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The Drifting of the “South” to Beijing: The Southern Factor in Beijing Culture of the Early Qing

Chen Dandan

Abstract

How did southern China figure in Beijing, the Qing capital? Here “the South” (Jiangnan) must be understood as a cultural rather than geographical term. It does not, however, merely refer to the cultural space in which intellectuals gathered but, rather, to their lifestyle and spiritual existence typical of the elites who resided in regions south of the Yangzi River. This sense of the South involved the body, sense, memory, and everyday experience of Han culture in this period.

Using Foucault’s notion of the “body politic,” I consider the South in opposition to macro politics, the Qing regime, which carried out society’s disciplinary and punishment functions. The body politic is a kind of “micro power,” which can sometimes override or undermine macro politics. In the process of accepting discipline and punishment from the Qing court, the South, drifting northward as its most talented men arrived to serve the Qing, was able to penetrate and reshape national politics in Beijing. In this sense, it maintained a measure of influence even in the face of hostile macro politics. To unpack the interaction between macro politics and micro politics, this article explores how the southern literati migrated to Beijing and established cultural circles there; how southern literati rewrote the idea of the “South” in the North and turned its remembrance into textual, physical, and spiritual rituals; and finally, how the South and the inscribing of the South, either in text or in action, served as a mode of existence for Chinese elites. I consider how intellectuals maintained or created links to the old culture by extending the South into the real spaces of the North and, more importantly, into their psychology.

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Leading Up to the Qing

While Shanghai studies have become one of the most cutting-edge and popular subfields in Chinese studies, Beijing has been comparatively neglected. The same can be said for the interaction between the cultures of the South (Jiangnan 江南) and North China in key historical periods. For most of the Ming dynasty, Beijing was the political capital, but it was never the cultural heart of the empire. Only in the early Qing did the dominant culture of the South begin to drift northward, principally to Beijing. This drift of southern culture to Beijing was a significant element in the development of Beijing's culture.

Scholars have examined various aspects of urban life and institutions in early modern China. For example, William Skinner's *The City in Late Imperial China* examines the cosmology and urban and social structures of the Chinese city, as well as its local societies and religious practices, but it does not provide a detailed examination of Beijing. Another book, *Beijing: From Imperial Capital to Olympic City* includes three chapters on premodern Beijing's role as capital: “The Emergence of Beijing as an Imperial Capital,” “The Forbidden City and the Qing Emperors,” and “Daily Life in the Inner and Outer Cities.” But again, its approach is more historical and sociological, much like “Change of Mandate: The Manchu Conquest, 1644-1860,” in the book *Beijing: A Concise History* or focused on material culture, such as another study, *The Building Culture in Early Qing Yangzhou*, which discusses the southern elements in the imperial gardens. All these works neglect the lived world of the literati. In terms of the differences and interaction between the South and the North, Zhao Yuan's *Studies on the Gentry in the Ming-Qing Transitional Period* provides many insights, but it discusses the North as a broader notion and does not focus on Beijing.

In scholarship that has largely focused on the physical or material form of Beijing, its urban spaces, and its people's daily life at the material level, there has been no deep investigation of the spiritual aspects of life in Beijing, the cultural circles that developed there, and how the spirit of the South came to take root in the northern capital. This article combines urban studies, intellectual history, and the history of mentalities (*histoire des mentalités*) to examine the

following issues. First, I trace the migration of the southern literati and cultural circles to Beijing, through which we see the interplay between politics and culture and between the Manchu regime as the central power and the culture of the South as a force representing local interests. Second, I consider how the Han literati from the South reinterpreted the South in the northern capital. This rewriting transplanted the literati's life modes from the South, helped them remember various aspects of their own southern culture in text and in reality, and recreated the South as literary imagery with different layers and forms. All these developments constitute the drift of the South to Beijing, through which the practice of the southern culture continued both in text and in reality. The penetration of southern culture to every level of the literati's everyday life contributed to the development of Beijing's culture and turned Beijing into a cultural center in its own right.

How did the South figure in Beijing, this northern capital in the early Qing? Here, the word "South" (*jiangnan* 江南) should be understood as a cultural, rather than geographical, term. It does not, however, refer merely to the cultural space in which intellectuals gathered but also to the lifestyle and spiritual existence typical of literati and other elites who resided in regions south of the Yangzi River. This sense of the South involved the body, sense, memory, and everyday experience of Han culture in this period.

The significance of the South in the history of Chinese culture arose from political transformations that date back much earlier. In fact, the shift of China's cultural center from the north to the south can be traced back to the first year of Yong Jia (永嘉) (307 CE), when the fall of the Western Jin Dynasty (266-316) prompted many elites to migrate and settle in areas east and south. This was not simply a geographic migration but one that led to a profound cultural transformation: it fundamentally changed the notions of "North" and "South," such that the South gradually came to be associated with a taste for fine art, a graceful style of living, and an aesthetic that appreciates a gentle and subtle style. Another milestone in this cultural migration was the fall of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127) and the move of the ethnic Han power base from Bianliang in the north to Hangzhou in the south in 1127 CE. As a result of these repeated invasions by the northern minority peoples and the flight of the ethnic Han, the South (also a region with its own minorities) gradually became the heart of mainstream Han culture.

Thus, if a dynasty established its court and capital in the north (often in Beijing), it had to deal with problems that arose from the separation of the cultural and the political centers. In *Notes in the Old Learning Chamber* (*Laoxue'an biji* 老學庵筆記), written by the poet Lu You (陸游) (1125-1210), northerners

(*beiren* 北人) are referred to as *cangfu* 儻父 (vulgar fellows).¹ This example points to the popular conception that the South represented elegance and the North crudeness. It was impossible for the short-lived Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) to change this separation of politics and culture, and during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the cultural center remained in the South, even though the capital was established in Beijing. Nanjing, called *peidu* 陪都 (second capital), remained important and was home to the same number of government authorities. This old city and the surrounding cities of Suzhou and Wuxi comprised the cultural center, where the most influential intellectual and literary activities took place. Lacking this cultural status, Beijing's role as capital was always in some question. In fact, many scholars have attributed the eventual collapse of the Ming to the shift of the capital to Beijing in the dynasty's early years.

The capital's distance from the cultural center of the country meant that the South, with its cultural and economic prosperity, had to supply Beijing with many basic physical and human resources. This could create problems, as we can see from an account in Shen Defu's *Wanliye huobian* (萬曆野獲編): "Fish used in ceremonial sacrifices at the court had to be transported from the South, but by the time the shipment reached Beijing, it had spoiled."² In addition to the North's economic dependence on the South, the spirit of Han culture shifted south, too.

While it is true that the separation of the political center from the cultural center had a lot to do with the prosperity of the South and the relative poverty of the North, economic considerations were not the sole factor. Here I turn to Michel Foucault. Generally speaking, in China national power (macro politics) and the individual were thought to be homologous, all part and parcel of the same cosmic system. The former determines the latter, and the latter reflects the former. Foucault has argued that this is not the case and proposed the concept of the "body politic." On the one hand, the body politic simply refers to people's bodies, sense, memory, and everyday experience. On the other hand, as it runs through these aspects of people, the body politic functions as a kind of "micro power," which can override macro politics, which carries out society's disciplinary and punishment functions. As Foucault describes it,

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- 1 Lu You 陸游, *Laoxue'an biji* 老學庵筆記 (*Notes in the Old Learning Chamber*) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1979), vol. 9.
 - 2 Shen Defu 沈德符, *Wanli yehuo bian* 萬曆野獲編 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1980), vol. 17.

this power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who “do not have it”; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; . . . they are not localized in the relations between the state and its citizens or on the frontier between classes and that they do not merely reproduce, at the level of individuals, bodies, gestures and behaviour, the general form of the law or government.³

Nevertheless, the relationship between body politic and macro politics remains complicated. The body politic is not absolutely free and can itself be affected by macro politics.

For my purposes here, the South can be considered the body politic. It initially took form during transitions in political power and so was always symbolic of politics. In addition, the South gained a certain spiritual image from literature. In other words, the notion of the South was also produced by literary imagination. Continually framed in terms of its poetic connotations, the South was gradually transformed from textual imagery to an entire spiritual existence, which began to produce a particular conception of self, both materially and intellectually. As a subject of cultural discourse, the South not only extended itself historically but also created the cultural elite of Chinese society.

While the “way of the South” as a body politic affected the macro politics in different eras, the early Qing period is particularly interesting for the following reasons. To begin, it was during the Ming Dynasty, and especially its later phases, that the influence of the South reached its greatest height. The collective activities of the literati—gathering, chanting, singing, and drinking—gave rise to what was later called *Jiangzuo fengliu* 江左風流 (romanticism of the South).⁴ As a body politic whose considerable power was rooted in its long cultural tradition, the South represented a way of life for China’s intellectuals. After the establishment of the Qing Dynasty, this way of life became a political symbol, not only in texts but also in everyday life. The Donglin faction (東林黨) in the late Ming and the literary society called the Fushe (復社) pushed the image of the South as a body politic to its climax in the political struggles at the Ming court in Beijing that would destroy the dynasty. With the establishment of the Qing Dynasty, a northern nomadic ethnic minority again seized political power. Resulting tensions between the macro-politics carried out by the national power and the effect of the South as body politic sharpened. Thus, the subtle dialogue between macro-politics and micro-politics in

3 See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 27.

4 江左 *Jiangzuo*, which means “the south of the lower reaches of the Yangzi River,” is interchangeable with *Jiangnan* in many literati writings.

the early Qing provides an excellent opportunity to trace key cultural changes in Chinese political culture.

With this dialogue in mind, let us go back to the cultural dynamics of the early Qing. The Manchu rulers, as an ethnic minority, realized the importance of establishing the dynasty's legitimacy. They therefore enacted a series of policies aimed at concentrating political and cultural power within the imperial court and its allies. The primary goal was to dissolve the cultural power of the South. Thus, during the transition the old conflict between the South and the North was extended into a confrontation between the old dynasty's loyalists and the new conqueror. The South now represented the last holdouts of the Ming dynasty and of Han culture. Even after the Manchus had captured most of the country, the South retained its role as the center of the Han culture. Yu Huai (余懷) (1616-1696) wrote *Miscellaneous Record of Banqiao* (*Banqiao zaji* 板橋雜記) to commemorate the rosy past of the South, especially of the old capital, Nanjing. Many plans for the overthrow of the Qing and a restoration of the Ming were conceived in the South. Thus the Qing ruler had to suppress potential resistance there. After a series of severe blows across the region, the worst of which were the judicial cases of *kechang* (科場), *zouxiao* (奏銷), *kumiao* (哭廟) which caused many literati from the South to be imprisoned or even executed, the Qing ruler adopted seemingly gentler cultural policies, such as “summoning the Ming loyalists” (*zhaoqiyyi* 詔起遺逸) in the ninth year of the Shunzhi (順治) reign (1652), and the “Examination for selecting the scholars and poets” (*boxuehongcike* 博學鴻詞科) in the eighteenth year of the reign of Emperor Kangxi (康熙) (1679). The common purpose of these measures was to win the hearts of the Han literati.

Here we can see how the minority ruler implemented discipline and punishment after seizing national power. But how did the South respond to these as a body politic? What happened to the South in the process of cultural change? I consider the historical response of the South to Beijing as the encounter of a body politic and macro politics in early modern China.

The Southern Literati and Cultural Circles in Beijing

In the early years of the Qing, thanks to a series of political and cultural policies, a large number of southern intellectuals were encouraged to migrate to Beijing. Among those flowing into the new capital, the most important figures were the “Three Masters of the South” (*Jiangzuo san dajia* 江左三大家): Qian Qianyi (錢謙益), Gong Dingzi (龔鼎孳), and Wu Weiye (吳偉業). Their appearance in the capital was quite shocking, since most southern intellectuals at that time devoted themselves to desperate resistance against the Manchus.

The decision of these men to accept government appointments from the new ruler in Beijing was a bombshell in the political and cultural context of the early Qing. As leaders of not only the South but also the intellectual culture of the whole country, their move to Beijing received wide publicity. Just before Wu set out for the capital,⁵ his friend Hou Fangyu (侯方域) wrote to him, hoping to dissuade him from his plan. Hou argued: “This decision is not merely a matter concerning yourself, but will affect the choices of intellectuals all over the country.”⁶ Although many contemporaries exiled themselves far from the cities, intending to bury the past world, these three men headed a cultural movement that flowed into the new capital. It is true that Qian left Beijing after only a short stay and Wu’s residence in Beijing was not long, but, due to their prominence, the fact that they had traveled to the new capital and accepted the official titles the Qing government had awarded them was highly symbolic.

Another group from the South was pushed into Beijing by the civil service examinations. The southern literati were influential due not merely to their numbers but also their cultural clout. Many important figures went to the capital to sit for the examinations, including Ye Fang’ai (葉方藹) from Kunshan (昆山) and three nephews of Gu Yanwu (顧炎武), known as “the three Xus of Kunshan” (昆山三徐): Xu Qianxue (徐乾學), Xu Bingyi (徐秉義), and Xu Yuanwen (徐元文). All of them scored high in the examinations. Another prominent figure was Wang Shizhen (王士禎) (his pseudonym was Yuyang Shanren (漁洋山人), “Yuyang from the Mountain”), who would later become a leader in poetry. It is true that Wang was from Xincheng (新城) in the north-eastern province of Shandong (山東), but if we take into account the ten years he spent in Yangzhou (揚州), where he was involved in many cultural activities with the southern literati, it becomes clear that Wang had fully embraced the culture of the South. In fact, in one poem, he calls himself “Wang of Yangzhou” (王揚州). In addition, Jiang Chenying (姜宸英), one of the “three famous men of the South without official titles” (*Jiangnan san buyi* 江南三布衣), and Gu Zhen’guan (顧貞觀) also moved to the capital. Both Jiang and Gu were important members of a famous literary salon held by the Qing prince Nalan Rongruo (納蘭容若), the son of Prime Minister Mingzhu (明珠).

The aforementioned “Examination for Selecting Scholars and Poets” was another catalyst for movement to the North. Its purpose, as elaborated in the

5 Wu Weiye was called up by the “Summoning the Loyalist of Ming” in the ninth year of the reign of Emperor Shunzhi (1652).

6 Hou Fangyu 侯方域, “Yu Wu Jungongshu 與吳駿公書 (A Letter to Wu Weiye),” in *Hou Fangyu quanji jiaojianzhu* 侯方域全集校箋注 (*The Annotated Complete Works of Hou Fangyu*) (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 2013), vol. 3. Jungong was Wu Weiye’s courtesy name.

imperial edict, was to promote the development of scholarship as well as literary production and provide the new dynasty with a fundamental theory for its reign. In other words, the Qing rulers wanted to transfer the cultural capital from another civilization into their own political capital.

According to Lu Yitian's (陸以湑) (1801-1865) *Memoirs in the Cold House* (*Lenglu zashi* 冷廬雜識),⁷ during the Qing Dynasty the government organized two sessions of the “Examination for Selecting Scholars and Poets.” The first was in the eighteenth year of the reign of Emperor Kangxi (1679). The second was in the first year of the reign of Emperor Qianlong (乾隆) (1735). In both sessions, men from the South greatly outshone the rest. Among the literati who passed these examinations, most came from Jiangnan⁸ and Zhejiang. In the first session, out of a total of fifty, thirty-nine southern men passed the examination. Among them were many famous cultural figures, such as You Tong (尤侗), who was admired by Emperor Shunzhi (順治) as an “Old Gentleman” (*lao mingshi* 老名士); Zhu Yizun (朱彝尊) and Yan Shengsun (嚴繩孫), the remaining two of the “three famous men of the South without official titles”; Peng Sunyu (彭孫遹), Wang Wan (汪琬), Chen Weisong (陳維崧), Mao Qiling (毛奇齡), and Xu Gui (徐軌).

Benjamin Elman once quoted Lawrence Kessler, agreeing that the “Examination for Selecting Scholars and Poets” illustrated that by this point most literati of the South had abandoned their hostility to the Qing court.⁹ In fact, as a cultural policy with a distinct political purpose, the examinations should be understood as part of the national power. All the same, they show that through this kind of dialogue and the gradually resolving tensions between Qing macro politics and the body politic, the South was experiencing a transformation. While national power forced many southerners to take the exams, the southerners' attitude toward the new dynasty had become ambivalent. For example, although Huang Zongxi (黃宗羲) did not take the examination, he still sent his son to accept government employment. To escape a government appointment, Yan Shengsun deliberately failed to finish his test, but he was tapped for a position anyway. In addition, his association with Nanlan Rongruo indicated his weakening resistance to Qing national power.

7 Lu Yitian 陸以湑, *Lenglu zashi* 冷廬雜識 (*Memoirs in the Cold House*) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1984).

8 Here “Jiangnan” was the name of a province, which included Jiangsu and Anhui, two present-day provinces.

9 Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology* (Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Publishing House, 1997), 9 (in Chinese).

Fifty men of letters who passed this examination and were appointed cultural officers would later be organized by the government to compile the *History of the Ming*. Obviously, this kind of project played an important part in Chinese macro politics. In fact, writing history has always been a political act, especially in transitional periods. After a dynasty ended, its loyalists would write history not only as a means of self-examination but also a way to re-concentrate the dispersed cultural power. To a new ruler, controlling the writing of history was an indispensable part of controlling culture. If we take this into account, we can understand why the new government quickly organized the compilation of the *History of the Ming* while exerting its national authority to suppress historical works produced by folk writers without official status. The “Examination for Selecting Scholars and Poets” demonstrates how the new dynasty tried to gain control of the culture by assembling its key producers (the literati, their activities, and their literary production). It succeeded in creating a cultural movement in the new capital.

Because many southern literati gathered in Beijing through these methods, new cultural circles began to emerge. Two main circles were active at that time, both of which were dominated by southern literati and the southern lifestyle.

One circle included Gong Dingzi, Ye Fang'ai, Peng Sunyu, Wang Wan, Chen Weisong, and Wang Shizhen. The attitude of the central figures always influenced the atmosphere of the entire circle. The leaders of this circle were Gong Dingzi and, later, Wang Shizhen. Gong was a particularly well-known representative of the South. In an introduction that Wang wrote for Gong's works, he called him “the recorder of the South” (*Jiangzuo wenxian* 江左文獻) for his “scholarship and elegant manners.”¹⁰ Wang Shizhen, as I argued above, should be regarded as a man of the South, too. According to the “Chronological Autobiography of Yuyang Shanren,” in the sixth year of the reign of Emperor Kangxi (1667), Wang Shizhen, Wan Wan, Li Tianfu, and others had organized a literary society under the supervision of Gong Dingzi.¹¹ At that time, any poet hoping to find his place in the literary circles of Beijing had to visit first Gong Dingzi and then Wang Shizhen. As a leader in poetry, Wang thought it was his responsibility to introduce the most excellent intellectuals to the whole circle. So, with Wang's recommendation, literati from all over the country quickly won fame as poets and were seen as Wang's pupils.¹² Considering

10 See Wang Shizhen 王士禛, “Yuyang Shanren zizhuan nianpu 漁洋山人自撰年譜 (Chronological Autobiography of Yuyang Shanren),” in <PY, char> (*Chronological Biography of Wang Shizhen*) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1992).

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

that most of Wang’s pupils came from the South—they included Hong Sheng (洪昇), Wang Shidan (王式丹), known as one of the “fifteen poets of the South” (*Jiangzuoshiwuzi* 江左十五子), and Wang Maolin (汪懋麟)—we can say that this circle was constantly enlarged by the southern literati going to Beijing.

Nanlan Rongruo and his teacher, Xu Qianxue, led another important cultural circle. This one included Gu Zhenguan (Rongruo’s best friend from Wuxi) as well as Chen Weisong and Wu Zhaojian (吳兆騫), two of the “three phoenixes of the South” (*Jiangzuo san fenghuang* 江左三鳳凰), and Zha Shenxing (查慎行), who came from the famous Zha family in Haining (海寧), an old town in Zhejiang Province. The “three famous Southern men without official titles”—Jiang Chenying, Zhu Yizun, and Yan Shengsun—were also important figures in this circle.

At that time, these two circles interacted frequently, and the activities of these southern intellectuals, such as chanting, talking, and compiling books, provided Beijing with a new intellectual culture, a literati culture. Their houses, such as Zhu Yizun’s “Old Vine Book House” (*Guteng shuwu* 古藤書屋), were fondly remembered and referred to often by later writers. In this sense, with part of the South (and its literary production and cultural activities) drifting to the North as southern literati regrouped in Beijing, the capital itself became renowned for its literati circles, which were crucial to the growth of Beijing’s culture. In retrospective accounts written by later generations, the activities of the southern circles in Beijing, whose figures frequented local landmarks like Liuli Chang (琉璃廠) and the Ciren Temple (慈仁寺), were considered an indispensable part of Beijing culture. In other words, through the reconstruction of a miniature South in the north, Beijing acquired its own cultural memory.

How did these southern cultural circles in Beijing help shape the early Qing? Rather than their political effect per se, or how they were tamed by the macro politics of national power, I consider how they reconstituted the culture of the South in the northern capital and how the South as a body politic affected macro politics. In the early Qing, conflict between macro politics and the body politic of the South had sharpened greatly. Under Emperor Shunzhi, the conflict was clearly between northerners and southerners, while under Emperor Kangxi, it took the form of confrontation within these groups and became entangled with clashes between Manchu political cliques, one led by Mingzhu and the other by Suo’e’tu (索額圖).¹³ In fact, nearly from the inception of Qing

13 Xie Guozhen 謝國楨, *Mingqing zhiji dangshe yundong kao* 明清之際黨社運動考 (*A Study of Parties and Societies in the Ming-Qing Era*) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1982).

rule, southerners suffered a variety of political blows as they struggled to become part of the ruling clique. Under Emperor Shunzhi, a group of southerners represented by Chen Mingxia (陳名夏), who came from Jiangnan Province, were appointed to official posts. As a member of the Jishe (幾社) literary society, Chen was clearly representative of the South. Upon his recommendation, other literati who were also among the most important people in southern political-cultural circles, such as Chen Zhilin (陳之遴) from Haining and Wu Weiye, also became government officials. But under the vigilant eye of the ethnic minority rulers, these southern officials were unable to maintain stable positions and status. Although Emperor Shunzhi once claimed that the punishments inflicted on southerners were not intended,¹⁴ this very claim reveals that southerners suffered greatly in political conflicts. One northerner, Feng Quan (馮銓), a political enemy of Chen Mingxia, once remarked to Emperor Shunzhi, “The southern literati are good at literary production but their behavior is often bad. In contrast, northerners may not be so excellent at literature, but their behavior is always exemplary.”¹⁵ It is recorded that the emperor was satisfied with Feng’s words.¹⁶ Here we see the embodiment of macro politics. Feng’s criticism of southerners for “being good at literary production” and the emperor’s consent to this can be read as the projection of national politics onto the cultural power of the South.

Chen Mingxia would eventually be executed as a result of a political attack from a northerner, Ning Wanwo (寧完我). Similarly, Chen Zhilin, also attacked by the northerner Wei Yijie (魏裔介), was exiled to the border regions. The judicial case of *zouxiao* (奏銷案) brought still greater insult. Many officials from the South—Wu Weiye, Xu Qianxue, Xu Yuanwen, Weng Shuyuan (翁叔元), Wang Wan, Peng Sunyu, Song Deyi (宋德宜), and Chen Weisong—were punished. These examples make clear that the national power was capable of exercising discipline and punishment over officials representing the body politic. At that time, even successful political operators, such as Xu Qianxue, depended heavily on Manchu mandarins like Mingzhu.

The southerners’ participation in this system of rule represented a degree of compromise. This entailed accepting the discipline of macro politics as well as a process of self-discipline. But the South also affected macro politics as a body politic through these southern literati because they helped changed the way

14 See *Qing shi gao* 清史稿·本紀五 (*The History of the Qing: Basic Annals*), vol. 5.

15 See *Qingshi liezhuan er chen chuan juan qishijiu fengquanchuan* 清史列傳貳臣傳卷七十九馮銓傳 (*Collection of Biographies of the Qing Dynasty, Biography of Feng Quan*) (Taipei: Mingwen Bookstore, 1985), vol. 79.

16 Ibid.

of life of the Manchu rules. Thus, while accepting the realities of the macro politics, the South also responded through its strong cultural power.

As a whole, the southern literati comprised the main cultural strength of the Qing government. Their importance included not only symbolic roles like the "three Masters of the South" but also cultural prestige. As Xu Qianxue once pointed out, most members of Prince Nalan Rongruo's literary salon were the most illustrious men of the time, although they did not succeed in politics.¹⁷ All these men were from the South. The contrast between their failure in politics and their assimilation of the Manchus also illustrates the mutual interplay between the macro politics controlled by the Manchu rulers and the South as body politic.

In addition to these people, those who succeeded in government became the leaders of key cultural offices. Xu Yuanwen, Ye Fang'ai, and Xu Qianxue were appointed one after the other as the head of the project to compile the official history of the Ming. Wu Weiye, Wang Shizhen, and Xu Yuanwen all served as head of the highest education office, the Guozijian (國子監).

In the early Qing, the teachers of the Manchu noble class, from the emperor to the various princes, came mostly from the South. Famous literati, such as He Zhuo (何焯), Qian Mingshi (錢名世), Zha Shenxing, and Wang Hao (汪灝), were selected to explain the Chinese classics to the emperors. Nalan Rongruo acknowledged Xu Qianxue as his teacher. His brother Kuixu's first teacher was Wu Zhaqian, then Zha Shenxing. Another Manchu nobleman, Yueduan (岳端), was taught by Gu Zhuo (顧卓), who came from Wujiang (吳江), and Zhu Xiang (朱襄), who came from Wuxi (無錫). Yueduan's nephew Wenzhao (文昭) was a pupil of Wang Shizhen, another crucial man of letters in the circle of Southern literati.

Literary activities in Beijing engendered and fostered the southern cultural circles there. Their significance can still be seen during the long reign of Emperor Qianlong, who initiated another massive cultural project, the compilation of the encyclopedia *Siku quanshu* (四庫全書), which again drew many southern literati to the capital. As Benjamin Elman has indicated, through their participation in cultural projects organized by the nation, "the energy and style of the scholarship of the South were replanted in Beijing."¹⁸ In fact, as we shall see, what was replanted was not merely the energy and style of the scholarship but an entire lifestyle typical of the southern literati.

17 See Li Xu 李勣, *Yinshui ci jian* 飲水詞箋 (*Commentaries on Yinshui ci*) (Shanghai: Zhengzhong Book Company, 1937), 6.

18 Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, 9.

Rewriting the “South” in the North

In the early Qing, the cultural activities of the southern literati in Beijing included gathering to discuss poems and exchange works. Beautiful courtesans, of course, were an indispensable part of these activities. The old “romantics” of the South were thus transplanted to the North through various activities by the whole literati culture. In a poem written by Cai Xiang (蔡湘), called “Listen to Liu Jingting Talking about Anecdotes in Sui and Tang Dynasties at the Banquet of Minister of Rites Gong Zhilu, with Limited Rhymes (Gong Zhilu Zongbo xishang ting Liu Jingting tan Sui-Tang yishi xianyun 龔芝麓宗伯席上聽柳敬亭談隋唐遺事限韻),”¹⁹ one can see an elegant party much like those of the past. It was a banquet hosted by Gong Dingzi. Among the guests was Liu Jingting (柳敬亭), the most famous storyteller in the old capital before the fall of the Ming. At this new banquet in the new capital, the old artist still told anecdotes of the Sui and Tang dynasties, just as he had in the South. Another famous artist, Zhang Wu (張五), had also been cast adrift in Beijing after the collapse of the Ming.²⁰ Thus for Liu and Zhang, the present occasion constituted a kind of rewriting of the past. Whereas Stephen Owen once called the image of Li Guinian (李龜年) in Du Fu’s “Meeting Li Guinian in the Southland” a “reminder of the past,”²¹ in fact, old artists such as Liu Jingting and Zhang Wu continued to maintain the integrity of the past world. They pulled the past into the present or pushed the present moment back to the past. In their work, the boundary between the present and the past was deliberately blurred. The past life-world of the South, thus, could be revived in the new capital, Beijing.

Through the medium of these social circles, the southern lifestyle came to permeate the everyday life of the Manchus. When Emperor Kangxi traveled to the South, he complained about the “excessive” luxury there; however, the everyday life of the court was itself pervaded by the atmosphere of the South. At that time, a group of southern literati, who had succeeded in the “Examination for Selecting Scholars and Poets,” were often summoned to the court. The emperor would have a feast with these literati and took pleasure

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- 19 See Deng Zhicheng 鄧之誠, *Qingshi jishi chubian* 清詩紀事初編 (*Chronicles on Qing Poems, First Series*) (Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 1965), 484. Cai Xiang 蔡湘 went to Beijing from Shanghai (at that time, Shanghai was a small town in Jiangnan province) at the age of twenty. Zhilu was Gong Dingzhi’s pseudonym.
- 20 Zhang Xingliang 章性良, “Song Zhang Wu gui Women 送張五歸吳門 (See Zhang Wu Return to Women),” in Deng, *Chronicles on Qing Poems*, 507. Zhang Xingliang was from Jiangdu (a southern town) and knew some of the old men of letters from the South.
- 21 Stephen Owen, *Remembrances* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 5.

in watching and enjoying beautiful flowers, fishing, and chanting. Since they had been taught, by and associated with, the southern literati, the Manchus gradually assimilated to southern culture. Nalan Rongruo's famous garden, where the Lushui Pavilion (淶水亭) stood, was selected as the gathering place for Rongruo and his literary friends. As the son of Prime Minister Mingzhu, Rongruo was trained by Han scholars, among whom were the most famous of the day. Because of his status, Rongruo's garden was where famous southern scholars such as Xu Qianxue, Wu Zhaoqian, and Zha Shenxing tended to gather. Growing up in these circumstances, Rongruo became a person whose tastes, feelings, and lifestyle were more like that of a southerner than of a northerner. His poems and songs vividly display this. After he had grown up and was selected to be the attendant to Emperor Kangxi, Rongruo became an excellent poet in his own right and the star of his salon.

One of the most important literary activities in the early Qing, the gatherings at the Lushui Pavilion resembled the old gathering tradition of the South, a tradition that had been noted by literati as early as the Eastern Jin (317-420). These gatherings did not simply copy those of the South but created a symbolic space in the new capital, where the Han literati could remember their parents' lives and even the previous dynasty, while the Manchus got to pursue the lifestyle their ancestors had desired for a long time. In this sense, the South extended itself in both memory and reality. As a natural site, Nalan Rongruo's garden was built according to the aesthetic of the South: a lovely lake, covered with lotus and green leaves, typical southern landscapes, and wandering poets, most of whom came from the South. It demonstrates how the South and Han culture were now cultivated in the everyday life of Manchu elites and in turn how the Manchus' imagined South created a new type of self. The most important thing here is that Nalan Rongruo, a Manchu, was the heart of this salon.

In addition to the Lushui Pavilion gatherings, there was a similar salon in Bo'er'du's (博爾都) villa in a suburb of the capital called Donggao Caotang (東臯草堂). This salon also had both Manchus and southern literati members. Thus, in drifting to the North, the South was substantially rewritten not only by the southerners at large there but also by the Manchus. At the same time, the South also helped rewrite the Manchu life-world and cultural identity in the north.

Remembrance of the South in the New Capital

How did the South and the writing of the South, either in text or in reality, serve as a mode of existence for the self? That is, how did intellectuals maintain,

acquire, or create links to the old culture by extending the South into the real spaces of the North and, more importantly, into their psychology?

In the tenth year of the reign of Emperor Shunzhi (1653), Wu Weiye set out for Beijing. On the way, he visited the city of Jinling (Nanjing) and wrote a couple of poems, which were full of sentimental images of the South, a kind of retrospective on the old dynasty. His subsequent poems were full of images of the South, too. In fact, at that time, images of the South were among the most common in his work. In Wu Weiye and his contemporaries' poems, we can see the South extending itself in text. In their textual world, it is located in the contrasts with the North. Both the North and the South already had established image systems. The image system of the South included "lost country" (*guguo* 故國), "home" (*jia* 家), "dream" (*meng* 夢), and "spring swallow" (*chunhong* 春鴻). Of course, this was an image system with bright colors. But if one goes behind the colorful veil, one finds that it was also an ethereal world with a sense of transience. "Flowers" allude to their subsequent fading; "spring swallow" is easily associated with a young bird's disappearing into the wider world. It is a bright yet sad image-world in which the brightness comes from past glory while the sadness arises from glory gone with the wind. In the meantime, in the image-world of the North, an air of desolation reigns: "old horse" (*laoji* 老驥), "storm and snow" (*fengxue* 風雪), "homelessness" (*wujia* 無家), and "lame donkey" (*jianlu* 蹇驢). Compared with the vividness of the South, such images obviously lack life and delight. But "old horses," "lame donkey," and "storm and snow" are also more concrete than "dream" and "spring swallow." These two parallel image systems contrast the South and the North not merely in terms of geographical difference but as gaps between the past and the present, culture and politics.

If we want to examine the inner world of the literati at that time, we cannot ignore the fact that the establishment of the Qing Dynasty gradually changed the meaning of the South as a cultural concept. In the Chinese literary tradition, the image of the South was an emblem of the old dynasty. In addition to being a lament for one's lost country, it also served as a representation of Han culture and, sometimes, a political objection. Zhang Dai 張岱 wrote *Remembrances of Tao'an's Dreams* (*Tao'an mengyi* 陶庵夢憶)²² and *The Search of Dreams in the West Lake* (*Xihu mengxun* 西湖夢尋); Yu Huai wrote *Miscellaneous Record of Banqiao* (*Banqiao zaji* 板橋雜記). These works served as representations of personal remembrance as well as a collective discourse for Han elites. Through their writing of history as well as the self, the literati sustained the South, but they also rewrote the past in a changed world.

22 Tao'an 陶庵 was Zhang Dai's pseudonym.

Thus, the effect of the South as a body politic can be accessed not only in the literati's re-creation of everyday life of the past but also through their representation. This kind of representation became a form of politics; it may be fairly characterized as a "spiritualization of politics." In this sense, it was also a discourse through which the past was invoked in the present via cultural tradition. It awoke and helped shape the culture flowing in one's body, sense, memory, and everyday experience. To people who surrendered to the Qing, such as Wu Weiye, the writing of their lament for the lost South, lost country, lost self, and lost culture was dual behavior. It washed away the deep sense of shame as it summoned up more rosy sentiments, which in turn became a subtle form of redemption. For these people, the most embarrassing necessity was seeking a balance between the old dynasty and the new. The South in the text then became an important point of balance, through which they could express nostalgia for their lost culture and declare, by visiting the lost self in the past, that they were still part of that past culture. It was only in these written texts that they could find a space to fully exist.

When we explore the inner worlds of the two generations, the older represented by the "Three Masters of the South," and the younger by their descendants such as Wang Shizhen, we find that the younger felt less responsible for the fall of the Ming than did their parents. While the older generation chose to alienate itself from its previous lifestyle as a form of redemption, the younger returned to the past by re-creating the flowery life lived by their elders. For the younger men, the intense pain at the loss of their homeland that weighed on the older generation had been diluted by the passage of time and faded to a subtle nostalgia for an earlier culture. A famous couplet by Wang Shizhen, "My thinking of Wujiang is shaken off every year, I ask the misty river about Banqiao,"²³ was written when he was only a little boy. Wujiang was in Suzhou, and Banqiao was an important area in Nanjing, both symbolizing the South. After the collapse of the Ming, the image of the South, particularly the old capital of Nanjing, often rolled into the minds of the literati as the symbol of the past dynasty. Thus for the younger generation, rewriting the South in the North became a way to recognize themselves in the old cultural world, construct ties to the old dynasty and the old cultural tradition, and gain a kind of self-affirmation as the transmitters of this tradition.

To the Han literati, the remembrance of the South provided a spiritual return to the former culture, the former dynasty, and their former selves. For the Manchus, it was more like a long journey upstream into a culture that had been admired for generations. The lost landscape of the Han was turned into

23 年年搖落吳江思，忍向烟波問板橋。

a fairyland. The Manchu “remembrance” of the South was in fact a celebration of the Han culture.

The Drifting of the “South”

In the process of accepting the discipline and punishment from the new national power, the South, by drifting in the physical space (from South to North), was able to penetrate and reshape the site of national politics (Beijing). In this sense, the South maintained a measure of influence as the micro politics in the face of the macro politics.

From the beginning, the Qing rulers intended to build a new capital, where Manchus were privileged to live in the inner city while the Han had to reside in the outer city. They hoped to create a new “Beijing culture” that would dominate other local cultures. The Qing rulers wanted to make Beijing a true cultural center to weaken the cultural power of the South and to minimize the possibility of rebellion there. From the “Examination for Selecting Scholars and Poets” to the early phases of the compilation of the *Siku quanshu*, the Qing rulers constantly tried to pull the cultural center from the South to Beijing.

However, in the meantime, the Qing rulers themselves and even the city of Beijing both experienced a kind of silent assimilation by the South. The everyday life and cultural identification of Manchu elites changed greatly. When Nanlan Rongruo finally traveled to the South, he was overjoyed because it was where most of his teachers and friends came from. To Rongruo, the South was like a dream, and being there was his most intense desire. In this sense, the South became the spiritual homeland for this Manchu prince.

In the process by which the Manchus endeavored to dissolve the cultural power of the South, the South itself served as a body politic, entering the development of the new dynasty’s culture. To some extent, it redefined the life-worlds of the Manchus. With the southern literati recreating their old cultural circles in Beijing, the city of Beijing developed its own memory of culture. As the famous classical scholar Pi Xirui (皮錫瑞) (1850-1908) once indicated: It is almost a law of history that the North always unites the country through politics while the South does so through culture.²⁴ After the South had been conquered by the Qing, the cultural flow of an entire literary group to the North shows us that the South managed to survive in a new political-cultural context and Han culture in a new non-Han dynasty.

24 Pi Xirui 皮錫瑞, *Jingxue lishi* 經學歷史 (*The History of the Classics*) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1959), 282.

Of course, one cannot ignore the fact that as a body politic, the South would inevitably be affected by macro politics. Such effects not only meant its political suppression or its assimilation into the domain of macro politics but also included the fact that after the fall of the Ming, the South itself, the lifestyle there and the style of literary and scholarly production, changed a great deal. Such changes came in part from the introspection of the southern literati regarding the culture in which they grew up. In fact, there was a long tradition of dialogue and tension between the South and the North, which only intensified during transitional periods. The drifting of the South in physical space not only resulted in certain effects in the North but also provided the North, its constant opposite, with a chance to blend culturally.

For example, Gu Yanwu, originally a southerner, chose to wander across the North after the fall of the Ming. As Qian Mu indicates in his *Zhongguo jinsanbainian xueshushi* 中國近三百年學術史 (*Intellectual History of China in the Last Three Hundred Years*), over the course of about twenty years of drifting in the North, an interest in “textual research” replaced Gu’s previously “gentle” and “elegant” literary taste; the style of Gu’s scholarly production also turned to what was generally considered “northern scholarship.”²⁵ Another example is Zeng Wan (曾畹). In the last days of the Ming, Zeng and his friend Wei Xi (魏禧), one of the “three most famous essayists” in the early Qing, together traveled in the cultural circles of the South, like many literati at that time. After the collapse of the Ming, Zeng also wandered in the frontiers from the East to the West. Twenty years passed, and in an introductory essay Wei wrote for Zeng,²⁶ he describes Zeng, previously a southern gentleman and an elegant dresser, as looking more like a northern frontiersman with a dark yellow face, bleak eyes, leather clothes, and a heavy knife fastened to his belt. Thus, in Wei Xi’s account, both the previous world and Zeng’s previous self seem like a distant dream. The drastic change in Zeng’s physical appearance can also be read as a metaphor that points to changes in the South.

Conclusion

In *Where Is the South: The Establishment of the Concept of the Orthodoxy and the Metamorphosis of the Gentry’s Spiritual World* (何處是江南：清朝正統觀

25 Qian Mu 錢穆, *Zhongguo jinsanbainian xueshushi* 中國近三百年學術史 (*Intellectual History of China in the Last Three Hundred Years*) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1986), 152, 156.

26 See Zhao Yuan 趙園, *Mingqingzhiji shidafu yanjiu* 明清之際士大夫研究 (*Studies on the Gentry in the Ming-Qing Era*) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1999), 97.

的確立與士林精神世界的變異), Yang Nianqun (楊念群) touches upon the interactions between the Han literati and the ruling Manchus. But Yang is more concerned with how the southern literati clashed with Qing rulers in their competition over who would represent orthodoxy and how the Manchus reconstructed and managed the South to claim the legitimacy of their rule.

In discussing the drift of the South northward instead of how the South was transformed or co-opted by the Manchus, I see the South not only as a place or a cultural concept but as a body politic that was able to move and provide a counterforce to central power. The interplay of southern micro politics and Manchu macro politics pulled the South into Beijing and allowed the transplantation of southern culture to the capital. The southern elements in Beijing's rise as a cultural capital in the early Qing point to a new chapter in the long history of cultural drift between North and the South in China.

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