


RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Emergence of the Yuan Non-Han Ancestry in Late Qing North China

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## Abstract

This study sheds light on the largely unknown trajectories of the emergence of Yuan non-Han ancestry in late Qing North China. Focusing on the case of a Yuan Mongol minister's enshrinement, the article argues that the commemoration of non-Han ancestries seems to have been aroused by the two-century-long imperial project of compiling the *Gazetteers of the Great Qing Empire*, over the course of which the state reiterated extensive surveys of local worthies, chaste women, and martyred loyal subjects, including those from previous dynasties. Importantly, the surveys coincided with the rise of epigraphic studies that featured exhaustive epigraphic fieldwork, which gave rise to the reinterpretation and replication of Yuan epigraphy, rendering Yuan steles one of the most adamant testimonies of ancestral claims. The ancestries classified during the Qing came to coexist with modern ethnic identities classified by the Ethnic Classification Project during the mid-twentieth century.

**Keywords:** Yuan non-Han ancestry; gazetteer compilation; Late Qing North China

In 1825, Baiju 拜住 (1298–1323) of Jalayir, a prominent minister of *Yeke Mongyol Ulus*, was posthumously made Duke of Loyal Benefaction (Zhongxian gong 忠獻公) and enshrined in the Shrine of Loyal Martyrs (Zhongyi ci 忠義祠) in Dali 大荔 County, Shaanxi, by the imperial edict of the Daoguang 道光 emperor (r.1820–50). The edict was issued in accordance with a petition from Ošan 鄂山 (1770–1838), a Mongol bannerman affiliated with the Plain Blue Banner (Zhenglanqi 正藍旗) serving at the time as the Grand Coordinator of Shaanxi (Shaanxi xunfu 陝西巡撫). The very succinct account of this enshrinement (consisting of only twenty-seven characters) in the *Veritable Records*<sup>1</sup> may seem quite abrupt and out of place, begging the following questions: Why was the long-dead Yuan minister honored five centuries after his death? Was this a personal endeavor to commemorate the loyal subject of his alleged ancestors by Ošan, a Borjigid Mongol bannerman? The *Veritable Records* does not provide any

<sup>1</sup>*Xuanzong cheng Huangdi shilu* 宣宗成皇帝實錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986–87), *juan* 90, 443: “[道光五年]十月己未，追予元臣拜住，入祀陝西大荔縣忠義祠。從巡撫鄂山請也。”

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further clues; however, as discussed below, the enshrinement has exerted a profound impact on local history.<sup>2</sup>

This study sheds light on the largely unknown trajectories of the emergence of Yuan non-Han ancestry in the late Qing North China.<sup>3</sup> During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, under the rule of *Yeke Mongyol Ulus*, or the Mongol Empire, a large number of migrants from Central Eurasia poured into North China. After the historical episode known as “The Uprising of the Five Barbarians” (*Wuhu luanhua* 五胡乱华) in the fourth to sixth centuries, the Jurchen and Mongol invasions in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries ushered in a second phase of full-fledged non-Chinese conquests in the history of China. Today, most descendants of the Yuan non-Han migrants appear to have been linguistically and customarily assimilated into the “Han” majority. However, as recent scholarship has shown, non-Han people were not unilaterally absorbed into the Han or forced to abandon their ancestral memories. After 1368, numerous non-Han people served in the Ming court and army, exerting significant influence over the Ming military, administrative systems, and court culture.<sup>4</sup> Centuries after the demise of Mongol rule, the descendants of Yuan non-Han immigrants could commemorate their ancestry.<sup>5</sup>

The recent three decades saw the publication of not a few comprehensive reports of the non-Han ethnic groups in Han-majority provinces. These groups include those who were classified as *Hanzu* during the Ethnic Classification Project (民族识别工作) but today claim *Mengguzu* ancestry. Scholars in mainland China contributed to most of these reports, among which the most comprehensive is *Mengguzu and Their Descendants Residing Scattered in the Hinterland of Our Mother Country* (*Sanju zai zuguoneidi de mengguzu ji houyi* 散居在祖国内地的蒙古族及后裔).<sup>6</sup> This book, a

<sup>2</sup>In order to circumvent an unwieldy discussion of the geographical definition of “north China,” I will not stick to its ever-changing historical administrative division. Rather, I will adopt a geographical perception (i.e., the northern half of China proper) that appears frequently in contemporary academic work and fits comfortably into the discussion of this article.

<sup>3</sup>Historically, “Han” was mostly an antonym of the terms denoting non-Han, such as *Hu* 胡 and *Di* 狄, rather than representing a heterogeneous community, or an exclusive social and cultural group that compels people to define their identities as individuals and as members of certain ethnic groups. After the fifteenth century, however, the term “Han” began to be used as a synonym of “Chinese” by the state; for the sake of discussion, I will consistently use “Han” as an invented label for, as Mark Elliott put it, “people who, by descent, language, and cultural practice, were recognized as Central Plain Dwellers” before the Republican era when the new Han-ness became an ethnically defined nation (*minzu*). See Mark Elliott, “*Hushuo*: The Northern Other and the Naming of the Han Chinese,” in *Critical Han Studies: The History, Representation, and Identity of China’s Majority*, edited by Thomas S. Mullaney, James Leibold, Stéphane Gros, and Eric Vanden Bussche (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 173f., and Michal Biran, “Periods of Non-Han Rule,” in *A Companion to Chinese History*, edited by Michael Szonyi (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 129–42.

<sup>4</sup>See David M. Robinson, *Martial Spectacles of the Ming Court* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013); David Robinson, *In the Shadow of the Mongol Empire: Ming China and Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Jinping Wang, *In the Wake of the Mongols: The Making of a New Social Order in North China, 1200–1600* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018).

<sup>5</sup>Tomoyasu Iiyama, “A Tangut Family’s Community Compact and Rituals: Aspects of the Society of North China, ca.1350 to the Present,” *Asia Major*, 27.1 (2014), 99–138. Zheng Dechang 郑德长 has recently explored the cases of Mongol and Semu families during the Ming, enriching our knowledge on the fate of the former Yuan office-holding families after the demise of the Yuan. Zheng Dechang, *Yinmo de shenyings: Yuan Ming bianju xia de Menggu Semu renqun yanjiu* 隐没的身影: 元明变局下的蒙古色目人群研究 (PhD diss., Fudan University, 2023).

<sup>6</sup>Wang Jianhua 王建华, *Sanju zai zuguoneidi de mengguzu ji houyi* (Kökeqota: Neimenggu renmin chubanshe, 2013).

product of the author's two-decades of painstaking fieldwork, enumerates thirty-nine such cases in Henan, Hebei, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Shandong, Jiangsu, Fujian, Guangdong, Hubei, Chongqing, and Yunnan (Table 1).

A quick survey of Table 1 reveals that the earliest written ancestral evidence in many cases emerged in the form of steles and genealogical texts during the late eighteenth to late nineteenth centuries and was later included in local gazetteers. Why did the commemorations take place during the late Qing, as in Baiju's case?

The emergence of Yuan non-Han ancestries gives us a glimpse of the bottom-up perspectives concerning identity making in Qing China. The conventional view is that Manchu rulers upheld Confucian ideals in China proper and presented themselves as legitimate Chinese emperors, while the Eight Banner system played a crucial role in constructing and maintaining Qing imperial governance. Institutionally, as Mark Elliott contends, "the Manchu's banner system stood for all that was not Chinese about them" and drew a clear demarcation between Manchus and the Han in the Qing administrative, military, and bureaucratic systems.<sup>7</sup> How should we contextualize the emergent non-Han ancestries in this overall ethnic landscape of Qing China?

Focusing on the case of Baiju's enshrinement, this paper offers two conclusions. First, the commemoration of non-Han ancestries seems to have been aroused by the two-century-long imperial project of compiling the *Gazetteers of the Great Qing Empire*, over the course of which the state reiterated extensive surveys of local worthies, chaste women, and martyred loyal subjects, including those from previous dynasties. Importantly, the surveys coincided with the rise of epigraphic studies that featured exhaustive epigraphic fieldwork, which gave rise to the reinterpretation and replication of the Yuan epigraphy, rendering Yuan steles one of the most adamant proofs of ancestral claims. Second, apart from the intention of the Qing court, gazetteer compilation projects functioned as a type of classification project, if not necessarily ethnicity. The ancestries classified by the Qing came to coexist with modern *minzu* identities classified by the Ethnic Classification Project during the mid-twentieth century.

### The Bai Lineage of Dali County, Eastern Shaanxi

The southernmost parts of Dali County used to be the floodplain of the Wei River 渭河 and the Luo River 洛河, the flooding of which created numerous soaring dunes in the area over the centuries. Though most dunes have been leveled off today, we can still see the remnant of the capricious landscape at the "Sandy Land Garden" (Shayuan 沙苑), a major tourist destination in the county, encompassing 600 square kilometers of land. Baijia Village is located approximately one and half kilometers north of the northern shore of the Wei River in the middle of the floodplain.

Predictably, sterile soil and frequent floods were seen as key features of this region over the centuries. Li Yuanchun 李元春 (1769–1854), one of the most eminent figures in the Learning of Guanzhong (*Guanxue* 關學) tradition during the Qing<sup>8</sup> and a native of the neighboring Chaoyi county, states in a letter to a friend:

<sup>7</sup>Mark Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), esp. 347.

<sup>8</sup>On the Learning of Guanzhong tradition, see Chang Woei Ong, *Man of Letters Within the Passes: Guanzhong Literati in Chinese History, 907–1911* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), esp.188–202.

**Table 1.** Non-Han Ancestry Resurgences in *Sanju zai zuguoneidi de mengguzu ji houyi*

	Place(s)	Surname(s)	Claimed Apical Ancestor(s)	Source(s) and Note
1	Nanyang 南陽, Henan	Wang 王	Toyon 脫歡, King of Zhennan 鎮南王	1578, 1585, 1768, 1815, 1877, 1881, 1901, and 1929 steles; 1743, 1891, and 1942 genealogies; a 1742 Dengzhou 鄧州 prefectural gazetteer; classified <i>Mengguzu</i>
2	Nanyang, Henan	Hu 忽	Qutluy Temür 忽都魯帖木兒, the tenth son of Qubilai	An 1830 stele and a 1919 Nanyang prefectural gazetteer; classified <i>Mengguzu</i>
3	Anyang 安陽, Puyang 濮陽, and Xuchang 許昌, Henan	Dong 董, Li 李, Ma 馬, Guan 關, and Chen 陳	King of Yu 豫王, or King of Situo 四拖王	A 1753 stele and 1739 and 1892 Neihuang 內黃 County gazetteers
4	Puyang, Henan	Guo 郭	Guo Yong 郭庸, emperor's son-in-law	Genealogy first compiled in 1743 and revised thirteen times
5	Linzhou 林州, Henan	Shen 申	Ögedei Qayan	A Qing genealogy and a 1911 stele
6	Xinxiang 新鄉 and Anyang 安陽, Henan	Ke 可, Feng 馮, and Zhang 張	Kefanfan 可反反	An 1887 stele; 1935 Huojia 獲嘉 County gazetteer
7	Luoyang 洛陽 and Nanyang, Henan	Li 李	Muqali	1812, 1866, 1870, 1927, and 1934 genealogies; some lineage members classified <i>Mengguzu</i>
8	Xuchang, Henan	Huang 黃	Temür Qayan	Genealogy first compiled in 1845 and revised in 1948, 1993, and 2001
9	Zhumadian 駐馬店, Henan	Liang 梁	Yisün Temür, (great) grandson of Qubilai	Liang Shuming 梁漱溟(1893–1988), <i>Guilin Liang xiansheng yishu</i> 桂林梁先生遺書, juan 1
10	Zhengzhou 鄭州, Henan	Jiao 校	Jalida 嘉禮答, grandson of Jüci	A stele from the Qianlong period
11	Pingdingshan 平頂山, Henan	Ma 馬 and Xuan 宣	Ma Tuda'er 馬禿塔兒 and Xuan Temür 宣帖木兒	1349 and 1765 steles; 1871 Ye 葉 County gazetteer; classified <i>Mengguzu</i>

12	Puyang, Henan	Su 蘇	Qošan, King of Yi 義王	Genealogy first compiled in 1533, then revised in 1561 and 1925; two 1896 steles; 1756 Caozhou 曹州 prefectural gazetteer
13	Yantai 煙台, Shandong	Du 都	Bililai 必里海, Tammači commander	1857 and 1921 genealogies; 1864 Ninghaizhou 寧海州 local gazetteer; classified <i>Mengguzu</i> in 1985
14	Zibo 淄博, Shandong	Liu 劉	Liu Wugong 劉五公 of Oronar	A 1346 stele excavated in 1979; classified <i>Mengguzu</i> in 1980
15	Xingtai 邢台, Hebei	Tuo 脫	Toqtoγ_a of Merkid	1567 and 1626 epitaphs (“Tuoshi muchuan guchushi dongye tuogong mubei” 脫氏慕川故處士東野脫公墓碑 and “Tuotuo chengxiangg san gongzi Zhou Bin zhi mubei wen” 脫脫丞相三公子周彬之墓碑文), and 1929 Xinhe 新河 County gazetteer
16	Yangquan 陽泉, Shanxi	Sun 孫	Taqai 塔海, county darya	“Chaoting dafu tahai mu” and 1881 Yu 盂 County gazetteer; classified <i>Mengguzu</i>
17	Baoji 寶雞, Shaanxi	Qu 屈	Ögedei Qayan	A 1743 stele
18	Dali 大荔, Shaanxi	Bai 拜	Baiju of Jalayir	An 1825 edict; 1850, 1885, and 1937 Dali County gazetteers
19	Baiyin 白銀, Gansu	Ma 馬	Tielimian 鐵禮棉 and Tielixiu 鐵禮秀	1890 and 1917 genealogies; classified <i>Mengguzu</i>
20	Baiyin, Gansu	Zhao 趙	Qači’un	1765, 1860, and 1895 genealogies; classified <i>Mengguzu</i>
21	Wuxi 無錫, Jiangsu	Li 李	Jiana 嘉那, a spouse of Činggis’s daughter	A genealogy said to be first compiled during the Yuan, revised eighteen times, and published in 2008
22	Zhenjiang 鎮江, Jiangsu		A Qing Mongol bannerman	A 1917 genealogy
23	Quanzhou 泉州, Fujian	Chu 出	Muqali	A 1720 genealogy; classified <i>Mengguzu</i>
24	Shishi 石獅, Fujian	Gan 干	Ganbatu Temür 干八秃帖木兒, a Ming general	1621 and 1763 Quanzhou gazetteers; 1830 Jinjiang 晉江 County gazetteer

(Continued)

**Table 1.** (Continued.)

	Place(s)	Surname(s)	Claimed Apical Ancestor(s)	Source(s) and Note
25	Heyuan 河源, Guangdong	Sha 沙	Alisha 阿里沙, a Yuan darya	Genealogy first compiled in 1597 and revised in 1697, 1771, and 2007; 1825 Xingning 興寧 County gazetteer; 1739 Longchuan 龍川 County gazetteer; classified <i>Mengguzu</i>
26	Yangjiang 陽江, Guangdong	Sha 沙	Shihāb al-Dīn 沙不丁, a Yuan darya	Genealogy first compiled in 1784 and revised in 1888 and 2009; tomb of Shihāb al-Dīn, renovated in 1800; a 1800 stele; 1925 Yangjiang gazetteer; classified <i>Mengguzu</i>
27	Enshi 恩施, Hubei	Bu 部	Toyon, King of Zhennan	An 1826 genealogy; classified <i>Mengguzu</i>
28	Hong'an 紅安, Hubei	Wang 王	Yisūnbuqa 也先不花, King of Tiling 提領王	1882 and 1910 Huang'an 黃安 County gazetteers; classified <i>Mengguzu</i>
29	Honghu 洪湖, Hubei	Lu 陸	Ariq Böke	A genealogy published in the 1980s
30	Yunnan	Yu 余	Tiemujian 鐵木建, King of Nanping 南平王	Genealogies compiled 1817–90 and five county gazetteers from 1850s to 90s; classified <i>Mengguzu</i>
31	Pengshui 彭水, Chongqing	Tan 譚 and Zhang 張	A brother of Toyon Temür Qayan	A genealogy; some lineage members classified <i>Mengguzu</i> during the 1950s and in 1982
32	Tonghai 通海, Yunnan	Zhan 旂, Guan 官, and Hua 華	Ala Temür 阿喇帖木兒, Pacification Commissioner of Diannan 滇南宣慰司都元帥	1788 county gazetteers; classified <i>Mengguzu</i>
33	Wenshanzhou 文山州, Yunnan	Huo 火 and Huo 伙	Qut Temür 虎都帖木兒, Military Commissioner 樞密院使	Classified <i>Mengguzu</i> in 1984
34	Kaiyuan 開遠, Yunnan	Wu 伍	Budaširi 不答失里, King of Xuande 宣德王	1734 Ami 阿迷 prefectural gazetteer; a stele from the Jiaqing period; more than 100 lineage members classified <i>Mengguzu</i> during 1979 to 2005

35	Mengzi 蒙自, Yunnan	Tang 湯 and Dong 董	Tangsalahu 湯撒喇忽, Huayannu 華嚴奴, and Chadudong 察杜董	1776 genealogy; 1790 and 1927 county gazetteers; classified <i>Mengguzu</i>
36	Shilin 石林, Yunnan	Yang 楊	Puluhaiya 普魯海牙, a Yuan general	1757 Lunan 路南 prefectural gazetteer; classified <i>Mengguzu</i>
37	Anning 安寧, Yunnan	Ma 馬	Yechibuhua 也池不花	A 1799 stele and a genealogy from the Guangxu period (1875–1908); classified <i>Mengguzu</i>
38	Yunnan	Duo 朵	Dorji 朵兒赤	1792 and 1855 genealogies; some lineage members classified <i>Mengguzu</i> after 1978
39	Hunan and Hubei	Sha 沙	Shihâb al-Dîn, general of Zhenguo	Genealogy first compiled during 1828–40 and revised in 1885–90, 1947, 2004, and 2007

In recent years, famines have made people starve, and banditry is prevalent everywhere. Yet, [the banditry of] Guanzhong is the most flagrant. In Guanzhong, [the banditry in] Tongzhou and Chaoyi is the most flagrant. In the region between the Luo and Wei Rivers, [the banditry in] Shayuan is the most flagrant. Between the two rivers, bandits comprised of both Han and Hui Muslims have long set up hideouts in settlements like Yangcun, Sucun, Dacun, *Baijia*, and Dingjia Yuanzi, regardless of whether the famine hits the region. Dozens of them used to band up together after sunset every fall and spring, wielding ladders and weapons. They openly obstructed traffic and returned to the villages after midnight.<sup>9</sup> (*italics mine*)

During the early nineteenth century, Baijia Village appeared to have been situated in the middle of the vast floodplain that was a hotbed of brigandage in the eyes of Li.

During my second visit<sup>10</sup> to Baijia Village on August 17 and 18, 2019, I had the opportunity to participate in two group discussions (*zuotanhui* 座談會), held first in Baijiacun Village, and then in Tiejia Village 帖家村, located approximately 500 meters to the north of Baijia Village. According to the village leaders and elderly villagers, there are three “Mongol” surnames in Dali: Bai 拜, Tie 帖/铁, and Da 达/答. They collectively used to be called “Dazi” 鞑子 by their neighbors, with an old saying: “Do not boggle at Tie, Da, and Bai surnames. They are not Huihui, but *aotai*” (帖、答、拜, 不用猜。不是回回, 是鞑台。). In both group discussions at the Baijiacun and Tiejiaacun villages, no one knew exactly what *aotai* meant.

Baijiacun villagers told us their ancestral history, chronologically reorganized as follows: The Bai are direct descendants of Baiju. The resident ancestor, Dulin 篤麟, a son of Baiju, migrated from Hebei to Pingjiang 平江, Zhejiang, and then to Dali County in the early Ming and named his new home village “Wuliucun” 五柳村, with only a few households comprised of his kin. As the population grew, the village was renamed “Xingpingcun 興平村.” In the oral history of the villagers, the great majority of the village population has been comprised of the Bai lineage members who uphold Confucian values. The Tongzhi Hui Revolt (1862–77) devastated Dali, with numerous villagers fleeing or being killed by their former Hui Muslim neighbors. Although there were two Muslim magnate lineages in Dali, Qiao 喬 and Dian 甸, after General Zuo Zongtang 左宗棠 (1812–85) drove out the Muslim rebels from Shaanxi during the Hui Muslim War (1862–77), only a few Muslims remained in Dali. In Baijia Village, only one Qiao-surnamed household remained, having abandoned its faith. Muslims in Dali today are mostly descendants of immigrants from Zhejiang, Fujian, Jiangsu, and Jiangxi provinces, sent by the Qing government after the Tongzhi Hui Revolt. In 1937 and 1942, fleeing floods, famine, and the Japanese invasion, waves of Muslim refugees from Henan settled in Dali. Today, even among the members of the Bai lineage, there are some Muslims. Baijia Village was originally located much closer to the Wei

<sup>9</sup>Li Yuanchun, “Yu zhou Ernan yan dao shu” 與周二南言盜書, in *Li Yuanchun ji* 李元春集, edited by Wang Haicheng 王海成 (Xi’an: Xibeidaxue chubanshe, 2015), 206: “近來歲荒民饑, 所在多盜而關內為甚, 同、朝為尤甚, 沙苑、洛、渭之間為尤甚。洛、渭間之盜雜有回、漢, 皆窩圍楊村、蘇村、大村、拜家、丁家園子諸處, 其來積有年所, 並不關歲荒年饑。往者每值冬春日落後即數十為群, 挾雲梯兵械, 公然停人村外, 三更後即入村。”

<sup>10</sup>This visit was facilitated by the characteristic kindness and devoted support of professors Hou Yongjian 侯甬坚 and Bai Genxing 拜根兴 of Shaanxi Normal University. Professor Bai is from Baijiacun and kindly went to the village with me from Xi’an. My sincerest gratitude goes to the two professors and the student Zhang Bo 张博, who also accompanied us and translated the discussions in the local dialect into Mandarin for me.



River and was surrounded by thick clay walls. Before the construction of the Sanmenxia 三門峽 Dam, in the 1956, the more than one-third of the villagers were evacuated to Ximin Town 西民鄉 in Zhongning 中寧 County in Ningxia. The walled village was abandoned and eventually leveled, along with four ancestral halls owned by two branch households.

The ancestral graveyard was located several hundred meters south of the former village. Unattended, it was buried in sand during a flood in the 1950s. An 1832 stele commemorating the 1825 imperial edict was also buried, but its replica, put up in 1925, still exists (discussed below). By 1962, villagers returned from Ningxia and established a new village north of their original site. In 1977, a feud (*xiedou* 械鬥) erupted with the neighboring village over wheat fields. As a result, a new boundary between the two villages was drawn, leaving the former graveyard site now within the territory of the neighboring village (this is one of the reasons the Bai lineage has not yet excavated the site to retrieve the ancestral relics).

Similarly, in Tiejia Village, the Tie lineage members told me that they are direct descendants of Baiju. Some also said that their apical ancestor was a wet nurse of a son of Činggis Qan while some others claimed that their ancestor was Temüjin himself. The Tie lineage members used to marry only from the Bai and Da lineages. Before 1955, their ancestors were divided into three households, each comprising nine families, with some Tie lineage relatives residing in Pucheng 浦城 County. The lineage had a genealogy recorded on silk with a painting of Činggis Qan. Unfortunately, the genealogy was lost during the “Destroying the Four Olds” (*Po siju* 破四旧) movement. Evidently, ancestral memory/narratives among Tie lineage members are much more obscure and inconsistent compared to those of the Bai lineage.

As seen above, it is remarkable that the crucial moment in the history of the Bai lineage was the enshrinement of Baiju in 1825. Why did Emperor Daoguang issue an edict to this particular lineage to enshrine Baiju? Fortunately, a petition to enshrine Baiju is recorded in the *Sequel to the Existent Manuscripts of the Old Dali County Gazetteer* (續修大荔縣舊志存稿) published in 1937. The essay “Record of the Enshrinement of Lord Bai Zhongxian, Comprised of Original Petition and Memorial” (拜忠獻公奉旨入祀記 集原呈及題奏)<sup>11</sup> was authored by Li Yuanchun, a powerful advocate of local history. It succinctly narrates the genealogy of Baiju for seven generations, from Gü’ün U’a (孔溫窟哇) of Jalayir, his son, Muqali, then down to Baiju, drawing on *Yuanshi*. Subsequently, the petition relentlessly praises the righteousness, undying loyalty, and self-sacrifice of Baiju, lamenting his assassination together with that of Šidebala (Gegen Qayan, r.1320–23) at Nanpo 南坡 in the coup d’état orchestrated by Tegši (d.1323). What is worth underlining is that the petition goes on listing the names of the petitioners: Liu Xueshi 劉學師, Instructor of County School (縣教諭); Wang Lian 王璉, scholarship student of the county school (廩增附生); Lord Deng 鄧, County Magistrate; Lord Xu 徐, Prefect; Lord E 鄂, Circuit Intendant; Lord Deng 鄧, Provincial Governor; and Lord E 鄂 (i.e. Ošan), Grand Coordinator. This list suggests that the person who initiated the enshrinement was not likely Ošan, who would soon have to confront the revolt of Jāhangīr Khwāja (1788–1828) in Xinjiang, nor was it his subordinate local officials, but the instructor and students of the Dali county school.

<sup>11</sup>Chen Shanxian 陳少先 and Nie Yurun 聶雨潤, ed., *Xuxu dalixian jiu zhi cun gao* (Xi’an: Shanxisheng yinshuaju, 1937), *Zuzhenglu* 足徵錄, *juan* 2, 8a–9a.

In “Bai zhongxian chongsi ji” (拜忠獻崇祀記), an essay wrapping up the process of the enshrinement (recorded in Li Yuanchun’s literary collection), Li states that it was Bai Wenwei 拜文偉 (dates unknown), the descendant of Baiju, who submitted the petition in the first place, presumably to the county government or school. Li also claims that Wenwei owned a family genealogy (*jiapu* 家譜) and a genealogical chart painted on a silk sheet (*shenzhou* 神軸) and thus “[their] genealogy is demonstrably able to be explored in detail” (世系確然可詳).<sup>12</sup> These fragmentary accounts suggest that the enshrinement of Baiju was a part of the project of Li Yuanchun and his colleagues to promote local history, arguably foreseeing the future recompilation of the *Gazetteer of the Empire*.

The 1937 *Dali County Gazetteer* reflects on the devastation of the revolt, recounting that the Shayuan floodplain had become completely desolate.<sup>13</sup> According to the oral history prevalent in the village, only eight households (*bahu* 八戶) remained in Baijiacun after the Tongzhi Hui Revolt. Nevertheless, the enshrinement and consequent official recognition of Mongol ancestry greatly bolstered the status of the Bai lineage in the county, as the local government kept on commemorating Baiju. The Shrine of Loyal Martyrs in the county seat was rebuilt in 1869 by local gentry,<sup>14</sup> and the tomb of Baiju, as well as the 1832 stele, was finally recorded in the 1879 *Tongzhou Prefectural Gazetteer*.<sup>15</sup> A stele recently excavated at the site of the previous Baijiacun village, titled “Chijing Yuan youxiang dongpingwang Bai zhongxiangong hui zhu shendaobei” (敕旌元右相東平王拜忠獻公諱住神道碑) (dated 1925), is a replica of the eroded 1832 stele built to commemorate the enshrinement of Baiju, allegedly in the ancestral graveyard now buried underground. This 1925 stele lists the eminent members of the Bai lineage at the time, including those called “manager of the three households” (*sanhu jingli* 三戶經理) and “manager of the six households” (*liumenhu jingliren* 六門戶經理人) and states that the lineage comprised three branches: *beishe* 北社, *xishe* 西社, and *nanshe* 南社. This stele inscription demonstrates that in the early twentieth century, the Bai lineage appears to have been a well-organized kinship organization united under the Yuan non-Han ancestry.

As the Bai lineage prospered, their ancestral narrative came to be recorded in local gazetteers. In introducing the Shrine of the Loyal Martyrdom and Filial Piety (Zhongyi xiaodi ci 忠義孝悌祠, i.e., former Zhongyi ci 忠義祠), the 1937 gazetteer remarks that though Baiju’s name was not found on the 1729 stele of the shrine (for he had not been enshrined then), there was a great plaque displaying his name, official title, and posthumous honorary title in its main hall. Members of the Bai lineage made seasonal pilgrimages to the shrine to burn incense, almost exclusively occupying the shrine as the

<sup>12</sup>Li Yuanchun, “Baizhongxian chongsi ji” 拜忠獻崇祀記, in *Li Yuanchun ji*, 287f.

<sup>13</sup>A local legend recorded in the 1937 Dali county gazetteer even claims that the “Sandy Land Garden” (Shayuan) became the playground of malicious apparitions. It recalls that after the Tongzhi Hui Revolt, people venturing into Shayuan for firewood and farming occasionally lost direction in the bush and fell into a coma, known as “coming across an astray tiger” (*yu mihu* 遇迷虎). Some even lost their lives by accidentally falling into the well or drowning after being mesmerized by malevolent river spirits (*hequzi* 河屈子, literally “Qu Yuan 屈原 in river”). *Xuxiu Dalixian jiu zhi cun gao*, *Zuzhenglu*, *juan* 4, 2a–2b: “同治元年回劫後，沙苑之中，漢民子遺寥寥，村落皆瓦礫場。回民西去，百里荒蕪，草樹叢雜，氣象陰森。民人入沙苑耕樵者，每迷罔失，向終日困荆棘中，村中糾眾，徧覓覲面時，提呼乃醒，名曰遇迷虎。甚至迷入沙井喪命。南濱渭河，又有河屈子為魅，每誘人入河。”

<sup>14</sup>Zhou Mingqi 周銘旂, ed., *Dalixian xuzhi* 大荔縣續志 (published in 1879), *juan* 6, 4a.

<sup>15</sup>Rao Yingqi 饒應祺 and Ma Xiandeng 馬先登, eds., *Tongzhoufu xuzhi* 同州府續志 (printed in 1879), *juan* 9, 1a.

ancestral hall of their lineage. The gazetteer authors complained, “Yet, the shrine is originally a public domain and those enshrined are all worthies in the previous dynasties. Now a family denies this for private reasons. How can efficacious lord Zhongxian (i.e. Baiju) stay calm in this abnormality?” (然祠本公地，祀皆前賢。今以一家之私，而抹倒之。忠獻有靈，豈忍安乎).<sup>16</sup> Taking over an official shrine as the lineage ancestral hall demonstrates the lineage’s authority as descendants of a righteous historical figure, to say the least.

It is important to note that the Bai lineage and its members were not called Mongols (*Menggu*) in any sources before 1937. Instead, the Bai lineage was commonly described as the descendants of Baiju, and his “ethnicity” did not seem to attract any attention from the lineage members and their neighbors.

Regarding the Bai lineage members as Mongols was a twentieth-century perception, starting from the 1937 *Dali County Gazetteer*, which states that

There are Mongols (*Mengzu* 蒙族) south of the desert, with three surnames, Tie, Da, and Bai. In the previous Ming, [their ancestors] migrated from Yan 燕 [i.e., northern Hebei] to this county. They are robust and endure heavy labor. Having come into contact with and gradually acculturated with Han people (*Hanzu* 漢族), [the Mongols] have intermarried with Han people for a long time.

沙南又有蒙族三姓，曰鐵，曰答，曰拜，自前明由燕遷居本縣。其人壯實耐勞，與漢族漸習聯絡，久通婚姻。<sup>17</sup>

Nie Yurun 聶雨潤 (dates unknown), the chief compiler of the 1937 gazetteer and the incumbent county magistrate, graduated from Pekin Academy (Beijing huiwen zhongxue 北京匯文中學) and had most likely learned the modern notion of race (*minzu/zhongzu*), the discourse of which became widespread by the use of stereotypic description of the Mongols (being robust and enduring heavy labor).<sup>18</sup> The conversion from the descendants of the loyal subject to “robust Mongols” in the 1937 county gazetteer

<sup>16</sup>*Xuxiu dalixian jiuuzhi cunqao*, juan 6, 1b–2a.

<sup>17</sup>*Xuxiu dalixian jiuuzhi cunqao*, juan 4, 5b.

<sup>18</sup>*Dalixianzhi bianzuan wenyuanhui* 《大荔县志》编纂委员会, ed., *Dalixianzhi* 大荔县志 (Xi’an: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1994), 211; Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 147f. Interestingly, Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893–1980) published “Zhonghua minzu de tuanjie” (中華民族的團結), advocating the national integrity of China based on the unity of the five *minzu* on January 10 in 1937, the same year *Xuxiu dalixian jiuuzhi cunqao* was published. Gu’s discussion was prompted by the Suiyuan campaign (Suiyuan kangzhan 綏遠抗戰) during November and December in 1936, an attempt by two military organizations supported by Japan (Inner Mongolian Army, Menggujun 蒙古軍, and Grand Han Righteous Army, Dahan yijun 大漢義軍) and Japanese auxiliaries to seize control of Inner Mongolia. Although the attempt was crushed by the Shanxi clique (Jin Sui jun 晉綏軍), Shimada Miwa points out that the fact that “Han” and “Mongol” military organizations funded by Japan engaged in a full-fledged war with the army under the banner of ROC came as a serious shock to Republican Chinese intellectuals, resulting in a flurry of publications on the national integrity, represented by Gu’s “Zhonghua minzu de tuanjie” and Shimada Miwa 島田美和, “Ketsugō no ‘kyō’iki’ gainen” 顧頡剛の「疆域概念」, in *Chūka Minkoku no seido henyō to Higashi Ajia chi’iki chitsujo* 中華民國の制度変容と東アジア地域秩序, edited by Nishimura Shigeo 西村成雄 and Tanaka Hitoshi 田中仁 (Tokyo: Kyūko sho’in, 2008), 157–74. Published in the same year, Nie Yurun’s juxtaposition of the *Mengguzu* Bais with their *Hanzu* neighbors in the Dali county gazetteer may have also been influenced by the vigorous arguments.

sheds light on the process in which premodern ancestry was distilled into modern ethnicity.

During the Ethnic Classification Project, the entire Bai lineage was classified *Hanzu* for reasons unknown to the lineage members today. Yet, the lineage members do not miss an opportunity to assert their “original” *Mengguzu* identity. Since 2014, some Bai lineage members, who are also village leaders, have attended the annual worship rituals of Muqali (d. 1223), the great-great-great-great grandfather of Baiju, held in Luoyang and Üüşin qoşıyu (Wushenqi 烏審旗), on the third day of the third lunar month and thirteenth and fourteenth days in the fifth lunar month, respectively, to consolidate the kinship tie with other self-claimed descendants of Muqali. Recently, Bai lineage members have claimed that they are one of the prominent nodal points in the revival of the *Mengguzu* identity in China and beyond, as far as Kazakhstan, by publishing their ancestral claims online.<sup>19</sup>

### The Bai Lineage as Descendants of a Righteous Subject

Although we have few sources tracing the history of the Bai lineage before 1825, the petition authored by Li Yuanchun contains an interesting sentence asserting that the state encouraged local governments and people in its jurisdiction to report righteous achievements. At the outset of the petition, Li also remarks,

I humbly suppose loyal subjects dedicate their life to the state, and if their effulgent achievements become widely known, a virtuous emperor would praise their wisdom and reveal the righteousness to the world, without leaving out [even the cases from] the previous dynasties. Delving into the virtuous deeds in ancient records, we reverently admire the perpetual fame [of meritorious subjects]. Considering the esteemed norms in the homeland, the spread of benevolence and compassion is our hope.<sup>20</sup>

In other words, Li Yuanchun candidly stressed the necessity to officially honor loyal subjects under any Chinese state in history in order to uphold and enhance morality.

Why did Li Yuanchun believe that the Qing state needed to honor loyal subjects from previous dynasties? In “Bai zhongxian chongsi ji,” having succinctly summarized the illustrious ancestry and benevolent achievements of Baiju, Li rationalizes his argument:

The principle of imperial commendation concerns worthiness and does not concern someone’s status to inspire the people under Heaven and sustain the code of morals for the ages. Let alone the Qilin Pavilion of the Han, the Lingyan Pavilion of the Tang, and the Zhaoxun and Chongde Pavilions of the Song [where the

<sup>19</sup>As commonly seen among Muslims in the region, it is widely believed among the Bai lineage members today that “Dungan,” the term referring to a group of Muslim people who migrated from northwest China to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia during and after the Tongzhi Hui Revolt, is derived from the local pronunciation of the word “eastern shore” (*dong’an* 東岸 in Mandarin), and thus Dali is the home county of all the Dungan people.

<sup>20</sup>Li Yuanchun, “Record of Enshrinement of Lord Bai Zhongxian, Comprised of the Imperial Edict, with the Original Petition and Memorial,” *Xuxiu dalixian jiuzhi cungao*, Zuzhenglu, *juan* 2, 8a: “竊思，蓋臣報國，功烈雖顯於當年，聖主褒賢，旌表不遺夫前代。稽芳踪於往牒，景仰恆殷，溯懿範於維桑，馨香是翼。”

portraits of the meritorious subjects were displayed] have been official schools and shrines of loyal martyrdom and filial piety, in which even an ordinary man with slight moral integrity can be enshrined, to say nothing of those who benefitted the state and its people. Our state honors good and honest people, and there have been ample such precedents. Recently, six scholars from previous dynasties, including Lord Lu Zhi 陸贄 (754–805), were enshrined in the Temple of Confucius. Many more were also enshrined in the shrines of local worthies in prefectures and counties.<sup>21</sup>

The original Classical Chinese term for “the principle of imperial commendation,” *baochong zhi dian* (褒崇之典), is a common usage that stands for honoring meritorious subjects. However, Li Yuanchun arguably uses this term with particular imperial edicts issued during the reign of the Qianlong emperor in his mind. On the eighth day of the second month in the forty-first year of the Qianlong period (1776), the Grand Secretariat and nine other ministers reported to the emperor, petitioning to posthumously honor the Ming loyal subjects who died for the dynasty. The petitioners submitted the list of candidates selected from *Mingshi* and *Collated Successive Comprehensive Mirrors in Aid of Governance Edited by Imperial Instruction* (*Yupi lidai tongjian jilan* 御批歷代通鑑輯覽, compiled in 1768). The Qianlong emperor approved of the petition and titled the list *Record of Martyred Subjects in the Previous Dynasty* (*Shengchao xunjie zhuchen lu* 勝朝殉節諸臣錄). Then the emperor issued a decree to have the record printed and published from the Wuying Palace (Wuying dian 武英殿) as well as to enshrine the Ming loyal subjects at the Shrines of Loyal Martyrs in the localities. Having pointed out that more than 3,600 martyred loyal subjects were selected from *Mingshi*, *Collated Successive Comprehensive Mirrors in Aid of Governance Edited by Imperial Instruction*, Provincial Gazetteers, and *Gazetteer of the Great Qing Empire*, the emperor went on to declare that no further survey and commemoration would be conducted.<sup>22</sup>

This decree of the Qianlong emperor pinpoints the potential problems that the emperor and his government would most likely confront if they expanded the commemoration project endlessly. As numerous people died resisting the advancing Qing army or sacrificed their lives for the states even before the Ming, the cost of commemoration would be astronomical if the central government allowed further petitions to enshrine one's ancestor. An enshrinement could be accompanied by privileges to the martyr's descendants. In the case of the Bai lineage, upon the enshrinement of Baiju, six persons, presumably members of the Bai lineage, were granted the post of “keepers of shrine (*fengsisheng* 奉祀生),” the hereditary position assigned to maintain sacrifices

<sup>21</sup>Li Yuanchun, “Baizhongxian chongsi ji,” *Li Yuanchun ji*, 287: “夫褒崇之典，論賢能不論貴賤，所以風勵天下，萬世綱常系焉。漢之麒麟，唐之凌煙，宋之昭勳、崇德無論，已自有學宮，忠義孝悌祠附之，雖匹夫一日之節皆得與於其中，而況功在社稷生民者乎？我國家旌揚善類，具有成例，近自陸宣公以下增祀學宮者凡六人，其入鄉賢者又所在多有。大荔拜氏，忠獻裔也，有家譜，有神軸，世系確然可詳。”

<sup>22</sup>*Gaozong chun haungdi shilu* 高宗純皇帝實錄, *juan* 1002 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986–87), 416–18: “乾隆四十一年二月八日，... 是因世近可徵，而朕加恩訪錄，已迥非漢唐宋諸朝所可及，不可謂不多。今既各加旌典，俾得共與闡揚。於崇獎忠貞、風勵臣節之道，已無遺憾。即使再加蒐採，亦未必能廣至千人，於此事全局，有何增益。而稽諸文獻無徵之餘，必至真偽混淆，轉不足以昭傳信。且恐有司詢訪，不免於胥吏輩藉端滋擾里閭，更非朕軫恤遺忠之本意。此事亦著照所議，無庸辦理。併以此旨，及議駁稿，備載卷首。仍將此通諭知之。”

to a particular enshrined person.<sup>23</sup> Apparently, generous granting of the status of loyal martyr could eventually be a weighty burden on the local financial and administrative system. It was in the same vein that the Qianlong emperor's reluctance to expand the scope of the survey was shared by his ministers. The memorial submitted in 1775 by Šuhede 舒赫德 (1710–77) and Yu Minzhong 于敏中 (1714–80)—also included in the beginning of *Record of Martyred Subjects in the Previous Dynasty*—had expressed more practical concerns, such as the difficulty of verifying the pieces of historical evidence submitted by the self-claimed descendants of the martyrs who were not recorded in *Mingshi* or other official historiographies.<sup>24</sup>

Since the Kangxi 康熙 period (1662–1722), the Qing state had sporadically commended loyal Ming subjects, whereas their number did not exceed several dozen at a time. The commendation of loyal Ming subjects was unprecedented in number not only in the Qing but throughout Chinese history. As stated in the 1776 decree, the Qianlong emperor and his ministers intended to bestow this royal blessing for the last time. They anticipated the consequences otherwise: local governments filled with petitioners, shrines crammed with martyrs, and villages crowded with martyrs' descendants claiming honor and privileges. However, contrary to their expectations, the publication of the *Record of Martyred Subjects* seems only to have instigated further petitions as the Qing state encouraged its subjects to report righteous persons simultaneously.<sup>25</sup>

With the 1775 memorial and the 1776 decree, both included with the *Record of Martyred Subjects in the Previous Dynasty* in mind, we find that Li Yuanchun quite skillfully dispels the concerns in the memorial and decree—reckless enshrinements of the loyal subjects—in the petition to enshrine Baiju. Having pointed out that “the virtuous emperor praises the wisdom and reveals the righteousness to the world, without leaving out [even the cases in] the previous dynasties,” as seen above, he cites *Yuanshi* to underline Baiju's loyalty attested in official history. He devoted about half the petition to describe Baiju's loyal service and martyrdom at the coup d'état at Nanpo, with rhetorical questions like “His descendants have resided on the soil of Dali without a proper sacrifice being conducted. What does his spirit rely on [to exist]? [He] ought to be reverently enshrined to console the loyal spirit” (後嗣遺於荔土，煙祀未舉，靈魂何憑？應請崇祀，以慰忠魂。).<sup>26</sup> Similar questions are frequently attested in petitions for the enshrinement of commemorative inscriptions for loyal Ming subjects recorded in contemporary local gazetteers. Li Yuanchun was clearly aware of the principle of enshrinement publicized by state-sponsored publications such as *Record of Martyred Subjects in the Previous Dynasty*.

The case of the Bai lineage suggests that the emergence of Yuan non-Han ancestries during the late Qing period was associated with repeated efforts to compile local gazetteers, which were necessitated by the two-century-long *Gazetteer of the Great Qing Empire* project. Originally, the Qing state intended to gather information to compile

<sup>23</sup>Li Yuanchun, “Bai zhongxiangong fengzhi rusi ji ji yuancheng ji tizou,” in *Xuxiu dalixian jiuzhi cun-gao*, 9a.

<sup>24</sup>Šuhede 舒赫德, Yu Minzhong 于敏中, et al., “Yishu” 議疏, in *Record of Martyred Subjects in the Previous Dynasty*, SKQS version, preface, 22b: “聖澤覃施，極為周溥。若因其間尚有遺佚，復令督撫採訪增加；則自今上距國朝定鼎百有餘年，正史既不載其名、故老又無從詢問、文獻並不足徵，而僅據其子孫呈報之詞，又將何所考核以辦其誣信！”

<sup>25</sup>Tobie Meyer-Fong, *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 135–74.

<sup>26</sup>Nie Yurun, ed., *Xuxiu dalixian jiuzhi cun-gao*, *juan 2*, 8b.

a comprehensive gazetteer of its realm. As a secondary project of compiling the gazetteer of the empire, the state permissively commended those who sacrificed their lives for the state. As the case of the Bai lineage shows, from a bottom-up perspective, the gazetteer compilation project aroused aspirations in local societies to honor one's ancestry and subsequently obtain relevant privileges, both tangible and intangible. In the concluding paragraph of "Bai zhongxian chongsi ji," Li Yuanchun endorses the veracity of the Bai lineage's ancestral claim, pointing out that "the Bai have resided in the depth of the wind-blasted desert. Who would have inquired (i.e., primed them with) the Yuan history?" (拜氏居篆沙之深，誰復與問元代故事?).<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the fact that the lineage residing in a bandit-infested barren region spontaneously sought state certification of their ancestry corroborates that the Qing commemoration project widely served as a golden opportunity to assert and legitimize one's ancestral narrative in the late Qing society.

During the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, as Roger Shih-Chieh Lo has demonstrated, the Qing court desperately sought to sustain its governance over conflicting groups in local society by authorizing and patronizing the local popular religions revered by each party in ever-increasing local conflicts.<sup>28</sup> State certification of pre-Ming loyal subjects, with their number spiking after the mid-eighteenth century, could be contextualized in the same vein. With mounting social unrest, local administrators faced insurmountable challenges in sustaining and permeating state authority into different social strata. When applicant lineage members and their acquaintances took part in local governance in a broad sense by being clerks, public school students, and prominent gentry elites, and when they reiterated imperial decrees requesting thorough surveys of honorable conduct, it was not likely a favorable option for local administrators to bluntly reject petitions.

As shown above, Li Yuanchun's "Record of enshrinement of lord Bai Zhongxian, with the original petition and memorial" enumerates the officials, from county magistrate up to provincial grand coordinator, with whom Li and his friends "submitted the petition with one heart and reported to the throne all together" (同心申奏，協力具題). This list indicates that such an application could attract the attention of and be smoothly approved by the bureaucratic hierarchy as long as it fulfilled appropriate conditions, such as written evidence of the achievements of the righteous person to be enshrined, testimonies in the locality, and support from the local academic authority. It cannot be a mere coincidence that in most of the cases in Table 1, the apical ancestors were commended for their loyalty to Yuan or their benevolent rule as a local administrator in the locality.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Li Yuanchun, "Baizhongxian chongsi ji," in *Li Yuanchun ji*, 288. For three months in 2020, Lu Chuyun 陆楚云, a master's student at Northwest Minzu University (Xibei minzu daxue 西北民族大学) at the time, conducted fieldwork in and around Baijiacun and submitted her master's thesis on the lineage organization of the Bai surname in 2021. See Lu Chuyun 陆楚云. "Shanxisheng Dalixian Baishi zongzu zuzhi de xingcheng, yunxing he chonggou 陕西省大荔县拜氏宗族组织的形成、运行和重构." Master's thesis presented to Northwest Minzu University, 2021. As shown in her thesis, in Baijiacun, the Bai lineage preserves at least four genealogical texts from the Republican era. Shedding light on the genealogies, I will discuss the enshrinement from the perspective of the Bai lineage in another paper in future.

<sup>28</sup>Roger Shih-Chieh Lo, "Local Politics and the Canonization of a God: Lord Yang (*Yang fujun*) in Late Imperial Wenzhou (1840–67)," *Late Imperial China* 33.1 (2012), 89–121.

<sup>29</sup>This desire could have stemmed from the same imagined geographies that motivated the Qing empire to preserve and restore the "pristine nature" in its fringes. See Jonathan Schlesinger, *A World Trimmed with Fur: Wild Things, Pristine Places, and the Natural Fringes of Qing Rule* (Stanford: Stanford University Press,

### Age of Gazetteer Compilation and Epigraphic Study

Why did Li Yuanchun assist with the Bai lineage's enshrinement project? In the works recorded in his literary collection, Li Yuanchun repeatedly states that he was planning to publish a new local gazetteer of his home county, Chaoyi, because of his dissatisfaction with the previous county gazetteer compiled by Bi Yuan 畢沅 (1730–97).<sup>30</sup> In compiling the new gazetteer, in its preface, Li declares his steadfast policy to exhaustively survey local righteousness:

The *Gazetteer of the Empire* (*Yitongzhi* 一統志) has been compiled since the Ming, and prefecture and county gazetteers have been its primary source. The *Gazetteer of the Empire* was the primary source of information on dynastic history. Recently during the Daoguang period, the state recompiled the *Gazetteer of the Empire* and issued an order: “few chaste women and righteous deeds [to be recorded in the gazetteer] have been reported by prefectures and counties. This is because local clerks [in charge of the survey] demand bribes [to enlist cases]. Henceforth, there must not be such a suppression.” In my opinion, there were, in fact, sources hidden in the villages, among which few were known to the public. Only one chaste woman was reported from my village, and it cost a lot [to have it reported. Academic pieces of Wang Fuzhai were collected from my village, but have not been reported. Although we sought to report everything worthy of the State, many remained unreported. This is because it is not easy to fully reveal the facts through exhaustive surveys].<sup>31</sup>

In stark contrast to the concerns of the Qianlong emperor and his ministers addressed in the 1775 memorial and the 1776 decree, in the eyes of Li Yuanchun, the repeated commemorations in local gazetteers had fallen woefully short of commemorating even a glimpse of the admirable local cultural tradition. Li's dissatisfaction could also be derived from the fact that the previous gazetteers were not compiled by the Guanzhong local scholars. Compiling new local gazetteers by himself, he may well have made the enshrinement of Baiju a part of the gazetteer compilation project, which aimed to promote the significance of their locality in the gazetteer of the empire.

It is crucially important to understand, as Li states in the beginning of the letter cited above, all the gazetteers at county, prefectural, and provincial levels were compiled to be source materials for the gazetteer of the empire (*yitongzhi* 一統志). The Yuan, Ming, and Qing empires all compiled the gazetteer of the empire and, as centuries passed, the scale of the compilation project gradually expanded. After the Ming Dynasty, the central court ordered each county and prefecture to compile its own gazetteer to provide basic data for the gazetteer of the empire.<sup>32</sup> Since the compilation of the *Gazetteer of the Great Qing Empire* (*Daqing yitongzhi* 大清一統志) was commenced in 1686, the

2017); Loretta E. Kim, *Ethnic Chrysalis: China's Orochen People and the Legacy of Qing Borderland Administration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 212.

<sup>30</sup>Ong, *Men of Letters in the Passes*, 192f.

<sup>31</sup>Li Yuanchun, “Xianfengchu chaoyixianzhi xu” 咸豐初朝邑縣志序, in *Xianfengchu Chaoyixian zhi*, edited by Li Yuanchun (Chaoyi: Huayuan shuyuan, 1851), 1b–2a: “自明以來，又有一統志，郡縣志為一統志之本，一統志即為作史之本。近道光時，國家重修一統志，下諭州縣，報節孝義行甚少，皆由吏書索費故，然飾今後不得更有抑阻。予見之，而其時文匿不出鄉間，少有聞者。吾里僅舉一孝婦，無少費。既吾邑又徵王復齋著作，亦未聞。實搜全上報上之多遺，猶搜下之未易盡實也。”

<sup>32</sup>Joseph R. Dennis, *Writing, Publishing, and Reading Local Gazetteers in Imperial China, 1100–1700* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), 35–48.



Qing state initiated multiple empire-wide surveys that first resulted in the compilation of provincial gazetteers. As the project dragged on, in 1728, the Yongzheng 雍正 emperor (r. 1723–35) regulated provincial genealogies to be recompiled every sixty years to renew the primary information for the *Gazetteer of the Great Qing Empire*. This meant that the opportunity to legitimize one's ancestral claim would emerge on a regular basis, also indicating that the compilation project of the gazetteer of the empire would have no end in the foreseeable future.

In fact, the Qing state did not plan to end the compilation project. In 1740, the *Gazetteer of the Great Qing Empire* was finally submitted to the Qianlong emperor with great aplomb. However, as discussed above, its compilation continued as the empire expanded its territory. Over the course of two centuries, the Qing Empire almost constantly sought and officially commended righteousness. As a result, thousands of people were enshrined. After the first *Gazetteer of the Great Qing Empire* was completed in 1743 and printed in 1746, the *Gazetteer of the Great Qing Empire* was further recompiled as the territory of the empire expanded. The second edition was completed in 1784 and printed and 1790. In 1811, Emperor Jiaqing 嘉慶 (1801–20) issued an edict to declare its recompilation to eventually be completed by his son, the Daoguang emperor, in 1842. Meanwhile, by-products of compilation projects, in the form of collected biographies of a groups of people, were compiled and printed to commemorate historical figures who contributed to the state in certain fields. One such by-product was the *Record of Martyred Subjects in the Previous Dynasty*, which consisted of cases of loyal martyrs extracted from gazetteers. Over the course of the repeated recomplings, more historical figures were commemorated by the gazetteers,<sup>33</sup> with emperors requiring local governments to uncover more unnoticed virtues.<sup>34</sup> During the late eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, in the eyes of the imperial subjects of the Qing, the compilation project of the gazetteer of the empire and the subsequent commemoration of historical righteous figures arguably appeared to be an unremitting state project that legitimized their ancestral claims and granted them privileges.

Once a historical figure was enshrined, the person's descendants had an opportunity to enjoy county/prefecture-wide fame and tangible benefits.<sup>35</sup> For example, as mentioned above, up to six members of the Bai lineage were granted the post of “keepers of shrine” whose corvée labor was usually exempted. Even if not enshrined, the state project of compiling gazetteers at the national, provincial, and county levels served as significant political and cultural contexts for the emergence of Yuan non-Han ancestries. Having one's ancestry recorded in gazetteers meant honoring descendants in local society. As Joseph Dennis persuasively discusses, local gazetteers could be “public genealogies” that legitimate the ancestral claims and esteemed status of the lineages that successfully have their genealogies recorded in gazetteers.<sup>36</sup> For example, the Dong 董, Li 李, and Ma 馬 lineages in Neihuang 內黃 County, northern Henan, collectively claim that they are all direct descendants of a Mongolian prince named Temür.

<sup>33</sup>Shortly before and after Baiju's enshrinement, the emperor approved of the enshrinement of at least five Southern Song and Ming loyal subjects in the local loyal martyr's shrines in multiple prefectures. *Xuanzong cheng huangdi shilu*, juan 30, 532; juan 71, 134; juan 156, 406; juan 169, 618; juan 212, 126.

<sup>34</sup>For example, see Emperor Jiaqing's decree issued in 1815. *Renzong rui huangdi shilu* 仁宗睿皇帝實錄, juan 312 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986–87), 148.

<sup>35</sup>Chen Yongming 陳永明, *Cong nikou dao minzuyingxiang: Qingdai Zhang Huangyan xingxiang de zhuanbian* 從逆寇到民族英雄—清代張煌言形象的轉變 (Taipei: Guolitaiwandaxue chuban zhongxin, 2017), 117–50.

<sup>36</sup>Dennis, *Writing, Publishing, and Reading Local Gazetteers*, 64–114.

Their earliest claim appears in the “notable tombs” (*gufen* 古墳) section in the 1739 Neihuang county gazetteer:

The tombs of the Five Surnames are located in Cifan Village. It is said that Temür, Lord Wenzhen, Censor, and Vice-Chancellor of the Right in the branch secretariat of Henan, had five sons named Dong, Li, Ma, Guan, and Chen. They were divided into five surnames that were prospering and eminent lineages in Neihuang, having produced members of multiple lineages who passed the examination. Those with the Guan surname migrated to Jiaofu village in Qingfeng County in Zhili, and those with the Chen surname migrated to Yanling County. The other three surnames all reside in Cifan Village.<sup>37</sup>

In 1753, the three lineages established a stele to commemorate the tomb they claimed to be that of Temür, and they engraved an inscription almost identical to the claim recorded in the local gazetteer fourteen years earlier. In doing so, the merging of these three surnames into a fictional lineage was officially authorized by the state. With tombs and steles still existing in the county, the three surnames hold an esteemed position in the county’s history.<sup>38</sup> In varying degrees, the projects of the three surnames and the Bai lineage can be contextualized as bottom-up reactions to the state’s project of gazetteer compilation and the subsequent commemorations of righteous figures in history.

Another important cultural background of the emergence of Yuan non-Han ancestries could have been the increasing popularity of epigraphic study among Qing literati scholars. Notably, these cultural endeavors also exerted an enormous influence on gazetteer compilation, especially when the scholars of epigraphic study were deeply involved in such work. The ancestral narratives of the Bai lineage and the three surnames were all recorded in the section of “tombs” (*fenmu*) in the Dali and Neihuang county gazetteers, respectively. This section often included not only tombs, but inscriptions engraved on the stones.

On many occasions, epigraphical scholars also served as local officials, venturing into the field to investigate epigraphical sources. Consequently, through their publications, they played a significant role in bringing to light numerous local stele sources that otherwise would have remained unknown, including those that were produced in the Mongol-Yuan era. An illustrative example is Bi Yuan, one of the most prolific Qing-dynasty epigraphic scholars and the author of the *Epigraphic Records of Guanzhong* (*Guanzhong jinshi ji* 關中金石記). Like many other epigraphical scholars in the mid-eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, Bi also compiled this comprehensive collection of stele inscriptions in Shaanxi based on extensive field research.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup>“Wuxing fen” in “Gufen” in Li Zhen 李滇, et al, eds., *Neihuang Xianzhi* 內黃縣志, dated 1739, *juan* 4, 2a–2b: “五姓墳在次范村。按，元御史河南行省右丞文貞公帖木梨有子五人，一曰董，一曰李，一曰馬，一曰關，一曰陳，分為五氏，迄今族姓蕃衍，科第蟬聯，為黃池巨族。關姓徙直隸清豐縣焦府村，陳姓徙鄆陵縣，餘三姓俱住次范村。(增補)”

<sup>38</sup>*Neihuangxian lishi wenhua yanjiuhui* 內黃縣歷史文化研究會 and Ye Feng 叶峰, eds., *Zoujin Neihuang guji lansheng* 走進內黃 古跡覽勝 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 2014), 63f; *Neihuangxian lishi wenhua yanjiuhui* 內黃縣歷史文化研究會 and Zhang Hua'en 張懷恩, ed., *Zoujin Neihuang diming qutan* 走進內黃 地名趣談 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 2014), 58f.

<sup>39</sup>Other similar well-known collections include Wang Chang’s 王昶 (1724–1806) *Collection of Bronze and Stele Inscriptions* (*Jinshi cuibian* 金石萃編) and *Sequel to Collection of Bronze and Stele Inscriptions* (*Jinshi xubian* 金石續編).

He explored both local epigraphy and historical landmarks in Shaanxi with extraordinary vigor during his tenures as Inspector (*anchashi* 按察使), Provincial Administration Commissioner (*buzhengshi*), and Grand Coordinator of the province in 1770–79. For example, several steles in the county, such as “Zeng andingjunbo mengjun xinqianbiao” 贈安定郡伯蒙君新阡表 (dated 1318), a Yuan genealogical stele inscription, were included in his *Epigraphic Record of Guanzhong*. More importantly, in 1756 Bi Yuan even took the initiative of reinstalling this Yuan stele and wrote the calligraphy for it in person.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, throughout Shaanxi, Bi Yuan occasionally commissioned new steles to commend the steles from previous dynasties.<sup>41</sup>

Concurrently with Bi Yuan, Chen Xuechang 陳學昌, a magistrate of Dali, also put up a stele alongside “Zeng andingjunbo mengjun xinqianbiao,” in 1776, to protect the Yuan stele. It is probably not too farfetched to say that the Bai lineage members were aware of gazetteer compilers’ passion for epigraphic records, which might have inspired them to put up a stele in their ancestral graveyard to commemorate Baiju’s enshrinement. After all, the steles, both from the previous dynasties and newly-built, were indeed incorporated in the county gazetteer in narrating local history, and the incorporated ancestral records became new historical evidence facilitating the evolution of ancestral narratives.

### Conclusion: Ancestry and Ethnicity in Qing and Modern China

Tracing the origin of a lineage in the remote past, the ancestral narrative and kinship cohesion of the Bai lineages fits into the evolution of the Chinese patrilineal kinship organization since the Song. According to Patricia Ebrey, the evolution of the lineage organization eventually incubated the modern “Han” ethnic identity, that is, “imagining the Hua, Xia, or Han, metaphorically at least, as a giant patrilineal descent group made up of intermarrying surname groups.”<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, it is worth reiterating that in any sources written before 1937, neither Bai lineage members nor any contemporary observers associated the lineage with any ethnonym. Li Yuanchun’s statement attests to this point in a telling manner: “The Bai lineage in Dali is the descendants of the Lord Zhongxian” (大荔拜氏，忠獻裔也). In other words, for Li Yuanchun and his contemporaries, what distinguished the lineage members from their neighbors was the ancestry originated from the Yuan loyal minister, not their ethnic attribution.<sup>43</sup>

Before the early twentieth century, the ethnic boundary for the Bai lineage members and their neighbors seemed ambiguous or even non-existent in the contemporary sources. In the letter to a friend, as we have seen above, Li Yuanchun finds only “Han and Hui Muslims” around Baijiacun in the early nineteenth century. Several decades later, during the Hui Muslim War, the Bai lineage members were obviously Han in opposition to Hui Muslims in the eyes of the Qing military commanders, for no contemporary source refers to “Mongols” in Dali County. Although these accounts do not represent the Bai lineage members’ emic self-perception, the absence of any

<sup>40</sup>Nie Yurun, ed., *Dalixian xinzhizhi cunghao* 大荔縣新志存稿 (Xi’an: Shanxisheng yinshuaju, 1937), *juan* 8, 31a–b: “鄭威愍公墓碑 乾隆二十一年建。陝西巡撫畢沅隸書。在城內威愍公祠。元安定郡伯蒙天佑墓碑 乾隆二十一年立。陝西巡撫畢沅隸書。在胭脂山村東。”

<sup>41</sup>See, for example, Guojia wenwuju 国家文物局, ed., *Zhongguo wenwu dituji: shanxi fence* 中国文物地图集 陝西分册 (Xi’an: Xi’an ditu chubanshe, 1998), 3:165, 314, 980.

<sup>42</sup>Patricia Ebrey, “Surnames and Han Chinese Identity,” in *Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan*, edited by Melissa Brown (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, 1996), 20.

<sup>43</sup>Li Yuanchun, “Baizhongxian chongsi ji,” *Li Yuanchun ji*, 287.

ethnonym, *Menggu*, or Han, in contemporary sources may indicate that they accepted being categorized as Han, while proudly demonstrating their Mongol ancestry. The emergence of the notion of race as a species among Chinese intellectuals after the 1910s gave a new attribute, *Menggu*, to lineage members by juxtaposing them with their Han neighbors.<sup>44</sup>

Indeed, it was only after 1937 that the Bai lineage members were given an ethnic identity by intellectual others or had it imposed on them. In explicating the crucial role that the early Ming imperial enterprise played in the evolution of the ethnonym “Han,” labeling all its subjects “Han” or “Hua” vis-à-vis its northern neighbors, Mark Elliott proposed “[t]hat ethnicity is created transactionally is to say that it emerges only when there is the interaction between two groups.”<sup>45</sup> This proposal can be applied to the “ethnic” boundary surrounding the Bai lineage after 1937, when they were recorded in the county gazetteer as a group, *Mengguzu*, vis-à-vis *Hanzu*.

The self-perception of the Bai lineage before the rise of modern notions of *Hanzu* and *Mengguzu* serves as a powerful reminder of the elusive evolution of the Han-ness over the course of the last thousand years of Chinese history. During the tenth to thirteenth centuries, with the Song confronting other such powerful states as the Khitan Liao and then the Jurchen Jin, which often turned into formidable adversaries, a salient cultural identity emerged among Song intellectuals in opposition to these states. Naomi Standen demonstrates that loyalty to the state, *zhong*, was the primary category determining one’s political belongingness and subsequently drawing the boundary between the Song and Liao/Jin realms.<sup>46</sup> During the Northern and Southern Song, as Shao-yun Yang points out, “ethnocentric moralism” emerged among Chinese academic traditions, especially Daoxue thinkers, which aimed to solidify and perpetuate the Chinese-barbarian dichotomy by asserting “[t]hat the normative world order was one in which the Chinese reigned supreme over all other peoples and that when this supremacy was properly rooted in superior morality, the barbarians could not but recognize and defer to it.”<sup>47</sup> Nicolas Tackett argues that the notion of “Han” emerged while the Song political elites contextualized their state’s existence in relation with the Khitan Liao in the interstate system, while aspiring to retrieve the “lost” Han populace and territory under the Khitan rule.<sup>48</sup> In each study, the common premise is that Han-ness is a self-perception that requires the existence of culturally and politically distinct Others.

<sup>44</sup>Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 147f.

<sup>45</sup>Elliott, “Hushuo,” 178. As David Robinson discussed, the Ming emperors, especially before the late fifteenth century, posed as the successors of the Yuan Mongol qayans, engaging deeply with the Chinggisid world order established by the Mongols. In doing so, as non-Mongols, the Ming emperors and most couriers felt anxiety about the allegiance of the Mongols who served the Ming. David M. Robinson, *Ming China and Its Allies: Imperial Rule in Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 45–71. It is important to note that the early Ming notion of Han or Hua vis-à-vis non-Han derived from the strong consciousness of political self and others, having a lot in common with the Song Han-ness discussed by Standen, Tackett, and Yang. The Ming Han-ness may not have necessarily been widely shared outside of the political context in the Ming, and nevertheless was distinctly different from the modern Han-ness as *minzu*.

<sup>46</sup>Naomi Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty: Frontier Crossings in Liao China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006).

<sup>47</sup>Shao-yun Yang, *The Way of the Barbarians: Redrawing Ethnic Boundaries in Tang and Song China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), 152.

<sup>48</sup>Nicolas Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation: Song China and the Forging of an East Asian World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

Meanwhile, shedding light on the Hanren 漢人/ Han'er 漢兒 in the Sixteen Prefectures in the Yan-Yun region (Yan Yun shiliuzhou 燕雲十六州) during the Lia-Song-Jin transition, Jinping Wang recently argued that while the “Han-ness” appears in literally collections and dynastic histories, they reflected the political and cultural elites’ top-down idealized vision of imperial subjects. Such an ethnocentric vision was, however, not shared by the Han’er of the Sixteen Prefectures, whose experiences were mainly structured in local epigraphical sources “by social identities configured by wealth, status, locality, and religious belief.”<sup>49</sup> Wang’s discovery aligns nicely with what we have found in the case of the Bai lineage. In local society during the pre-modern eras, a person’s political allegiance (if any) did not necessarily constitute the primary factor in defining the person’s identity, and in the case of the Bai, “Han” seems to have been an unfamiliar notion to the lineage members before the Republican era, especially when it was compared with their frequently declared self-definition as the descendants of Baiju.<sup>50</sup>

Similar to the Han or non-Han identities in the Middle Period, in the case of the Bai lineage, ethnic markers were employed mostly by political and cultural elites such as Li Yuanchun. The contrast between a top-down vision of clearly demarcated ethnic identity and a much more fluid social reality was rather common in the Qing as well. In his study on the conflict between the Bannermen and civilians in nineteenth century Qing China, Mark Elliott has remarked—outside the imperial court where political elites classified imperial subjects with their top-down perception—“Manchu-Han antagonism does not leap out of the historical record and that it does not seem that late imperial Chinese society was wholly riven by ethnic strife.”<sup>51</sup>

It was only during the early twentieth century, through the efforts of Republican intellectuals, that “Han” eventually emerged as a prominent ethnic identity. This identity did not originate from the pre-modern Han-ness but represented new political discourses. Initially imagined as opposed to the ruling Manchus, Han-ness after the last decades of the Qing evolved largely as an ethnicity related to a nation (*minzu*) during the first several decades of the twentieth century that “comprised a single, homogeneous *guozu* (nation-state) around the entire, multiethnic body of the *Zhonghua minzu*,” as James Leibold describes.<sup>52</sup> In the case of the Bai lineage, while being classified as Han during the Ethnic Classification Project, this new narrative of Han-ness had apparently contravened with their self-perception as the descendants of the Yuan Mongol prince. Rather, it became one of the axes of difference between Mongol (*Menggu*) and Han *minzu*, which appears to have facilitated the emergence of their new “Mongol” (*Mengguzu*) identity vis-à-vis the Han *minzu* in the groundwork of the contemporary *minzu* demarcations in PRC. In the same vein, in most cases in Table 1, the apical Mongol ancestors as progenitors of the lineages were commemorated for their undying loyalty to the Yuan state during the late Qing, and the narratives of the

<sup>49</sup>Jinping Wang, “Land and People: The Sixteen Prefectures of Yan and Yun during the Liao-Song-Jin Transition,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 51 (2022), 123.

<sup>50</sup>The four genealogical texts from the Republican era, such as the one titled *Eight Households of the Bai Surname in Gaoyang Li, Xingping Village, Luonan, Dali County, Tongzhou Prefecture in Shaanxi (Shanxi Tongzhoufu Dalixian Luonan Xingpingcun Gaolili Bai bajia* 陝西同州府大荔縣洛南興平村高陽里八家, dated 1921), also do not touch upon the word “Han” in their entirety.

<sup>51</sup>Mark Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 210.

<sup>52</sup>James Leibold, “Search for Han: Early Twentieth-Century Narratives of Chinese Origins and Development” in *Critical Han Studies*, 231.

Mongol ancestors during the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries have served to rationalize the lineages' claims to be non-Han today.

As the key institution implemented by the Qing state, the banner system, which “stood for all that was not Chinese about them,” enabled the Manchu identity to endure throughout the Qing era. As this paper has shown, non-Manchu subjects in China proper took advantage of the state project of gazetteer compilation to assert their ancestry beyond the Manchu-Han dichotomy proclaimed by the political and cultural elites.<sup>53</sup> The legacy of the ancestries authorized by the Qing still lives on today, as shown in Table 1. In terms of its profound impact on identity building or sustenance, the Qing gazetteer compilation project functioned as a “classification project” of some sort, beyond the intentions of the Qing court. Table 1 and the case of the Bai lineage also demonstrate that the result of the Ethnic Classification Project during the twentieth century often conflicts with the ancestry authorized by the earlier imperial state project. Only approximately half of the cases in Table 1 are classified as Mongols (*Mengguzu*) today. In the Qing gazetteer compilation project, as Li Yuanchun's remarks demonstrate, historical sources played a crucial role in legitimizing one's claim of ancestry. In contrast, in Chinese scholarship during the mid-twentieth century, Stalin's four principles of nationality (common language, common territory, common psychology, and common economic life) became the primary principle in classifying ethnicities.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, in field surveys in Guizhou and Yunnan conducted to classify *minzu* in 1954–56, the survey teams lent importance to languages and customs but not necessarily to historical sources that assert ancestry.<sup>55</sup>

However, this does not mean that ancestries authorized by the Qing have no influence today. Rather, as in the case of the Bai lineage, premodern ancestries still act as a basis for lineage identity that contradicts the officially classified *minzu* registration.<sup>56</sup> This reality strongly suggests that the classification or identity-making criteria has continued to differ significantly between the state and communities on the ground. The states in Chinese history have repeatedly classified and categorized their subjects, and their classification criteria differed from each other.<sup>57</sup> North China attracts our

<sup>53</sup>Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 347.

<sup>54</sup>Tamara T. Chin, “Antiquarian as Ethnographer: Han Ethnicity in Early China Studies,” in *Critical Han Studies*, 139.

<sup>55</sup>Thomas Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010).

<sup>56</sup>In his discussion on the Cantonese identity, Kevin Carrico points out that while the state in general initiates the construction of ethnic identity, “people on the ground” also strive to establish multi-layered identity out of their imagination. And Carrico goes on to discuss, “[i]dentification is thus a multilayered act of distinction across multiple axes, either through positive self-identification or negative othering, in a process that is neither solely top-down nor bottom-up but always relational, dynamic, and laden with the shifting imagining and exercise of power.” See Kevin Carrico, “Recentering China: The Cantonese in and beyond the Han,” in *Critical Han Studies*, 26. This argument is completely applicable in the case of the Bai lineage, as they attend the collective worship of Muqali in their attempt to assert their Mongol ancestry (and thus *Mengguzu* status), while being officially classified as Han.

<sup>57</sup>It should be noted that most of the historical states that conducted ethnic/cultural classification of the subjects in their administrative system, such as Liao (classifying Khitan, Xi, Bohai, Han, etc.), Jin (Jurchen, Bohai, Han, etc.), Yuan (Mongol, Sume, Hanren, and Nanren), Qing (Manchu vis-à-vis Han), and probably northern Wei (Hu vis-à-vis Han), were all established by non-Chinese conquerors. Indeed, as Mark Elliott discusses, the historical Han-ness was the product of “the persistent occupation of significant parts of the Central Lands by Northern Others and the repeated challenge they threw down as to who the *Hua* or *Han* were.” See Elliott, “Hushuo,” 189.

attention because it has been, and continues to be, a contested site for claims of identity. In China's two-thousand years of imperial history, hundreds of thousands of non-Han conquerors settled in North China, only to be conquered by the new rulers. However, they did not simply disappear from the historical stage or from local memories. The histories of these non-Han rulers and migrants, as well as the ways in which these histories were remembered, continued to impact the ethnic, cultural, and religious landscapes in North China.

**Competing interests.** None.