

Centering the Periphery: Teaching about Ethnic Minorities and Borderlands in PRC History

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How many ethnic groups (*minzu*) live in China today? I ask this question at some point on the first day of almost any class I teach on Chinese history. Students not from the PRC often look back at me blankly, while those from Mainland China (sometimes a plurality in my courses at CMU) knowingly raise their hands. The answer, of course, is fifty-six—fifty-five minorities plus the Han majority. Then I ask some follow-up questions: “How come China has fifty-six *minzu*? When did China get fifty-six *minzu*? How do we know China has fifty-six *minzu*?” Now everyone is confused...

But I do so because introducing students to the “minority question” at the start of a course is one way I begin to complicate the idea of “China”—whether fully conceived or as a vague notion—so many students bring with them to the classroom. It provides an avenue through which to deconstruct the notion that China is a singular, linear, and continuous entity, to challenge the presumption that the current Chinese state and nation are simply modern manifestations of their dynastic predecessors, and to historicize the often-tortured process by which the twentieth-century nation-state came into being. Rather than proffer an irredentist, progressive narrative of fragmentation to reunification and from colonial victimhood to world power, it allows me to introduce ideas of empire and to contrast them with the expectations of nationhood. And, importantly, as an educator invested in telling better, more inclusive, and representational stories about the past, it is the right thing to do. It affords an early opportunity to inform or remind students that China does not equal “ethnic Chinese,” that other people live within its borders and that these people were not always “minority nationalities.” They were minoritized—alongside the creation of a majoritized Han—through certain global processes associated with the formation of nation-states.

To start, although those designated as “ethnic minorities” only make up around 8 percent of the population of the PRC today, I remind students that this is still well over 100 million people. They and their historical experiences matter. Whether or not this is emphasized in class is a choice with real consequences that we as instructors make. To put it another way, how non-Han people became ethnic minorities in a Han-dominated nation-state is not a question of peripheral importance. It is among the key questions of modern Chinese history and the fallout is one of the core unresolved tensions that the present leadership under Xi Jinping **seems determined to finally settle**. Below I do my best to argue why we must make time and space for including non-Han people and places in our courses on PRC or twentieth-century Chinese history followed by suggesting a framework for doing so. I finish by offering some suggestions for course material.

The histories of the United States (where I live and teach) and modern China are far from analogous, but the same instincts and rationales that have driven many scholars and educators to rethink how we teach the American past (or British Empire or European ascendancy, etc), should also inspire us to strive to construct a more inclusive portrayal of China’s recent history. When we teach about the *relative* lack of peasant resistance to collectivization in the 1950s, for instance, we risk erasing the massive rebellions and the brutal counterinsurgency campaigns that engulfed many ethnocultural borderlands in the mid-to-late 1950s.¹ In the Amdo region that is the subject of much of my research (most of Qinghai, southern Gansu, and parts of northern Sichuan) tens of thousands of people—particularly Tibetans, but also Mongols, Hui, Salar, Tu and others—were killed, arrested, tortured, and/or displaced.² If we discuss the consolidation of the new state but ignore the massive program of settler colonialism in northern Xinjiang under the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corp (*bingtuan*) that transformed the grasslands into militarized industrial farms and extractive industries, what does that say about our commitment to challenging narratives that elide colonial violence elsewhere?³ When we talk about bloodshed spilled during the Cultural Revolution by Red Guards in Beijing, but leave out the horrific ethnic pogrom committed against Mongols in Inner Mongolia, we are giving fuel to the lie that the Cultural Revolution was simply ten years of Maoist madness while helping to cover up the systemic racism, undergirded by state ideology, that persists to this day.⁴

The CCP’s success in reconstructing *most* of the territorial dimensions and demographic diversity of the Qing Empire is among the most consequential accomplishments of the early-PRC period. And among the most vexing problems it has faced since is determining how to best govern these regions and what the relationship should be between non-Han people and the state and nation. Nonetheless, I often see syllabi, read textbooks, and attend conferences that would make you think it was the boundaries of the relatively truncated and exclusionary Ming dynasty—and not those of the expansive and far more inclusive Qing—that would eventually be adopted by the PRC. And I have spoken to colleagues who are reticent to discuss such topics in class because they are worried either about offending native Chinese students (and the possible backlash that might bring) and/or propelling anti-China sentiment into our already hyper-polarized political environment. Yet imagine choosing not to teach about Jim Crow or, for that matter, the Chinese Exclusion Act out of similar concern for offending students in the U.S. (and yes, I realize that this is a challenge that many of our colleagues may soon face). Or even worse, imagine considering these topics unimportant. Instead of self-censorship or indifference, we need to figure ways to tell these

stories in a manner that is effective, sensitive, and without imputation. Fortunately, because discussion centered around the intersections between race/ethnicity, representation, state violence, and historical memory/commemoration are so much more familiar to students today than they were even a decade ago, in my experience most students are equipped with tools necessary to at least grapple with these issues in constructive and respectful ways, even when put into the unfamiliar context of recent Chinese history.

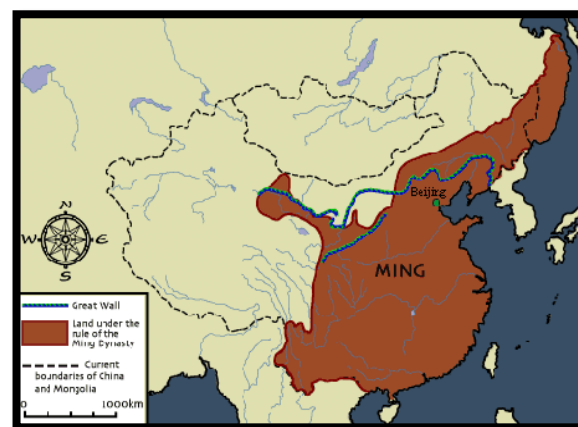
As historians (and historically-minded scholars in other disciplines) we are in some ways uniquely positioned to assist them in doing so. By historicizing “China” within larger global frameworks, we help chip away at narratives both positive and negative that contribute to a notion of Chinese exceptionalism. The result is that when discussing the treatment of non-Han people in the PRC—whether the relatively progressive and pluralistic pretensions found in various iterations of the state constitution or the reality of frequent and often horrendous violations of those foundational promises—they can be dealt within the context of wider global efforts since the rise of the nation-state either to accommodate, mitigate, or eliminate ethnocultural diversity. By reflecting on the American experience, for example, and our refusal to live up the ideals of (some of) our founding documents, my students have a foundation upon which to think about similar failures within China’s particular context. When we consider China’s expansion west (both during the Qing and again after 1949), students often bring up America’s even more violent history of westward expansion. When the current situation in Xinjiang is discussed, my students frequently reflect on the incarceration of children at the U.S.-Mexican border or mass incarceration of African Americans. And when we talk about the protests in Hong Kong, BLM protests and the response of U.S. law enforcement inevitably arise. This emphatically is not to draw equivalences; we certainly are not trying to “both sides” China’s treatment of its ethnic minorities by reflecting on America’s own troubled past and present (as **Chinese state media** and its online defenders often do). However, I have found these types of discussions extremely fruitful for helping to disarm those Chinese students who already feel under attack by the anti-China rhetoric permeating their lives in the U.S. while providing students not from China (including many Chinese and Asian Americans) tools with which to better conceptualize and contextualize majority-minority and state-minority relations in China.

After all, minorities, like majorities, do not just exist; they “are historically constituted.”⁵ I wholeheartedly agree with Janet Klein, a historian of the Ottoman Empire and its successor states, who argues, “it is essential for us to critically reconsider our use of the term ‘minority,’ to see minorityhood as *historically and socially constructed as we recognize nationhood to be*, and to understand the specific links between them.”⁶ As I repeatedly remind my students, there were no ethnic minorities in the Qing empire.⁷ In fact, it was only in the context of the mid-nineteenth-century rise of the nation-state and the emergence of the concept of representational government (whether democratic or authoritarian) that the concept of discrete minority populations appeared globally alongside that of “a coherent national ‘majority.’”⁸ The term

itself only entered international law during the settlements that ended the First World War and came to mark the ascendancy of the sovereign nation-state. Not coincidentally, it was in the 1924 manifesto announcing the formation of the first United Front between the Kuomintang and CCP that the Chinese neologism *shaoshu minzu* (minority nationality or ethnicity) first appeared.⁹

If there were no minorities (or majorities) in the Qing empire, what were there? Like most successful empires across time and space, the Qing managed separate and unequal subject populations through a variety of governing practices that ranged from more bureaucratic to more paternalistic and fluctuated between some that prized acculturation and others that reenforced difference.¹⁰ Perhaps it goes without saying, but the first thing students need to grasp if they are to understand the barriers the PRC has encountered in its efforts to fully integrate non-Han communities into the modern nation is that these various “constituencies,” as Pamela Crossley refers to them,¹¹ and the territories they traditionally inhabit, have not been part of “China” since “time immemorial” as the state increasingly chooses to suggest.¹² Instead, they were conquered by the Manchu rulers of the Qing during a particular moment of empire building that occurred between the mid-17th and mid-18th centuries. Although the borders forged by Qing armies had “no precedent in Chinese history,” more often than not twentieth-century Han state and nation builders of all political stripes have essentialized these boundaries as the natural extent of an innate and timeless China.¹³

To illustrate the point, I fall back on the tried and true: maps. I use one showing the extent of the Ming state (Map 1), side-by-side one illustrating the boundaries of the Qing empire (Map 2), which was twice as large. Then I show a map of the PRC (Map 3), which, of course, is much more closely aligned with the dimensions of the Qing than the Ming. Finally, I again show the Ming but now next to a map that displays the PRC’s “nationality autonomous areas” (Map 4) which make up over 60% of its landmass. Side-by-side they almost look like matching puzzle pieces and clearly illustrate that most areas in which ethnic minorities are recognized to live today were not part of a historical China, but instead were conquered during the height of the Manchu Qing empire.¹⁴



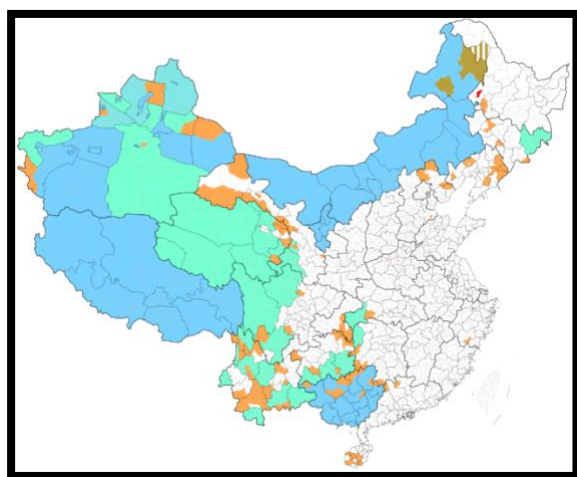
Map 1: Ming Empire



Map 2: Qing Empire



Map 3: PRC w/ Nationality Autonomous Areas



Map 4: PRC w/ only Nationality Autonomous Areas

What is an empire and why does that matter? From Star Wars’ Galactic Empire (a reference students still understand) to Ronald Reagan’s Evil Empire (a reference they emphatically do not), as several historians of empire have suggested, in today’s world the concept of empire is often reduced to “a Bad Thing,”

“a value-laden appellation” in which the “perception of exploitation is more important than the objective fact of empire.”¹⁵ The point here is not to rehabilitate “empire,” but to recognize that traditional empires accommodated diversity in different ways than those adopted by the consolidated nation-state. For its clarity and precision, I use Charles Tilly’s definition to demonstrate that the Qing was in many respects a prototypical empire. Tilly writes, “An empire is a large composite polity linked to a central power by indirect rule” that governs through “distinct compacts for the government of each segment; and [the] exercise of power through intermediaries who enjoy considerable autonomy within their own domains in return for the delivery of compliance, tribute, and military collaboration with the center.”¹⁶ For the Qing, these intermediaries might be Mongol *jassag*, Tibetan Buddhist lamas, Turkic Muslim *begs*, ‘tribal’ headmen (*tusi/tuguan*) on the southwestern frontiers, or Han Confucian literati officials. Empire is often visualized as a “hub-and-spoke network” in which each segment is connected to the imperial center but not each other (it is also easy to illustrate on a PowerPoint). While the reality was considerably messier,¹⁷ the point is to show that the Qing used “existing practices, understandings and relationships” to rule over its various segments through different arrangements with different sets of elite intermediaries who often benefitted from their “collaboration” with the throne. In fact, empire cannot exist without this type of collaboration. To put it another way, if the Qing had ruled over its domains uniformly and directly, it would not have been an empire. I ask my students what it would have been? A country? A kingdom? Or as Karen Barkey writes, “Once the multifarious settlements between state and different communities diminish and stabilize, and standardized relations apply to all segments of imperial society, we are not talking about empire anymore, and have moved toward an alternative political formation, perhaps on the way to the nation-state.”¹⁸

And this is what began to occur by the last years of the Qing. An often-overlooked component of the New Policies (*Xinzheng*, 1901-1911) was the extension of Chinese-style administration and the formal opening of Han migration to non-Han parts of the empire at the expense of local elites and communities.¹⁹ As with the Ottoman’s Tanzimat reforms, however, by eliminating the patchwork nature of empire in favor of administrative standardization, in essence beginning to make majorities and minorities, the court may have “delegitimized the central state more than strengthened it.”²⁰ The distinct compacts connecting the imperial hub to regional elites, already strained, were severed by the revolution of 1911 (also easy to illustrate on PowerPoint). Most literally, after clarifying in no uncertain terms that their past relationship with the Manchu royal house was not transferable to a Chinese republic, both the 13th Dalai Lama of Central Tibet and the 8th Jestundamba of Mongolia quickly declared independence.²¹

There is no need, much less space, to review the vicissitudes of China’s twentieth-century borderland history here. What is important to me when I address my students is to emphasize that it is not the story of fragmentation to reunification or feudalism to modernity. It is a story of the end of empire and the struggle over what should come next, who should be included, and on what terms. Once political elites in China determined that the new nation-state should include all of the

lands and peoples of the former empire, an almost unprecedented supposition, this transition became that much more complicated. On what basis should people whose main connection had been that they were subjects of the same sovereign now "assent" to form a horizontal political community?²² Joseph Escherick has called this the "Atatürk counterfactual,"²³ and I use the Ottoman example (with maps, as always) to show how farcical it would seem to us today if Turkish leaders had attempted to claim all of the Ottoman territories as part of a Turkic-dominated nation-state. Not just because the European powers would not have allowed it, but because most of us would agree that the Balkans, northern Africa, and other lands that had once been under Ottoman rule are not Turkey!

Because China's modern borders have been naturalized to such a degree, it is sometimes difficult to see the parallel. But this is exactly what many Han political elites claimed in the first half of the twentieth century; they called for the entirety of the composite, multiethnic Qing to be transformed into a Chinese Republic. And with a few significant exceptions, primarily Mongolia and Taiwan, this is what the CCP accomplished after 1949. To do so, Han nation-builders no matter their political persuasion first needed to "erase empire" by claiming that unity was based on something other than (relatively recent) imperial conquest.²⁴ Although a gross simplification, in the main Republican leaders sought to blunt the danger diversity posed to the idea of the nation-state by arguing that the various peoples of China were unified through common descent.²⁵ To the contrary, after 1949 the CCP made diversity explicit by dividing its population into what eventually (but not until 1979) would become fifty-five legally recognized minority groups along with the Han majority. The CCP erased empire by claiming that these distinct groups had coalesced over centuries of common struggle to form one big socialist family. Nationality classification, autonomy, and other legal and less formalised markers of *minzu*-based difference imposed after 1949, along with the frequent acts of physical violence and discrimination that have targeted minority communities since—all within living memory and in many cases ongoing—have helped harden both minority nationality subjectivity as well as that of the "default ethnicity,"²⁶ the Han majority. However, they have also laid bare the "discrepancy between declared *de jure* equality and *de facto* inequality" that exists between Han and non-Han.²⁷ As in many other national contexts, the process of minoritization in China has "marked" non-Han people and territories as others, while leaving the majority "unmarked," and thus exposing minoritized peoples to tremendous levels of discrimination, exclusion, assimilationist pressure, and both state-led and intercommunity violence.²⁸ What they haven't done is provide a convincing argument that explains to many (but not all) non-Han people their stake as minorities in a Han-dominated, authoritarian state.²⁹

And many within China's leadership have come to a similar conclusion. Over the past decade or so, the decision in 1949 to create a "multinationality state" made up of (now) fifty-six state-recognized *minzu* has come under criticism in some elite circles as the reason many non-Han people have yet to embrace their identity as loyal Chinese citizens. Uradyn Bulag calls it the CCP's "original sin" and likens the creation of nationality minorities to "Frankenstein's monsters" that in the eyes of the

current leadership "must be stopped before they kill their creator."³⁰ This has led some, including Xi Jinping, to advocate for "a newly imagined community of the Chinese nation of shared destiny," that in essence sees minority identity "as a threat to the Chinese state and the Chinese nation."³¹ This helps explain the horrific state violence currently being committed in Xinjiang, but also broader acts of epistemological violence against non-Han communities such as the "sinification" of Hui Muslim mosques and the likely end of education in languages other than Chinese. Or to put it in the framework I use to teach modern Chinese history, what we are seeing today is the most recent iteration of a more than century-long effort to create a nation-state out of the ashes of empire, or in Bulag's words, "the Party appears to be seeking to complete the Chinese mission of finding a national form compatible with its state form."³²

There is no better way to communicate to students that non-Han people (now ethnic minorities) and their stories not only matter inherently, but also matter for our understanding of China's recent past, than to set aside time and assign coursework related to non-Han historical experiences. While a tremendous amount still needs to be done, there is now more material than ever related to non-Han people and regions after 1949. For example, Felix Wemheuer's new textbook *A Social History of Maoist China* includes discussion of ethnicity in China, including sections on the "peaceful liberations" of Tibet and Xinjiang. Among the "interludes" found in Rebecca Karl's recent *China's Revolutions in the Modern Age* are forays into 1950s Tibet and the current crisis in Xinjiang. While there is always room for more, David and Yurong Atwill's *Sources in Chinese History* devotes considerably more attention to border regions and non-Han people than previous document collections. Jeremy Brown's new study of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, *June Fourth*, includes a chapter on how events in Beijing connected to riots in Lhasa, clashes between Han and Tibetan students in Lanzhou, and even anti-African protests in Nanjing. In doing so, Brown provides a model for how scholars can and should think beyond the Han even when their topics do not specifically focus on "minority issues."

Work on PRC history in Tibetan regions, while still in its infancy, is probably more developed than those about other minority areas. My chapter "Tibet in China? China in Tibet" in the *Handbook on Ethnic Minorities in China* was written for classroom use as an accessible and assignable reading that attempts to do much of what I have suggest above. If you use "Cultural Revolution memoirs" in class, why not assign *My Tibetan Childhood* by Naktsang Nulo? Originally published in China in colloquial Amdo Tibetan, it is a remarkable account of growing up in the southern Qinghai grasslands in the 1950s, the arrival of the "Chinese army" in 1958 (not 1949), and the tremendous levels of violence that accompanied the region's forced integration into the PRC. On top of the intrinsic importance of the topic, it provides an opportunity to discuss a host of issues related to ethnocultural violence, communal memory, and national belonging, particularly when paired with a more 'standard' CR memoir (I usually assign Rae Yang's *Spider Eaters*).

A fantastic and visually stunning addition to the literature on the CR is Tsering Woesser's *Forbidden Memory: Tibet*

during the Cultural Revolution. Newly translated into English, it features roughly three hundred photographs taken by the author’s father, a PLA officer, and is accompanied by Woesser’s own essays and interviews. A deeply personal rumination on victimhood and culpability, culture, language, identity, violence, loss, and memory, I have asked students to focus on the images by conducting photo analyses. Although more difficult to find, *Six Stars with a Crooked Neck*, written by Pema Bhumi and translated by Luran Hartley, is a thankfully short, wonderfully light-hearted, but deeply thought-provoking memoir of school life in a village on the eastern edge of the Tibetan plateau. Completely absent the type of physical violence we most often associate with the CR, *Six Stars* instead focuses on transcultural and transtemporal misapprehensions and on what Gyanendra Pandey calls “routine violence,” the quotidian acts of violence committed against Tibetan learning, language, cultural heritage, social relationships, and communal remembering.³³ What is doubly interesting for students is that the iconoclastic protagonists of both *Forbidden Memory* and *Six Stars* are themselves mostly Tibetan and therefore raise nuanced (and discussable) questions about agency, culture, ideology, propaganda, collaboration, and avenues of resistance.³⁴ A more difficult but fascinating book to include in class (or maybe one to read yourself and incorporate into lecture) is Melvyn Goldstein et. al.’s *On the Cultural Revolution in Tibet*, the story of the ultra-violent 1969 Nyemo Revolt in which a Tibetan nun—acting as a medium for powerful spirits and invoking Chairman Mao as the defender of Buddhist religion—was used by (mostly Tibetan) members of the Red Rebel faction (Gyenlo) to attack their more loyalist (mostly Tibetan) rivals (Nyamdre). Tsering Woesser, who is the most prominent Tibetan public intellectual working within China, has also authored a short and accessible primer, *Tibet on Fire*, on the 2008 Tibetan uprising and the wave of self-immolations that followed. Her poetry and essays are also worth checking out. Finally, not only does the volume *Contested Memory: Tibetan History under Mao Retold*, edited by Robert Barnett, Françoise Robin, and myself, include essays that might be useful in a classroom setting, it also contains fifteen primary sources in translation that illustrate various ways—and for various purposes—that the Tibetan experience under high socialism has been documented and re-remembered by a variety of actors and entities in the post-Mao years.

This is far from an exhaustive list and Tibetans, of course, are not the only group in need of representation. Two now older but still useful articles on the understudied ethnocultural

violence committed against Mongols during the CR were written by David Sneath and William Jankowiak. Rian Thum and Gardner Bovingdon have each penned short overviews of the recent history of Xinjiang and its people (although their focus is on Uyghurs), and the new edition of James Millward’s *Eurasian Crossroads* promises updated chapters on Xinjiang up through the present. Speaking of, in this recent essay Guldana Salimjan forcefully argues that China scholars of all specializations and disciplines—and not just those who work on border regions and ethnic minorities—have an obligation to speak out and teach about the atrocities currently occurring in Xinjiang, and worrying developments elsewhere, lest we risk “feed[ing] into a cycle of neglect and complicity.” There are too many excellent pieces of reportage, testimonial, research, and multimedia on recent events in Xinjiang to list here. Fortunately, Salimjan highlights many useful resources in her essay, including the Xinjiang Documentation Project housed at the University of British Columbia, to which students can be directed if they would like to see witness statements and primary documents in both Chinese and English translation, and which also contains links to scholarship, teaching tools, and sample syllabi.

Given all of this, how do we talk to our students about the PRC state today and its actions in ethnocultural borderlands? Certainly, many of the policies and discourses it employs are strongly reminiscent of colonial practices from both “China’s” own imperial past and elsewhere. But does that make the PRC an empire? Many will disagree, but to my mind calling it an empire obscures and flattens more than it illuminates. I instead argue that the PRC in its various iterations since 1949 remains more akin to what Adeeb Khalid calls “the activist, interventionist, mobilizational state that seeks to sculpt its citizenry in an ideal image” than it does an imperial formation like the Qing.³⁵ While it draws on imperial precedents, the transformative agenda and participatory politics of the PRC only make analytical sense to me if it is understood as a fundamentally different type of state. After all, as Khalid once asked in the context of Soviet Central Asia, “Where does empire end and other forms of nonrepresentational or authoritarian polity begin?”³⁶ And as I have written elsewhere, if today many Uyghurs, Tibetans, and other minoritized people and their supporters consider the PRC to be an empire, this may not be confirmation of empire so much as it is evidence of the failure of a century of nation building.³⁷

¹ See for example, Wang Haiguang, “Radical Agricultural Collectivization and Ethnic Rebellion: The Communist Encounter with a ‘New Emperor’ in Guizhou’s Mashan Region, 1956,” in *Maoism at the Grassroots: Everyday Life in China’s Era of High Socialism*, eds. Jeremy Brown and Matthew D. Johnson, 281–305 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); Melvyn C. Goldstein, *History of Modern Tibet*, vol. 3, *The Storm Clouds Descend, 1955-1957* and vol. 4, *In the Eye of the Storm, 1957-1959* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014, 2019).

² Benno Weiner, *The Chinese Revolution on the Tibetan Frontier* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2020); Naktsang

Nulo, *My Tibetan Childhood: When Ice Shattered Stone* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

³ Guldana Salimjan, “Mapping Loss, Remembering Ancestors: Genealogical Narratives of Kazakhs in China,” *Asian Ethnicity* 22, no. 1 (2021): 105-20.

⁴ According to the indictment lodged against the Gang of Four in 1981, of the nearly 35,000 people “persecuted to death” during the Cultural Revolution almost half (16,000) were associated with the fictitious Inner Mongolian People’s Party. While both numbers are gross undercounts, considering the Mongol’s miniscule share of China’s overall population it is still a remarkable admission.

⁵ Gyanendra Pandey, *Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 171.

⁶ Janet Klein, "Making Minorities in the Eurasian Borderlands: A Comparative Perspective from the Russian and Ottoman Empires," in *Empire and Belonging in the Eurasian Borderlands*, eds. Krista A. Goff and Lewis H. Siegelbaum, 17-31 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019), 19. Italics original.

⁷ As with the Ottoman and Russian Empires, processes of minoritization may have begun during the Qing's last decades. For example, see Hannah Theaker, "Old Rebellions, New Minorities: Ma Family Leaders and Debates over Communal Representation following the Xinhai Rebellion, 1911," *Global Intellectual History* (2021), 1-21.

⁸ Benjamin White, "The Nation-State Form and the Emergence of 'Minorities' in Syria," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 7, no. 1 (2007): 64-84, at 68.

⁹ James Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism: How the Qing Frontier and its Indigenous became Chinese* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 11.

¹⁰ On various ways the Qing governed its various segments, see Nicola DiCosmo, "Qing Colonial Administration in Inner Asia," *The International History Review* 20, no. 2 (1998): 287-309.

¹¹ Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

¹² See the chapters by Elliot Sperling and Andres Rodriguez in Naomi Standen, ed., *Demystifying China: New Understandings of Chinese History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013) and Gardner Bovingdon, "The History of the History of Xinjiang," *Twentieth-Century China* 26, no. 2 (2001), 95-139.

¹³ DiCosmo, "Qing Colonial Administration in Inner Asia," 288.

¹⁴ Like most maps, none of these are strictly "accurate," but that is something that can also be discussed with students.

¹⁵ Ronald Grigor Suny, "The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia, 'National' Identity, and Theories of Empire," in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, eds. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin, 23-66 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 26-7; Stephen Howe, *Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9-10; Mark Beissenger, "The Persisting Ambiguity of Empire," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 11, no. 2 (1995): 149-84; Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 6-7.

¹⁶ Charles Tilly, "How Empires End," in *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building, The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*, eds. Karen Barkey and Mark Von Hagen, 1-11 (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 3. See also Howe's definition, *op. cit.*, 15-16.

¹⁷ See, for example, Joseph W. Esherick, "How the Qing became China," in *Empire to Nation: Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World*, eds. Joseph W. Esherick, Hasan Kayali, and Eric Van Young, 229-59 (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

¹⁸ Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 10.

¹⁹ Esherick, "How the Qing became China," 241-2.

²⁰ Kemal H. Karpat, "Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, eds. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, 141-69 (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982), 163.

²¹ Even before the Qing's official abdication, the Jetsundamba Bogd Khan announced, "Originally Mongolia was not part of China, but because it followed the Qing royal house from the first day, it owes that house a great debt. Mongolia had absolutely no connection at all with China. Consequently, today when the Qing court has been destroyed, Mongolia has no natural connection with China and should be independent." Quoted in Henrietta Harrison, *China* (London, Hodder Arnold, 2001), 142.

²² Pamela Kyle Crossley, "Nationality and Difference in China: The Post-Imperial Dilemma," in *The Teleology of the Modern Nation-State: Japan and China*, eds. Joshua A. Fogel, 138-58 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 140-1.

²³ Esherick, "How the Qing became China," 243.

²⁴ Peter C. Perdue, "Erasing Empire, Re-Racing the Nation: Racialism and Culturalism in Imperial China," in *Imperial Formations*, eds. Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan, and Peter C. Perdue, 141-69 (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007).

²⁵ See, for example, Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism*; Esherick, "How the Qing became China;" Magnus Fiskesjö, "Rescuing the Empire: Chinese Nation-Building in the Twentieth Century," *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, 55, no. 1 (2006), 15-44.

²⁶ Stevan Harrel, *Ways of being Ethnic in Southwest China* (Seattle: University of Seattle Press, 2001).

²⁷ Uradyn E. Bulag, "Ethnic Resistance with Socialist Characteristics," in *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict, Resistance*, eds. Elizabeth J. Perry and Mark Seldon, 178-97 (London, Routledge, 2000), 186.

²⁸ Klein, "Making Minorities in the Eurasian Borderlands," 31. Dru Gladney writes, "As Han-ness is related to 'whiteness', so the majority in China is invented as an unmarked category, courtesy of a subjugated, stigmatized, and identified minority." Dru Gladney, *Dislocating China: Reflections on Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern Subjects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 83.

²⁹ For some smaller groups, the PRC's *minzu* formula may offer sought-after recognition and a degree of protection. See, for example, Benno Weiner, "In the Footsteps of Gariman or Han Yinu? Rebellion, Nationality Autonomy, and Popular Memory among the Salar of Xunhua County," in *Muslims in Amdo Tibetan Society: Multidisciplinary Approaches*, eds. Marie-Paule Hille, Bianca Horlemann and Paul K. Nietupski, 47-65 (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015).

³⁰ Uradyn E. Bulag, "Minority Nationalities as Frankenstein's Monsters? Reshaping the 'the Chinese Nation' and China's Quest to Become a 'Normal Country,'" *The China Journal*, 86 (2021): 46-67 at 63-4.

³¹ Bulag, "Minority Nationalities as Frankenstein's Monsters?" 46, 65.

³² Bulag, "Minority Nationalities as Frankenstein's Monsters?" 47.

³³ Pandey, *Routine Violence*.

³⁴ For a scholarly study of some of these issues, see Dáša Pejchar Mortensen, "Historical Amnesia in Gyalthang: The Legacy of Tibetan Participation in the Cultural Revolution," in *Contested Memories: Tibetan History under Mao Retold*, eds. Robert Barnett, Benno Weiner, and Françoise Robin, 275-308 (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

³⁵ Adeeb Khalid, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective," *Slavic Review* 65, no. 2 (2006): 231-51 at 232. To illustrate his point, Khalid compares the USSR to Kemalist Turkey, a state rarely considered to be an empire but that also attempted to transform recently minoritized peoples into ideal citizens.

³⁶ Khalid, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization," 233.

³⁷ Weiner, *Chinese Revolution on the Tibetan Frontier*, 211.