JOURNAL OF CHINESE HUMANITIES 8 (2022) 322–338

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Using Ancient Maps to Examine Historical Changes in China's Territory and Concept of Territory

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Abstract

When using maps to study China's historical concept of itself, we find that the research can be divided into two schools: the "Map of the Traces of Yu" (*Yu ji tu* 禹跡圖) system and the "Unification Map" (*yitong tu* 一統圖) system. There are also two major classifications for the type of map used: the "China Proper" type and the type that includes the outlying areas. These competing concepts of what constitutes China reflect the different modes of life that have existed alongside each other throughout China's long history, namely the agrarian and the nomadic lifestyles. The relationship between these two economic modes has alternated between peaceful and hostile and this tumultuous relationship has influenced who are considered "real" Chinese and who are the outsiders. This paper explores the evolution of what is considered China's territory and what is not.

Keywords

cartography – Chinese maps – territory – national-identity

The earliest surviving maps that reflect, on a national scale, ancient people's understanding of the geographical space in which they lived were made during the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127). Naturally, these Northern Song maps also inherited geospatial perceptions, experiences, and territorial conceptions from the Tang dynasty (618–907) and even earlier. The earlier the era, the fewer are the ancient maps that have survived to the present day. This study discusses selected, representative ancient maps from the Northern Song

dynasty through the Qing dynasty (1636–1912). Correlating these maps with the records of the geography sections and local gazetteers in the official dynastic histories, it discusses changes in China's territory and concept of territory, as well as related questions that emerge from China's territorial issues in history. In the present author's view, ancient maps are the best source for ancient people's unique conceptions of their own territory. They are the most important material for understanding the national territory and concept of territory of ancient people. Ancient maps possess a kind of immediacy lacking in written records: they concentrate direct spatial experience. By using maps to explore ancient people's concept of territory, we can sidestep the inherent vagueness of official documents.

Through study and interpretation of ancient maps, the present author discovers a very interesting phenomenon: the production of these maps reveals the existence of two "systems" for conceiving the "territory of China." These systems are both interrelated and distinct. They are both about the perception and experience of the "territory of China," but they are also inconsistent with each other. This inconsistency is not about changes in the geographical area controlled by the dynasty; rather, there have existed different perceptions of the "territory of China" itself. Geographically, the domains they depict are not the same. We can call one the "Map of the Traces of Yu" (*Yu ji tu* 禹跡圖) system; the other, the "Unification Map" (*yitong tu* 一統圖) or "Great Unification Map" (*da yitong tu* 大一統圖) system. The territory depicted in the "Map of the Traces of Yu" system is more or less equivalent to the domain of the "Nine Provinces" (*jiuzhou* 九州) or the "Red Territory and Divine Land" (*chixian shenzhou* 赤縣神州) – that is, the expanse of the East Asian continent south of the Great Wall and east of the Hengduan Mountains 橫斷山. The "Unification Map" system, by contrast, added nomad territories north of the Great Wall, as well as the broader western territories, including the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau 青藏高原. The former system has formed the core territory of China since the Qin and Han dynasties. For the sake of convenience, we will tentatively call this "core China" (*benbu Zhongguo* 本部中國). We will tentatively call "peripheral China" (*zhoubian Zhongguo* 周邊中國) the additional territory in the latter system which surrounds "core China." In the wake of the Qing dynasty and the modern nationalist movement, "peripheral China" has gradually been integrated into "core China" and has taken on equal sovereign significance with it in the national map. As a result, China evolved from a dynastic state with a "tributary order" (*chaogong zhixu* 朝貢秩序) into a modern nation-state – that is, modern China. We will return to this later. The basic point of this paper is to propose a historical system of orthogonal perceptions of "the territory of China" and to analyze the historical content and rich cultural implications

of these two perceptions, with the goal of advancing a new interpretation of "the territory of China" in scholarship.

1

The ancient maps depicting the territory of "core China" most worthy of discussion are: *Map of the Traces of Yu* (*Yu ji tu* 禹跡圖), drawn during the Northern Song dynasty from the third year of the Yuanfeng 元豐 period (1080) to the first year of the Shaosheng 紹聖 period (1094); *Map of the Magistracies of the Nine Regions* (*Jiuyu shouling tu* 九域守令圖), on a stele re-erected by Rongzhou 榮州 provincial inspector (*cishi* 刺史) Song Changzong 宋昌宗 in the third year of the Xuanhe 宣和 period (1121); *Geographic Map* (*Dili tu* 地理圖), drawn by Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279) geographer Huang Shang 黃裳 (1146–1194), engraved by Wang Zhiyuan 王致遠 (1193–1257) in the seventh year of the Chunyou period 淳佑 (1247); *Map with Postscript by Yang Ziqi* (*Yang Ziqi ba yu ditu* 楊子器跋與地圖), drawn during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) in the seventh to eighth years of the Zhengde period 正德 (1512–1513); and *Map with Marks by Wang Pan* (*Wang Pan tizhi Yudi tu* 王泮題識輿地圖), published during the Ming dynasty in the twenty-second year of the Wanli 萬曆 period (1594) and copied and amended by an anonymous Korean cartographer.[1]

The titles of these maps reveal their connection to a deep geographical and historical tradition. They transcend the temporality of any one dynasty, and so imply the permanence of this geographical space. The phrase "Traces of Yu" (*Yu ji* 禹跡) alludes to the travels of the legendary Yu the Great 大禹 – scaling mountains and fording streams, dredging and channeling floodwaters, demarcating administrative divisions, and fixing territory. Over millennia of transmission, the deeds of Yu the Great left a deep impression, and people living on this land worshipped him as a god. Yu's "traces" represented the common

1 The stele with *Map of the Traces of Yu* is preserved in the Shaanxi Provincial Museum 陝西省博物館; a rubbing of the original map is held in the Beijing Library 北京圖書館. The original stele of *Map of the Magistracies of the Nine Regions* is preserved in the Sichuan Museum 四川博物館; a rubbing of the original map is held in the Beijing Library. The original stele of *Geographic Map* is preserved in the Suzhou Inscription Museum 蘇州碑刻博物館. *Map with Postscript by Yang Ziqi* is preserved in the Lüshun Museum 旅順博物館. *Map with Marks by Wang Pan* or *The Korean Reproduction and Annotation of Map with Marks by Wang Pan* (*Wang Pan tizhi Yudi tu Chaoxian mohui zengbuben* 王泮題識輿地圖朝鮮摹繪增補本) is preserved in the Paris Library, and the Beijing Library has photocopies. One can refer to the ancient maps above in *Zhongguo gudai dituji* 中國古代地圖集 published by Wenwu chubanshe 文物出版社. Unfortunately, the printed copies are much smaller than the original size, which may cause some inconvenience.

identity of the territory's people. Apart from its political implications, it is appropriate to consider its cultural importance. The phrase "magistracies of the Nine Regions" (*jiuyu shouling* 九域守令) held a similar significance. "Nine Regions" (*jiuyu* 九域) refers to the territory of the "Nine Provinces" (*jiuzhou* 九州) that Yu the Great demarcated. Entitling the map "magistracies of the Nine Regions" implied that its function was to safeguard this aspect of Yu's legacy. Similar maps transmitted from the Song dynasty (960–1279) were called *Map of the Territorial Boundaries of the Nine Provinces in "Yugong"* (*Yugong jiuzhou jiangjie tu* 禹貢九州疆界圖), *Map of the Nine Regions in the Yuanfeng Period of the Present Dynasty* (*Shengchao Yuanfeng jiuyu tu* 聖朝元豐九域圖), *Map of the Nine Provinces of Emperor Ku* (*Di Ku jiuzhou zhi tu* 帝嚳九州之圖), and so on.[2] Allusions like "traces of Yu" and "Nine Regions" to designate territory show that history, culture, and geographical activity were already tightly bound up in people's geographical conceptions even in this early period. The geographical territories that they designated were widely recognized.

Map of the Traces of Yu is exquisite. The cartographer used an illustrative scale of horizontal and vertical gridlines to show the distance between any two locations. Up until the Qing dynasty, few maps depicted river systems so well. But there are no indications of mountain ranges, few place names, and the Great Wall is missing. Just as the map's name suggests, its geographic content is more detailed in places with "traces of Yu"; wherever "traces of Yu" are absent, content is brief or nonexistent. The map's grid is made up of 72 squares on the vertical axis and 68 squares on the horizontal axis. At the northern end is the region of the Great Bend of the Yellow River (*Huanghe hetao* 黃河河套). Because "Yugong" 禹貢 mentions "weak water" (*ruoshui* 弱水) and "black water" (*heishui* 黑水), the western end of the map reaches as far as Guazhou 瓜州 and Liusha 流沙. In the southwest, the only label is "Black Water Mouth" (Heishuikou 黑水口), which seems to flow south. These regions were full of the geographical traces of peripheral ethnic groups; however, the cartographer ignored them totally, and the northern, western, and southwestern ends of the map are completely blank except for river courses and a few place names. We can only assume these omissions were intentional. Since Chinese (*Zhuxia* 諸夏) people were not active in these territories which did not belong to the "territory of Yu" (*Yu yu* 禹域) and lay beyond "the traces of Yu," they were ignored. The cartographer's territorial conception refers clearly to the "territory of Yu" and his goal was simply to provide a visual representation of it.

2 See Cao Wanru 曹婉如, Zheng Xihuang 鄭錫煌, Huang Shengzhang 黃盛璋, Niu Zhongxun 鈕仲勳, Ren Jincheng 任金城, and Ju Deyuan 鞠德源, ed., *Zhongguo gudai dituji: Zhanguo – Yuan* 中國古代地圖集 • 戰國—元 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1990).

Map of the Magistracies of the Nine Regions, drawn in the Xuanhe 宣和 period of Emperor Huizong 徽宗帝 (r. 1119–1125), is more elaborate. The drafter did not use the grid method to represent scale, but rather borrowed from Chinese landscape painting to represent the shape of mountain ranges and superimposed curves to show the waves at sea level. The shapes of the Liaodong Peninsula 遼東半島 and Hainan Island 海南島 are closer to reality than they are in *Map of the Traces of Yu*; drawn among the waves in the South China Sea is a sailboat heading west, which seems to reflect the lively trade with Southeast Asia at that time. The smallest administrative unit shown on the map is the county (*xian* 縣), which number as many as 1,125; there are 242 provinces (*zhou* 州), ten sub-prefectures (*cifu* 次府), and four capital prefectures (*jingfu* 京府). This map has the most place names of jurisdictions at various levels of any map from the Song dynasty.[3] However, the concept of territory that the map reflects is the same as in *Map of the Traces of Yu*. *Map of the Nine Magistracies* is one of the rare ancient maps with clearly marked borders. In the north and northwest of the map, there is a distinct line demarcating the border of the Northern Song dynasty with the state of Liao 遼, as well as with the state of Xixia 西夏. In the west and southwest there is a distinct line demarcating the Northern Song dynasty from various parts of Tubo 吐蕃 and the state of Dali 大理. Beyond the border, the map only indicates mountain ranges, forests, and plains; there are no names of states or localities. This clearly marked border reflects the Song people's strong ethnic sentiment, which caused them to identify more closely with the territory under their administrative control. In historical comparison, the Song dynasty was a weakly unified dynasty. It was surrounded by powerful neighbors ready to attack and suffered their bullying. It craved unity but lacked the capacity to achieve it, so the border between internal and external territory was unusually clear. The representation of "core China" in *Map of the Magistracies of the Nine Regions* only illustrates the territory within the dynasty's actual control under specific historical circumstances; it does not indicate any change in the geographical perception of "core China."

Geographic Map provides complementary evidence. Huang Shang produced this map during the Southern Song dynasty in Pucheng county 普成縣, Longqing prefecture 隆慶府, Eastern circuit 東路, Li province 利州 (present-day Jiange County 劍閣縣, Sichuan Province 四川省). Huang's place of origin was on the front line of the Southern Song dynasty's confrontation with the state of Jin 金 and his goal in creating the map and offering it in tribute was to allow future emperors to contemplate reconquering ancestral territory that

3 Zheng Xihuang 鄭錫煌, "*Jiuyu shoulingtu* yanjiu" 九域守令圖研究, in *Zhongguo gudai dituji: Zhanguo – Yuan*.

had fallen into the hands of other ethnic groups. This is not an ordinary map, but a map of "traumatic memories." The Southern Song dynasty and the state of Jin were separated by the Huai River 淮河; however, this is neither a map of the Southern Song dynasty's territory, nor of the Southern Song and the state of Jin, for it depicts the entirety of Southern Song territory but only part of Jin territory. There is no border between the two states, and the part of Jin that is shown was Song territory that had fallen into enemy hands. The map reminds the monarch never to forget this grievous loss of ancestral territory, and never to lose faith in the struggle to reconquer the homeland. The level of artistry in *Geographical Map* is not particularly high. Although the rendering of the mountains according to the methods of landscape painting is quite realistic, the map is too dense, the river courses are drawn too crudely, and the coast is highly distorted. In terms of cartographic technique, *Geographical Map* is not equal to *Map of the Traces of Yu* or *Map of the Magistracies of the Nine Regions*; however, it is more strongly cognizant of the "Central Plains" and the "Nine Regions" as Chinese territory.

Compared with the Song dynasty, the maps of the Ming dynasty take a haughtier view of China's neighbors, but the concept of "core China" remains constant. At first glance, *Map with Postscript by Yang Ziqi* seems to belong to the "Unification Map" system, since it includes the vast lands of the north and the northwest. This would be the wrong conclusion, however. First, the proportion used for "core China" is starkly different from that used for the peripheral areas. Due to limited geographic knowledge and cartographic technique, it was normal for a single map to use inconsistent scales; this is the case for all ancient maps. The difference in scales in *Map with Postscript by Yang Ziqi* is extreme, however, and too large to attribute to a lack of geographic knowledge. The map is densely covered with the names of the "barbarian" (*yiman* 夷蠻) countries in all directions. The labels in the southeast and the southwest are all placed in the sea; only names are indicated, and territory is not depicted. The names in the north and the northwest are either densely concentrated or evenly distributed, such that the geographical significance is lost. This can only be interpreted as a symbolic depiction of "the four barbarian border tribes paying tribute at court" (*si Yi lai chao* 四夷來朝) – an idealization which lacked any geographic reality. Second, the map shows a distinct border between core and peripheral territories. In the east, this line starts from the Shanhai Pass 山海關. In the north, it runs along the Great Wall. In the northwest, however, it circles around the entire Hexi Corridor 河西走廊, and from Songpan 松潘 south it circumvents the southwest zone to end in the sea. In the entire area enclosed by the boundary line – that is, the territory of the Ming dynasty's thirteen provinces (*si* 司) and two capitals (*jing* 京) – the depiction of mountain

ranges, lakes, and river courses is very clear. There are borders between each of the provinces (*shengsi* 省司), and the depiction of administrative divisions – prefectural capitals (*fusi* 府司), jurisdictions known as "guards" and "battalions" (*weisuo* 衛所), and county seats (*xianzhi* 縣治) – is very detailed. This level of detail does not carry over to the peripheral territory, however, very clearly demonstrating the cartographer's concept of territory. The lesson is that it is not possible to interpret a map's concept of territory based solely on the amount of the geographic space that it depicts, and we can conclude that *Map with Postscript by Yang Ziqi* belongs to the "core China" system. *Map with Marks by Wang Pan* is similar. If we disregard the far east of the map, the original Ming dynasty section forms a square. In the north part, the Great Wall is absent, and an almost straight mountain range marks the border. In the northwest, there is a "great desert" (*da liusha* 大流沙) that nearly reaches the sea in the southwest. The Ming dynasty lies within this "world" (*tianxia* 天下, lit. "all-under-Heaven") surrounded by the sea, the mountains, and the desert. The blank space in the upper part of the map lists the names of 184 jurisdictions known as "guards" (*wei* 衛) and 20 known as "battalions" (*suo* 所) in the Nurgan Regional Military Commission. The map also includes the names of all Ming dynasty administrative units in impeccable detail down to the level of "guards," "battalions," and counties (*xian* 縣). Ren Jincheng 任金成 and Sun Guoqing 孫果清 have compared each entry in the map and concluded, "The map's main purpose seems to have been to represent the main political units in the country, such as administrative regions at all levels and urban settlements. It is essentially an administrative map."[4] Precisely because it is an administrative map, wherever "administration" reaches, the map is exhaustive, but wherever "administration" does not reach, it is sparse. On this map, "administration" reaches only to "core China." The map backgrounds the contrast between core and periphery, as well as the relationship between the geographical spaces occupied by the Ming dynasty and the "four barbarian border tribes" (*si Yi* 四夷).

2

In the history of cartography, there is a second system of maps of China's territory: the "Unification Map" system. They are impressive, delimiting territory

4 Ren Jincheng 任金城 and Sun Guoqing 孫果清, "*Wang Pan tizhi Yudi tu* Chaoxian mohui zengbuben chutan" 王泮題識輿地圖朝鮮摹繪增補本初探, in *Zhongguo gudai dituji: Mingdai* 中國古代地圖集 • 明代, ed. Cao Wanru 曹婉如, Zheng Xihuang 鄭錫煌, Huang Shengzhang 黃盛璋, Niu Zhongxun 鈕仲勳, Ren Jincheng 任金城, Qin Guojing 秦國經, and Hu Bangbo 胡邦波 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1995), 112.

based on the principle of "Great Unification" (*dayitong* 大一統). They foreground the relationship between Chinese (*Huaxia* 華夏) and the so-called "four barbarian border tribes" in the geographic space of the East Asian continent. The scope of their depiction goes beyond "core China" to embrace the historical and geographical activities of the peripheral non-Han ethnic groups. In the history of cartography, maps of this "Unification Map" system parallel those of the *Map of the Traces of Yu* system: each has its own origins, each has its own system, and the two systems run in parallel without interference. This type of map reveals a competing concept of "the territory of China": the concept of "Great Unification" which includes within China all the territory that successive dynasties achieved. Maps that reflect this concept of territory include: *Map of the Hua and Border Territories* (*Hua-Yi tu* 華夷圖), in the Southern Song dynasty; *Great Ming Comprehensive Map* (*Da Ming hunyi tu* 大明混一圖), in the Ming Dynasty; *The Imperial Household's Confidential Map of Unified Territory, A Combination of Manchu and Han* (*Man-Han hebi Neifu yitong yudi mitu* 滿漢合壁內府一統與地秘圖) in the Kangxi 康熙 period (1661–1722) of the Qing dynasty; and *Thirteen Copperplate Maps of Qianlong* (*Qianlong shisanpai tongban ditu* 乾隆十三排銅版地圖) in the Qianlong 乾隆 period (1735–1796).[5] The geographical space depicted in these maps is much larger than those of the "Map of the Traces of Yu" system. They focus not only on "core China," but also complicated geographical activities of the core and periphery and the relations between Chinese (*Zhuxia*) and "barbarians" (*si Yi*).

Textual scholarship indicates that *Map of the Hua and Border Territories*, engraved in stone in the sixth year of the Shaoxing 紹興 period (1131–1162) during the Southern Song dynasty, is a reduced version of *Map of the Hua and Border Territories within the Four Seas* (*Hainei Hua-Yi tu* 海內華夷圖) by Jia Dan 賈耽 (729–805) in the Tang dynasty.[6] The original is doubtless a great work in the history of cartography, but it is no longer extant, and the version that survives is about 79 cm long and 78 cm wide – much smaller than the original. The present author believes that, in the process of reduction from the original or through transmitted versions, much important content and subtle points of Jia Dan's original work were lost. However, the map's most important feature

5 The stele of *Map of the Hua and Border Territories* is preserved in the Shaanxi Museum; a rubbing of the original map is held in the Beijing Library. *Great Ming Comprehensive Map* is preserved in Beijing at the First Historical Archives of China 中國第一歷史檔案館. Prints of *The Imperial Household's Confidential Map of Unified Territory, A Combination of Manchu and Han* and *Thirteen Copperplate Maps of Qianlong* are held in the Beijing Library.

6 Cao Wanru 曹婉如, "Youguan *Hua-Yi tu* wenti de tantao" 有關華夷圖問題的探討, in *Zhongguo gudai dituji: Zhanguo – Yuan*.

has been preserved – its concept of territory. The original map was titled *Map of the Hua and Border Territories within the Four Seas*; clearly Chinese (*Huaxia*) and "barbarians" (*si Yi*) formed a complete world within the four seas. *Hainei* is a "world" which Chinese (*Huaxia*) and "barbarians" (*si Yi*) built together. The Southern Song *Map of the Hua and Border Territories* that survives is centered on "core China" with no surrounding borders; in addition to peripheral political entities and place names, it includes seventeen notes, more than any other map. The notes briefly describe the history of each ethnic group and their relationships over time – including ethnic groups that inhabited the upper and middle reaches of the Yangtze River and the upper reaches of the Xi River 西江 systems. There are accounts of all the peripheral groups whose ethnic activities had historical links with Chinese (*Huaxia*). Clearly, the map is not focused on the administrative divisions of "core China," but rather on the relationship between the Chinese (*Huaxia*) and "barbarians" (*si Yi*). The present author thinks it is reasonable to infer that *Map of Hua and Border Territories* was unable to depict the geographical activities of the peripheral ethnic groups. Perhaps the drafters' cartographic skill was too limited to illustrate the information in two-dimensional space, so they used textual narration instead. Or perhaps reducing Jia Dan's original or transmitted versions left so little space that the drafters had to resort to text instead of illustration. The latter is more likely than the former. Although the details differ slightly, the Southern Song *Map of the Hua and Border Territories* presents a geographical view in which Chinese (*Huaxia*) and "barbarians" (*si Yi*) jointly belong to one world within the four seas.

The production of the Ming dynasty *Great Ming Comprehensive Map* is somewhat mysterious. The map is large and impressive: it was painted in color on a silk scroll 347 cm long and 453 cm wide. It starts in the east from the Korean Peninsula and Japan, extends west to the Middle East and the South Asian Peninsula, and in the north includes almost the entire territory of Mongolia. However, the cartographer is not known. The large geographic space that the map depicts exceeds the Ming people's experience of geography. Although it includes the usual variation in scales, the full work clearly shows two areas densely populated by ethnic groups: "core China" and the South East Asian Peninsula. By incorporating much of the Mongols' experience conquering the Asian continent, *Great Ming Comprehensive Map* transcends the concept of "Great Ming Unification" itself. For us, it crystallizes collective experience and memory: the idea of "unification" based on territory. Even while it recognizes the limits of the dynasty's domain in terms concrete territory, it remains flexible enough to recognize the scope of the dynasty's power.

The Qing Dynasty is regarded as possessing full imperial grandeur. Although it conducted its domestic administration and foreign diplomacy in the style of an empire, its concept of territory foreshadowed the modern nation-state. In many cases, the way the dynasty recognized its territory and established its boundaries verged on modern concepts and practices. The present author believes that this is due to the deepening of international exchange. For example, this period saw the first border dispute with a major country outside the tributary order, Russia, which the dynasty could only resolve through negotiation and consultation. This resulted in the Treaty of Nerchinsk in the 28th year of Kangxi's reign (1689). On the other hand, improvements in surveying and mapping techniques made it possible for the first time to accurately measure territory and demarcate borders. It seems that dynasties before the Qing did not maintain specialists in cartography or map printing. The maps that survive were all commissioned by officials or scholars with special interest or skills, to be given as gifts or used in education. Although the drafting and printing of territorial maps is intimately linked to politics and education, there was still some separation between cartography and the activities of the state. By the Qing dynasty, however, land surveying and mapping became an organized state activity. During the High Qing era, Emperors Kangxi, Yongzheng 雍正, and Qianlong (combined r. 1661–1796) commissioned unprecedented surveying and mapping expeditions.[7] In the Qing dynasty, cartography reached its height and map printing was exquisite. Naturally, the dynasty also benefited from the new survey techniques brought by Western missionaries. The development of an ideology of national sovereignty and its realization in surveying and mapping work was also important.

In the 47th year of his reign (1708), Emperor Kangxi dispatched missionaries Joachim Bouvet 白晉 (1656–1730), Jean-Baptiste Régis 雷孝思 (1664–1738), Pierre Jartoux 杜德美 (1669–1720), Xavier Fridelli 費隱 (1673–1743), Francisco Cardoso 麥大成 (n.d.), and others to every province to conduct surveys and draft a complete map of the country. The map was completed after ten years of arduous work in the 57th year of Kangxi's reign (1718). The missionaries used triangulation for on-site measurements, and produced the map in a trapezoidal projection, using a longitude and latitude grid for the first time. The map

7 Qin Guojing 秦國經 and Liu Ruofang 劉若芳, "Qingchao yutu de huizhi yu guanli" 清朝輿圖的繪製與管理, in *Zhongguo gudai dituji: Qingdai* 中國古代地圖集 • 清代, ed. Cao Wanru 曹婉如, Zheng Xihuang 鄭錫煌, Huang Shengzhang 黃盛璋, Niu Zhongxun 鈕仲勳, Ren Jincheng 任金城, Qin Guojing 秦國經, and Wang Qianjin 汪前進 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1997).

preserved in Mukden Palace in Shenyang is called *The Imperial Household's Confidential Map of Unified Territory* (*A Combination of Manchu and Han*), while the map preserved in the Palace Museum in Beijing is called *Map Giving a Full View of the Imperial Territory* (*Huangyu quanlantu* 皇輿全覽圖). It is a milestone in the history of cartography, as well as in the historical evolution of the concept of the "territory of China." This map has two noteworthy aspects. First, there is a clear concept of borders. For example, in row 7, number 4, which depicts Yunnan's 雲南 border with Myanmar, the Myanmar portion is blank, while the Yunnan portion is labeled in detail, and the border is indicated by a dashed line. When a river course forms the boundary, the river is indicated. Although in row 6, number 6, there is no dashed line between Tibetan areas and India, the mountains serve as a boundary, and the borderlands on the Indian side are blank. Second, the place names on the map for "core China" are in Chinese, while those for the surrounding areas of Manchuria, Mongolia, Xinjiang, Qinghai, and Tibet are in Manchu. The present author believes this is the reason why the map uses the phrase "A Combination of Manchu and Han" (*Man-Han hebi* 滿漢合璧) in its title. It is no accident that core and peripheral place names on the map are in different languages. When the Qing dynasty once again brought non-Han ethnic groups to settle in the Central Plains, they accelerated the process of regional integration. Ethnic groups and lifestyles in the two places deeply influenced each other while remaining different. From the rulers' perspective, the traditional methods for governing each place were different, as well. The different languages in which place names were inscribed reflected both the existence of a distinction between "core China" and "peripheral China," as well as the gradual process of integration. When Emperor Qianlong pacified Dzungar and Altishahr, he dispatched people to survey the areas of Xinjiang and Tibet that Kangxi had not been able to survey. The result was *Thirteen Copperplate Maps of Qianlong*, in which all the place names are in Chinese. The change symbolizes, at least in a geopolitical sense, that "core China" and "peripheral China" had now been completely integrated. A national political entity had been firmly established, with a vast territory including Manchuria, Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet surrounding the Central Plains.

Before the Qin dynasty (221–207 BCE) and Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE), the Chinese (*Zhuxia*) people carried out their cultural activities within the boundaries of "core China," represented by the Yellow River and Yangtze River basins. After thousands of years, the result of this geopolitical activity was the development and crystallization of the concept of the "Nine Provinces." After the Qin and Han dynasties, the Chinese (*Zhuxia*) people had no choice but to exist in a wider geographical space, and in this space to clash and merge with surrounding ethnic groups, thus developing the concept of "peripheral China."

For more than 2,000 years, as the Han and peripheral nationalities repeatedly conquered and assimilated each other, this concept of "peripheral China" deepened and sedimented until it fully merged within a single territorial political entity. Ancient maps that reflect people's geographical and cultural activities clearly depict this by turns tragic and joyful historical development on the East Asian continent. The development and crystallization of the concept of "China" is the result of these kinds of geopolitical activities in the more than 2,000 years since the Qin and Han dynasties.

3

From the above, we have seen that there are two conceptual systems concerning the territory of China – namely, the "core China" system and the "peripheral China" system – and we have discussed the historical evolution of these concepts. What is the historical content behind this unique concept of territory? In other words, what stable historical factors promoted the evolution of this concept of territory? If a concept of territory is only the result of people's historical activities, what is its cause?

To make the historical image clearer, we must push our time horizon back to before the Qin and Han dynasties. Chinese civilization originated in the Yellow River and Yangtze River basins, a vast area suitable for agriculture. In the early stage of civilization, there emerged city-states, feudal fiefdoms, and tribal settlements with different degrees of civilization, scattered along the Yellow River and the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze river. Generally speaking, areas with superior natural environments, such as the middle plain of the Yellow river, the Wei River 渭河 plain, the Yangtze River plain, the Jiaodong Peninsula 膠東半島, the Sichuan Basin 四川盆地, the Xiang River 湘江 basin, and regions around the Lake Tai 太湖, were socially more highly developed than their hinterlands, and therefore accumulated more political and economic power. Rising state powers inevitably consolidated the weaker powers around them and incorporated them into their spheres of influence. The process of integration involved the merging of the ethnic groups, the re-establishment of political power, and the re-accumulation of economic wealth. From the dawn of civilization through the many millennia leading up to the "Great Unification" of the Qin and Han dynasties, this process of integration was sometimes fast and sometimes slow, but it never stopped. With the passage of time, weaker independent powers were incorporated into stronger powers. A cruel drama of "dog eat dog" geopolitics played out on the historical stage. From documentary sources, we can see the basic evolutionary trend:

the number of states steadily declined. The present author believes that the fundamental force shaping the integration of ethnic and political powers is the degree of potential complementarity of methods of production on this piece of land. The complementarity of soils, rivers, temperature, humidity, and rainfall meant that, at the level of the productive capacity of the time, the most productive use of the land was agriculture. Agricultural methods of production and lifestyles spread in tandem with this process of integration. The conflict between pastoralist and agriculturalist powers was not primary, but secondary, to this basic tendency toward ethnic integration and state annexation. The primary force was the consolidation and expansion of the cultivable zone. This consolidation and expansion constantly sought the limits of its geographic possibilities. By observing the change in the meaning of the word "China" (*Zhongguo* 中國), we can see one aspect of this consolidation and expansion. In the Western Zhou dynasty (1046–771 BCE), "China" was equivalent to *Wangji* 王畿, and the geographic space to which it referred was limited to the capital city (*jingshi* 京市).[8] In the Spring and Autumn period (ca. 770–476 BCE), however, "China" meant *Zhuxia*, the geographic space of which extended to subject vassal states encompassing the entire Yellow River basin and the North China 華北 plain. During the Warring States period (ca. 475–221 BCE), "China" was synonymous with the "Nine Provinces," and its geographic space reached the Yangtze River basin. At this time, the only thing "China" lacked was a centralized, unified dynasty that could end the fragmentation and chaotic warfare of the Seven Warring States (*Qixiong* 七雄). In the third century BCE, Qin Shi Huang 秦始皇 (r. 221–210 BCE) accomplished this and established a unified dynasty.

Interestingly, the process of regional political integration in East Asia did not stop with the establishment of the "Great Unification" dynasty; instead, it just launched the process of regional integration on a larger scale. Just looking at the territorial map of the Qin dynasty, we see that the expansion of agricultural powers in the northeast, north, and northwest had already reached the limits imposed by geography, climate, and the productive capacity of the time. The fact that the Great Wall serves as the border is an indicator of these kinds of limits. Beyond the Great Wall (*saiwai* 塞外) is an even vaster territory, a zone with ethnic groups of different origins, suitable for nomadic or small-scale oasis agriculture. In the wake of millennia of integration, however, the territory beyond the Great Wall had developed sophisticated, advanced farming techniques, and developed a cultural identity on this basis. A "Great Unification"

8 See Mao Heng 毛亨, Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, and Kong Yingda 孔穎達, comm., *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 (Beijing: Zhonghu shuju, 1980), 548.

dynasty provided the region with durable and reliable political guarantees. By way of comparison, the territory within the Great Wall (*sainei* 塞內) was densely populated, the economy was developed, and people had plenty of food. Beyond it, the population was scarce, the climate was harsh and cold, it was difficult to earn a living, and it was especially difficult to accumulate wealth. These were two entirely different worlds; however, neither geography nor the defensive measures of the time could separate them completely. An imbalance in needs perpetuated conflicts and connections between the two worlds. In terms of economics, the interior needed little from the exterior, while the exterior was dependent on the interior for essential goods such as grain, textiles, tea, pottery, and copper and iron products. At the economic level of the time, these basic needs were difficult to satisfy through the development of free trade. It was the attractiveness of the interior's wealth that caused it to perceive an urgent security threat from the exterior. In terms of security, the exterior could exist independent of the interior because the interior needed nothing from it. Conversely, however, the interior was dependent on the exterior to establish a security order: it needed to secure the exterior's submission or assurances to guarantee its own security. In the immature political order of the time, it was not realistic to place one's hope entirely in rational peace. Economically and politically more powerful parties always used two-pronged, carrot-and-stick methods to meet their needs. The overall tendency in the dynasties after the Qin and Han, albeit with fits and starts, was to incorporate peripheral ethnic groups over an ever-greater territory into their historical activities. Through harsh methods like dispatching punitive expeditions and garrisoning troops, or gentle methods like tribute, marriage alliances, ennoblement, and trade, the peripheral ethnic groups and powers were brought within the dynasty's sphere of influence. In this way, the dynasty's strong political power extended even to remote areas. In terms of ethnic integration, the "Great Unification" of the Qin and Han dynasties marked a fundamental change. Before the Qin and Han, there was a slow advance in cultivated territory, with occasional conflicts between agriculturalists and pastoralists. Afterwards, by contrast, there was conflict between politically unified agricultural powers and pastoralist powers, with gradual expansions in cultivated territory. This was mainly apparent in the southwest. Due to geographic and climatic constraints, the conflict between agricultural and pastoralist powers occurred not as a slow advance, but as a seesaw struggle. This kind of seesaw conflict continued through every dynasty after the "Great Unification."

The world of the agriculturalists had no choice but to actively confront the pastoralist civilization. The vastness of the pastoralist world and its many ethnic groups made it impossible for the agriculturalist world to conquer it

completely; victories were only ever temporary. As soon as pastoralists grew strong, they would invade and harass the agriculturists. Moreover, due to the lack of support from economic and religious interests, sending a punitive expedition against pastoralist forces was a last-ditch measure that only solved the immediate crisis. Over successive dynasties, conquest was not the preferred strategy. The more desirable strategy was to seek political submission or allegiance from the "barbarian" states (*Yiman zhi guo* 夷蠻之國). In fact, the method of military conquest was a tool in service of this consistent strategy. The agriculturalist world lacked the ambition to seize others' land; it was gained easily and lost easily. When the dynasty used military force against pastoralist powers, it was more like adults teaching children to obey. Once the opposing side expressed submission, hostilities ceased, and the troops withdrew. In the more than two millennia following the Qin and Han dynasties, military force was used repeatedly on the frontier, and there were countless deaths and injuries, but the frontier never advanced. If it had not been for the Mongol and Manchu invasions south into the Central Plains, the forces of "core China" would never have been able to cross the Great Wall. The western region, which historically had the deepest ties to "core China," was garrisoned throughout successive dynasties. These garrisons' basic purpose was not colonial conquest, but to ensure the dynasty's own security by extending the Gansu 甘肅 corridor and dividing the pastoralist forces in the north and northwest, to isolate them from each other and prevent them from joining forces.[9] In the face of a vast and formidable pastoralist world, ancient people used their economic and political advantages to develop a method of incorporating peripheral forces into their own sphere of influence. They called this method "loose reign" (*jimi* 羈縻, lit. "bridle and halter"), and used it unaltered over successive dynasties.[10] This "loose reign" was simply a strategy of relations based mainly on political, economic, and cultural inducements, backed by the threat of military conquest. Under the "loose reign" strategy, the goal – whether pursued through economic, cultural, or military means – was always political subordination. Clearly, the strategy reflects knowledge and experience derived from the longstanding conflicts between agriculturalists and pastoralists on the East Asian continent.

The present author has reason to believe that the distinction between "core China" and "peripheral China" that ancient maps depict, along with the two related yet distinct concepts of the territory of China, reflects just this

9 See *Han Shu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 94.3816.

10 Ban Gu 班固 regarded "loose bridle" as "The wise sovereign's proper way to control and direct barbarians (*manyi* 蠻夷)." Ibid., 94.3843.

coexistence of the agriculturalist and pastoralist worlds on the East Asian continent, as well as their conflict and integration. This has shaped their concept of territory, with its distinction between land subordinate to the center (*zhongyang shutu* 中央屬土) and frontiers on the periphery (*zhouyuan bianchui* 周緣邊陲). It is not like modern nation-states, which, due to taxation, stationing of troops, and internationally recognized standards, can have definite borders. The existence of the pastoralist world caused profound security problems for the agriculturalist world. They could not be resolved by a decisive military conquest, nor by economic and cultural means. Instead, two different worlds were forced into long-term coexistence in one geographic area. The dynasties of the center were only able to secure their security interests in exchange for economic, property, and cultural exchanges – or else through military conquest. Seeking political subordination of tribal forces and states on the frontier resulted in the establishment of an order in which the world on the periphery paid tribute to the agriculturalist world at the center. Thus, central dynasties and tribal forces – even states – that owed allegiance to them formed a complex relationship of subordination. This relationship of subordination had several types: appointing local chieftains (*tuguan* 土官, *tusi* 土司) to administer the system of "loose reign" prefectures (*jimi zhousi* 羈縻州司); stationing troops to monitor and administer the march governor (*duhu* 都護) system; and establishing a tributary and vassalage relationship through ennoblement. The link among each of these types was the use of military force, politics, and culture to develop relations of subordination that were progressively more distantly aligned with the central power.[11] Based on these historical facts, when ancient people depicted the layout of state territory, they naturally reflected this collective experience in their maps. On the one hand, they considered the "Nine Provinces" where Yu the Great traveled to be China; on the other, they included in China peripheral areas with close relations of political subordination under the tributary order to the central dynasty. Both belonged to a unified China. From the perspective of the modern nation-state's concept of

11 These different kinds of political relations of subordination are somewhat similar to the order of "five domains" (*wu fu* 五服) described in *Yugong* 禹貢 and *Shanhaijing* 山海經: the central government domain (*dian* 甸), the governing domain of the feudal vassals (*hou* 侯), the pacified domain (*sui* 綏), the peripheral domain (*yao* 要) and the uncivilized domain (*huang* 荒). However, whether the order of "five domains" is a historical fact or the imagined ideal of ancient literati is still controversial. The present author does not endorse directly comparing the tributary order with the order of "five domains," and especially does not endorse viewing the tributary order as a "model of the world" without borders. Yang Liansheng 楊連升 has criticized this view as a "myth" without historical basis. Yang Liansheng 楊連升, *Guoshi tanwei* 國史探微 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban gongsi, 1984).

territory, this may be difficult to comprehend. However, once we delve into the ancient politics, economics, culture, and geographic life and customs of the East Asian continent, it seems perfectly natural.

Translated by Brook Hefright

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