



Evolution of the Relation between Manchu and Han: Political and Social Interaction in the Qing Dynasty

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Abstract. The contradictions and interactions between the Manchu and Han dynasties run through the entire Qing Dynasty. In the early Qing Dynasty, the Manchu rulers laid the foundation for Qing rule by establishing an empire with multi-ethnic coexistence, initially integrating the Manchu and Han political systems, and improving the status of Han officials. In the mid-term, the distribution of political power and interaction between Manchu and Han officials presented a complex situation. While maintaining their dominant position, Manchu rulers provided Han officials with certain development space, and there was both cooperation and competition between Manchu and Han officials. On the social level, the deepening of communication and integration between Manchu and Han has promoted mutual understanding and recognition among ethnic groups, enriching social culture. In the late Qing Dynasty, facing internal and external troubles, cooperation and differences emerged in the relationship between Manchu and Han. The Manchu rulers attempted to control the core power, while Han officials and intellectuals played a more active role in the reform, promoting China's modernization process. Although the reforms in the late Qing Dynasty did not completely change China's fate, the efforts and explorations of the Manchu and Han dynasties in the reforms accumulated valuable experience for later social changes.

Keywords: Manchu, Han Nationality, Political and Social Interaction, Qing Dynasty

1 Introduction

Over the past five thousand years, there have been many different dynasties and rulers in Chinese history, and the Qing Dynasty was the last dynasty ruled by ethnic minorities. The relationship between the Manchu rulers of the Qing Dynasty and the main ethnic group Han has always been a subject of concern and controversy. In the historical picture of the Qing Dynasty, the relationship between the Manchu rulers and the dominant Han ethnic group has always been a highly anticipated focus, but also full of endless controversies. This relationship is not static, but constantly develops and evolves with the passage of time, the evolution of political situations, and changes in social environments. The evolution of Manchu Han relations is deeply

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P. Dou and K. Zhang (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2024 International Conference on Social Sciences and Educational Development (ICOSSED 2024)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 912, https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-382-5_105

embedded in the political structure and social fabric of the Qing Dynasty. The complexity and diversity of Manchu Han relations deeply influenced the political landscape and social form of the Qing Dynasty [1]. On the political level, it involves the distribution of power, the formulation and implementation of policies, as well as the appointment strategies of the ruling class towards Manchu and Han officials. In the social sphere, it is reflected in various aspects such as cultural exchange and integration, mutual influence of customs and habits, as well as daily interactions between people and economic activities. Exploring the evolution of Manchu Han relations during the Qing Dynasty is of great significance for us to comprehensively and accurately understand the overall history of the Qing Dynasty. It can not only help us reveal the changes in the political situation and social development of that era, but also provide valuable historical references and inspirations for us to handle ethnic relations and promote social harmony in the present.

2 Formation of Manchu Han Relations in the Early Qing Dynasty

2.1 The Entry of Manchu into China and the Establishment of Political Power

The Later Jin Dynasty established by Nurhaci in 1616 was not a multi-ethnic empire, but a national regime. After Huang Taiji's exploration, the entire Northeast and the southern desert were incorporated into the territory, and this ethnic regime transformed into an empire where multiple ethnic groups coexisted. Huang Taiji established the Han Eight Banners and the Mongolian Eight Banners outside of the Manchu Eight Banners, expanding the foundation of the country's rule. In 1636, Huang Taiji declared himself emperor, marking the official appearance of the empire of Manchu, Han, and Mongolian integration on the historical stage.

After the establishment of the Later Jin Dynasty, Nurhaci identified himself as the "Northern Dynasty" and referred to the Ming Dynasty as the "Southern Dynasty". During the reign of Emperor Taiji, the Ming Dynasty was still referred to as the 'Southern Dynasty'. Before the Qing Dynasty entered the country, it was sometimes referred to as the Ming Dynasty by "China"; After entering the country, it claimed to be China and expanded its territory to the entire empire ruled area. In this way, the past 'small China' has evolved into 'big China'. 'Little China' is just a Han dynasty, while 'Great China' is a diverse and integrated country [2].

Since a pluralistic and integrated country has been formed, it should be recognized that the Manchu and Han dynasties are integrated, and the narrow nationalism of the past "distinction between Chinese and barbarians" should be abandoned. The integration of Manchu, Han, and Mongolian has been a fundamental national policy since the establishment of the Qing Dynasty. After ascending to the throne, Huang Taiji declared that "the people of Manchuria and Han are all one entity," and that "the people of Manchuria, Mongolia, and Han are considered one entity." Before entering the country, the Qing Dynasty was already a diverse and integrated country, and after

entering the country, its diverse components were expanded, but the essence of unity did not change.

2.2 The Preliminary Integration of Manchu and Han Political Systems

In terms of bureaucratic system, the Qing Dynasty generally adopted the "Qing inherited Ming system" while retaining some of the Manchu system. Starting from Huang Taiji, the Qing Dynasty made learning Han culture and the laws and regulations of the Ming Dynasty its basic national policy. Before entering the country, the Qing Dynasty had already established institutions such as the Imperial Academy, the Six Ministries, and the Inner Court, which could be said to have taken shape [3]. After entering the country, further inherit the system of the Ming Dynasty, retain the local bureaucratic system of the Ming Dynasty, and improve it. Inheritance is not just a literal copy. It also requires development in order to revitalize ancient systems. Inheritance is not about abolishing the original system of Manchuria, but about the coexistence and complementarity of two systems. For example, the early Qing Dynasty's cabinet system inherited and developed the Ming Dynasty's cabinet system, while the Council of Councillors was a legacy of the old Manchu system.

Learning Chinese and Han classics was a major cultural policy implemented by the Qing Dynasty. After ascending to the throne, Huang Taiji issued an edict that Manchu nobles must study Han Chinese cultural classics in schools. In the early stages, Shunzhi did not know Chinese and was confused when reading the memorials of various officials. Later, he devoted himself to studying and after nine years of hard work, he was finally able to read through classical Chinese literature. This tradition of hard work has been passed down in the Qing Dynasty, so the cultural level of the Qing emperors was very high.

An important manifestation of the integration of Manchu and Han is the elevation of the status of Han officials. Before entering the country, there were already a large number of Han officials in the Qing Dynasty, but their status was relatively low. After entering the country, Dorgon clearly proposed the idea of "mixing the country with Huaxia and giving equal importance to both Manchu and Han", and stipulated that there would be four ministers in the cabinet, with two Manchu and two Han people each. The six ministries and twelve ministers each hold half of the total. In 1658, Emperor Shunzhi made adjustments to the official system, unifying the ranks of Manchu and Han officials and elevating the status of Han officials [4].

3 The Development of Manchu Han Relations in the Mid Qing Dynasty

3.1 The Distribution of Political Power and the Interaction between Manchu and Han Officials

In the mid Qing Dynasty, the distribution of political power between the Manchu and Han dynasties and the interaction between Manchu and Han officials presented a

relatively complex situation. The distribution of political power between the Manchu and Han ethnic groups in the mid Qing Dynasty was not an absolute tilt, but rather provided certain development space for Han officials while maintaining the dominant position of the Manchu ethnic group. The interaction between Manchu and Han officials had both a cooperative and win-win aspect, as well as a competitive and conflicting aspect, which together shaped the political landscape of the mid Qing Dynasty.

In terms of power distribution, Manchu rulers still hold a dominant position in the central government. Key decision-making positions, such as Minister of War, are mostly held by Manchu nobles. However, over time, the status of Han officials has gradually risen [5]. On the one hand, this is because the consolidation of Qing Dynasty rule relied on the governance ability of Han Chinese scholars, and on the other hand, the imperial examination system provided an important pathway for Han Chinese scholars to enter the officialdom. In political interactions between Manchu and Han officials, there was both cooperation and competition. In some important political affairs, Manchu and Han officials were able to collaborate and cooperate. In addressing issues related to national economy and people's livelihood, such as managing floods and rectifying salt policies, Manchu and Han officials are often able to abandon ethnic differences and work together to provide solutions. They rely on their respective experiences and expertise to collaborate with each other.

But it cannot be ignored that there was also a certain degree of competition between Manchu and Han officials. There is an implicit competitive relationship between Manchu and Han officials in terms of official promotion and resource allocation. Manchu officials may have easier opportunities for promotion in the early stages due to their advantageous background [6]. Han officials, on the other hand, rely on their own knowledge and achievements to strive for higher positions and more power. This competition also had a certain impact on the political ecology of the mid Qing Dynasty. In order to balance the relationship between Manchu and Han officials, rulers often adopt some conciliatory strategies. In the appointment of some important positions, the proportion of Manchu and Han officials will be considered to maintain political stability.

3.2 Social Level Communication and Integration Between Manchu and Han

In the mid Qing Dynasty, the exchange and integration of Manchu Han relations at the social level further deepened, presenting a rich and colourful scene.

In terms of language, Manchu and Chinese languages influence each other. While learning Chinese, the Manchu people also incorporated some Manchu vocabulary into the language, enriching its expression. And the Han people also gained a certain understanding of the Manchu language through communication with the Manchu people. In terms of clothing culture, Manchu and Han styles borrow from each other. The traditional clothing elements of the Manchu people have gradually been accepted by the Han people, and the Manchu people have also been influenced by Han clothing, making their clothing styles more diverse [7]. Especially in the folk, the

daily attire of the Manchu and Han people gradually merged and there were no longer strict boundaries. The exchange of food culture is even more significant. The distinctive cuisine of the Manchu people, such as Saqima, has spread and been loved by people in Han areas. At the same time, the rich and diverse cooking techniques and cuisine of the Han ethnic group were also accepted by the Manchu people. Man-Han Banquet is a typical representative of the fusion of Manchu and Han food culture, which gathers the essence of Manchu and Han cuisine. In terms of customs and habits, Manchu and Han also blended with each other. Some Manchu festivals and customs, such as the Golden Festival, are gradually known to the Han people, while the Han people also actively participate in the celebration of traditional festivals, such as the Spring Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival. In important ceremonies such as weddings, funerals, and weddings, the forms and concepts of the Manchu and Han dynasties also influenced each other, gradually forming some common characteristics. In terms of living, with the coexistence of Manchu and Han ethnic groups, the architectural styles have also merged with each other. The courtyard style architecture of the Manchu people and the traditional dwellings of the Han people have borrowed from each other, forming a new living style.

This kind of social exchange and integration between Manchu and Han has promoted mutual understanding and recognition among ethnic groups, and enhanced mutual feelings. It not only enriched people's lives, but also laid the foundation for the stability and development of society in the mid Qing Dynasty, enabling the Manchu and Han ethnic groups to coexist harmoniously in a common social environment and jointly create a unique and colourful social culture.

4 The Relation Changes Between Manchu and Han in the Late Qing Dynasty

4.1 Cooperation and Differences Between Manchu and Han Under Internal and External Troubles

In the late Qing Dynasty, under the severe situation of internal and external troubles, the relationship between Manchu and Han underwent complex changes, with both cooperation and differences. In terms of cooperation, in the face of the impact of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom movement, the Manchu and Han forces jointly invested in the suppression action [8]. The Manchu generals commanded the battle, while the Han militia and local armed forces actively responded and cooperated in the operation, striving to maintain the rule of the Qing Dynasty. When resisting foreign aggression, the Manchu and Han military and civilians also joined hands to resist external enemies. For example, in the Sino Japanese War, Manchu and Han soldiers fought side by side on the battlefield, showing a certain degree of unity. However, the differences are equally significant. In terms of political power distribution, Manchu rulers attempted to firmly control core power and set many restrictions on the promotion and exercise of power by Han officials. This led to conflicts between

Manchu and Han officials, and some capable Han officials were unable to fully display their talents due to the suspicion of Manchu rulers [9].

In terms of benefit distribution, Manchu nobles often prioritize safeguarding their own interests and tend to maintain their own ethnic privileges in resource allocation, tax policies, and other aspects, which has caused dissatisfaction among the Han people. There has always been a deep concern and vigilance among Manchu rulers towards the rise of Han power. They are afraid that if Han officials hold too much power, it will shake the foundation of Manchu rule, so they still harbour suspicion and vigilance towards Han officials in the appointment of key positions and the formulation of important decisions. This uneven distribution of power led to conflicts and estrangement between Manchu and Han officials, and also made it difficult to smoothly implement policies that were beneficial to national development. There are also differences between Manchu and Han in their attitudes towards Western culture and technology [10]. Manchu conservatives tend to maintain traditional order and hold a skeptical and resistant attitude towards new things in the West. Some Han officials and intellectuals, on the other hand, are more open-minded and advocate actively learning advanced Western technologies and concepts in order to achieve national self-improvement. This complex relationship of cooperation and divergence reflects the dilemma of the relationship between the Manchu and Han dynasties in the late Qing Dynasty. Cooperation was necessary to maintain common rule and resist external threats, but deep-rooted ethnic differences and conflicts of interest led to the emergence of differences, which collectively influenced the political landscape and social development of the late Qing Dynasty.

4.2 The Role and Function of Manchu and Han in Reform

In the late Qing Dynasty, facing the dilemma of internal and external troubles, reform became the call of the times, and the Manchu and Han played different roles and played their respective roles. The Manchu ruling class showed a certain degree of passivity and conservatism in the reform. Some Manchu nobles, due to their long-term dominant position, are accustomed to the old system and order, and have insufficient understanding of the necessity and urgency of reform. However, some Manchu officials gradually awakened in the wave of reform and began to support some moderate reform measures. For example, in terms of military reform, they agreed to introduce Western military technology and training methods, and establish a new type of army. Han gentry and officials played a more active and important role in the reform. The Han Westernization Faction, represented by Li Hongzhang, Zhang Zhidong, and others, advocated for "learning from foreigners and developing skills to strengthen oneself", vigorously promoted modern industry, military industry, and civilian industry, and advanced the process of modernization in China. They actively introduced Western machinery, equipment, and production technology, and founded a series of modern enterprises such as Jiangnan Manufacturing Bureau and Hanyang Iron Works, laying the foundation for China's industrial development. In the field of ideology and culture, Han Chinese intellectuals took the lead in advocating for the reform of traditional education systems, promoting new-style education, and

cultivating practical talents. At the same time, they actively spread Western democratic ideas and scientific culture, providing ideological impetus for social change.

The roles played by the Manchu and Han ethnic groups in the wave of reform are complex and interdependent, jointly driving the wheels of history. The rulers of the Manchu people, either openly or secretly, provided legitimate support and necessary resources for the reform, which fueled the spark of change. The gentry and officials of the Han ethnic group spared no effort in promoting the process of reform, and their enthusiasm and wisdom provided a continuous source of motivation and practical solutions for the reform. However, due to various reasons, the reforms in the late Qing Dynasty were not able to completely reverse China's fate. But it cannot be denied that the efforts and explorations made by the Manchu and Han ethnic groups in the reform have accumulated valuable experience and wealth for later social changes. These experiences, like the lighthouse of history, illuminate the path of later generations.

5 The Influences of Manchu Han Relations on the Politics and Society of the Qing Dynasty

5.1 Political Influences

In terms of politics, the evolution of Manchu Han relations played an important role in the ruling strategy and power structure of the Qing Dynasty. In the early period of the dynasty, Manchu rulers took a series of measures to balance the relationship between Manchu and Han in order to consolidate their political power. On the one hand, they highly valued the Manchu people to ensure their dominant political position. In the core institutions of the central government, such as the Military Affairs Office, Manchu officials held key positions, which ensured the political influence of the Manchu people. On the other hand, in order to govern the vast Han areas, they also had to employ Han gentry and officials, leveraging their governance experience and local influence. This strategy of combining Manchu and Han to some extent stabilized the political situation in the early Qing Dynasty, but also led to power struggles and mutual restraint between Manchu and Han officials. Over time, the gradual integration of Manchu Han relations led to changes in the political system of the Qing Dynasty. For example, on the basis of inheriting the Ming Dynasty system, the Qing Dynasty continuously absorbed the political culture and governance concepts of the Han ethnic group, improved the imperial examination system, and selected more Han talents to enter the bureaucratic system. This not only improved the governance efficiency of the government, but also enhanced the legitimacy and sense of identity of the Qing dynasty among the Han people.

5.2 Social Influences

Culturally, the exchange and integration between Manchu and Han enriched the cultural connotation of the Qing Dynasty. The language, clothing, customs, and other

aspects of the Manchu people have to some extent influenced the Han people. At the same time, the Confucian culture, literature and art, and etiquette system of the Han people have also had a profound impact on the Manchu people. The mutual infiltration of Manchu and Han cultures has formed unique cultural characteristics of the Qing Dynasty. For example, Peking Opera developed against the backdrop of the fusion of Manchu and Han cultures.

In terms of language, the relationship between Manchu and Han has promoted the emergence of bilingualism. In the Qing Dynasty, especially in the communication between the court and Manchu Han officials, many people were able to proficiently use both Manchu and Chinese languages, which provided convenience for cross ethnic communication and exchange. The influence of Manchu Chinese relations on language is bidirectional. As the main language, Chinese's strong inclusiveness and influence have also prompted Manchu to absorb a large number of Chinese vocabulary and expressions in its development process. This mutual influence and integration in language not only reflects the communication and interaction between the Manchu and Han ethnic groups, but also an important manifestation of the continuous development and deepening of Manchu Han relations, adding unique colors to the diverse and integrated language and culture of the Chinese nation.

In terms of economy, the exchange between Manchu and Han promoted the prosperity of trade. The developed agriculture and handicrafts in Han areas complement the characteristic industries in Manchu areas, forming a broader market and more complex economic network. The cooperation and exchange between Manchu and Han merchants promoted the development of commerce and the prosperity of cities. The characteristics of mutual learning and integration between Manchu and Han are reflected in aspects such as diet, housing, and entertainment. In the long-term common life, the Manchu and Han people gradually formed some common ways of life and values.

The relationship between Manchu and Han had an undeniable impact on the political stability, institutional improvement, and cultural, economic, and social aspects of the Qing Dynasty. This influence not only shaped the unique historical landscape of the Qing Dynasty, but also provided important references for us to study the development of multi-ethnic countries.

6 Conclusions

The contradiction between Manchu and Han basically runs through the entire history of the Qing Dynasty. In terms of its development characteristics, it presents the features of early relaxation, mid to late confrontation between Manchu and Han, and later struggle. The relationship between Manchu and Han was not only the starting point of the Qing Dynasty's system and policies, but also naturally became and has always been the connecting point of many contradictions in the Qing Dynasty. Although the conflicts between the Manchu and Han dynasties in the mid Qing Dynasty had greatly eased compared to the earlier period. Overall, the contradictions between the Manchu and Han dynasties have been present throughout the entire

history of the Qing Dynasty. In terms of their developmental characteristics, they exhibit features of early relaxation, mid to late Manchu Han confrontation, and later struggle.

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