New Light on the Origins of the Manchus

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THE Manchus, members of the southern branch of the Tungus and better known before the early seventeenth century as the Jurchen, Jürčed, or Juchen, have had a much longer history than their present name suggests. They are a non-Han ethnic group in China and, according to the national census of 1982, have a population of just over four million. For the most part they live in Liaoning province in Northeast China. Despite their current minority status, the Manchus at one time were important in Chinese history. The Ch’ing dynasty (1644–1912) they founded, for instance, was a height of Chinese civilization as well as the breaking point between China’s traditional and modern history. Contemporary China has inherited many features from the Ch’ing, including her tremendous geographical dimensions and a huge population. But only the Ch’ing dynasty after the Opium War (1839–42) is well covered and adequately understood. Not until the last two decades have scholars begun to focus on the history of the Manchus before 1840. Given

the recent interest, the time seems propitious for a survey of the beginnings of the Manchus.

This article concentrates on the ancestry and ethnic composition of the Manchus, the origin of their name, and the reasons why it was adopted. Although the survey evaluates controversial views concerning the Manchus and makes suggestions, its purpose is not to create new issues or revise old ones. Rather, it will use recent scholarship to shed light on the origins of the Manchus. Because the Manchus are historically significant, a survey of their early history may be useful to the study of both the late Ming and early Ch‘ing dynasties.

THE EARLY ANCESTRY: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

For centuries the ancestors of the Manchus settled in China’s northeastern region, known to the West as Manchuria. This region, basically a great plain, connects the steppes and the desert in the west and northwest to the Great Khingan Mountains, borders Siberia on the north and the Korean peninsula on the south, and once extended to the Japan Sea.3 Because of its location, Manchuria became a melting pot for many ethnic groups from China, Mongolia, and Siberia. As one scholar points out, the Sungari valley in northern Manchuria was the meeting place of at least four prehistoric cultures: the valley of the Yellow River, the Mongolian desert and steppe, the Pacific coast, and the taiga area around Lake Baikal.4 It was out of this complex environment that the Manchu ancestors evolved.

The early ancestry of the Manchus is difficult to identify, in great part due to the geography of Manchuria. The numerous ethnic groups influenced one another and acquired foreign elements. With


4 For the latest study on the various ethnic groups, see Fu Lang-yün 傅朗雲 and Yang Yang 楊楊, Tung-pei min-tsu shih-lüeh 東北民族史略 (Ch‘ang-ch‘un: Chi-lin jen-min ch‘u-pan she, 1983) [hereafter TPMT], chs. 1–4. For the four prehistoric cultures, see Kwang-chih Chang, “Neolithic Cultures of the Sungari Valley, Manchuria,” Southwestern Journal of Anthropology 17.1 (1961): 56–74, esp. p. 56.
time, blood ties lost their importance as groups embracing members of diverse origins were formed on the basis of region.

The Chinese dynastic histories, the chief source of information on China’s frontier peoples, have also made it difficult to identify the early Manchu ancestry. They always labeled those people as barbarians and paid little or no attention to their ethnic and cultural differences, so that their information is both biased and sketchy. Moreover, the chroniclers were mainly literary men, not ethnologists or anthropologists, so that the dynastic histories often described only the most powerful groups, treating them as representative of all in the region. Consequently, their names changed in the dynastic histories whenever political domination shifted. Such defects in the sources make it difficult to identify the early ancestral line of the Manchus.

Like many other ethnic groups, the Manchus have had a long and complex ancestral line that is liable to controversies. Three controversial issues deserve our examination. One issue concerns the origin of the Tungus. Since its appearance in Western literature in the seventeenth century, the term “Tungus” has given rise to various theories about the etymology of the name and the original home of the people. Julius H. Klaproth, author of Asia Polyglotta, mentions that the term was derived from the word Donki, meaning “people,” which was the self-designation of some groups residing in Siberia. Another theory maintains that the name was used by the Yakuts, a Turkic people in Siberia, to deride their neighbors. At first the term circulated only among the local people, but later it was adopted by scholars to include other groups with similar characteristics. These two interpretations and their variants are not convincingly documented.

The most influential theory, advanced by Jean Pierre Abel

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5 For possible dates of its adoption, see Kan Chih-keng 干之敬 and Sun Hsiu-jen 孫秀仁, Heh-lung ch' u-pan 五嶺古代民族史綱 (Harbin: Heh-lung ch' u-pan she, 1986) [hereafter HLC], pp. 58-59.


Rémusat, a French linguist, holds that the name “Tungus” was derived from the words Tung-hu 東胡 (Eastern Nomads)—a Chinese term for a proto-Mongol people who were active in eastern Mongolia and part of Manchuria before the Christian era but who subsequently vanished.\(^8\) Perhaps because of its ingeniousness, this theory has appealed to many scholars, among whom were Édouard Chavannes, Feng Chia-sheng 馮家昇, Lü Chen-yü 吕振羽, Fu Lang-yün 傅朗雲, and Yang Yang 楊陽. Nevertheless, S. M. Shirokogoroff, an ethnographer and physical anthropologist, Shiratori Kurakichi 白鳥庫吉, a Japanese historian, and Ling Ch’un-sheng 凌純聲, a well-known Chinese anthropologist, have challenged this theory because of its obvious shortcomings. It indirectly identifies the Tung-hu people with the Tungus, who, as Ling contends, are essentially a branch of the Tung-i 東夷 (Eastern Barbarians), a designation loosely applied by the chroniclers of the dynastic histories to many ancient tribes in eastern China and Manchuria. Moreover, the Tung-hu people had since the beginning of the Christian era faded away from China’s borders and dynastic histories. Thus it is inaccurate to revive their name hundreds of years later.\(^9\)

Unlike other scholars, Shirokogoroff examines the region between the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers from a cultural perspective and considers it to be the Tungus ancestral homeland. According to him, some proto-Tungus, namely the ancestors of the Tungus, were pressured by Chinese migrants from the northwest during the third millennium B.C., or even earlier, to move to Manchuria. When con-

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fronted with the native Paleo-Asiatic settlers in Manchuria, the newcomers moved on to Siberia and laid the foundation of the northern Tungus. A later wave of proto-Tungus migrants remained in Manchuria and became the southern Tungus.\(^{10}\) Shirokogoroff's view is vigorously opposed by some scholars for its lack of scientific proof. Besides, it is tied to a groundless theory that advocates the western origin of the Chinese.\(^{11}\)

Some recent studies identify Manchuria as the original home of the Tungus. For example, the archaeological findings from the neolithic site in Mi-shan 密山 district, Heilungkiang province, are believed to be the artifacts of the Tungus.\(^{12}\) Given that the Tungus have resided in Manchuria for millennia, this view is worth considering, although more archaeological evidence is needed. Whenever the Tungus homeland may have been, the location doubtless has some bearing on early Manchu ancestry.

Another issue about the early ancestral line of the Manchus involves the myth of the origin of the Ch‘ing imperial house as told in a legend based on the bird myth popular among many Tung-i groups. Before the 1970s, the myth did not attract serious attention in spite of its importance to the early Manchu ancestry. The myth has two versions. One version, attributed to Hong-taiji 皇太極 (also known as Abahai, r. 1627-43), the second ruler of the Manchu state, is lengthy and elaborate. It first appeared in Ch‘ing T’ai-tsu Wu Huang-ti Nu-erh-ha-ch‘i shih-lu 清太祖武皇帝努爾哈赤實錄 (Veritable Records of Nurjaci, Emperor T’ai-tsu, the Martial, of the Ch‘ing Dynasty), which was completed in 1636.\(^{13}\) Since then it has been in-

\(^{10}\) Shirokogoroff, Social Organization of the Northern Tungus, pp. 141-45.


corporated into other Ch’ing official compilations, such as Ta-Ch’ing Man-chou shih-lu 大清滿洲實錄 (Veritable Records of the Reign of Nurgaci: Manchu Version), as a standard explanation for the beginnings of the Manchu imperial house. The story relates that three heavenly maidens, Enggulen 恩古倫, Jenggulen 正古倫, and Fekulen 佛古倫, were bathing in Bulhūri 布勒瑚里, or 布爾瑚里, Lake in the Long White Mountain of southern Manchuria. After swallowing a red berry deposited on her clothes by a divine magpie, Fekulen gave birth to a baby boy, Bukūri Yongṣon 布庫里雍順, who, enthroned by three tribal chieftains as their ruler, became the progenitor of the Ch’ing ruling house. And, the story continues, under him the state was called “Manchu,” the term adopted in 1635 by Hong-taiji as the name of his subjects.14

Thanks to imperial patronage, this version became the dominant, official account of the myth throughout the Ch’ing dynasty. Besides appearing in Ch’ing official compilations, it was cited in both semi-official and private works, such as the Tung-hua lu 東華錄 (Tung-hua Records), and the Manchus, or the Reigning Dynasty of China: Their Rise and Progress by Rev. John Ross.15 Even after the demise of the dynasty, the story often appeared in history books or reference works, among which are Ch’ing-shih kao 清史稿 (Draft History of the Ch’ing Dynasty), Ch’ing-tai t’ung-shih 清代通史 (General History of the Ch’ing Dynasty) by Hsiao I-shan 畲一山, and Lucien Gibert’s Dictionnaire Historique et Géographique de la Mandchourie.16 Although this


story was widespread, its validity has not been critically evaluated.

Scholarly interpretations changed with the discovery of a non-official version from the Chiu Man-chou tang 處滿洲傳 (The Original Archives in Old Manchu Script), which was published in 1969 by the National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan. In contrast to the official version, this one is simpler, shorter, earlier, and unadorned. It was first recounted in 1635 by Muksike 穆克什克, a member of the Hurka, or Hurha 呼爾哈, tribe. It resembles the official account, but the Bulhüri Lake, where the heavenly maidens bathed, was located at the foot of Bukūrī Mountain near the Amur River, or Heilungkiang 黑龍江, namely, in northern Manchuria. This oral version was shared by some Jurchen tribes in the Amur valley, for example, the Heje 赫哲 people. Most important, it agrees with the history of the Jurchens, who inhabited the Amur region before the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when many of them migrated south and became the earliest constituents of the Manchus. The non-official version thus helps to link both the Ch’ing imperial house and the early Manchu ancestry to the Amur valley.

The bird in the myth also plays a significant role in Jurchen tradition. One legend tells of a divine magpie that saved the life of Fanca 凡察, or 范察, a descendant of Bukūrī Yongšon, by misleading his enemy. Two other tales reveal that both Nurgaci 努爾哈赤 (1559-1626), founder of the Manchu state, and his successor, Hong-taiji, dreamed of birds before they defeated their rivals. The bird also figures in the religious life of the Heje people, a group related to the Manchus.¹⁸


¹⁸ Ch’ing T’ai-tsu Wu-huang-ti Nu-erh ha-ch’i shih-lu, 1.1, Ch’en Chieh-hsien 陳捷先, Man-chou ts’ung-k’ao 滿洲叢考 (Taipei: College of Arts, National Taiwan University, 1963), p. 51. For Nurgaci’s dream, see Shinkan Ichirōku, 1:2.9b–10a (T’ai-tsu’s reign); for Hong-taiji’s
The bird myths of the Jurchens provide clues in linking the Manchus to the Tung-i people in ancient Manchuria, who had similar legends. One story is about Ch’i 契, the founding ancestor of the Shang dynasty (1766–1122 b.c.), to whom Chien-ti 简狄 gave birth after having become pregnant by swallowing the egg of a divine black bird. This story and its variations appear in many sources and were popular among many tribes in Manchuria. Another legend concerns T’an-tzu 燕子, ruler of a small Tung-i principality, who related his ancestry to the birds.19 Archaeologists recently discovered a neolithic site in the eastern Amur region; among their findings was an eagle head carved on bone, which serves to verify the importance of the bird to the Tung-i people.20 The bird myths are inadequate sources and must be used judiciously, but they suggest traditions shared by several peoples. They are helpful in tracing the early Manchu ancestral line, especially when supplemented by other data.

Also controversial to the study of the Manchu ancestry are the Su-shen 肅慎 people, who were alternatively known as Hsi-shen 息慎 or Chi-shen 稼慎, and were active in Manchuria as early as the Shang and Chou dynasties (1766–256 b.c.). Early Chinese sources describe them as hunters, fishermen, primitive farmers, cave residents in cold days, tree dwellers during hot seasons, and users of wooden arrows with flint heads. The accuracy of these descriptions has been confirmed by recent archaeological findings from several sites in Heilungkiang province.21

dream, see Ta-Ch’ing li-ch’ao shih-lu, 57.32, T’ai-tsung’s reign, 6/8/30. For the bird and the Heje people, see TPMT, p. 177; Ling Ch’un-sheng, p. 114; Lattimore, “The Gold Tribe,” pp. 57, 60, and 62.

19 The story about the birth of Ch’i and its variations can be found in many sources, one of which is Mao-shih Cheng-chien 毛詩鄭箋 (SPPY ed.), 20.11a. In a careful study Kwang-chih Chang mentions some other sources containing the similar myth and also analyzes other ancient myths. See K. C. Chang, Early Chinese Civilization: Anthropological Perspectives (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 167–68. In a penetrating discussion Fu Ssu-nien 傅斯年 regards this myth as tales popular among the Tung-i people. See his Fu Meng-chen hsien-sheng chi 傅孟真先生集, 6 vols. (Taipei: National Taiwan University, 1952), 2:32–41. For the story of T’an-tzu, see Ch’un-ch’iu Tso-shih chuan Tu-shih chi-chiai 春秋左氏傳杜氏集解, 3 vols. (SPPY ed.), 3:23.24b–25a.


21 For a general description of the Su-shen people, see HLC, pp. 98–110; TPMT, pp. 13-
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Most sources regard the Su-shen people as the earliest ancestors of the Manchus, but scholars have different theories about their ethnicity. One interpretation regards the Su-shen as a Tungus group. This view has since the 1930s been expounded by an international group of scholars, among whom were Chinese and Japanese exponents such as Feng Chia-sheng and Shiratori Kurakichi, and a Roman Catholic missionary in Manchuria, Lucien Gibert, who advocated the same view in a French reference work. During the last decade, this interpretation has also recruited support from some Chinese historians and anthropologists.

Scholars who disagree with the above interpretation are divided. Some doubt the Tungus interpretation, but fail to offer any alternatives. The authors of *Tung-pei min-tsu shih-lüeh* (東北民族史略 (A Brief History of the Ethnic Groups in Manchuria) assign the Su-shen to the family of the Northeastern Barbarians (Tung-pei i 東北夷) without elaborating upon the latter’s origin in modern terms. Some believe that the Su-shen people were of Paleo-Asiatic origin.


23. For instance, the late Ling Ch‘un-sheng doubts about the relations between the Su-shen and the Tungus people. See his *Sung-hua chiang*, *p. 34. For the second example, see *TPMT*, *p. 14. For the last example, see Pamela Kyle Crossley, “Manzhou yuanliu kao and the Formalization of the Manchu Heritage,” JAS 46.4 (1987): 766, n. 16; Shirikogoroff, *Social Organization of the Northern Tungus*, p. 149.
After weighing various aspects of the issue, one is inclined toward the first interpretation, which is both more logical and better documented. But another question needs clarification——namely, were the Su-shen people a homogeneous ethnic group, or a political entity? Once again, there are two interpretations. Numerous Chinese sources, especially the dynastic histories, record the Su-shen as a unified and homogeneous group and treat them as the progenitors of all later groups of people in ancient Manchuria. In chronological order, these later groups were the I-lou 撫婁, Wu-chi 勿吉, Mo-ho 韦鞴, etc. Several historians——Yeh Hsiang-kao 彈拾高, Chin Yu-fu 金毓黻, and Meng Sen 孟森, to name just a few——refer to these groups as being the same people with different designations. As a result, they identify later groups with earlier ones—for example, the I-lou with the Su-shen, and the Wu-chi with the I-lou. Even very recent articles written by Hsi Liu-fang 喜柳芳, Yang Pao-lung 楊保隆, Ch’en Hsien-ch’ang 陳顯昌, and Chang T’ai-hsiang 張太湘, and published in the years 1980–85, subscribe to the same view. As one scholar complains, however, the weakness of this interpretation is apparent, because it follows a ‘‘mono-ethnogenetic’’ approach. It fails to explain how the Su-shen could have become the ancestors of so many ethnic groups and why they frequently had to change names.

At the other end of the controversy is the view based largely on a political approach and formulated possibly by Ting Ch’ien 丁謙 (1843–1919), a specialist in Chinese frontier history and geography.


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In a study of the ethnic groups on China's frontiers, Ting considers the Su-shen to be a political entity along with the I-lou as a tribe within it. He suggests that as a political entity, the Su-shen may comprise different ethnic groups as components. Because of its eloquence, his view is supported by Wu Shih-chien 吳士鑑, Liu Ch'eng-kan 劉承幹, Chien Po-tsan 謝伯贊, and Hsüeh Hung 薛虹. 27 With the further refinement of several new studies, it has become even more persuasive. The Su-shen appear in these studies as a "loose conglomeration" of tribes, mainly of Tungus origins. 28 Of course, the name changed when a different component group became dominant in the area.

The above interpretation fits in well with the historical and geographical pattern of Manchuria, which was, as discussed previously, a meeting place of diverse peoples and cultures. As a "loose conglomeration" of tribes, the Su-shen covered the Amur-Sungari-Ussuri region during the second and first millennia B.C. Among their constituents were the Paleo-Asiatics, who made up a major branch of the Tung-i and intermixed with the other branch, the Tungus. This conglomeration contributes to the controversies about the Su-shen people as well, the ancestors of the Manchus.

That the Su-shen people headed the early ancestral line of the Manchus is evident in several ways. The region the Su-shen inhabited was the homeland of the Southern Tungus, from whom the Jurchen people were descended. Chinese dynastic records and Ch'ing official compilations all link the Su-shen people, directly or indirectly, to the pedigree of the Manchus. This linkage is supported by many current studies. According to one new study, for example, the Manchus esteemed the gerfalcon and called it songkon, a


28 See, for example, Ch'i Yü-chen and Sun Chin-chi, p. 133; HLC, p. 106. For the term "loose conglomeration," see Hok-lam Chan, Legitimation in Imperial China (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), p. 52.
term phonetically related to the words "Su-shen," which originally suggested a falcon or wild goose.29

Furthermore, wooden arrows, a noted product of the Su-shen people and an item included in their tribute to China, were possibly made from birch. The Manchus also attached importance to birch and used it for making arrows. But an even more convincing link can be found in the Su-shen custom where men and women braided their hair into queues—a style later preserved by the Jurchens. The Manchus were the last custodians of this style.30 Although seemingly isolated or accidental, these customs, when taken together, clearly point to kinship between the Su-shen and the Manchus.

Next in the Manchu’s early ancestral line came the I-lou people, who were dugout dwellers and fierce fighters with powerful bows. They were active during the Former and Later Han periods (202 B.C.–A.D. 220) and populated roughly the Amur-Sungaria-Ussuri region. Some places in Manchuria were named after them. The name “I-lou” is also phonetically close to the Manchu word “yeru,” which means “pit, cave,” and, by extension, “dugout.” The artifacts from the excavations along the Wan-yen 蛟蜒 River, Sui-pin 綏賀, Heilungkiang province, appear to be the remains of I-lou culture.31

The origin of the I-lou is as controversial as that of the Su-shen. Many Chinese works treat them simply as the Su-shen by a different designation, while others disagree. Whether the I-lou were Tungusic or Paleo-Asiatic is yet another controversy. Considering

29 The Hou-Han shu, Wei-shu, and Chiu-T’ang shu link the Su-shen, I-lou, Wu-chi, and Mo-ho peoples. See note 24 above. The link is finally extended to the Manchus in A-kuei 阿桂 and Yü Min-chung 于敏中, comp., Ch’in-ting Man-chou yüan-liu k’ao 欽定滿洲源流考, Chintai Chung-kuo shih-liao ts’ung-k’an, series 14, vol. 131 (Taipei: Wen-hai ch’u-pan she, 1966) [hereafter CTMC], 1.3; 2.1b-2a; passim. For the songkon, see TPMT, p. 14.


all of the pertinent facts, one may infer that the term "I-lou" is a conglomerate. The I-lou and the Su-shen may be two branches of the same broad origin, populating the same area and perhaps intermixing with each other. The I-lou group became dominant after the decline or migration of the Su-shen around the first century. It is in this broad sense that one may link the I-lou to the early Manchu ancestry.

In the wake of the I-lou people, the Wu-chi 勿吉, 沃且, or 蘇集, tribe emerged in about the fifth century as the dominating group in Manchuria. They settled throughout much of Heilungkiang province and extended deep into western Kirin. They were tough fighters and politically divided into many regional groups. Perhaps the groups in the Kirin area were stronger than others and kept close tributary relations with China. Their culture, as represented by the remains from T'ung-jen 鋼仁, a hilly community in Sui-pin, Heilungkiang, closely resembled the Su-shen and I-lou cultures.

The ties between the Wu-chi and the Manchu ancestors seem close. In a long note, Shirokogoroff argues that the Wu-chi belonged to the Northern Tungus. Some recent studies also classify them as Tungus. In the Manchu language the word "weji" (Wu-chi) means forest. After being overshadowed by the Mo-ho people during the end of the sixth century, the Wu-chi inhabited the taiga, and their descendants remained forest residents until the rise of the Manchus. An additional connection between the Wu-chi and the Manchus is their belief in the Long White Mountain as a sacred place.

32 For those who consider the I-lou and Su-shen the same people, see notes 24 and 25 above. For those who do not consider these two groups the same people, see notes 27 and 28. For I-lou's being a Tungus people, see M. G. Levin and L. P. Potapov, eds., The Peoples of Siberia (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 692; Shiratori Kurakichi, 4: 522; Gibert, p. 342. In his Social Organization of the Northern Tungus, Shirokogoroff suggests that the I-lou were a Paleo-Asiatic people (p. 142). Ling Ch'un-sheng tends to agree with Shirokogoroff, see his Sung-hua chiang, pp. 33–34, 41 and 44. For Su-shen's migration, see TPMT, p. 55, Hsi Liu-fang, pp. 92–97.

33 TPMT, pp. 68–71 and 76; Levin and Potapov, p. 692; Ikeuchi Hiroshi 池内宏, Mansen-shi kenkyu 滿鮮史研究 (Kyoto: Zokokusha, 1951), pp. 469–523. For the cultural site in T'ung-jen, see Chang T'ai-hsiang, "Ts'ung tsui-hsin k'ao-ku hsüeh," pp. 28–29; TPMT, p. 70.

34 For the Wu-chi people's Tungus affiliation, see Shirokogoroff, Social Organization of the Northern Tungus, p. 363; HLC, pp. 53 and 212; Crossley, "Manzhou yuanniu kao and the Formalization of the Manchu Heritage," p. 769. For the Manchu word "wu-chi" (weji), see Yü-
The rise of the Mo-ho people marked an important stage in the history of the early Manchus. The Mo-hos, composed mainly of the Mo貊 and the Ho貊, do not seem identical with the Wu-chi people as recorded in old Chinese sources. Emerging in the region once inhabited by the Su-shen people, they contained many Su-shen descendants.\(^3^5\) In the sixth century the Mo-hos consisted of seven major tribes, which were further subdivided. The fragmentation may suggest that the Mo-ho were not a single ethnic group. They may comprise both the Paleo-Asiatics and the Tungus, but the Tungusic components were possibly dominant.

The Heh-shui 黑水 was one of the seven Mo-ho tribes and is the most relevant to this paper. Settling along the middle and lower Amur River, the Heh-shui were composed of sixteen subgroups. Some of their leaders received official titles from the T’ang dynasty (618–907) and maintained peace for her northeastern frontier.\(^3^6\) After 928 some of the subgroups moved into the ruins of the P’o-hai渤海 Kingdom (692–926), which was created by the Su-mo粟末, also one of the seven Mo-ho tribes. The Po-hai kingdom was conquered by the Khitans, founders of the Liao dynasty (947–1125).\(^3^7\) The new settlers benefited from the fertile land and high technology left by the Po-hai. But it was from the relatively backward Heh-shui tribe that the Jurchens emerged.\(^3^8\)

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\(^{35}\) For the Mo-ho people’s relation to the Mo and the Ho, see TPMT, p. 82; for their coverage of the descendants of the Su-shen, see ibid., p. 83. For some old Chinese accounts in question, see Pei-shih 北史 (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1967), 94.15b–16a; CTMC, ch. 5. A recent study considers the Mo-ho a non-Tungus people. See Li Hsüeh-chih 李學智, “Tui-yu Wu-chi, Mo-ho chung-tsü yü ming-ch’eng chih kuan-chien” 對於勿吉，靺鞨種族與名稱之管見, Ta-lù tsa-chih 大陸雜誌 15.6 (1957): 13–16; 15.7 (1957): 10–14. For a general survey of the Mo-ho, see Sei Wada, “The Natives of the Lower Reaches of the Amur River as Represented in the Chinese Records,” Memoirs of the Research Department of the Tōyō Bunkō 10 (1938): 50–53.

\(^{36}\) For the Hei-shui tribe, see Chin-shih 金史 (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1967), 1.1–4a; CTMC, ch. 5.


From the above discussion, one may conclude that recent studies throw a new light on the early ancestry of the Manchus. They deflate the mono-ethnogenetic approach, which had prevailed among scholars for decades. They also provide better interpretations for some issues about the Tungus and Su-shen peoples. Most important, they successfully demonstrate that the ancestry of the Manchus was intricate. The Manchu ancestors, from the Mo-ho back to the Su-shen, were regional tribes of diverse origins instead of a homogeneous ethnic group. True, recent studies fail to determine the exact affiliations among the groups or to discern their ethnic components. These failings result in part from the very complexity of the early Manchu ancestral line. Much greater clarity, however, can be achieved in reference to the recent ancestral line of the Manchus.

THE RECENT ANCESTRY

The first in the recent ancestral line of the Manchus were the Jur-chens, who founded the Chin dynasty (1115–1234). The term “Jurchen” (Chu-li-chen 朱里真, Nü-chen 女真, Lü-chen 慕真, or Nü-chih 女真, 女質), possibly meaning “gold,” was given to the Hei-shui people by their conquerors.39 The Liao dynasty divided the Jurchens into two categories. Those in southern Manchuria and under its direct control were referred to as the civilized Jurchens (shu Nü-chen 熟女真), while their less developed cousins in northern Manchuria were known as the “wild” or “savage” Jurchens (sheng Nü-chen 生女真).40 It was the Wan-yan 完顏 (Wanggiya in Manchu) clan, a subgroup of the wild Jurchens, who finally laid the foundation of the Chin dynasty.

The Wan-yan clan originally inhabited the valley of the Tumen and upper Yalu Rivers in southeastern Manchuria. In the early or mid-tenth century, under the guidance of its first ancestor, Han-p’u 韓普, the clan moved northward to the region of the Mu-tan 牡丹, or Hurha River. In due course the clan expanded to twelve bran-

40 Man-tsu chien-shih, p. 9; TPMT, p. 110.
ches, and their leaders served as officials of the Liao government. From the eleventh century on, it was a regional power which gradually became independent of Liao control. Under the leadership of A-ku-ta 阿骨打 (1068–1123), the Wan-yen clan devised a written language, defeated the Liao, and established the Chin dynasty. His successor, Wu-ch’i-mai 喬乞買 (r. 1123–35), completed the task by conquering the Liao as well as the Northern Sung dynasty (960–1126). For the first time the Manchu ancestors ruled a vast kingdom covering Manchuria, part of Mongolia, and North China.

The Manchus inherited a great deal from the Jurchens of the Chin dynasty. As a matter of fact, until 1635, when the term “Manchu” was officially adopted, they were known only as the Jurchens. After 1596, Nurgaci referred to himself as ruler of the Nü-chen, Later Chin (Hou-Chin 後金) or Chin state. Evidently all these terms were intimately associated with Jurchen ancestors. In some ways the banner system of the Manchus resembled the Chin institutions of meng-an 猛安 (chiliarchy) and mou-k’o 謀克 (century), which were both military and hereditary. Although chiefly military in nature, the meng-an and mou-k’o institutions also performed political and social functions and were the main prop of the Jurchen power.

The Manchus also inherited from their Jurchen progenitors funeral and religious practices, sports, a hair style, linguistic elements, and as many as ninety-four surnames.

The Chin dynasty declined with the rise of the Mongols and finally lost its mandate to them in 1234. During the Yüan dynasty, the Jurchen people underwent great changes. Many of them had been Sinicized and were treated as Northern Chinese in the Yüan ethnic hierarchy. Some perished in the Mongol war of conquest, and some served in the Yüan government and acquired Mongol identity. The

41 Tao, pp. 16–17; Chan, p. 55.
42 Tao, pp. 18–20; Chan, pp. 56–58.
43 For the names of the state after 1596, see Huang Chang-chien 黃彰健, “Nu-erh-hachi’ih so-chien kuo-hao k’ao” 努兒哈赤所建國號考, CYYY 37.2 (1967): 421–48.
45 Sung Te-chin 宋德金, “Chin-tai Nü-chen tsu-shu shu-lun” 金代女真族俗述論, LSYC 3 (1982): 145–59. For the linguistic similarity, see CTMC, 18.13b–16a; for the ninety four surnames, see CTMC, 7.5b–8b.
Jurchens in Manchuria were divided into two major groups, given special designations, and controlled by different administrative structures. One group resided in southern Manchuria, roughly from the Kirin-Heilungkiang border to the Liao-tung peninsula. They were more advanced than the Jurchen tribes in northern Manchuria and were, according to Yuan usage, referred to as the “Jurchens.” In other words, the term “Jurchens” was then a name for only part of the people in question. The “Jurchens,” together with the Chinese and the Koreans of the same region, lived under the Yuan provincial government supplemented by a few myriarchies (wan-hu fu 萬戶府) or regional garrison units. Assimilated to the Chinese toward the middle of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), they were not the direct ancestors of the Manchus.46

The second major group under the Yuan government was the less developed Jurchens called the “Water Tartars” (Shui ta-ta 水達達). They were hunters and fishermen scattered over the eastern half of northern Manchuria and ruled by five myriarchies: T’ao-wen 桃溫, Hurha (Hu-li-kai 胡里改), Odoli (Wo-to-lien 翁托倫), T’o-wo-lien 脫斡倫, and P’o-k’u-chiang 孟朵江. It was from the Water Tartars, especially those of the Hurha and Odoli myriarchies that the immediate Manchu ancestors were descended.47

Besides these two main Jurchen groups, there were the Wu-che 吳越 tribe in the lower reaches of the Amur River; the Gilyaks 費雅喀, 飛牙喀, or 基里亞克 (also Chi-li-mi 吉里迷, 乞烈迷 in Chinese sources), around the estuary of the same river; and the Ku-wei 骨嵬 in Sakhalin. These were far-flung tribes, who fished and hunted. During the Yuan dynasty, they were administered by the Office of the Eastern Expedition Marshal (Tung-cheng yüan-shuai fu 東征元帥府),


and during the Ming period, they were under the jurisdiction of the Nurkal Military Commission (Nu-erh-kan tu-ssu 奴兒干都司). 48

Under early Mongol rule, the Jurchen groups in Manchuria enjoyed relative stability and progress. During natural disasters, they were given food and other assistance by the Yüan government. At the same time, they had to pay taxes, to send tributes, particularly gerfalcons, which helped the Mongols to hunt, and to perform both labor and military services. But toward the mid-fourteenth century, the Yüan dynasty had become weakened by domestic problems, and its demands for gerfalcons had grown excessive. Consequently, the Water Tartars and the Wu-che tribe staged several rebellions. 49 Although Mongol supremacy ended in 1368, it was not until the seventeenth century that the Jurchen people were again blessed by fortune.

The transition from Yüan to Ming affected the political situation of the Jurchen people in Manchuria. Though they had been driven out of China, the Mongols continued to be a threat and a prime source of anxiety for the Ming rulers. For instance, the Mongols in Manchuria held out against the Ming for twenty years (1368–87). They frequently attacked China, especially after the Yung-lo period (1403–24), the apex of Ming power. The Ming government gave border defense priority and made sure that there were sufficient troops to deal with Mongol invaders. At the same time, they adopted a non-military policy of indirect control, or loose rein (chi-mi 落麾), toward the Jurchens. 50 As a result, the Ming was less effective than the Yüan in controlling the Jurchen tribes.

48 Each of the three tribes had various renderings of its name, but it is inadvisable to list all of them here. The Wu-che were descended from the Wu-chi of the fifth and sixth centuries. The Chi-li-mi were the ancestors of the Gilyaks who are known today as Nivkhis in Russia. The Ku-wei, also known as K’u-i 苦夷, were descendants of the Mo-ho. For the three tribes, see TPMT, pp. 68–69, 138, and 177–78; Yang Pao-lung, “Ch’ien-t’an Yüan-tai ti Nü-chên jen,” pp. 17–18; Wada, “The Natives of the Lower Reaches of the Amur River,” pp. 53–55; Hsiao, The Military Establishment of the Yuan Dynasty p. 186, notes 179–80 and 182; for the Nivkhis or Gilyaks, see Levin and Potapov, pp. 767–87. For the Office of the Eastern Expedition Marshal, see Yüan-shih, 10.10a; Man-tsu chien-shih, p. 13; Yang Yang, Yüan Lü-k’un 袁閏琨, and Fu Lang-yūn, Ming-tai Nu-erh-kan tu-ssu chi-ch’i wei-so yen-chiu (Kai-feng: Chung-chou Shu-hua she, 1982), p. 17.

49 For their progress under the Yüan, see Rossabi, pp. 6–7; for Yüan beneficial measures, see ibid., pp. 5–6; Yüan-shih, 16.24b; for their obligations and rebellions, see Rossabi, pp. 4–5, 8–9; Yüan-shih, 41.8a.

50 For the Mongols in Manchuria, see the biography of Naghuchu in L. Carrington
Without the protection or arbitration of the Ming, the Jurchens in northern Manchuria were vulnerable to the marauding Mongols, intertribal conflict, and intra-tribal feuds. These difficulties, along with economic and social problems, led to tribal migrations, largely southward, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Later, because of Chinese punitive campaigns, Korean expeditions, and natural disasters, some tribes became even more restless, moving from one settlement to another in the south. On the whole, such migrations resulted in a new configuration of the Jurchen tribes. Since the mid-Ming dynasty, the Jurchen had appeared in three main groups: Chien-chou, Hai-hsi, and "Yeh-jen" (savage or wild). These divisions were made by China according to geographical, administrative, and cultural criteria. In the early seventeenth century these groups were unified, and the Manchus emerged out of the unity, as the next section will discuss.

Before the Manchus rose, various Jurchen groups submitted to the Ming dynasty's guard-post system (wei-so chih-tu 衛所制度), an institution begun by the Mongols in China. The Hung-wu Emperor (r. 1368-98) installed the system in southern Manchuria, as well as along China's northern frontiers. His successors, especially the Yung-lo Emperor, extended it northward as far as Sakhalin.

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The three divisions were coined in the Mid-Ming period. See Chiang Hsiu-sung 蔣秀松, "Hai-hsi yü Hai-hsi Nü-ch'en" 海西與海西女真, MTYC 5 (1981): 33, and the three divisions were based on political, geographical, cultural factors. See ibid. pp. 33-35.

For the Mongol connection with the system, see Romeyn Taylor, "Yuan Origins of the Wei-so System" in Charles O. Hucker, ed., Chinese Government in Ming Times: Seven Studies
Manchuria had two basic types of guard-post system. One was the Liao-tung Military Commission (Liao-tung tu-ssu 遼東都司), first created in 1371 as a guard and finally consolidated in 1375. It centered in the east valley of the Liao River in southern Manchuria, and governed all the ethnic groups under its jurisdiction, with emphasis on the Chinese. The other type was the Nurkal Military Commission, founded in 1404 as a guard and raised to a higher level in 1409. It covered the Jurchen tribes from the Amur-Sungari-Ussuri valleys to Sakhalin and lasted until the beginning of the seventeenth century. The aforementioned three main groups of Jurchens were also under its jurisdiction. Unlike the Liao-tung Commission which was staffed mainly by Chinese, the Nurkal Military Commission consisted largely of Jurchen chieftains. Generally speaking, each commission was divided, in descending order, into the guard (wei 衛), the chiliarchy (ch’ien-hu so 千戶所), and the century (po-hu-so 百戶所).  

Through the guard-post system, the Ming government exercised indirect control over the Jurchen people. They were allowed to keep their own political, economic, and social institutions, while their chieftains were given hereditary official appointments at various levels of the system. The appointments strengthened the status of

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54 For the Liao-tung Military Commission, see Yang Yang, Li Chih-t’ing, and Fu Lang-yün, “Ming-tai Liao-tung tu-ssu chi ch’i’ei wei ti yen-chiu” 明代遼東都司及其衛的研運, She-hui k’o-hsüeh chi-k’an 社會科學輯刊 6 (1980): 77–83. For the Nurkal Military Commission, see Wada Sei, “Minshō no Manshū keiryaku,” pp. 345–72; Yang Yang et al, Ming-tai Nuerh-kan tu-ssu, chs. 3–7. For the founding of the Nurkal Military Commission, see Li Chien-ts’ai 李健才, Ming-tai Tung-pei 明代東北 (Mukden: Liaon-ning Jen-min ch’u-pan she, 1986), p. 52. For an analysis of these two types of guard-post system, see Lin, “Manchuria in the Ming Empire,” pp. 1–43.
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the chieftains as rulers of their people and authorized them to lead the tributary missions to the Ming emperor—missions that provided the Jurchens with opportunities for trade with China. In exchange, the chieftains were obligated to preserve frontier peace for China, to send tributes to the Ming court, to accept Chinese arbitration, and to perform various special tasks.55 The imperial house of the Ch'ing dynasty had served as officials of the system since the early fifteenth century.

For approximately two centuries the Ming dynasty was able to control the Jurchens through the guard-post system. When confronted with problems from the 1570s onwards, the Ming dynasty could no longer keep the Jurchens in line. It was under these circumstances that Nurmagci emerged and began to unify the Jurchen tribes. Finally his successor, Hong-taiji, gave the unified Jurchen people a new designation—Manchus.

COMPONENTS OF THE MANCHUS

The Manchus were far from a homogeneous ethnic group. They comprised both Jurchen and non-Jurchen elements, who might be thought of as layers successively added to a main stem: first the Chien-chou and Mao-lien Jurchens, then the Hulun tribes, and finally the "wild" Jurchen groups. Among the non-Jurchen components were Chinese, Mongols, and Koreans.

The Chien-chou tribes, the innermost layer, originated from the Hurha and Odoli, two myriarchies founded among the Water Tartars by the Yüan dynasty and centering around the I-lan district, Heilungkiang province.56 As mentioned before, the chaos during the Yüan-Ming transition disrupted the socioeconomic life of many Jurchen groups. In search of better places to live, the Jurchens of both myriarchies independently began their southern march, which lasted almost two decades following the late 1380s. Eventually the Hurha tribe seemed to have settled in the area of present-day Ussurijsk, known under the Po-hai Kingdom as Chien-chou, which later

became the designation of the Jurchens of the Hurha and Odoli tribes. The Odoli tribe founded its new base close to Hoeryong 韓寧, which was near the Tumen River in Korea. Neither settlement was permanent; military, political, or economic considerations subsequently forced both tribes to move several times. Each move signified a new stage of development vital to their political future. From their settlements they maintained political and economic relations with both China and Korea, relations that contributed to their growth. In time they absorbed new groups and expanded into four branches. The organizational changes laid the foundations for the advent of the Manchus.

In carrying out its pacification policy toward the Jurchens, the Ming government in 1403 created the Chien-chou Guard near the Hurha settlement. The chieftain of the Hurha tribe, Aqacu 阿哈出 (d. 1409), also known as Yü-hsü-ch’u 於虛出, or Li Ch’eng-shan 李誠善, was made commander (chih-hui shih 指揮使) of the new establishment. During the years 1412–17 the Odoli settlement evolved into the Left Chien-chou Guard, with Menggetumur 猛哥帖木兒 (also Mengke Temur, d. 1433), chieftain of the tribe, as regional commissioner (tu chih-hui shih 都指揮使). It was finally from this Left Chien-

57 For Chien-chou as a place of the Po-hai Kingdom, see Meng Sen, Ming-Ch’ing shih shih lun-chu chi-k’an 明清史論著集刊 (Taipei: Shih-chiai shu-chu, 1961), p. 357. But Owen Lattimore suggests that the name “Chien-chou” was “a re-transcription into Chinese of a Tungusic corruption of the Chinese Chin-tsu—‘the tribe of the Chin,’ or Jurchid.” He further points out that the name was at first not regional, “though it came to be used regionally. . . .” See Inner Asian Frontiers of China, p. 116, n. 29. For the Usurijsk site, see Chang T’ai-hsiang, “Lun Chien-chou Nü-ch’ên yüan-liü yü nan-ch’ien,” p. 59; Li Chien-ts’ai, pp. 71–81. Other views are suggested by Hsüeh Hung, who identifies Feng-chou 奉州 as the right location (“Ming-tai ch’u-ch’i Chien-chou,” p. 28), and Yang Yang et al., who contend that the site should be along the Sui-fen 綏芬 River, (Ming-tai Nu-erh-kun tu-ssu, pp. 207–13). For the founding and locations of the Chien-chou Guards, see Kenshi ぎょききこ 建州疆域考, 2 vols. (n.p., n.d., hand-written), 1:8b–60a; and Wang Chung-han, “Ming-tai Nü-ch’ên-jen ti fen-pu,” pp. 3, 11–12.


59 For the creation of the Chien-chou Guard and Aqacu’s appointment, see Ming Shih-ku 明實錄, 183 vols. (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1962–68), 25.6b, Yung-lo Reign, 1/11/27; DMB, p. 839.

60 Official Ming sources fail to give any date for the founding of this guard. See Hsüeh
chou Guard that the Manchu imperial house emerged. According to the late Meng Sen, Menggetimur was a great-grandson of Bukūri Yongson, the chief character in the founding myth of the Manchu state. Menggetimur is also identified with the person of Mengtem 孟特穆, who appears in official Ch’ing sources as the dynasty’s Primeval Emperor and First Ancestor (*Chao-tsu Yüan-huang-ti* 赤祖原皇帝). Nurgaci, the unifier of the Jurchen people, was a sixth generation scion from the line of Menggetimor.

The Left Chien-chou Guard was also significant in another way. By 1442 the Ming court created out of it the Right Chien-chou Guard, with Fanca 凡察 (d. 1451), Menggetimur’s half-brother, as its chief. With this creation, the Chien-chou Jurchens had three main branches, each referred to as a tribe. These tribes lasted until the rise of Nurgaci during the early Wan-li period (1573–1620). Despite occasional feuds, they were on good terms among themselves. There was intermarriage between the ruling houses of the Chien-chou and Left Chien-chou Guards, and for about a decade after 1440, the two branches settled in the same area of Hetu Ala 赫圖阿拉 (present-day Hsin-pin 新賓, Liao-ning province). The third branch, the Right Chien-chou Commandery, was at one time also settled there. The conjunct settlement signified the formation of the nucleus of the Manchus.

Hung, “‘Ming-tai ch’u-ch’i Chien-chou,,’” p. 31. One source regards the year 1417 as the founding date. See Wu T’ing-hsieh 吳廷燮, “‘Chien-chou piao’” 建州表, *Tung-pei ts’ung-k’an* 東北叢刊 13 (1931): 5. For a detailed description about the Left Chien-chou Guard, see *Kenshū kyoiki kō*, 2:1a–41a. For Menggetimur, see *DMB*, pp. 1065–67. For his being made regional commissioner, see *Chason wanggo sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄, 48 vols (Seoul: Kuksa P’yŏnch’ŏn Wiwonhoe, 1955–58), T’aep’jok 1, 11.351, 6/3/6.

61 For Menggetimur’s being identified as Mengtem, see Meng Sen, *Ming-Ch’ing shih chiang-i*, p. 369. For Menggetimur’s relations with Bukūri Yongson, see ibid., pp. 369 and 371; and Meng Sen, “Ch’ing Shih-tsu Pu-k’u-li Yung-shun chih k’ao-ting” 清始祖布庫里雍順之考訂, *CYY* 3.3 (1932): 345–52.

62 *Ming shih-lu*, Cheng-t’ung reign, 89.6, 7/2/13; Wu T’ing-hsieh, 13 (1931): 17; *Kenshū kyoiki kō*, 2:41b–51b.

63 For the matrimonial relations between these two houses, see Wu Han 吳晗, *Tu-shih cha-chi* 讚史稿記 (Peking: San-lien Shu-tien, 1979), pp. 46, 47–48; Meng Sen, *Ming-yüan Ch’ing-hsi t’ung-chi* 明元清系通記, 16 vols. (Peiping: College of Arts, National Peking University, 1934), “Cheng-pien” 正編, 3.51a. For their conjunct settlement, see *Ming shih-lu*, Cheng-t’ung reign, 71.8a, 5/9/20; *Chason Wanggo Sillok*, T’aep’jok 1, 21.580, 11/4/26. For the conjunct settlement of the three tribes for about a decade, see Sonoda Kazuki, “Kenshū sanci no ichi ni tsuite” 建州三衛の位置に就いて, *SZ* 60.4 (1951): 34; *DMB*, pp. 840, 1066–67. For
The Chien-chou Jurchens actually consisted of a fourth branch, the Mao-lien group, which also originated in the Hurha tribe. In their southward migration, mentioned before, the Hurha people split into two groups. The main body moved to the Ussurijsk area, while the smaller group settled along the northern bank of the Tumen River, the present borderline between North Korea and Manchuria. In the river bank settlement, the newcomers mingled with the natives, who were descendants of the Po-hai people. They named ‘‘Mao-lien” after the designation of the guard set up by the Ming government at that location in 1406.64

Relations between Mao-lien and Chien-chou Guards were strengthened by later events. The Yi dynasty (1392–1910) in Korea tried to control the Jurchens within or near its borders, and one of its targets was the Mao-lien Guard. In 1410, the Korean troops threw the Mao-lien Guard into chaos by killing its commander Pa-erh-sun 把兒遜, or Po-i-so 波乙所. In an attempt to stabilize the situation, the Ming court appointed Mengke Bukha 猛哥不花 (d. ca. 1429)—who was an officer of the Chien-chou Guard and a younger brother of Li Hsien-chung 李顯忠 (d. ca. 1420), the guard’s chief—to the Mao-lien commandship. The appointment virtually made the Mao-lien a fourth branch of the Chien-chou Jurchens. Active throughout a wide area, including most of the Liao-tung valley and southeast Kirin province, the four branches formed the core of the Manchus.65

the movements of the Chien-chou Guard itself, see Wada Sei, Toashi kenkyü, pp. 478–84. For the importance of their conjunct settlement, see TPMT, p. 153; Yang Yang et al., Ming-tai Nu-erh-kan tu-ssu, pp. 218–19.

64 For the origin and location of the Mao-lien tribe, see Chiang Hsiu-sung, ‘‘Mao-lien wei ti pien-ch’ien” 毛僕晉的變遷, She-hui k’o-hsiüeh chi-k’ an, 1 (1984): 99–100. But another study identifies its location in Mu-leng 穆棱, Heilungkiang, which is far northward. For its inclusion of the Po-hai element, see Cheng Hsiao 鄭曉, Huang-Ming ssu-i-k’ao 皇明四夷考 (Kuo-hsüeh wen-k’u ed., Series 1, Peiping: Wen-tien ko, 1933), p. 38; Shen Mou-shiang 沈懋賞, comp., Ssu-i kuang-chi 四夷廣記 (Hsüan-lan t’ang ts’ung-shu hsü-chi ed.), 97:606a. The Po-hai people were made up of three components: the Fa 發 tribe, the Su-mo tribe of the Mo-ho people, and some Koguryō 高句麗 people. see TPMT, pp. 85–86. For the founding of the Mao-lien Guard, see Ming shih-lu, 49.2, Yung-lo reign, 3/12/12.

65 For the death of Pa-erh-sun and the Ming reaction to it, see Chiang Hsiu-sung, ‘‘Mao-lien wei ti pien-ch’ien,” p. 101; Ming Shih-lu, 119.1a, Yung-lo reign, 9/9/3. In 1438, the Mao-lien Guard was divided into two groups, one of which was under Pa-erh-sun’s descendants. For the division of the Mao-lien Guard, see Chiang Hsiu-sung, ‘‘Mao-lien wei ti pien-ch’ien,” pp. 101–102. For the intimate relations between the Mao-lien and the three Chien-
Another component of the Manchus consisted of the Hulun tribes, which originated in the Hai-hsi Jurchens. Although originally applied to a relatively small region, the term "Hai-hsi" was liberally interpreted in official Ming sources and covered numerous guards from northern Liao-ning province to most of the entire Amur Valley, with the Sungaria Valley as its center. The present discussion focuses only on three of the Hai-hsi guards: Left T’a-shan 塔山左衛, T’a-lu-mu 塔魯木, and Fu-t’i 弗提. Because they settled in the area of the Fulahun River, known today as the Hu-lan 呼蘭 River, they were referred to as the Hu-la-wen 忽剌溫 Jurchens. The terms "Hu-lan" and "Hu-la-wen" are phonetic corruptions of the word "Fulahun," from which the designation "Hulun" is also derived.

Toward the end of the fifteenth century, for economic, social, and military reasons, the Left T’a-shan, T’a-lu-mu, and part of the Fu-t’i Guards each began southwestern movements. During the years 1530–70 they settled between the upper reaches of the Liao and Sungari Rivers. Later the Left T’a-shan settlement split into two tribes, Hada 哈達 and Ula 烏喇, whereas the T’a-lu-mu and Fu-t’i communities respectively became the Yehe 葉赫 and Hoifa 輝發 tribes. In Ming sources they appear as the four Hulun tribes. In addition to geographical proximity, they shared the same clan name, Nara 納喇, a Jurchen surname of long standing. For nearly three decades after the 1570s they formed a bloc to confront the alliance of the four Chien-chou branches. Because of economic and political factors, however, the solidarity of the four tribes gave way to enmity, thus easing the way for Nurgaci’s entry. After being conquered


66 For the origin of the term "Hai-hsi,” see Chiang Hsiu-sung, “Hai-hsi yü Hai-hsi Nü-chen,” p. 31; for its geographical location and historical meanings, see ibid., pp. 32-33 and 34, and Ts’ung pei-yüan, p. 8; Li Chien-ts’ai, pp. 60–61, 144–45. In his detailed study, “Ming-tai Nü-chen-jen ti fen-pu,” Professor Wang Chung-han regards the Sungari valley as its main locations (pp. 5 and 10). For the three guards, see Yang Yang, et al., Ming-tai Nu-erh kan tu-su, pp. 113, 147–50. For the relations between the terms "Fulun" and "Fulahun," see Ts’ung P’ei-yüan, p. 13. The term “Fulahun” is a Manchu word meaning light red. See Yu-chih wu-t’i Ch’ing-wen chien, 2: 3203.

67 For the formation of the Hulun tribes and their southwestern migration, see Ts’ung P’ei-yüan, pp. 8–14.

68 For reasons for the close relations among the Hulun tribes, see ibid., pp. 16–17. Nara was an old Jurchen surname at least since the Chin 金 dynasty. See CTMC, 7.6b.
in 1599–1619, they joined hands with the Chien-chou Jurchens to become the early constituents of the Manchus.

As a component of the Manchus, the “Wild” Jurchens occupied the area stretching from the entire Amur valley to the banks of the Ussuri River and from these two rivers to the Okhotsk and Japan Seas. Contrary to popular opinion, the “Wild” Jurchens were not necessarily less civilized simply because the Ming government referred to them, including the Chien-chou and Hai-hsi, as “wild” or “savage.” The term “Wild Jurchens” was actually no more than a rather vague and biased classification based on traditional Chinese values. According to recent studies, the far-flung Jurchen tribes whose chieftains did not regularly receive official titles from the Ming court or send tributes to it were usually recorded in official compilations as “wild” people. One may therefore conclude that the “wild” people were largely outlying Jurchen tribesmen, who spoke Tungus dialects and engaged in hunting.

The “Wild” Jurchens were divided into two main groups: Eastern Sea (Tung-hai 東海) and Amur River. In the Eastern Sea group were the Weji 瀋集 tribesmen, who were the descendants of the aforementioned Wu-chi people, the Warka 瓦尔喀 tribes, the Hurha 虎尔哈 or 庫尔喀, and the Goldi, known to the Russians as the Nanays. In general, these tribes settled in the region between the lower Sungari and the Japan Sea, including the Maritime District of the Soviet Union today. Because they were closely connected with the Chien-chou and Hai-hsi Jurchens in language and customs, Nurgaci sent troops as early as 1598 to unify the Eastern Sea tribes, with the Warka people as his first target. After nearly thirty years of military and diplomatic campaigns, he finally brought the entire region under his control.


70 The two major divisions are based on Yen Ch’ung-nien 閻崇年, Nu-erh-ha-ch’ i h chuan 努尔哈赤傳 (Peking: Pei-ching ch’ u-pan she, 1983), pp. 73–90. For the unification of the Eastern Sea groups by Nurgaci, see ibid., pp. 74–83; Lü Kuang-t’ien and Ku Ch’ing-yao, p. 93; G. V. Melikhov, “The Process of the Consolidation of the Manzhou Tribes under Nuerhaqi and
The Amur River Jurchens were divided into even more tribes. Those who inhabited the region from the Amur estuary to the Island of Sakhalin were the Reindeer Tungus, among whom were the Gilyaks and Oronchons 鄂倫春, respectively referred to as the Nivkhis and Evenks according to Russian sources. Along the northern bank of the middle Amur were the Sahalin 薩哈連 tribes, with some of the Hurha groups on its southern bank. The Solons 索倫, Dahurs 達呼爾, Oronchons, and O-wen-k’e 鄂溫克 (also known as Yakuts or Evenks) inhabited the upper course area of the Amur River.\(^7\)

From 1616 onward, Nurgaci made efforts to unify the middle and lower Amur Valley Jurchens, such as the Sahalin, Goldi, Reindeer Tungus, and Hurha tribes. He succeeded to an extent, although he did not fully control them. His heir, Hong-taiji, completed the job, unifying most of the tribes of the upper Amur course.\(^7\)

During the early Ch’ing dynasty, the Manchus were conventionally divided into the Old (fu 佛 or chiu 舊) and the New (ice 伊徹

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\(^7\) For the Amur group, see Yen Ch’ung-nien, pp. 83-90; Lü Kuang-t’ien and Ku Ch’ing-yao, pp. 94–95. For the Gilyaks, Nivkhis, and Solons, see Levin and Potapov, pp. 687, 620, and 624; Sei Wada, “The Natives of the Lower Reaches of the Amur River,” pp. 89, 94. 97–98. The Dahurs originated in the Solons, according to Wang Chung-han, Ch’ing-shih ts’e-k’ao 清史雜考 (Peking, Jen-min ch’u-pan she, 1957), pp. 99–116. According to Shirokogoroff, Social Organization of the Northern Tungus (pp. 83–84), the Dahurs were perhaps a Mongolized Tungus group. For the Oronchons, see Feng Chün-shih 馮君實, “O-lun-ch’un tsu t’an-yüan 鄂倫春族探源, CSHP 2 (1979): 77–86. For the O-wen-k’e tribes, see Lü Kuang-t’ien, “Ch’ing-tai pu-t’e-ha ta-sheng O-wen-k’e jen ti pa-ch’i chi-kou” 清代布特哈打牲鄂溫克人的八旗結, MTYC 3 (1983): 23–31. The term O-wen-k’e is transliterated from “Evenks.”

Shirokogoroff provides long supplementary notes on most of these groups in his Social Organization of the Manchus (Shanghai: Royal Asiatic Society, North China Branch, 1924), pp. 169–70; 176–77. The Oronchon and O-wen-k’e groups were closely related to, and sometimes confused with, the Solon people. See TPMT, pp. 169–73; Chung-kuo shao-shu min-tsu 中國少數民族, ed. Kuo-chia min-wei min-tsu wen-t’i wu-chung ts’ung-shu pien-chi wei-yüan hui 國家民委民族問題五種叢書編輯委員會, (Peking: Jen-min ch’u-pan she, 1981), pp. 97–99, 109–10.

\(^7\) For the unification of the Amur Valley group by Nurgaci and Hong-taiji, see Melikhov, pp. 72-80, 82, 85–86; Anami Korehiro 阿南惟敬, “Shin Taisō no Kokuryūkō seito ni tsuite” 清太宗的黑龍江征討について, Bōei Dai Gakkō kiyō 防衛大學紀要 6 (March 1962): 1–29.
or hsin 新). The Jurchens who voluntarily or involuntarily joined Nurgaci or Hong-taiji before 1636 were the Old Manchus. They were the hard core of the Banner forces responsible for the rise of the Ch’ing dynasty. More than two thirds of the 645 clan names recorded in the Pa-ch’i Man-chou shih-ts’u t’ung-p’u 八旗滿洲氏族通譜 (Genealogy of the Manchu Clans in the Eight Banners) joined the Nurgaci bloc before 1636. Nearly all the powerful clans—Guwalgiya 瓜爾佳, Niohuru 鈕祜祿, Sumuru 舒穆祿, to name only a few—submitted to Nurgaci before his death. 73 It was largely because of the cooperation of these powerful clans that Nurgaci and Hong-taiji were able to build their political and military strength.

The New Manchus were mainly the outlying “Wild” Jurchen tribesmen such as the Solons, Dahurs, Oronchons, and O-wen-k’es. Because they were scattered over a great distance, they were brought into the Manchu banners relatively late. Most of them were conquered by Hong-taiji in the years 1636–43, while some submitted to the Ch’ing as late as the K’ang-hsi period (1662–1722). On the whole, they sprang from small, obscure clans and played a relatively insignificant role in the founding of the Ch’ing dynasty. Since they were good archers and tough fighters, they were sought after by the Ch’ing rulers even after the K’ang-hsi reign, and were usually assigned to the frontier garrison or special units. 74

Among the diverse groups making up the Manchus, the Chinese

73 The two terms “Old Manchus” and “New Manchus” seem to be customary designations, for Ch’ing official records fail to offer any authoritative definitions. Largely originating from private sources, interpretations about these terms are various and vague. For example, see Hsi-ch’ing 西清, Hek-lung chiang wai-chi 黑龍江外記 (Chin-tai Chung-kuo shih-liao ts’ung-k’an, series 6, vol. 59, Taipei: Wen-hai ch’u-pan she, 1966), 3.1a; Chi-lin t’ung-chih 吉林通志, comp. Ch’ang-shun 長順 et al. 10 vols. (Chung-kuo pien-chiang ts’ung-shu, series 1, Taipei: Wen-hai ch’u-pan she, 1965), 51.3a. For the clans which joined the Nurgaci camp before 1636, see Pa-ch’i Man-chou shih-ts’u t’ung-p’u 八旗滿洲氏族通譜, comp. O-erh-t’ai 鄂爾泰 and Lü Chih 呂熿 (Palace ed., 1745), chs. 1–65. For a general discussion of the Old and New Manchus, see Wang Chung-han, “Kuan-yü Man-ts’u hsing-ch’eng chung ti chi-ko wen-t’i,” pp.131–32.

74 For interpretations about the New Manchus, see Fu-ke 福格, T’ing-yü ts’ung-t’an 聽雨叢談 (Hong Kong: Lung-men shu-chu, 1969), p. 2; Chi-lin t’ung-chih, 51.3a–4a, 5a; TPMT, p. 157; Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China, p. 135; Hsi-ch’ing, 3.1a. A recent study extends the recruiting date for the New Manchus to the Yung-cheng period. See Robert H. G. Lee, The Manchurian Frontier in Ch’ing History (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 33–34. For their assignment to the banners and frontier garrison units, see respectively, Ta-Ch’ing li-ch’ao shih-lu, 52.12, T’ai-tsung reign, 5/7/4; Hsi-ch’ing, 3.1b.
element was considerable. From the twelfth century onward there had been constant flows of Jurchen migrants into the Liao-tung area, which was mainly a Chinese cultural frontier. During the first two centuries of the Ming dynasty many Jurchen tribesmen were permitted individually or in small groups to settle in that region. Around the mid-Ming period, one contemporary source points out, the Jurchen settlers, when combined with the Korean migrants, made up thirty percent of the area’s population, with the Chinese constituting the remainder. In the course of time, the Liao-tung residents adapted themselves to the special environment of the region, giving up their original ethnic and cultural roots. In short, they became the “transfrontiersmen,” as Frederic Wakeman, Jr. mentions.  

There thus emerged groups of people of controversial ethnic origin and ambiguous political allegiance. The most notable of them was the Tung 佟 (T’ung) clan of Fu-shun 撫順, Liao-tung. Some clansmen—such as Tung Bu-niyan 佟卜年 (T’ung Pu-nien, d. 1625) and Tung Ho-niyan 佟鶴年 (T’ung Ho-nien, fl. 1610s)—served the Ming as army officers or local administrators. They were later charged by some of their contemporaries with being Jurchen descendants. The charges were complicated because many members of the clan—for instance, Tung Yang-sing 佟養性 (T’ung Yang-hsing, d. 1632) and Tung Tu-lai 佟圖麟 (T’ung T’u-lai, d. 1632).  


1658)—were dedicated to the Ch’ing conquest of China. Moreover, a clanswoman gave birth to a baby boy who became the future K’ang-hsi Emperor (r. 1662–1722), while two others were made imperial consorts. In 1688 the throne allowed Tung Tu-lai’s descendants to change their banner affiliation from the Chinese Plain Blue to the Manchu Bordered Yellow. They also identified Tunggiya, a Jurchen clan designation, as their original surname.77

Another example was the Si 石 (Shih) clan, whose members, Si Guwe-Ju 石國柱 (Shih Kuo-chu, fl. 1620s–30s), Si Tiyan-ju 石天柱 (Shih T’ien-chu, fl. 1620s–30s), and Si Ting-ju 石廷柱 (Shih T’ing-chu, 1599–1661), served in the Ming army at Kuang-ning 廣寧, Liao-tung. Since their defection to Nurgaci in 1622, they and their descendants had devoted themselves to the Ch’ing cause. Originally affiliated with the Chinese Plain White Banner, the Si clan later claimed the Jurchen surname Guwalgiya. With the imperial blessing in 1688, they were transferred to the Manchu banner and renamed.78

The above cases show how the ecological conditions make it difficult to distinguish the true ethnic origin of the Tung and Si clansmen. Fu-shun and Kuang-ning, respectively the centers of the Tung and Si clans, were not only garrison fortresses, but frontier markets, where the Chinese and Jurchen cultures interacted. It is therefore possible that the two clans were either Sinicized Jurchens or Chinese accustomed to the Jurchen way of life. In other words, they were “transfrontiersmen.” At any rate, the stories about the Tungs and the Sis are incomplete. Dahai 達海 or 大海 (ca. 1595–1632) was also a case in point. His family had resided in Giolca 覺尔察, near Fu-shun, and as a child he learned Manchu as well as Chinese. Because of his linguistic ability, he became indispensable.

77 For Tung Yang-sing and Tung Tu-lai, see Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period, 2:797–98 and 796, respectively. For the marriage ties between the three clanswomen and the Ch’ing imperial house, see ibid., 1:327–28; 2:795 and 796. For the changes of the clan name and banner affiliation, see ibid., 2:794. For questions concerning the origin of the Tung clan, see Cheng T’ien-t’ing 鄭天錬, Ch’ing-shih t’an-wei 清史採微 (Chungking: Tu-li ch’u-pan she, 1946), pp. 22–27. But a recent study suggests that T’ung Yang-hsing was descended from a Jurchen ancestry. See Hou Shou-ch’ang 侯壽昌, “Ch’ien-lun T’ung Yang-hsing” 清論楊性, Li-shih t’ang-an 歷史檔案 2 (1986): 105.

78 For the story of the Si clan, see Pa-ch’i Man-chou shih-tsu t’ung-p’u, 1.31b–32a, and Cheng T’ien-t’ing, Ch’ing-shih t’an-wei, p. 28.
to both Nurgaci and Hong-taiji. He was commissioned to translate books, handle official communications, carry out diplomatic missions, and improve the Manchu script. Cho Kyong-nam 趙慶男 (1570–1641), a Korean scholar-official, identified Dahai as a Chinese person from the Liao valley, while Ch’ing official sources list him as a member of the Giolca clan. In all likelihood, however, he was a “transfrontiersman.”

Since the founding of the Ming dynasty, various Jurchen tribes took Chinese captives from Liao-tung as slaves. Although many escaped to Korea, even more remained captives. Some married their captors, thus creating identity problems for their offspring. During the Ming era, especially toward its end, many Liao-tung Chinese, impoverished by the exorbitant tax and corvée burden, fled to the Jurchen regions. After Nurgaci’s ascendancy, the number of Chinese defectors increased, as did the number of captives. Without a doubt, some of these people also became members of the Manchus.

The Mongols were a major non-Jurchen component of the Manchus. Because of their geographical proximity, the eastern Mongols and Manchus had close economic, political, and cultural ties long before the rise of Nurgaci. Two of the four Hulan or Hai-hsi tribes, for example, were ruled by chieftains of Mongol origin. Singgen Dargan 星根達爾漢, founder of the Yehe tribe, was a Mongol of the

79 For Dahai’s biography, see Pa-ch’i i tung-chih ch’u-chi 八旗通志初集, ed. Hung-chou 弘曆 and O-erh-t’ai 鄂尔泰, 40 vols. (rpt. Taipei: T’ai-wan Hsieh-sheng shu-chu, 1968), 236.3a–6b; Ch’ing-shih lieh-chuan 清史列傳 (rpt. Taipei: Chung-hua shu-chu, 1964), 4.10a–11a; Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period, 1.213. For his being of Chinese strain, see Cho Kyong-nam 趙慶男, Nanjung chamnok; Sok chamnok 亂中雜錄續雜錄, 5 vols. (Seoul: San-so Nanjung chamnok Publication Office, 1964), Sok chamnok, 1.41; Wakeman regards Dahai as a transfrontiersman’s descendant. See The Great Enterprise, p. 44.

80 For data on Chinese captives and escapes, see Chason Wangjo silla 唐朝王朝史, Sejong 3, 36.68, 9/4/16; 60.463, 15/4/2; Munjong, 13.487, 2/4/20. For marriage relations between captives and captors, see ibid., Sejo 1, 36.698, 11/8/6; Songjong, 113.107, 11/1/7.

81 For the Chinese who fled to the Jurchen areas, see DMB, p. 826; Ming Shih-ku, 90.20, Hsüan-te reign, 7/5/9; 424.5, Wan-li reign, 34/8/27. For the Chinese defectors during Nurgaci’s reign, see the biographies of Fan Wen-ch’eng 范文程 and Li Yung-fang 李永芳 in Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period, 1.231–32 and 499. For Nurgaci’s taking of Chinese captives, see Shinkan Ichiroku, 1:2.3b, (T’ai-tsu’s reign). For Chinese captives among the Manchus, see Kawachi Yoshihiro, “Kenshū Jochoku shakai kōzō no ichi kōsatsu” 建州女直社會構造の一考察 in Tamura Jitsuzō 田村寛造, ed., Mindai Man-Mōshi kenkyū 明代滿蒙史研究 (Kyoto: Imperial Kyoto University, 1963), pp. 297–339.
Tumed 土黒特 tribe. Bujantai 布占泰 (d. ca. 1620), the last chieftain of the Ula tribe, was a Mongol descendant. One may safely infer that some of their subjects must also have been of Mongol descent. Together with the Chien-chou Jurchens, as discussed before, the Hulun tribesmen formed the core of the Manchus.

The Qorčin 科尔沁 tribe was the first eastern Mongols to join Nurgaci and Hong-taiji, and was subsequently followed by other Mongol tribes. As a whole, they were organized into the Manchu banners. Later the Mongols had their own banners, but many of them remained members of the Manchu banners. The Mongol component was further strengthened by marriage. Both of Hong-taiji’s empresses were Mongol princesses, one of whom was the mother of the Shun-chih Emperor (r. 1644–61). In return, during the years 1616–1796, as many as seventy-one princesses from various branches of the imperial clan were married off to Mongol nobles. With such reciprocity, the Mongol and Manchu elements became indistinguishable.

The Korean element was yet another non-Jurchen component of

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83 For relations between the Manchus and the Qorčin Mongols, see Pao-jih chi-ken 寶日吉根, “Ch'ing-ch'u k'o-erh-ch'in pu yû Man-chou ti kuan-hsi” 清初科尔沁部與滿洲的關係, MTYC 4 (1981): 46–52. There were 235 Mongol clan names remaining in the Manchu banners. See Pa-ch'î Man-chou shih-tsu t'ung-p'u, chs. 66–71.

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the Manchus. Korea bordered on some Jurchen tribes—in particular the Chien-chou groups, who at various times, settled inside it. The Jurchen tribesmen frequently raided Korea in search of booty and captives. Besides, Korean migrants were active in the Liao-tung valley, where they and the Jurchen settlers made up thirty percent of the population. Some Koreans defected to Nurgaci after he assumed political power. A Korean witness testified that there was a Korean village near the headquarters of Nurgaci and that the villagers actively served in the Manchu army. 85

The intermingling of Koreans and Jurchen on the frontier resulted in some Koreans fighting unswervingly for the Ch’ing cause. For instance, Ch’ong Myŏng-su 鄭命壽 (fl. 1620s-50s), a government slave in Korea, was taken captive by the Manchus in 1627. Almost immediately he proved himself worthy of trust and was selected by Hong-taiji as his secretary and potential advisor in charge of Korean affairs. Since he worked for the Ch’ing, rather than his fatherland, some Korean officials repeatedly hatched plots to defeat him. In the records, he was best known by his Manchu name, Gulmahûn 顧爾瑪渾. 86

Sindari 新達理 (fl. 1620s–40s), a Korean with the surname of Kim 金, is another noteworthy example. He and his clan voluntarily joined the Manchus in 1627. He became so loyal to the Ch’ing cause that he reported to Hong-taiji all of the schemes devised by Koreans against the Manchus. He thus earned imperial backing for himself and his descendants. One of his grandsons, Canming 常明 (d. 1736–95), served the Ch’ien-lung Emperor (r. 1736–95) as a Chamberlain of the Imperial Body-guard (Ling shih-wei nei-ta-ch’en

85 For the Chien-chou settlement inside Korea, see note 58 above and Meng Sen, Ming-yûn Ch’ing-hsi t’ung-chi, “Ch’ien-pien,” 4.50b–52b. For the Korean and Jurchen elements in the population of the Liao-tung valley, see Pi Kung, 1:1.21a. For Jurchen’s taking of Korean captives, see Choson wango sillok, Sejong 3, 59.447, 15/2/15; 60.463, 15/4/2. For Korean-Jurchen marriage relations, see ibid., T’aegok, 1.9, Hsin-wu 辛禧 9/8 (in vol. 1 of the set; no date recorded). For Korean defectors, see the Korean brothers, Han In 韓潤 and Han Úi 韓義, as recorded in Shikan Ichirioku, 1:2.21a (T’ai-ts’u’s reign). For the testimonies of the Korean witness, see Yi Min-hwan 李民煥, Chaam sŏnsaeng munjip 紫巖先生文集, 3 vols. (postscripted, 1896), 6.6a.

THE ORIGIN AND MEANING OF THE TERM "MANCHU"

The term “Manchu,” written as “Manju” in Manchu script, and as “Man-chou” 滿洲 in standard Chinese romanization, was not, as some scholars suggest, an invention of Hong-taiji. It had appeared as early as 1613 in the Chiu Man-chou tang and came into use after 1628. But not until 1635 was the term officially adopted to replace Nü-chen (Jurchen, Jürčed, or Juchen), the traditional name of the people in question.

The origin and meaning of the term “Manchu” have puzzled scholars of early Ch’ing history. Since the first half of the eighteenth century there have evolved about a dozen interpretations, which the following few pages will briefly evaluate.

The interpretations fall into four broad categories. The first category, which consists of Korean, Western, Japanese, and Chinese

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87 Sindari and his descendants belonged to the Manchu Plain Yellow Banner. For him and Canming, see Pa-ch’i Man-chou shih-tsu t’ung-p’u, 72.1–2a. For the forty-three Korean clan names, see ibid., chs. 72–73.

88 Shirokogoroff, Social Organization of the Manchus, pp. 167–68.

89 Some Chinese and Japanese scholars regarded the term “Manchu” as an invention by Hong-taiji. For example, see Chu Hsi-tsu, p. 21; Hsiao I-shan, 1: 48–49; Inaba Iwakichi, Shinchô zenshi 清朝全史, trans. into Chinese by Tan Tao 但薰, 2 vols. (Shanghai: Chung-hua Shu-chu, 1924), 1:60. The term first appears in Chiu Man-chou tang, 1:81; Ch’ing T’ai-tsu ch’ao lao Man-wen yüan-tang 清太祖朝老滿文原檔, trans. and annot. by Kuang Lu 廣禄 and Li Hsüeh-chih, (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1970), p. 33. It came into use sometime after 1628, according to a well-documented study by Gertraude Roth Li, “The Rise of the Early Manchu State: A Portrait Drawn from Manchu Sources to 1636,” Ph. D. Thesis (Harvard University, 1975), p. 10. I am grateful to Dr. Li for her kindness of allowing me to cite from her dissertation. For the official adoption of the term in 1635, see Ta-Ch’ing li-ch’ao shih-lu, 25.29a, T’ai-tsung reign, 9/10/13.
variants, concerns the connotation of the term "Manchu," and the others are defined by linguistic considerations. A Korean account is perhaps the earliest and most neglected of all the interpretations of the meaning of the term "Manchu." On a diplomatic mission to China around 1711, Kim Kyŏng-mum (1735-1807), a Korean scholar-official, learned from a Manchu bosoku (Ling-ts’ui) that the word "man" suggested 10,000 Jurchen warriors, while the sound "chou" implied continuing prosperity. This version, though not supported by any other source, is worth considering because it contains a propitious meaning that appealed to both Chinese and Jurchen traditions.

One Western version was furnished by Rev. John Ross. It influenced a few other scholars such as Rev. S. Couling, who was noted for his *Encyclopedia Sinica*. Ross maintained that the term Manchu meant "clear." Apparently he confused the term with "Ch’ing" 清, which was the official name of the dynasty founded by Nuragaci and Hong-taiji and which also meant "clear." Another Western version, recorded by S. M. Shirokogoroff, proposes that “Manchu” means “united provinces.” But Shirokogoroff neither documented nor formally adopted it.

In yet another interpretation, Giovanni Stary, a noted Ch’ing scholar, divides the term into two parts, “man” and “ju,” and then analyzes them with linguistic and historical methods. He concludes that the term is essentially a Tungus word. "Man" represents the basic concept, denoting strong, powerful, and great; the suffix "ju" expresses the “wished-for realisation” idea. So far,
this has been one of the most persuasive suggestions, but like other interpretations, it also needs more documentation.

A Japanese interpretation was referred to by Ichimura Sanjirō 村村瓊次郎, a well-known historian of China. He mentions that the term sprang from the Mongol and Jurchen languages, implying *yumo* 勇猛 (valor). His view is debatable because in the Manchu language the word "valor" reads as "*mangga," and there is no close phonetic relationship between "*mangga" and "Manchu."

A Chinese view, advanced by Cheng T’ien-t’ing 鄭天挺, a renowned historian of the Ch’ing, suggests that the term "Man-chou" possibly derives from the word "*majan," meaning long arrow in the Manchu language. This proposal, even though inadequately developed, deserves consideration.

The second category of interpretations contains propositions that are based on the relations between China and her frontier tribes. One proposition relates to the story of an "eastern barbarian" chieftain who was defeated by China. When chased by Chinese troops, he hid himself among pigs in a pen. After an unsuccessful search, one of the Chinese soldiers, seeing a pigpen, shouted: "*Man-chu" 滿洲 (all pigs). Consequently, they stopped searching, and the chieftain’s life was saved. In memory of this event, he (most likely unaware of the true meaning of the words) named his people "Man-chu." This version is too legendary to deserve serious consideration.

Another proposition was presented in 1929 by E. C. Ning, then the chief inspector of the Frontier Bank at Mukden. Ning regards the term Man-chou as the corruption of the Chinese words for "barbarian" chieftain (*manchu* 蠻主). The Jurchen chiefs, who were unaware of the derogatory connotation of these two characters, were happy to be addressed as such. When they became aware of the real meaning, they kept the sound but adopted two other characters, "Man-chou" 滿洲, as the name for both the people and

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96 Shirokogoroff, *Social Organization of the Manchus*, pp. 159-60; E. C. Ning, "Historical Account of the Laio-ning Province (South Manchuria) and the Manchus" in *Documents of the Third Conference, Institute of Pacific Relations*, Kyoto, Japan, 1929, vol. 21: Manchuria (Kyoto: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1929), pp. 4-5.
their locale.97 A slightly different interpretation suggests that the words "Man-chou" might be a "polite form" of man-tsu 蠻族 (barbarians), a term applied by China to many of the tribes around or inside her borders.98

A third category of interpretations includes two propositions that relate the term Man-chu to an official or religious title or a combination of both. For example, Meng Sen and Hsiao I-shan believe that the term Man-chu was an honorable Jurchen title meaning the "greatest leader," and that it was from this title that the term "Man-chou" evolved. Documented by a Korean witness, this view is certainly persuasive.99 A Ch'ing official compilation even points the term as a title given to the chieftain of the Mo-ho tribes which, as discussed above, were powerful in Manchuria during the sixth century. This version is endorsed by a Russian scholar.100

Several Chinese and other sources connect the words "Man-chou" with "Manjusri" 曼殊師利, a Buddhist title in Sanskrit. They further argue that "Manjusri" was also a respectful title given to Nurgaci by the Tibetans. This religious interpretation, originating in an official work of the Ch'ing dynasty, has won support from Wang Jung-pao 汪榮實 and Hsü Kuo-ying 許國英, Wu Tsung-tz'u 吳宗慈, Inaba Iwakichi 稲葉岩吉, and I. J. Schmidt.101

97 Ning, pp. 7-8.
98 This variant appears in Shirokogoroff, Social Organization of the Manchus, p. 11, n. 3, but I cannot find the original source. Perhaps it was an oral proposition.
99 Meng Sen, Ming-yian Ch'ing-hsi t'ung-chi, "Ch'ien-pien," 1.2b-3a; Hsiao I-shan, 1. 52-53. For the Korean account, see Yi Min-kwan, 2.4b; 5.11b. Here the author referred to Nurgaci as "Man-chu" 滿住.
100 The title for the Mo-ho chieftain was Ta-mo-fu man-cho 大莫弗滿咄. See CTMC, 5.1a. For criticism of this proposition, see Huang Chang-chien, "Man-chou kuo kuo-hao k'ao" 滿洲國國號考, CYYY 37.2 (1967): 460-61; Shirokogoroff, Social Organization of the Manchus, pp. 162-63. The Russian scholar who endorsed this version was V. Gorsky. See Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China, p. 116, n. 28; Feng Chia-sheng, "Man-chou ming ch'eng," p. 71; Stary, "The Meaning of the Word 'Manchu,'" p. 2.
101 CTMC, 1.1a, Wang Jung-pao, and Hsü Kuo-ying, Ch'ing-shih chiang-i 清史講義, 2 vols. (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1913), 1:3-4; Wu Tsung-ts'u, "Ch'ing k'ai-kuo ch'ien-chi" 清開國前紀, Shih-hsüeh chuan-k'an 史學專刊 1.4 (1936): 134-36; Inaba Iwakichi, Shincho zenshi, 1: 60-61. For comments on I. J. Schmidt's adoption of this version, see Giovanni Stary, "Uber den ursprung des Names 'Manju'" (Concerning the Origin of the Name 'Manchu'), Permanent International Altaic Conference Annual Meeting, Ghent, Belgium, (unpublished, 1979), pp. 1-2. I am indebted to Dr. Stary for permitting me to cite from this conference paper. I am also indebted to Professor Luc Kwanten for informing me of Dr. Stary's paper.
A few scholars basically accepted the Buddhist interpretation, but made it more sophisticated. Fan Wen-lan 范文瀾, a Marxist
historian, for example, confirms that from “Manjursri” stems the
honorable title “Man-chu” 滿住, as Nurgaci was once addressed.
The term Man-chou, Fan maintains, combines the first character
from the title “Man-chu” and a second character that was formed
by adding the water radical “氷” to the “chou” in Chien-chou 建州,
the name of an important guard mentioned before. Borrowing
concepts from the philosophical School of Yin and Yang and
Five Elements, Fan further points out that the water component was
added in the hope of extinguishing the fire element, which was
supposedly intrinsic to the dynastic name “Ming.” As water over-
comes fire, so did the Manchus overcome the Ming dynasty.

A fourth category consists of four interpretations based on
names. Some scholars draw interpretations from geographical
names. In a long essay, Huang Chang-chien 黄彰健, a noted
specialist in Ming-Ch’ing history, offers his view after evaluating
most of the available Chinese and Japanese sources. The words
“Man-chou,” he contends, originated in a place called Man-chie 滿遮,
known later as Wan-chu 萬珠, which was a center of the Chien-
chou branch of the Jurchen. To strengthen his contention, he ap-
plicated both Chinese and Korean phonetic elements. And in an article
of 1986, Sun Wen-liang 孫文良 suggests a similar view.

One Ch’ing historian argues that the term Man-chou derived
phonetically from the P’o-chu 婆猪 River, also known as the Hun 滾
or Tung-chia 佟家 River, where Nurgaci’s ancestors lived. This
view opens a new vista, but, as one scholar points out, it is weak
because it is based on defective sources. Another view derives
from the name of the Amur River, which is referred to in Tungus
language as mamgu, oroc, or mangu.

102 See Chung-kuo t‘ung-shih chien-pien 中國通史簡編, ed. by Chung-kuo li-shih yen-chiu hui
中國歷史研究會 under Fan Wen-lan (Shanghai: Hua-tung jen-min ch’u-pan she, 1952), p.
620. Most of Fan’s ideas are repeated in Li Fang-ch’en 李方曆, Chung-kuo chin-tai shih 中國近
103 Huang Chang-chien, “Man-chou kuo kuo-hao k‘ao,” pp. 468–73; Sun Wen-liang, pp.
14–15.
104 Ch’en Chieh-hsien, pp. 18–24; for criticism on Ch’en’s view, see Huang Chang-chien,
“Man-chou kuo kuo-hao k‘ao,” p. 468.
105 This view was advocated by V.I. Cincius, a Russian scholar. For the view and the com-
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Other interpretations focus on personal names. The more influential of these was perhaps initiated by T’ang Pang-chih 唐邦治, who was once an assistant compiler of the Ch’ing-shih kao and had among his supporters the late Professor Erich Hauer of the University of Berlin. According to this version, the term Man-chou derived from the personal name of Li Man-chu 李滿住 (d. 1476), a powerful Jur-
chen chieftain of the Chien-chou tribe.106 Without adequate docu-
mentation, this argument is far from conclusive. Another version results from the work of Ban Nobutomo 伴信友, a Japanese scholar, who related the term to Minamoto no Yoshitsune 源義経, who crossed the sea from Hokkaido to China and served the Chin dy-
nasty founded by the Jurchen. Because of his ability, Minamoto made a name for himself and his descendants became the founders of the Ch’ing dynasty. It was from Man-chu 滿仲, one of Minamoto’s ancestors, that the term “Man-chou” sprang. This version is too imaginative to accept, as some historians have commented.107

Several sources link the term “Manchu” to tribal or state names. One such source, a decree issued by the Ch’ien-lung Emperor in 1777, asserts that the progenitor of the Ch’ing imperial clan founded the state called Man-chu 滿洲. This name, the decree maintains, was actually a phonetic interchange of the designation of the ancient Su-shen people, but it was incorrectly rendered in Chinese as “Man-chou.” Despite the imperial stamp, such a phonetic relationship hardly exists between these two names.108 Another source, Ichimura Sanjirō’s work, relates the term Man-chou to the name of the Man-chieh 滿節 people, one of the nine “barbarian” tribes


107 Ban Nobutomo, Chūgai keiiden 中外經緯傳, (Manuscript, Tōyō Bunkō, 5 vols.), 2:2.31b–34b, 35a–39b. For comment on this version, see Ichimura Sanjirō, pp. 492–93.

108 Ta-Ch’ing li-ch’ao shih-lu, 1039.4b, Ch’ien-lung’s reign, 42/8/19. This decree resulted in the compiling and publishing of the CTMC.
recorded in a commentary on the *Analects*.¹⁰⁹ One may question, however, why the Ch’ing founders had to borrow the name of an ancient and rather obscure tribe for their subjects.

Some early Ch’ing official works claim that the words “Man-chou” derived from the name of the state founded by Bukūrī Yongšon, the legendary progenitor of the dynasty’s imperial house. Among such official compilations are the *Chiu Man-chou tang*, the *Ta-Ch’ing T’ai-tsu Wu huang-ti shih-lu* 大清太祖武皇帝實錄 (Veritable Records of Emperor T’ai-tsu, the Martial, of the Ch’ing Dynasty), and *Ta-Ch’ing Man-chou shih-lu*.¹¹⁰ Two noted Japanese scholars reached similar conclusions. Mitamura Taisuke 三田村泰助 believes that the term Man-chou had been the name of the state created by Nurgaci. With evidence from the *Chiu Man-chou tang*, Kanda Nobuo 神田信夫 backs up Mitamura’s viewpoint.¹¹¹ But his view fails to offer any information about the meaning of the term.

The last view in the fourth category is that of S. M. Shirokogoroff, who focuses on the words “Man-chu” 滿珠, as mentioned in the imperial decree of 1777, and relates the term to the pearls produced in Manchuria. He further points out that the two characters, meaning “plenty of pearls,” represented to the Chinese and Manchus alike not only a “precious gem” but a “pleasant name.” The character “chu” 珠 was later replaced by “chou” 洲, thus forming the term “Man-chou” or “Manchu.” Interesting as it may be, this view seems too literal-minded.¹¹²

Clearly, none of the aforesaid interpretations of the term Manchu has provided satisfactory answers. One reason is the lack of reputable primary sources. Despite its importance, the *Chiu Man-chou tang* is neither complete nor systematic, as two experts of Manchu language have commented.¹¹³ It can only help solve some aspects

¹⁰⁹ Ichimura Sanjirō, pp. 494–96.
¹¹² For Shirokogoroff’s interpretation, see his Social Organization of the Manchus, p. 160.
of the problems concerning the term. A second reason why the interpretations are unsatisfactory is that even the two official interpretations of the Ch’ing dynasty, as contained in the imperial decree of 1777 and the Ch’in-ting Man-chou yüan-liu k’ao 欽定滿洲源流考 (A Critical Study of the Origin of the Manchus) of 1778, are conflicting.114

Determining the origins and meaning of the term ‘’Manchu’’ is moreover difficult because Ch’ing rulers were politically motivated to tailor some of the sources about the early history of the dynasty. The alterations of the old Manchu archives and repeated revisions of the Veritable Records (shih-lu 官錄) dealing with the reign of Nurgaci are cases in point.115 A final source of difficulty is the Manchu language, which greatly differs from Chinese. When rendered from one language to the other, some terms undergo connotative changes. Unless these difficulties can somehow be overcome, the origins and meaning of the term ‘’Manchu’’ will continue to puzzle scholars.

Notwithstanding the above difficulties, some aspects of the term ‘’Manchu’’ may be clarified. The Manchus were largely a political entity, whose formation corresponded with the unification of the Jurchen tribes by Nurgaci after 1583. The term ‘’Manchu’’ first appeared during Nurgaci’s reign and came into use shortly after the succession of Hong-taiji to the throne. But not until 1635 was it officially coined as the name of Hong-taiji’s subjects, who consisted of Mongol, Chinese, and Korean components in addition to various Jurchen groups.116

Moreover, the term ‘’Manchu’’ does not seem to have originated in ancient Chinese books because Nurgaci, Hong-taiji, and their close associates were warriors, first and last. It is unlikely that they

114 Cf. Ta-Ch’ing li-ch’ao shih-lu, 1039.4b–8a, Ch’ien-lung’s reign, 42/8/19, and CTMC, 1.1b and 5.1a. For a good analysis of the Ch’in-ting Man-chou yüan-liu k’ao, see Crossley, ‘’Manzhou yuan-liu kao and the Formalization of the Manchu Heritage,’’ pp. 761–90.

115 For the tailoring of the Shih-lu for Nurgaci’s reign, see Walter Fuchs, ‘’The Personal Chronicle of the First Manchu Emperor,’’ Pacific Affairs 9.1 (1936): 78–85.

would have appreciated any term taken from these books, which did not interest them. But a term that fitted their political needs would appeal to them. Obviously, the words "Man-chou" were such a term.

Because it is futile to try to find the origin and true meaning of the term, it would be more advisable to examine the reasons for Hong-taiji's adoption and enforcement of the new name. In this regard, some scholars have suggested that Hong-taiji intended to conceal the vassal status that the Jurchen and his ancestors had endured under Ming suzerainty. Others have suggested that he wanted to use a new name to obscure China's animosity toward the Jurchen people, whose ancestors had conquered North China and founded the Chin dynasty in the early twelfth century. In other words, on the eve of conquering China, Hong-taiji attempted to create a better image of the entire Jurchen people by giving them a new appellation.  

There was also a practical consideration. Among the people pacified by Nurgaci were many Jurchen groups as well as some Mongol tribes and Chinese inhabitants in the Liao-tung region. As Hong-taiji acquired more Jurchen, Mongols, Chinese, and even Koreans through his conquests, the term "Jurchen" ceased to be appropriate. Especially when Hong-taiji was about to proclaim himself "Emperor of the Ch'ing Dynasty," a new name that would embrace all the ethnic components had to be found. But a more important reason is deep-seated in the politico-social development of the Jurchen people before 1635, when Hong-taiji decided to enforce the new name "Manchu." As a recent study reveals, Nurgaci and Hong-taiji referred to their people on various occasions as jusen 諸申 or 珠申, which means "Jurchen" in the Manchu language.  

Prior to Nurgaci's rise, the Jurchen social structure and political institutions were relatively simple. There were tribal ejen 領真 (chief, lord, or master) and their subjects or jusen, who were basically free people. Below the jusen were the slaves known in Manchu as aha 阿哈.

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117 Ch'ing-shih chien-pien, p. 41; Man-tsu chien-shih, p. 47; Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period, 1:2.
118 Li Hsüeh-chih, "Shih Man-wen chih 'chu-shen' yū 'a-ha'" 釋滿文之“諸申”與“阿哈”, Pien-cheng yen-chiu so nien-pao 邊政研究所年報 12 (July 1981): 1-34, especially pp. 14-17 and 19-20. The following few lines are largely based on this article.
After years of conquests Nurgaci added to his *jusen* many new subjects including both Jurchen and non-Jurchen peoples. When the political and military institutions were arranged at various levels for administrative reasons, the *jusen* were subjected to more control from the hierarchy, and their status became degraded. Although legally not slaves, the *jusen* had more obligations and less freedom than before. As the social realities changed, the word *jusen* became confused with "*aha*." After Hong-taiji came to the throne, the number of the *jusen* increased and their components became complex. The term *jusen* increasingly became a misnomer for the people who would after 1644 be the conquering class in China. By calling his subjects "Manchu"—a term free of anachronistic connotations and actually already in use—Hong-taiji could correct the confusion created by the name *jusen*, and assure its acceptance by the peoples as their common designation.

Finally, the adoption of the name "Manchu" was in accord with Hong-taiji's efforts to consolidate his political power. Unlike Nurgaci who was interested in a small frontier state and in sharing his authority with family members, Hong-taiji envisioned a centralized empire under his sole control. Nevertheless, in the face of powerful aristocrats, he was merely the *prima inter pares* and had to rule jointly with three other princes during the early part of his reign. It was not until 1632 that he was able, through much maneuvering, to terminate the co-rule. Since the struggle for power is a permanent issue within a ruling group, the ruler's effort to consolidate his power is a persistent political phenomenon. Evidently, the substitution of the name "Manchu" for the term *jusen* was also Hong-taiji's maneuver for more political power. Whereas the name *jusen* had come to pertain only to the common people, the term Manchu could be applied to both the commoners and the aristocrats. By using the new name, Hong-taiji attempted to place himself above both aristocrats and commoners.

In addition, the term "Man-chu" existed before Hong-taiji's ascendancy. Whatever its origin or meaning, an old term would
recruit support from more people and therefore legitimize his claim to superiority. As one scholar analyzed it, legitimate rule makes "the ruled feel ‘obliged’ or ‘bound’ to render obedience." And from this basis, Hong-taiji took another step in his bid for supremacy. In 1636, only a year after his adoption of the name "Man-chou," he proclaimed himself "Emperor of the Ch’ing Dynasty."

CONCLUSION

To sum up, recent studies have shed new light on the early history of the Manchus, a Tungus people with a long and complicated ancestral line. Generally speaking, their early ancestral line can be attributed to the Su-shen, I-lou, Wu-chi, and Mo-ho peoples, all of whom were active in Manchuria at different times. Each group was a regional cluster composed of members of diverse origins. It was by no means a homogeneous entity, as many sources suggest. The Manchus identified the Jurchens, especially those of the Hurha and Odoli tribes, as their immediate ancestors.

During the unification by Nurgaci in the early seventeenth century, the Jurchens acquired considerable non-Jurchen traits and gained a distinct ethnopolitical identity. From 1613 onward, this new group was occasionally mentioned in Ch’ing sources as the "Man-chou" or "Manchu." For political and social reasons, Hong-taiji adopted this term in 1635 as the official designation of his subjects. Unfortunately, there have been controversial interpretations regarding the origin and meaning of the name "Manchu" since the first half of the eighteenth century. Considering the difficulties involved, it seems inadvisable to offer yet another interpretation, which would merely create a new dispute, rather than solve the old. Nonetheless, a study of the formation of the Manchus may contribute to the understanding of Ming-Ch’ing times.

121 Ta-Ch’ing li-ch’ao shih-lu, 28.17b, T’ai-tsung’s reign, 10/4/11.