

# **Conquest Dynasties of China or Foreign Empires? The Problem of Relations between China, Yuan and Qing**

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**Abstract:** The problem of statehood with regard to relations between China, Yuan and Qing states and dynasties is analyzed in comparative historical context. It is hard to accept the concept of one China (single or divided), during many centuries ruled by different dynasties and never incorporated in other states. Self-names of states and declarations of their succession, as such, do not create historical succession. The concept of China under different circumstances has been used for different purposes: national liberation of the Chinese people from enslaving by foreigners, justifying of internecine fights and/or centralization of the state, the right of a foreign state to conquered China, the right of creation of a world empire or subjection of other states and peoples. Liao, Jin, Yuan and Qing should be considered not as "dynasties of China established by minority nationalities", but as multi-national empires established by non-Chinese peoples: Khitans, Jurchens, Mongols and Manchus, to whom the conquered China or its part was joined. The Song and Ming empires, ROC and PRC represent the state of China in different historical times. However, the formation, structure, sociocultural concepts, ways of legitimization, governing, and national policy differ the Yuan and Qing empires from China, which was only a part of them. Declarations of the Manchus and the Chinese, that their empire is the main state in the world, Zhongguo, are analogous to

declarations of German, Ottoman, Russian and some other monarchs about their succession to the Roman Empire. The Chinese worldview underwent serious changes in the course of history. These changes can be better explained as occurring in different (Chinese and non-Chinese) states with different understanding of the Zhongguo principle, than in one state led by Chinese and conquest dynasties.

**Keywords:** China, history, ideology, empire, nationalism, Yuan, Qing.

Discussions about the history and policy of China are often limited with her uniqueness in the sense that China's historical path does not correspond to tendencies common for other states. It is considered that, though China has been several times won by foreigners, she had not become a part of any other state, because invaders were quickly assimilated by their new subjects. This opinion, partly true, seems to be rooted in traditional sinocentric concept of the history developed many centuries ago by Chinese Confucian historians. According to this concept, China is a unique state, the main state in the world, and she cannot become a part of any other state. It is broadly accepted that more than 200 years ago understanding of China and the Chinese as a multinational community has been similar with what we associate with modern national identity of China and her citizens (e.g. Zhao, 2006, p. 14)

In this paper we shall try to understand how true this concept is, using the comparative historical approach. The most important for us were, of course, Chinese sources, written at various times. However, it is necessary to consider that the traditional Chinese historiography had official character. Historical treatises have been censored, and the explanation of historical process remained Confucian. Therefore, it is necessary to use also not-Chinese sources and, in particular, Tibetan and

Mongolian, which often explain the same events and concepts in other ways. Here we tried to provide quotations of these sources in broadly known translations into European languages, when possible.

### **1. Traditional Chinese Worldview**

Understanding of the term *China* and its equivalents was not identical by different peoples and at different times. The terms for China, the Middle State (Chin. *Zhongguo* 中國) and Under Heavens (Chin. *Tianxia* 天下), for the first time were mentioned in the texts belonged to the Zhou Dynasty (1122–249 B.C.). The people of Zhou were old vassals of the Shang Dynasty (1766–1122 B.C.), whose state concept, most probably, did not allow merging of neighboring tribes with the Shang people.

The system, created by the Zhou Dynasty, was completely different. The subdued Shang people seem to have been much more numerous and cultured than their conquerors. The lands seized by the Zhou were too vast to rule them from one center. Their *wang* was stronger than any of his vassals, but no more; besides, the tendency to change the balance of forces in favor of particular principalities in due course has developed. The state of Western Zhou was rather a confederation with the Zhou ruling house, but not Zhou people as a tribe in its core.

The new state model was highly efficient: territories, controlled by vassals of the wang of Zhou, significantly exceeded the limits of the Shang State. They expanded quickly. At the Eastern Zhou, actual authority of the wang has come to naught. This did not impede to comprehension by his formal subjects of their belonging to one commonality, rather cultural than political. The term 'Middle State' at that time referred to a set of polities recognizing supreme authority of the wang of Zhou, rather religious and magic than political and,

consequently, sharing basic values of the Zhou culture. Many of these polities were non-Chinese ethnically. By the end of the Eastern Zhou, the Chinese people were descendants from very many tribes assimilated and gathered together. So one more generalized term designating the Chinese as an ethnic commonality, *huaxia* 華夏 ('civilized *xia*') has traces of this ethnic variability within the ethnos.

The authority of the Zhou (i.e. Chinese) culture was so great, that kingdoms of other ethnicities willingly accepted it and joined the struggle for place in the Zhou political hierarchy, recognizing themselves as vassals of the wang of Zhou and their states as a part of the Middle State. Those who did not join this system were considered as tribes, instead of states. However, even enemies of the wang of Zhou, who did not recognize his suzerainty, usually were under a strong influence of the Chinese culture.

As a result, philosophers and politicians assured that submission of all surrounding "barbarians" is only a matter of time and proper behavior of the ruler, who is the source of the beneficial *de* 德 power which, under this concept, softens customs of even remote peoples and step by step prepares them for recognition of leadership of the Zhou ruler.

However, this system gradually dissatisfied the majority of rulers who had accepted the concept of the Middle State. The wang of Zhou looked too weak to provide unity. Wars become more and more frequent Under Heavens. The idea of unification under the authority of one ruler has become more and more popular. As a result, in the 4th Century B.C. rulers of seven largest principalities had accepted the title of wang, and the struggle was won by the Qin Dynasty. This dynasty existed rather short. However, the next Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 A.C.) ruled enough to lay the foundations of almost all basic concepts of the unitary Chinese culture.

As a result, people with very different ethnic roots, spoken many languages, living in different natural conditions, since then on considered themselves as the Chinese, as subjects of one emperor, shared a common set of cultural concepts, and had common actual and mythological history. This phenomenon became the basis of permanent expansion of borders of the Chinese state and the area inhabited by the Chinese ethnos, known as the Han, the self-name chosen after the name of their first long-standing empire. Self-consciousness was the integral factor of formation of the Chinese nation.

During the periods of unity (Tang, Northern Song) national component became a little less meaningful, and the empire started to live by her own laws, which put fidelity of a subject or vassal and execution of necessary ceremonial by them to the ruler above their national identity. During these periods the *Zhongguo* concept became vaguer: different territories were included in the empire under different conditions or controlled at different extents.

Foreign names of China specify neither the concept of *Zhongguo*, nor the Chinese ethnos. Russian word *Kitai* and Mongolian *Khyatad* are derived from Khitan, the name of people, probably, of Mongolian group, lived since very old times on the territory of Northern Mongolia and Manchuria. In the 10th Century they established the Liao Empire from Pacific Ocean to Eastern Turkestan and from Mongolia to the Central China. The Tibetan term for China, *Rgya nag* (Tib. རྒྱ་ནག), means literally 'black vast'. By the same principle were constructed names for India, *Rgya gar* རྒྱ་ཁག – literally, 'white vast'. According to the most widespread view, these names reflected most common, from the Tibetan point of view, dress colors in these regions (Das, 1902, p. 304, 305, 306).

The Indian, Arabian, Japanese, Malayan and Latin names of China: *Chin*, *Mahachina*, *Sin* and *Sina*, probably, have been derived from the name of the first Qin Empire. The modern word 'China' in different versions may be derived from the words 'Qin' through the

medieval *Chin* and *Machin*, probably mixed later with the name of the Qing Dynasty.

Therefore, *Zhongguo* is termed in Russia and Mongolia by the Kidans and not the Chinese people, while in Tibet it is derived from color and does not reveal any specific connection of China with Tibet; western term China also does not contain any ethnic aspect.

What are the "dynasties of China"? The term 'dynasty' in Europe and its Chinese translation has different meaning. In Europe this is surname of rulers from one family, replacing one another; existence of one dynasty does not exclude simultaneous existence of others. The "Chinese dynasty" is a name of a state by the period of reign of one family that has adopted the Chinese concept of monarchic power; it is such a state which includes a part of China, or it contains China as a whole, or it is just China, or a part of it that was proclaimed to be a state, or it is a state adjacent to China's borders whose ruler, having proclaimed himself the emperor, claimed for the Chinese throne (Kuzmin, 2011, p. 469).

These families ruled by the Mandate of Heaven – *tian ming* 天命. This is the Western Zhou concept. Such mandate can be received or lost. Chinese historians accepted not all such pretenders as genuine emperors and genuine dynasties: this right was usually fixed to the ethnic Chinese. Exceptions were rare, the Yuan and Qing dynasties established by Mongols and Manchus. They managed to subdue the whole of China and, consequently, nothing remained to the Chinese historians as to recognize them as legitimate, though "barbaric" dynasties. Two more "foreign dynasties" have ruled only in Northern China: the Liao of Khitans and the Jin of Jurchens. They received the status of dynasties only because their official histories were written and included in the code of dynastic histories at the Yuan. All this contained a certain conceptual contradiction: the legitimate emperor, personification of *Zhongguo*, was a "barbarian".

In Europe the concept of dynasty, as a line of rulers from one family, is divided with the concept and a designation of the state, in China both are intermingled. As a result, in the traditional Chinese historiography not China was a part of the states which conquered it but only the dynasty inside China replaced. In a large part it occurred because the conquerors were satisfied by such situation: first, it alleviated the control over the Chinese subjects which in each of such states made a vast majority, and second, as mentioned above, within the framework of the region around of China the title of the emperor of the "main state in the world" was the most desirable. Neither Mongols, nor Manchus at formation of their states had their own concepts of a world monarchy. More precisely, these concepts were reduced to general provisions that other peoples should obey them and their monarchs ruling by the will of Heaven. In the form of *Zhongguo* and the Mandate of Heaven the great khans received well developed concept, which did not contradict their own traditions.

Each state should have a certain unique set of characters distinctive from others. These characters may change in time, but there should remain something common, which allows us recognizing the continuity of a given state. It is possible to determine several sufficient characters, which remain specific for China during her history irrespectively of all changes and official declarations:

1) Common socio-cultural concepts based on common historical and mythological past, common written language, concept of the Middle State as a centre of civilized world, the only large state surrounded with barbaric peoples.

2) Belief that all neighbouring peoples are vassals, submissive or unruly, of the Son of Heavens (the ruler of *Zhongguo*) who gradually mollifies their habits and leads them to the idea of submission to *Zhongguo*, was also a component of this concept.

3) Following conclusions come from these two points in real

state and regional policy:

a) the practice of cultural assimilation of ethnic minorities, whose culture regarded as lower than the Chinese culture, and sinicization as a natural phenomenon beneficial for assimilating ones. This practice led to a quick increase of population and area inhabiting by the state-forming ethnos, the Han: regional differences between its members in spoken language, dress, habits, etc. did not influence the sense of their ethnic unity;

b) not very clear distinction in the historical memory between the territories really incorporated into the empire and those dependent on it in some degrees (often virtual);

c) extremely negative attitude to separation of peoples and territories once dependent on China: only the expansion of territory ruling by the Son of Heavens (or another ruler of China) can be considered as normal direction of historical process.

How typical are these characters for the "conquest dynasties of China", namely, the Yuan and the Qing? Whether it is possible to determine their empires as China?

## 2. Yuan Empire

Genghis Khaan and his descendants considered that whole world should submit to them. This could be perceived as an analogy to the traditional Chinese worldview. However, Mongols meant submission to their great khan (Mo. *khaan*) ruling by the will of Heavens, instead of "mollification of habits of barbarians" and acculturating influence of the Middle State. So such analogy is only superficial: permanent appellations of Mongolian great khans to the Eternal Blue Sky (Mo. *munkh khukh tenger*) belonged to Tengrianism, an ancient cult of the Turkic and Mongolian peoples (see Bira, 2011), which cannot be derived from Chinese cults.



The grandson of Genghis Khaan, Great Khan Kublai in 1271 has issued the decree, according to which the Great Mongolian State (Mo.: *Ikh Mongol Uls*<sup>1</sup>) from now on was called on the Chinese manner "the Great Initial" (Chin.: *Da Yuan*). The text of this decree did not stipulate that it is valid only for the territory of China (Yuan shi, juan 7, p. 7254), but it was written in Chinese and, most likely, has not been proclaimed in other Genghisid states formally composed parts of the Mongolian Empire and submitted to Kublai. Nevertheless, the decree of the Great Khan by definition was mandatory for all his subjects. Thus, if we shall equate the Great Yuan State with China, we should conclude that borders of China have reached Hungary and Palestine, and the whole Great Mongolian Empire, including Russia, Afghanistan, Iran and some European countries, was China.

The Mongolian khans of other principalities (*uls*) accepted the seniority of great khans by old Mongolian tradition, based on the legacy of the blood from Genghis Khaan. The Chinese accepted authority of Yuan emperors as the next dynasty in *Zhongguo*. Kublai had given Chinese temple names to his predecessors; such names were given also to his ruling descendants. At the same time, all Yuan emperors had also Mongolian names. They did not consider themselves and other Mongols as the Chinese and did not aspire to their sinicization. The Mongolian concept of the Great State of Genghis Khaan was now crossed the Chinese concept of the Middle State. Mongols only in the last decades of their rule began to perceive the Chinese culture. However, assimilation has never been practice of Yuan rulers. The Yuan Empire up to the end remained the Mongolian state, which included China together with other territories.

### **3. Qing Empire**

Manchus have accepted some important components of the

Chinese worldview before the conquest of China. After this conquest, declarations of these concepts aimed at legitimization of their rule for the Hans, the most numerous people in the empire. The main points were sacralization of emperor's power which should spread to whole world from its centre to periphery, and centralized Middle State, eternal and main state in the world. All foreign missions to Beijing were explained as arrivals of tributaries, imperial territorial expansion as "pacification of barbarians", spreading of beneficial influence of the emperor etc.

Manchus sought for legitimization among the Han people also using cultural history and political legacy. The first Qing Emperor in Beijing, Shunzhi (ruled in 1643–1661), although attracted by Buddhism, in public positioned himself mainly as a Confucian emperor (Liu, 1989, p. 73). The same is true for emperors ruled after him.

Together with the concept of the empire, Manchus accepted her designation in Chinese manner. Official name of this empire was Great Pure State (Chin. *Da Qingguo*). Until 1644, the Qing court designated China as the State of the Han (Ma. *Nikan gurun*), or the State of the Han's Great Ming (Ma. *Nikan-i Daiming-i gurun*) (Jiu Manzhou dang, 1969: 21,223; Kyu Manshu to, 1975: 173, 250, 266; Li Xuezi, 1971: 57-63 – in Zhao, 2006, p. 5). Since the seizure of Beijing in 1644, the Manchus began to apply the term Middle State (Ma. *Dulimbai gurun*) to their empire which included subdued Han and non-Han lands (Zhao, 2006, p. 11).

Detailed study of Chinese documents of 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> centuries revealed usage of the following terms as equivalents for the Qing State: *Zhongguo*, our territory, our dynasty, dynasty of the state (Zhao, 2006, p. 6-10). *Zhongguo* is in one row with these unofficial terms. This is not surprising: there may be only one empire in the world, and not her specific name is important, but rather the name during a given period.

Russian documents of the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century termed the Qing Empire as Chinese State (Russ. *Kitaiskoe gosudarstvo*), the

State of the Bogdo (*Bogdoiskoe gosudarstvo*), Empire of China (*tsarstvo Kitai*) (RGADA, f. Mongolskie dela, op. 1, year 1673, d. 2, l. 10–14; f. Sibirskii prikaz, stlb. 535, l. 3-9; *ibid.*, stlb. 535, l. 17; *Dopolneniya...*, 1857; *Vedomost...*, 1961). In the Manchu versions of more than 160 diplomatic documents between the Qing court and Russia in 1661–1734 the Qing Empire termed also *Dulimbai gurun* (Zhao, 2006, p. 9-11). From 1727 to 1862, first lines in the Russian versions of Russian–Qing documents wrote Great Daqing State (*Velikoe Daitainskoe gosudarstvo*), Daqing Empire (*Daitainskaya imperiya*), but body texts may contain the terms Middle State (*Sredinnoe gosudarstvo*), China (*Kitai*) etc. (*Sbornik Dogovorov...*, 1889, p. 10-15, 50-195). Since 1862, only terms derived from 'China' have been used (*Kitai*, *Kitaiskaya imperiya*, *Velikoe Kitaiskoe gosudarstvo*) (AVPRI, f. Kitaiskii stol; f. Missiya v Pekine; *Sbornik Dogovorov...*, 1889, p. 211 etc.). In the Qing treaties of the 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with all Western states (except for Russia), only China or Chinese Empire (texts in MacMurray, 1921) is indicated.

Mongolian tradition, descending to the Qing period, terms this empire Manchu Qing State (Mo. *Manj Chin uls*), whereas China (*Khyatad*), or Middle State (*Dundad uls*) are used for "China proper". There are also variations as *Daichin uls*, *Manj uls*, *Chin uls*, our Great Qing, the state of our Manchu Emperor, Emperor's state (e.g. Jambadorji, p. 62 and Erdenipel, p. 116, 161, 224, 247 in *Istoriya...*, 2005; many sources in Elverskog, 2006, and Batsaikhan, 2010).

Many important characters of the Qing State contradicted those of China. Nurhaci, the founder of the Manchu State, adopted many characters of his state from the Mongols (details see in Farquhar, 1971, p. 18-19). The Qing Empire had been founded by the Manchu and received its name outside of China (that time the Ming Empire). Nurhaci's son Hongtaiji, the founder of the Qing was an independent khan. However, he recognized his dependence on China for elevating his status in the eyes of neighbours and for obtaining a Chinese title. In 1627

he tried to discuss the border issues with the Ming court, proposing the Shanghaiguan outpost on the Great Wall of China as a border point. He considered that time his state independent on *Nikan gurun* (Zhao, 2006, p. 6). In 1636, he adopted the name Qing 清 (Pure) for his dynasty and the state, and this meant an opposition to the neighbouring Ming 明 (Light). During some time both states coexisted. The Han called Manchu *guan-wai de ren* 關外的人 – people from beyond of outposts, i.e. from the outside of the Great Wall.

As a result of conquest, China had been incorporated into foreign state, the Manchu Qing Empire. The source of central power there originated from the outside of China. After seizure of Beijing on 6 June 1644, the Manchus in October of the same year brought their already enthroned (on 8 October 1643) Shunzhi Emperor. He was again proclaimed emperor on 30 October 1644, this time as the emperor of all conquered lands and those which should be subdued (Nepomnin, 2005, p. 44). However, members of the Ming Dynasty (so called Southern Ming) continued to control parts of China until 1662.

Qing emperors from Shunzhi to Qianlong used the term 'China' for designation of the whole territory of their empire (Zhao, 2006, p. 6-8). At the same time, "China proper" was considered as a subjugated state (Smith, 1996, p. 145). In the past, states of Central Asia and external areas were simply referred to by terms *yi* 夷, *fan* 番 and *man* 蠻 used to designate "barbarians" (Wang, 1999, p. 290). The Manchus revised this. In particular, the terms like *yi* and *man* almost completely disappeared from the 'History of Ming' (*Ming shi*), finished by Qing historians in 1739. Instead, Qing historians used *waiguo* 外國 (foreign states) and *xiyu* 西域 (western regions), the terms free of ethno-cultural connotations; having designated the empire as *Zhongguo*, her historians, mainly the Han, seem to have resolved the question of political legacy in the Chinese history – the question having basic value for Chinese

worldview (Wang, 1999, p. 303). All that meant conceptual revision of the concept of China.

The Yongzheng Emperor (ruled in 1722–1735) indicated that the "barbarian people" concept concerns only geography but not differences between the "Han Chinese" from "non-Han Chinese" (i.e. non-Han subjects of the Qing), Manchuria for their dynasty was the source of the Middle State (Li, 2008, p. 346-347). According to the pronouncement of the Qianlong Emperor in 1755, "There exists a view of China (*Zhongxia*) according to which non-Han people cannot become China's subjects and their land cannot be integrated into the territory of China. This does not represent our dynasty's understanding of China, but is instead that of the earlier Han, Tang, Song and Ming dynasties" (HC, 7338 – in Zhao, 2006, p. 4, 11-12).

Qianlong had conquered Xinjiang but, according to many Confucian officials and intellectuals, its people did not deserve Qing rule and territorial defense; some considered it totally useless (Jia, 2011, p. 1-9). These people emphasized differences between the 'inner' 内 and 'outer' 外, where 'inner' meant "China proper" and 'outer' meant the lands beyond Jiayu Guan, the westernmost outpost on the Great Wall of China. Qianlong objected: "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 into inner and outer?" (in Jia, 2011, p. 4).

The Yongzheng Emperor avoided usage of the term 'the Chinese' (*Zhongguo ren* 中國人) using instead it 'people of China' (*Zhongguo zhi ren* 中國之人), to emphasize that they are subjects of the empire instead of ethnic Chinese (Crossley, 1999, p. 46). When necessary, the terms 'people of China' in treatises (e.g. the Treaty of Nerchinsk of 1689) were used in the forms *Zhongguo zhi ren* and *Zhongguo zhi min* (Ma. *dulimbai gurun i niyalma*) (Zhao, 2006, p. 14). However, the Han (Chin. *han ren* 漢人) as a self-name retained in the Chinese consciousness, and in late

19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries it prevailed. This name occurs most often in contexts characterizing the essence of Chinese – Manchu ethnic contradictions, and *han ren* and *Zhongguo ren* (the Chinese) in these cases have been used as synonyms (Kryukov et al., 1993, p. 329).

Let us analyze the legitimization of the Qing power for the Mongols. First of all, it was the legacy from Genghis Khaan supported by kinship. For example, Hongtaiji by his mother belonged to the Genghis Khaan lineage; Kangxi (ruled in 1662–1723), partly Mongol Genghisid, also emphasized this legacy by declarations on having the seal of the Yuan Dynasty (Puchkovskii, 1963, p. 340-341; Crossley, 1999, p. 212, 224). The title Bogd Khaan (great khan, or emperor) was conferred on Hongtaiji by the Mongols. Bumbutai (Xiaozhuangwen) Empress, Shunzhi's mother, descended from Borjigin clan, i.e. she was also a relative to Genghis Khaan. Some other Qing emperors also have wives from this clan. The majority of old-Mongolian historiographers shared the opinion on the unity of genealogical line of Mongolian, Chinese (i.e. Ming) and Manchu emperors (Bira, 1960, p. 55). It is clear from main Mongolian annals. 'Erdeniin Toli' tried to connect the origin of the Qing Dynasty with one of the nearest associates or descendants of Genghis Khaan. The 'Bolor Toli' told that the Manchu Khan had become the Mongolian Khan because he acquired the Genghis' seal, given to him by two wives of Ligden Khan. 'Erdeniin Erikhe' told, that Manchu Khan had found the seal of Yuan emperors called the Jade Jewel, and therefore he was granted the honorable title of the Bogd Khaan, and the era name was changed (Puchkovskii, 1963, p. 340-341).

All these were strengthened by a special position of Mongols in the empire, familiar relations of the ruling dynasty with them, and common religion (the Tibetan Buddhism). Every Qing Emperor had Manchu, Mongolian and Chinese names. The major decrees were published in Manchu, Chinese and Mongolian.

Mongols realized their connection with the Qing Empire but not

with China: they had become a part of 'our Great Qing' by personal vassal oath of Mongolian princes to the Manchu Dynasty. "While all the early Mongolian histories had presented the idea of the Mongols as a distinct entity under the Qing in the narrative arc of India-Tibet-Mongol Manchu Buddhist history, in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century this presentation began to change. Mongol histories of this period do not focus exclusively on the Mongols within the Qing, but rather, on the entire Buddhist Qing, of which the Mongols, along with the Manchus, Chinese and Tibetans, were only one part" (Elverskog, 2006, p. 135).

Since the Nurhaci time, Manchu rulers have established religious contacts with Tibet. In addition, they sought to use the authority of the Dalai Lama for subjection of the Mongols. The Dalai Lama, in turn, was interested to find strong patrons of Buddhism. Qing emperors, gradually expanding their influence on Tibet, have used already existed model: the relations with highest Lamas by the 'priest – patron' principle (Tib. *mchod-yon* མཚན་པོས) descended to Yuan period. However, now this had a somewhat another form than relations between Sakya hierarchs and Yuan emperors. Legitimization of Qing emperors in the eyes of Tibetans was related to their positioning as world monarchs elevating Buddhism (Crossley, 1999, p. 242) connected with Dalai Lamas by *chō-yon* relations (AVPRI, f. 143 Kitaiskii stol, op. 491, d. 78, l. 107-114; Shakabpa, 2010, p. 498-501).

In his 'Pronunciations for lamas' inscribed in the Yonghegong Monastery in Beijing, the Qianlong Emperor indicated that, in the contrast to Yuan, the Qing Dynasty is giving to lamas the title 'Teacher of the State' instead of 'Teacher of the Emperor'. This statement, however, did not correspond to reality. As a Buddhist, who had studied religion and received Tantric initiations, Qianlong should have known that, according to Buddhism, his Root Teacher was the Lama who had given him these initiations (details see in Kuzmin, 2012, p. 261-273). Actually, a certain anti-Buddhist deviation was traditional for Chinese

educated circles: this religion, as Taoism, was considered belonging to the common people, and interest to it unworthy for a 'gentleman' (or 'superior person'). Manchu version of one Qianlong's pronouncement in Yonghegong stated: "When I started to learn the [Tibetan] scriptures, I was criticized by some Chinese for being biased towards the Yellow Church" (i.e. the Gelug Sect of the Tibetan Buddhism) (in Farquhar, 1978, p. 26). However, the words 'by some Chinese' are missing from the Chinese version (ibid.). The Buddhist faith of Manchu emperors, appropriate initiations etc. in a major part have not been reflected in Chinese documents (Uspenskii, 1996, p. 43).

Dependence of Tibet from Qing was determined by personal connections of Buddhist hierarchs with Manchu emperors and some, very uneven influence of the Manchu on Tibetan policy. However, according to many Chinese officials and chroniclers, it had become a part of the Qing territory (Lu, 1828, p. XXII-XXIII; Martynov, 1978, p. 235-278; Smith, 1996, p. 148). Nevertheless, it is difficult to agree with the opinion that 'priest-patron' relations "were self-deception for hierarchs of the Tibetan Buddhism, whereas their vassal relations with Qing emperors represented reality" (Besprozvannykh, 2001, p. 307-308). Vassalage should be recognized by both sides, as in the example of Mongolian princes and Manchu emperors, but this was not the case of Manchu emperors and Dalai Lamas.

The Tibetan term for China, 'Black vast' (see above), neither embraced Tibet nor indicated any specific connection between them, and the Tibetan self-name *Bod* བོད did not concern China (Sperling, 2004, p. 34).

For governing eastern Mongolia, Hongtaiji in 1636 created the Mongolian chamber, one of whose main functions was to trace the order of granting titles to the Mongolian nobles who declared loyalty. Later it was transformed into the Chamber of External Relations (*Lifanyuan*), which regulated also relations with Tibetans and Russians. Legislation



for the Mongols was based on their traditional legal customs. Later they were included in the general legislative 'Code of the Chamber of External Relations' (*Lifanyuan zeli*). Mongolia and Tibet were considered there as areas outside of China, with separate legislation, including prohibition of colonization of Mongolia by the Chinese (in Lipovtsov, 1828, v.1, p. 74). Bans to the Chinese settling in Mongolia were repeatedly published in the end of the 18th – beginning of the 19th Century. The legislation of *Lifanyuan* for Tibet was shorter and regulated mainly providing of "tribute" to the emperor, approval of reincarnated lamas, income of taxes into the treasury of Tibet etc. (Lipovtsov, 1828, v. 2, p. 191-277).

Therefore, the ways of the Qing legitimization were different for the Chinese, Mongolian and Tibetan peoples. This contradicted traditional Chinese worldview requiring acculturation of "barbarians". Qing emperors, on the contrary, sought to prevent this in regard to Mongols and Tibetans. Following Confucianism, they nevertheless had official shamans and, at the same time, were sincere Buddhists.

#### **4. Crisis of the Qing worldview and the Xinhai Revolution**

To the beginning of the 20th Century the nationalism became the key driving force in international relations, since the traditional sinocentric system had failed due to collision of the Qing Empire with the Western powers (Chen Zhimin, 2005, p. 52-53). For the sake of retention the empire, the Cixi regime adopted a new policy towards assimilation of the "frontier peoples" by the Han. This meant cessation of the conditions behind old relations of the Qing with Mongolia and Tibet. This resulted in proclamations of independence of these states and the rise of national movements. In the contrast to Zhou, Tibetans and Mongols did not consider themselves Chinese. To the time of Qing collapse, their territories have not become China ethnically or culturally.

In respect of authority, Mongolia and Tibet were connected only with the Manchu Dynasty. This view has persisted in Mongolian and Tibetan understanding of history till our days.

However, just the Manchus were the first subject to assimilation. By the end of the Qianlong reign, the Han composed 80% of provincial officials (Rigger, 1994, p. 197). In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, many Manchus have forgotten their native language; some began to subscribe themselves as the Han in order to avoid military service. Since abolishing of the ban for the Han to settle in Manchuria in 1907, her population has increased from 17 to 34 million people. The proportion of the Han there reached 93% in 1930s (Manchuria, 1934, p. 94).

However, some Chinese contemporaries indicated that the Manchu had not been assimilated, and they remained alien conquerors (Zarrow, 2004, p. 67-107). Moreover: to that time the Manchus had well-documented and imperially-endorsed construction of racial identity, history, an attested language and homeland, all elements that fit together to aid in the formation of a Manchu ethnic consciousness (Crossley, 1990, p. 9). Clear distinctions between the conquerors and the conquered clearly retained in the Qing Empire. In this sense, it was truly a Manchu Empire, not a Chinese one (Elliott, 2001, p. 5).

May be, the Manchu Dynasty has legitimately transformed the empire to the Chinese republic?

First of all, it is necessary to note that from 1861 to 1908 r. the Empress Dowager Cixi actually ruled the empire instead of emperors. She had the status of regent: 1<sup>st</sup> regency in 1861–1873, 2<sup>nd</sup> in 1875–1889, and the last in 1898–1908 (Bland and Backhouse, 1910, p. 51). Her first regency resulted from the coup in 1861, which deprived of power those regents who had been assigned by the Xianfeng Emperor (ruled in 1850–1861) before his death (details see in Kwong, 1983, p. 221-238). The regent possessed full authority in the state until the emperor will attain his majority. This was confirmed also by imperial decrees on the

authority and powers of the regent published in 1908 (e.g. AVPRI, f. 188 *Missiya v Pekine*, op. 761, d. 1271, 1272). The Tongzhi Emperor has died in 1875, when he has not attained 20 years old. By indication from Cixi, her nephew Guangxu was determined the new emperor (ruled in 1875–1908). He attained his majority, formally started to reign, and thought of reforms, which Cixi and her entourage considered dangerous. In 1898 Cixi had deprived the emperor of the imperial seal and published on his behalf a decree introducing regent's rule. Guangxu did not rule, lived under house arrest in bad conditions, was regularly humiliated, and finally poisoned by Cixi a day before her death.

The next, infant emperor Xuantong (Puyi) did not rule. The provision on rights and authority of the prince-regent has been elaborated by the State chancellery together with ministries and main bureaus, and approved by the Imperial decree on 30 November 1908. "All state affairs are deciding by the prince-regent and publishing as imperial decrees with affixing of his seal and, in especially important cases, the prince-regent is soliciting for decree from the Empress Dowager Longyu" (in Brunnart and Hagelstrom, 1910, p. 32-33). The Prince-Regent Chun, father of Puyi, had resigned on 6 December 1911, soon after Yuan Shikai returned to power. The latter preferred to see his weak-willed stepsister Longyu as the regent. She has issued the abdication decree of the last Qing emperor in favour of the "republic of five races" on 12 February 1912, following the insistence of Yuan Shikai, who kept in mind establishing the new dynasty. In particular, it declared: "[We] welcome the establishment of the great Chinese republic that integrates all the territories where dwell the five ethnic groups, that is, Manchus, Han, Mongol, Muslims, and Tibetans" (*Zhongguo dier lishi dang'an guan*, 1991, p. 2.72 – in Zhao, 2006, p. 16). Three decrees related to abdication of the dynasty prescribed to establish the republic, remove all national borders and prejudices, retain ceremonial rights, generous material provision etc. for the emperor (in Weale, 1918, p. 295-298).

Thus, since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, emperors have been removed from their power by a regent who had dubious legitimacy. Then another regent deposed the last emperor and the whole dynasty in favour of the republic. Correspondingly, the legitimacy of acts issued by them is debatable, because the regent's functions were limited by temporary governance by the empire until the emperor will come of age and assume full power. Regent had no right to depose the emperor and eliminate monarchy.

### **5. Problem of Legacy of the Republican China from the Qing Empire**

Republicans have proclaimed the ROC on the wave of the Han nationalism. They did not coordinate their program with the Qing Dynasty. The decree on abdication of the emperor did not compose legal basis for the republican state. First constitutional acts of the Republic of China in 1912–1914 do not refer to the imperial decrees (see texts in Weale, 1918, p. 299-350). Moreover, Sun Yatsen in his declaration at assuming the post of the temporary President of China stated the necessity of complete elimination of the remains of autocracy, and in the message at his renunciation of this post near the tomb of the Ming founder Zhu Yuanzhang he said on the establishment of a free republic and elimination of the strong enemy of the nation, i.e. Manchus (in Giles, 1912; Sun Yatsen, 1985, p. 121-123; Sidikhmenov, 1985, p. 288-289). There were no appellations to the abdication of the Qing Dynasty later. For example, the preamble to the Constitution of the ROC (1946) stated that the Constitutional Assembly adopted the Constitution "by virtue of the mandate received from the whole body of citizens, in accordance with the teachings bequeathed by Dr. Sun Yat-sen in founding the Republic China" (The Constitution of the Republic of China...). The Constitution of the PRC also does not contain any

appellations to the Qing abdication and declares "people's democratic dictatorship" (Constitution..., 2004). Moreover, its first version stated the "great victory in the people's revolution against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism" (Constitution..., 1954).

Having assumed treaty obligations of the Qing Empire to foreign powers, the republicans demonstrated succession of the ROC from this empire with regard to international treaties. Without that, the Republic would not be recognized by world powers who sought to keep their economic and strategic interests. According to modern international law, legal succession of states occurs when one state ceases to exist and another state starts to exist or acquired control over the territory lost by the former one. The main question is whether the successor state acquires international obligations of the predecessor state (West's..., 2008).

However, historical succession of states is not limited with international treaties. Mainly those characters, which distinguished the Qing Empire from China, including different forms of legitimization for different peoples, have been rejected in the republican China. But multi-ethnicity, one of the main characters of the empire, from the very beginning has used as parallel with the concept of the "republic of five races". How correct is this concept?

Since the time of Beijing seizure, Qing emperors repeatedly stated that Manchu and Han composed 'one family'; they should live without conflicts – nevertheless, they established national borders and assessed the Han unflatteringly in other cases (Elliott, 2001, p. 100-213). Only before the collapse of Qing, there appeared ideas and petitions that only a set of institutional reforms could reduce the division between the Han and non-Han peoples, and establish a strong state (Zhao, 2006, p. 21-22). It was not an "imperial nation" (sensu Byung, 2011, p. 229): the concept of nation is applicable only to the nation state, i.e. such a state that derives its legitimacy as a sovereign entity for a nation as a

sovereign territorial unit. The ROC has become such state. "One family" was understood there in other way than in the empire: it was not paternal care of the emperor on all his subjects, but equality of citizens before laws. How real was this equality?

In 1910s, the nation-building views of Sun Yatsen included a model traditional for China: the Han will compose the only state nation. Assimilation of non-Han peoples was fixed as a program requirement of Tongmenghui, then Kuomintang. In late 1910s, another goal was declared: they should be "melted" into a single nation with the Han to establish the new principle of the "Chinese nation" (*Zhonghua minzu* 中華民族). However, in 1921 Sun Yatsen decided that all the Han should be simply renamed in *Zhonghua minzu*, which meant his incline to the initial project.

In the first months of the ROC, among the Han establishment, debates about "five nationalities" took place. Differences related to the principles of the Great China (*da Zhunggo zhuyi* 大中国主义) and the Native China (*benbu Zhunggo* 本部中国). Proponents of the first principle recognized the Han as the only people capable of nation-building, denying that trait to the other four. Proponents of the second principle were in favour of granting independence to the "frontier peoples", so as to secure the external borders of the republic. The latter remained in minority. The Mongols, Tibetans and the Turkic were banned from establishing own countries that could be used by foreign forces (Esherick, 2006, p. 244). Correspondingly, the Chinese nationalists accepted the concept of the "Chinese nation" (*Zhonghua minzu*), consisting of "five nationalities".

In the beginning of the republican era, Western anthropological concepts were broadly discussed in China, and there were attempts to "substantiate" initial kinship of the "five races" (Ishikawa, 2003, p. 8-26; Leibold, 2006, p. 188-194, 210-212). Environmental factors have been

discussed together with their blood kinship. For example, Chiang Kaishek (1947, p. 39-40) distinguished five peoples or clans of China by religion and geographical environment but not by differences in race or blood. Many Chinese scientists and politicians of the Kuomintang period argued that "five races" of China are kindred to each other and/or have cultural, economic, political and historical commonality. The term "minority nationalities" (Chin. *shaoshu minzu* 少數民族) had appeared for the first time in history of China: in 1924 at a conference of the Kuomintang, and in 1926 at that of the CPC (Jin, 1987).

The presidential mandate of 28 October 1912 stated that the "republic of five races" has been established. To join Outer Mongolia and Tibet to China, Yuan Shikai unsuccessfully tried to persuade the 8th Bogd Gegeen and the 13th Dalai Lama, who had proclaimed independence of their states. The president used imperial phraseology: China, Mongolia and Tibet from the time immemorial composed "one family"; the relation between Mongolia and Tibet, from one hand, and China from the other had been destroyed as a result of suppression from the Qing rulers, and now the time of eradication of the abuses has come (Svedeniya., 1912).

By the decrees of Yuan Shikai on 15 and 21 April 1912, the status of Mongolia and Tibet as vassal territories was abolished and they were equated with provinces of China proper (Belov, 1999, p. 59). Japanese scientists noted that the "republic of five races" was a new political construct used for the suppression of self-determination of former Qing "frontier peoples" by force (Leibold, 2006, p. 188-191). In addition, the Han nationalists, like the Chinese communists, saw "frontier peoples" as potential allies in the fight for independence from foreign imperialism and inner feudalism (Leibold, 2003, p. 2).

Nationalism of the republicans, having traditional sinocentric ideology in its core and more and more often interpreting within the

framework of Western concepts (see Ishikawa , 2003, p. 8-18), has become the key for obtaining political legitimacy of the ROC within the Qing borders. But at the same time movements of non-Han peoples were spread, from the beginning directed not so much against the Qing monarchy as such, but rather against approaching Chinese control over the former imperial territories (Crossley, 1999, p. 343).

Mongols, Tibetans and the Turkic did not participate in the Xinhai Revolution, elaborations of the doctrines of the "Chinese nation" and the "five races". Their movements were directed to establishment of their independent states but not the Chinese republic.

In this regard, arguments of the 8th Bogd Gegeen and the 13th Dalai Lama are indicative. The Bogd Gegeen in March 1912 explained in the message to Yuan Shikai, that Mongolia "was never subordinated to China, and accepted only the authority of the Qing Dynasty, which has nowadays fallen, and, therefore, the communication of Mongols with China was interrupted" (AVPRI, f. Kitaiskii stol, d. 319, l. 133 – in Belov, 1999, p. 60). In 1913 he wrote to the President: as a result of abdication of the Manchu Dynasty two separate states have been formed, Mongolia and China, and "we cannot have claims to each other. The fact that you have become the leader of the Chinese people and I of the Mongolian, is the most proper solution of the question, and this, apparently, does not provide bases for kindling of mutual enmity" (Vestnik Azii, 1913, no. 14, p. 41-42 – in Belov, 1999, p. 103). In other telegrams to Yuan Shikai he gave an example of America which have separated from the British Empire; he specified that Mongols and Chinese have nothing common in faith, language, customs and way of life; he denied claims of the president that the Qing Dynasty "has conceded the supreme rights to the Chinese people" (Belov, 1999, p. 102; Korostovets, 2004, p. 281-282). Yuan Shikai sent a telegram to the 13th Dalai Lama where he apologized for excesses of the Chinese troops and informed on "restoration" of the Dalai Lama in his title. The Dalai



Lama has answered, that he did not ask it as he is intending of ruling Tibet himself (Shakabpa, 1984, p. 245).

Term 'the Chinese' (*Zhongguo ren*) is using now for designation of all citizens of China, with subdivisions to "Han Chinese", "Mongol Chinese", "Tibetan Chinese" etc. However, this term is related first of all to "China proper" and the Han (see above). Despite of declarations on the equality, "minority nationalities" from the very beginning, in fact, have been removed from the process of nation-building. Although all citizens are formally equal before laws, most important laws are always written by the Han. All this corresponds to the old Chinese ideology and assimilation, which is not declared officially.

During many centuries the Chinese people included different nationalities, but such inclusion always meant voluntary acceptance of basic concepts of the Chinese culture and the desire to become Chinese. Modern "minority nationalities of China" do not display such desire. To the contrary, they do everything to preserve their own ethnocultural concepts. Therefore, there is no commonality *Zhongguo ren* or *Zhonghua minzu*, which includes all citizens of China. These terms can be applied only to the Han nation in the process of assimilation of "minority nationalities".

## **6. Declared and Factual Succession**

Multi-nationality is not a criterion of succession between the Yuan and Qing states with the republican China. Criteria of succession of states based on their historical legacy are undeveloped and, if in some cases such legacy is evident, in others it may be disputable.

Roman Empire is a good example. It had important similarities with China: sacralization of the central power; universalism and claims to world domination; perception of non-Romans as "barbarians"; ideas on civilizing role of the Rome; gradual expansion of the Roman

civilization from relatively small areas to vast regions. Some states claimed for succession from the Roman Empire: Byzantium (whose official name was Empire of the Romans Βασιλεία τῶν Ῥωμαίων), Charlemagne's Empire and the Holy Roman Empire. The Ottoman Empire has joined the "successors" after the conquest of Constantinople. Holy Roman Empire and Grand Duchy of Moscow have begun to use the Byzantine coat of arms as their own. The concept of the 'Third Rome' has been elaborated in Moscow. It proclaimed Moscow as the only and the last successor of the Rome; genealogy of grand princes of Moscow semi-officially descended to Octavian Augustus.

A suitable case for comparison with the Qing Empire is the Ottoman Empire, whose Sultan Mehmed II, having seized Constantinople, considered himself successor of Byzantine emperors and accepted the title *Kaisar-i Rum* (Caesar of Rome). Just as the Qing (Manchu) Empire captured the Ming (Chinese), the Ottoman (Turkish) conquered the Byzantine (Greek). Both the Manchus and the Ottomans have made capitals of the captured states their own capitals (Beijing and Constantinople respectively). The Manchus extended their power to Mongolia, Dzungaria and East Turkestan; their influence to Tibet and other areas. The Turks have annexed the Balkan countries, Egypt, Iraq, etc.; their influence included Algeria, Arabia, Moldavia and other countries. In both cases, there were vassal and dependent states. Both empires collapsed and went through revolutions. Because of the national movement and wars, countries, the capitals of which were the capitals of the empires, have separated from them: i.e. Greece and China. Greece regained part of the original Greek lands and does not purport to the rest of the Ottoman Empire's "heritage". For example, it does not state that Yemen and Moldova are integral parts of Greece. But China, in a similar situation, announces Mongolia, Tibet, etc. as her integral parts and their peoples united with the Han in "one family" and "one nation".

Other analogies may be found in the Far East. States which

accepted the *Zhongguo* concept started to use the Chinese concept of dynasties. Some neighbours of China tried to apply not only Chinese hieroglyphs or Confucian rituals but also political ideology. The emperor of Vietnam in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century proclaimed his country as Middle State China (Viet. *Trung quốc*) and non-Vietnamese as barbarians. The term 'Middle State' was also used as a self-name in Japan.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, if we will analyze history beyond the sinocentric approach, it will be hard to accept the concept of one China (single or divided), during many centuries ruled by different dynasties and never incorporated in other states. Self-names of states and declarations of their succession, as such, do not create historical succession. The concept of China under different circumstances has been used for different purposes: national liberation of the Chinese people from enslaving by foreigners, justifying of internecine fights and/or centralization of the state, the right of a foreign state to conquered China, the right of creation of a world empire or subjection of other states and peoples.

Liao, Jin, Yuan and Qing should be considered not as "dynasties of China established by minority nationalities", but as multi-national empires established by non-Chinese peoples: Khitans, Jurchens, Mongols and Manchus, to whom the conquered China or its part was joined.

The Song and Ming empires, ROC and PRC represent the state of China in different historical times. However, the formation, structure, sociocultural concepts, ways of legitimization, governing, and national policy differ the Yuan and Qing empires from China, which was only a part of them.

Declarations of the Manchus and the Chinese, that their empire

is the main state in the world, *Zhongguo*, are analogous to declarations of German, Ottoman, Russian and some other monarchs about their succession to the Roman Empire. They do not represent a matter to international law and cannot provide grounds for any legal inferences.

The Chinese worldview underwent serious changes in the course of history (e.g. Wang, 1999, p. 304, 395). However, these changes can be better explained as occurring in different (Chinese and non-Chinese) states with different understanding of the *Zhongguo* principle, than in one state led by Chinese and conquest dynasties.

The ROC and the PRC, the nation state of the Han, had gained almost whole territory of the Qing not from continuity of one state, but from occupation of weaker neighbours. To prove this, the Han nationalists have proclaimed the new doctrine of "one Chinese nation" consisting of "five races". Such annexations were impossible, or possible only in some cases at the collapse of other empires, by internal and international means. However, in this case the world powers considered their interests better secured in the "unitary China" than in several states restored their independence. The "unity of China" in the Qing borders is a result of the Han and Western imperialism. There is no "one Chinese nation" that includes the Mongols, the Tibetans and the Turkic. Modern concept of one China as multi-national state, which has been ruled by different dynasties during many centuries and never become a part of other states, is historical myth.

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<sup>1</sup> Main meaning of the Mongolian word *uls* is state. However, in nomadic cultures, on the contrast to settled ones, the 'state' concept concerns, first of all, people instead of a certain territory or borders. Later on, under Chinese influence, Mongols began to use this term also for Chinese "dynasties" (Chin. *chao*). However, it seems that initially Mongolian language had no unambiguous equivalent for the European tem 'dynasty'. The closest word may be *ugsaa*, one of the main meanings of which is 'royal clan'.

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