷錄

Guizhou 貴州

hanjian 漢奸

huayi zhi bian 華夷之辨

jimi 犬羈

jiuyi 九夷

Kangxi 康熙

miao jiang 苗疆

Ortai 鄂爾泰

Qianlong 乾隆

Sichuan 四川

siyi 四夷

tusi 土司

Wu Sangui 吳三桂

yamen 銜門

yi 夷

Yongzheng 雍正

Yue Zhongqi 岳鐘琪

Yunnan 雲南

Zhang Guangsi 張廣泗

zhi turen 治土人

Zhu Youlang 朱由烺