# CHARTING A NEW COURSE: MAPPING, ETHNICITY, AND THE FORGING OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN CHINA

by

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# ABSTRACT

Upon the conclusion of the Qing Dynasty in 1912, the areas formerly under their control experienced an era of uncertainty regarding their political future. Although early Western historians of China have mistakenly held the Qing Empire to be synonymous with China, more recent work in the field of Chinese history suggests important distinctions between the two. Thus, the notion of how Qing territories came to be conceptualized as part of an emerging Chinese nation is worth further examination. In the maps and other data compiled by European explorers in the region during this time, it is possible to glimpse the uncertainty of the trajectory of the former Qing regions. From the viewpoint of cartography, we can see evidence of the variety of voices that eventually would come to shape the nation that emerged. Europeans, of course, were simply one of many forces that shaped China as a nation, but they uniquely represent how Chinese nationalism functioned in a global nationalist context. Much of the question surrounding nationality in China revolved around concepts of ethnicity and the potential success of a multiethnic state drawn from Qing era precedents. The struggle and diversity of input present in these maps serves to remind us that China as we know it was forged in a dynamic process, and the geographically and ethnically complex nation that emerged was always far from guaranteed, the ripples of which can still be felt in China today.

Dedicated to Colin, Natasha, and Richard

in the hopes they will follow their own dreams

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# INTRODUCTION

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, so too did China's final dynasty. By 1912, the Qing Empire collapsed after nearly three centuries of rule, which came to encompass a swath of territory from the Yellow Sea to the Himalayas. Although early nationalist politicians would declare a republic that same year, the former Qing territories broke apart into a country of warlords without any strong central authority. During those early years of uncertainty, from the decline of the Qing until the final solidification of a new Republic of China under the Kuomintang Nationalist government in 1930,[1] it was never clear what future would emerge. Even with the creation of a new China, the question remained just what nation would arise from the ashes of empire. A critical strategy to answer the question of who China would be rested with modern state-building techniques, most notably those of cartography and ethnography. Within this blurred political context, the various European explorers tracing the hills and valleys of the former empire would come to help both discover and create a newly unified state in the wake of the old. Through their maps and other data, we can glimpse the extreme national uncertainty over what "China" would come to mean, as well as the many voices and arguments of those who debated that future.

[1] In 1930, the KMT defeated several prominent rivals in the Central Plains War, although some may consider the conclusion of the Northern Expedition in 1928 over the lesser warlords to mark the solidification of their authority.

Thus, by reshaping itself as a modern multiethnic nation through mapping, China stood to regain its place as a major global player in the emergent nationalist world system. The advent of a global nationalist movement, which would emerge shortly following the fall of the Qing Empire, mandated that China embark on a dynamic process of defining the extent of their territorial possessions in relation to other nations, while simultaneously demarcating internal geographical divisions to promote national unity in the context of a multiethnic state. The scope of my argument rests primarily on the European expeditions during this time, and the maps that they drew from their travels. This is not to discount the native process of nation building that predominated, but to illustrate a critical facet of the reality of China as a developing world power in the wider global system. In this global system, huge multiethnic states could be considered the rule in Asia rather than the exception, with the British, Russian, Chinese, and several other powers competing for sovereignty.

In this competitive context, I argue that the maps produced by the expeditions into Central Asia demonstrate a clear uncertainty in the continued possession of areas conquered during the former Qing Empire by the emerging modern Chinese nation at this particular moment in time. Although the territories mapped by these European explorers are often nominally defined as being part of China, the content of the maps shows not only a great deal of variation at the margins and lack of internal order, but also imply a sense of wilderness unclaimed by any able government. The maps also demonstrate a great deal of difference between each other, despite their relative contemporaneity based on the motives of those involved in creating the map in question. Furthermore, the individual maps themselves contain a collage of distinct voices. Notions of territory,

nation, and ethnicity are hammered out in these maps only through the exchange of a diverse conglomeration of groups. The lack of conceptual homogeneity shows how the China we know today, at this time represented simply one of many possible futures for the region, while simultaneously offering insight into the forces that, in hindsight, came to shape the nation that would emerge.

The uncertainty of an emerging Chinese state in the frontier regions mapped by these European explorers can be seen in a few different features, perhaps most noticeably in treatment of borders. These maps show a huge variability in the depiction of international boundaries over time. Part of this is due to changes in claims and border disputes, but also to a large measure of uncertainty as to their exact location, as the notion of borders as specific lines on a map was a recent historical development. Part of the reason for creating these modern scientific maps in the region was in order to create borders according to this new definition. Internal boundaries do not feature as prominently on many of the earlier maps, for these too were in a state of flux and in an era of decentralized control, they were probably not politically very meaningful, and in any case, borders presented no barrier to the explorers themselves.

Changing borders were not the only aspects of these European maps that implied a certain lack of control over these regions by any Chinese power, which had no central government for much of this period. The maps are exploratory in nature, they imply that these regions are uncharted and thus unclaimed. They pompously declare certain sections to be “unexplored” since they are some of the first to map the areas with modern methods. While some maps leave the regions nominally tied to China, they all imply a distinct lack of concrete administrative or population basis for this connection. Due to the

geographical nature of the maps, the regions they depict are rarely defined by province or in relation to a larger China, but instead are defined either by pure scientific grid squares or by the extent of a particular geographical feature such as a mountain range. This adds not only to their aura of scientific purity but also to the depiction of these areas as politically untethered, a wild natural landscape with sparse population.

This obsession with using the most modern mapping methods to fill in "unknown" areas of the globe lies with assumptions of nationalism that treat the globe as a finite resource that must be divided up exactly to comply with notions of individual and absolute sovereignty. It is important to note that this obsession with cataloging the planet's surface, in this case at least, is not necessarily driven by European desires to make their own claims in the majority of the regions they are traversing except to define their edges in relation to their own processions. The Great Game, the contest between Britain and Russia to gain supremacy and territory in Asia, at this point was beginning to come to a close. While certainly British and Russian designs existed on some of the territory claimed by the Qing, in this era, the two had settled into a policy of preventing the furthered ambitions of the other. The information provided by these explorers would have been valuable for these simpler strategic reasons to the powers funding these explorations, as well as the hubris of many Europeans seeing themselves as the rightful possessors and discovers of the world's scientific knowledge. In fact, the general sense given by the maps is an overall disinterest in Chinese national and internal structure from the European standpoint. The big question for China then was not always about preventing outside powers from directly claiming these areas, but whether the areas

would continue to be part of a larger Chinese entity or split off into independent nationalist units.

This paper will broadly discuss these frontier regions as a whole, but will focus on explorations of the Northwestern Qing territory of Xinjiang with some overlap into neighboring areas such as Gansu (which at the time of the expeditions included Ningxia) and Inner Mongolia. Xinjiang offers a perfect example of a territorial unit with which a future as part of a united China could never be assumed. Xinjiang had been incorporated into the Qing Empire in the 1750s after the defeat and general eradication of the rival Zhungar Empire in the region. The Manchu emperors intended the region to act as a buffer zone between themselves and any future threats from the center of the continent. After its conquest, Xinjiang continued to remain politically and conceptually separate from China as an imperial possession. It was not until the 1830s when the court even decided to legalize Han settlement in the region in an effort to increase their authority in the distant territory. Indeed, Beijing's authority over the region suffered many challenges in the form of annexation and uprising attempts throughout its history, such as the 1864 Tungan Rebellion. By the time of the late Qing, the court was engaged in desperate attempts to reassert their control over Xinjiang, eventually incorporating it as a territory in 1884. However, upon the collapse of the Qing, much of Xinjiang and other frontier regions as well fell into a period of increased local authority and decentralization. There were no guarantees that these seemingly very colonial extensions of the Empire would remain linked. Indeed the maps seem to provide evidence of a tendency away from unification.

Despite the absence of any direct Chinese governmental authority over these distant regions, and a distinct absence of any united China in these maps, that uncertainty at least does not preclude the prospect of unity as one of several possibilities. While these territories are not united, we see that some voices present in the mapping process, especially in the final maps discussed, had the motivation to try and create a unity that did not yet exist. Eventually, as ideas and images of China began to solidify, symbolically the map would become an icon of the nation, as we see occurring all over the world binding nations together internally.

## Qing Multiethnic Empire

Modern national consciousness in China can only be understood in light of the legacies of the former Qing Empire. Current notions in China regarding ethnicity and geography, the extent of the government's claim over peoples and places have been strongly influenced by the unique realities of China's final dynasty. The conquest of China by an outside elite presented particular challenges to the effective governance of the dynasty while simultaneously presenting the opportunity for an era of expansion across Asia unprecedented in China's history. The Qing Empire nearly doubled the geographic expanse claimed by the preceding Ming dynasty.[2] Yet it must be distinctly understood that the Qing Empire was not synonymous with a Chinese Empire.

Whether the Manchu-led Qing dynasty represents a distinct ethnic unit is still debated, but most "New Qing" historians, those recent academics advancing beyond traditional understandings of Qing imperial structure, agree that the Qing represented a

[2] Peter Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010) 32.

distinct political unit separate from traditional Confucian Dynasties.[3] The primary difference between the Qing and previous dynasties rests with the multiethnic nature of their Empire. This method of unifying territory comes from earlier steppe culture with the leader acting as a "wheel-turning king" or the center of many different peoples and polities, unified by his pivotal influence as the legitimate leader of each group according to their own system.[4] Crucial to understanding this strategy is the fact that the Qing dynasty drew a clear distinction between their role as rulers of China and as rulers of a larger empire. The Qing emperors viewed themselves as the rulers of China, and simultaneously the rulers of the various borderlands, both united under the Manchu empire, not that they had conquered these frontier regions for China.[5]

The distinction between Qing imperial territories and those within the Great Wall is of vital importance when considering how these very separate regions later became linked into a single national entity. For now, it is enough to remember that imperial ties did not inevitably imply a linkage within the transition to a nationalist system. We might tentatively hold up Britain as an example of how imperial possessions did remain linked into a single nation, with the caveat of course that Britain's lack of contiguity among numerous other factors does not lend it to a perfect comparison. Nevertheless, it illustrates how national ties are dependent on how early nationalists around the world chose to interpret their own "imagined community."[6] An excellent counter example is the

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[3] Mark Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnicity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001) and Pamela Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History ad Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1999)
[4] Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror,* 211.
[5] Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 50-72.
[6] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006) 10-47.

case of Indonesia, which had previously no larger cultural, political, or ethnic connection beyond a recent history of shared colonial experience.

In the case of China, Qing understandings of ethnicity offered a powerful precedent for political collaboration based on the rhetoric of multiethnicity. Because the Qing emperors viewed themselves as the rulers of many peoples, it was especially important for them to attempt to understand the different groups they ruled in a systematic and authoritative fashion. In some cases, if not most, this meant going so far as to create and shape ethnicity.[7] By fitting groups in systematic boxes, the Qing attempted to develop broad policy decisions. The policy might differ by people or place, but often took ethnicity as a major consideration. In Xinjiang, for instance, residents operated under a system of legal pluralism based on perceived ethnicity in an attempt to prevent conflict.[8] In the southwest, the ethnic catalogs known as the Miao Albums detailed each officially recognized group in terms of a number of constant factors, including dress, family structure, customs, etc. for the benefit of imperial officials.[9]

In addition to cataloging peoples, Qing officials also engaged in very systematic mapping projects. As Matthew Mosca notes, by the early Qing, the challenge of mapping in China rested not with an absence of information, but rather with a surplus of information coming from all corners of the world. He comments that in mapping,

> This led to a conception of perfection quite different from the ideal of one accurate, mathematically based visual rendering of the earth pursued by contemporary mapmakers in Europe…[instead] a work was deemed to be

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[7] C. Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) 89-136.
[8] James Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) 56-63.
[9] Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) 41-97.

> "complete"…when it made full and judicious citations from all relevant textual knowledge.[10]

Thus, scholars and officials at the time regarded accuracy in mapping in terms of the reliability and virtuousness of the individual contributing their account to the larger picture. This placed a premium, naturally, on respected scholars within the Empire,[11] with local informants below them, and "…the findings of Western cartography…relegated to the lowest rung of authority, used *faute de mieux* for lands not described elsewhere."[12] However, maps of any scope usually relied on many different sources out of necessity, and were conglomerations themselves of many perspectives.

## Mapping Techniques

The methods of mapping used immediately following the Qing collapse and into the Nationalist Era drew more heavily from European conceptions of cartography and remained largely consistent throughout the period. Each explorer discussed here, and the many Chinese cartographers trained in Europe during this time as well, used the same type of technology in their expeditions. The major differences lie instead with their chosen representation of data rather than the methodology employed in surveying. Given the lack of variability in their techniques then, the vast differences in the presentation of the landscape rests instead with the scientists themselves and their own interpretations and vision of the regions. More so than other visual mediums, such as photography, artifacts, etc., mapping requires a great deal of conscious presentation by those producing

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[10] Matthew Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy: The Question of India and the Transformation of Global Politics in Qing China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013) 43.
[11] Qianlong himself contributed to mapping and other scholarly projects and as Emperor, represented the apex of virtuous scholarship.
[12] Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy*, 22.

the map, and yet its painstaking reliance on scientific methodology invests the medium with a sense of absolute reality less prevalent in some other visual forms.

In some ways, the trust imbued into maps as representations of a complete reality of a space is justified by the immense effort required by the process, which is at once a work of science and art. Yet as we shall see, choices about how to depict space in maps differs greatly, even within our small scope of a handful of roughly contemporary explorers traversing roughly the same area, each consciously selecting which features of the landscape to portray and how to convey these to the viewer. Their methods of course were anything but rough, requiring a painstaking attention to detail in often difficult conditions. Even with all the challenges inherent in producing precise calculations in the field, these maps are astonishingly accurate in terms of geographic location. The Digital Silk Road Project has overlaid some of the maps produced by explorer Aurel Stein around the turn of the twentieth century with maps produced using modern GPS and satellite images. Stein's maps are located at about the median chronologically of the explorers discussed. Although he had the benefit of some earlier expedition data, he did not even have the wide range of information available to, say, Sven Hedin's expedition some years later. And yet, when compared to satellite maps, Stein maps alone in terms of geographic precision can be measured not in miles, but rather in feet. Their skill and the level of realism they achieved is beyond impressive. It is a testament not only to their individual talent, but also to the degree of importance they and their patrons placed on this type of information and representation.

While these explorers shared a constant and precise methodology in their mathematical calculations, the maps themselves vary widely in their interpretations of

that data. Thus, although we can say with some certainty that the maps are precise, it would be a mistake to label them as accurate. These maps are the product of individual perspectives, and while they incorporate scientific information, they are not themselves a neutral depiction of that information to the same extent, for example, a table of coordinates would be. Even making the decision of what information to incorporate into a map, from towns, to ruins, to altitudes, presumes the importance of some features over others, and represents an attempt at illustrating a particular facet of reality, not even the minutest of which could ever be considered a perfectly faithful copy. Not to say that the maps are somehow wrong or not useful, but that they do consist of a combination of decisions about what to include and exclude. The purpose of this discussion of maps is to remind us that maps can be useful tools, but never considered to be unbiased reflections simply due to the scientific methodology involved in their creation.

The impetus for this obsessively precise modern mapping came to represent a fact that all great powers began running up against all around the early modern world, that the earth was finite. The world was increasingly being seen as a commodity, which under the emerging notions of absolute sovereignty, needed to be absorbed and to be defined in relation to other sovereign powers. Modern maps show this struggle in various ways, but most concretely in terms of borders. The world's powers began a race to fill in the "blank" areas on the world map, and mapping came to constitute discovery and thus ownership on at least some level, whether that be in terms of actual political power or a sense of scientific superiority.[13] It is important then to remember that although a perfectly

[13] Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994)

valid, useful, and accurate way of viewing the world, these maps have their own agendas and depict the world in accordance with contemporary ideas of what the world should be.

# FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND

European explorers had been traversing the continent long before the fall of the Qing Empire. Especially on the fringes of the Empire, they had a great deal of freedom, even more so as the Qing government began to lose their grip on power in the wake of the many internal rebellions following the Opium Wars. As the Empire began to collapse, Europeans found themselves not only with fewer restrictions to their movement but also to their ambitions. Areas in Asia that had not previously been under direct, or firm control by any of the larger empires at play in the region had for some time been snapped up by the Russian and British Empires. As Qing power withdrew from their frontiers to deal with instability in the center, they had less control over not only protecting their frontier interests, but also ensuring that peoples on the frontier did not come into conflict with Russian and British claims.

At the time of Sir Francis Younghusband's first series of expeditions from 1884-1894, the Qing Empire was attempting to modernize in a frantic attempt to recover from the Taiping Rebellion. At this point in the land grab contest of the Great Game, Britain and Russia were attempting to finalize their borders in Asia. In this climate, Sir Francis Younghusband began exploring central Asia as a young military officer from British India. Occasionally he undertook these travels at his own interest, especially early in his

career, but later Younghusband travelled at the behest of the British government.[14] From 1884 until 1889, he conducted scientific observations and determined useful routes of travel from Manchuria to Tibet. From 1889 onwards, he was assigned various political missions to what would become Xinjiang and military missions to various border-states in the Himalayas.

The map that he published in his account of his decade of travel, *The Heart of a Continent*, was intended simply for illustrative purposes for his Western readers and does not seem to be based on extensive surveying. Nevertheless, it presents a unique insight into Western perceptions of these territories during the final days of the Qing, as well as Great Game politics. This map, Figure 2.1, entitled *Central Asia from Peking to Yarkand* actually spans from modern Korea to Xinjiang. The vast majority of this region at the time of Younghusband's travels, although previously claimed by the Qing Empire, had recently undergone a period of weakened attention and interference from the center in the aftermath of the destructive Taiping rebellion. The Qing Empire had lost control of Xinjiang as a territory during a series of uprisings in the 1860s, but in an effort to regain firmer control had reincorporated Xinjiang as a full province in 1884, the very year Younghusband began his expeditions.

The political climate in this vast region varied, but held in common a recent history of general unrest and an effort to renew weakened ties by the Qing government. As one of the earlier European maps produced of the region using modern cartographic techniques, and considering its intended purpose of illustration rather than any

[14]Frank E. Younghusband, *The Heart of a Continent* (London: John Murray, 1896)

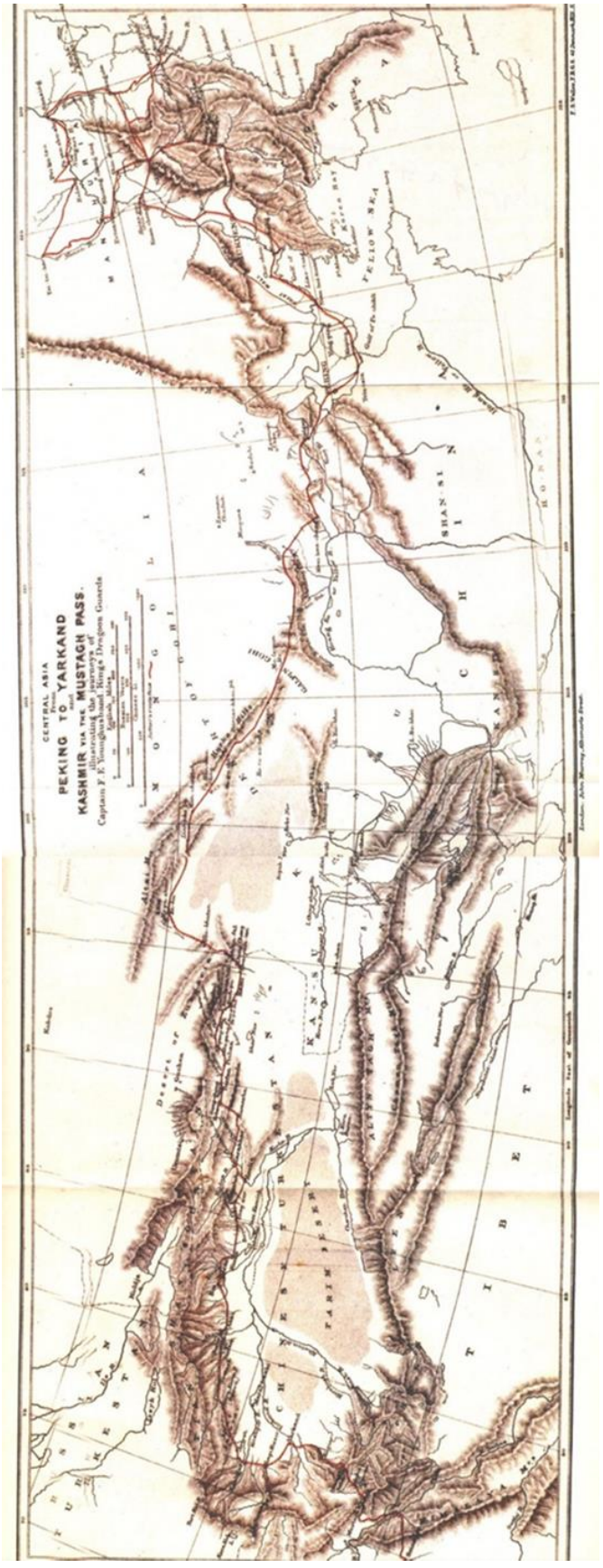


Figure 2.1: *Central Asia from Peking to Yarkand and Kashmir via the Mustagh Pass* by Francis Younghusband, 1889

comprehensive catalog of the region, Younghusband's map is somewhat sparse on detail. It gives only a general sketch of the vast terrain he travelled, and yet it gives a wealth of information regarding his perspectives of the contemporary nature of the Qing frontier, especially politically.

The most interesting feature of Younghusband's map is the complete absence of political boundaries. This absence in itself presents a wealth of questions about the author's intent. It cannot be dismissed as simply a result of the map being geographical in nature. The tendency to portray territory with an aura of scientific neutrality rather than portraying it in terms of imagined political realities is in itself a telling aspect of modern mapping. The choice of Younghusband to emphasize the map's geographic features demonstrates a desire that this work should be viewed as scientific and apolitical, thus granting his depiction of the landscape as an authoritative version of reality. Including both geographic and political phenomenon as we are wont to do today places the existence of arbitrarily agreed upon borders on the same level of unquestionability as the existence of the mountains themselves.

The decision then to exclude drawing the borders on this map then could lie simply with the fact that doing so lies outside the scope of the purpose of the map itself, that Younghusband is choosing not to impose any particular reality other than the one intrinsically visible on the viewer. After all, for Younghusband himself, borders presented no obstacle to his travels, and he freely traversed regions of many different local, regional, and imperial divisions. Yet, despite the absence of any hard lines demarcating the territory, we do see the inclusion of some political labels despite their seeming to blend into those territories nearby. As a result, the map is not purely

geographical and it seems to reflect the reality Younghusband experienced, unbounded in his travels. The truth on the ground was that there were no distinct boundaries to speak of, just general spheres of influence on every scale without clear division between them. Even the nature of these particular regions in relation to each other is unclear, and can only be guessed at based on the size of the labels themselves. This is a particularly important reflection of the political situation during the collapse of the Qing as it was not at all clear whether these individual regions would remain together or break off into their own separate entities. Without borders, the typeface and font size are the only things to suggest whether the area in question indicates a country, province, or any other region. These are paltry clues at best, and the overall impression is one of general disconnect. Kansu [modern: Gansu] even appears on the map twice, one label larger than the other as it seems to occupy at once a provincial and a larger sovereign status. Younghusband seems to mark these areas only in the most general regional terms, even with even China itself appearing as a strictly regional power not tied to the wider Qing Empire. The map draws these former frontier territories as potentially independent; for instance the labels "China" and "Tibet" are of equal size, thus seeming to imply that these regions share equal political sovereignty. Younghusband himself would shortly afterwards lead the British Invasion of Tibet in 1904 due to just such a border conflict, in an effort to check Russian influence in the region. In the unequal treaty concluding the conflict the British dealt directly with Tibet rather than through the Qing Empire, although rather than treating Tibet as a sovereign nation, the treaty delegated Tibet to a protectorate state of the British Empire despite largely leaving it to its own devices.

This confusing situation was the result of emerging, but not yet solidified, notions of a global system of national sovereignty. In our global nationalist system, individual states recognize the sovereignty of all other nation states as independent entities that in theory should be free of outside political interference, and not subject to the authority of any other nation, in other words a system based on some level of equality among all participants. Although this might differ in practice, the ideology of nationalism drives rhetoric surrounding the interactions between most modern states and is largely taken for granted despite its relatively short history. Nationalism is often seen as the antithesis of colonialism and yet, at this point in time as the world transitioned from one to the other, interesting overlaps coexisted. In the case of Tibet, the British are simultaneously treating it as a state independent of China or the Qing, and yet also as a state unable to engage in affairs equally with other nations without ever being treated as a colony. In either case, Tibet is quite clearly being shown as not belonging to China at this point in time to British eyes.

Besides China and Tibet, other regions depicted on the map are of various other sizes, leaving the viewer to guess their status in relation to the others. Korea, for instance, might be shown as equal to China, while Mongolia and "Chinese Turkestan" are clearly not. Yet some places such as Kan-su [modern: Gansu] and Shan-si [modern: Shanxi] are labelled as the same size to Mongolia. Although labelled smaller than China, it cannot be assumed that these regions are somehow subunits of China as a whole for two reasons. In the first instance, "China" is labelled at a significant distance from many of these places, whereas today the larger political unit is generally labelled centrally to its respective parts. Additionally, regions that are not and have generally never been considered part of

a larger Chinese entity such as "Russian Turkestan" (roughly modern Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) are included as well. To read Younghusband's map as depicting a unified political whole gives into our modern bias, and in fact, this map clearly demonstrates a lack of unity or any type of political clarity.

This map is probably a very accurate representation of the political reality as perceived by the British in the region. Aside from any consideration of cultural or historical complementary interests on the part of the people themselves, Younghusband as a military man and an outsider is representing the boots-on-the-ground reality of Qing military and political sovereignty in the region. While Qing power had greatly diminished, this did not necessarily mean that an ideological unity did not exist, nor that the Qing had not made their own claims to sovereignty in these areas. And yet, this blurring of sovereignty and overlapping authorities may have better represented the Qing frontier situation better than even Younghusband realized.

Prior to the general adoption of nationalism, much of Asia had operated under a dual sovereignty system where a single place might be subject to multiple hierarchies of power. In James Millward's work on Xinjiang, for instance, he demonstrates how within the unique multiethnic empire of the Qing, Xinjiang was at once within and without.[15] It was not a part of China, despite being part of the Qing. Xinjiang operated directly under the authority of the emperor, not the general provincial system, but neither was it a colony in the sense that it was somehow lesser in status to China proper. A simpler example to dual sovereignty during the Qing might be C. Patterson Giersch's work on Yunnan, where the wildly diverse frontier both in terms of geography and population

[15] Millward, *Beyond the Pass*

existed at the crossroads of several different empires. Pockets of territories there could at the same time pledge allegiance to two or even more great powers at once without either claiming sole ownership.[16] The Qing court or the Burmese court for instance might both claim status in the region knowingly while the local authorities might use this existence between two powers to further their own interests without any of the parties feeling the need to claim sole authority so long as everyone's interests were being met. This variety and flexibility of the Qing frontier system as demonstrated by the different strategies taken in different areas of the empire contributed to their success in such a wide arena. Precisely by not creating rigid distinctions, the Qing were able to expand their authority. That is of course not to say that the regions under their control were not clear in their own minds, but just had more flexibility in actual policy.

The intricacies of this complex and varied political system is not given justice in Younghusband's map. However, for all that it does not explain the reasoning behind it, the map's lack of distinct borders does reflect a different understanding of sovereignty than that which had, relatively recently in the grand scheme of history, emerged in Europe. While an incomplete picture, Younghusband's is not a false picture. This map demonstrates a European perspective on the actual situation, although their lack of comprehension would prove troublesome in Qing and later Chinese attempts to claim these territories as their own. As other empires began to emphasize strict boundaries, dividing the globe absolutely with no overlap, the Qing Empire found it necessary to follow suit or lose territory due to these new rules. While the Qing did not have the time

[16] Giersch, *Asian Borderlands*, 78-120.

or energy to react to this changing global tide, their Nationalist successors would race to draw China in concrete mapping terms.

Another important point absent in the map besides boundaries, the Qing Empire itself is never mentioned on the map at all. In choosing not to draw borders Younghusband may have been presenting a particular version of reality on the frontier, but forgoing any mention of the preeminent power in the region is not only negligent but markedly conspicuous. In light of its omission, the lack of boundaries takes on a new significance as presenting these territories not in various degrees of independence and subordination, but as a rejection of the Qing Empire itself, limiting the dynasty's claim at most to China proper. This map then would be a misrepresentation of Qing identity at best and a blatant challenge to their authority in these regions at worst. The map seems to completely disregard the Qing as an imperial power and instead implies that these regions are open to the influence of other imperial powers, which would go a long way towards explaining Younghusband and the British in their invasion of Tibet a decade later. There is a chance this was not Younghusband's explicit intention, as certain provinces seem to ,be listed in similar font size both clearly within and potentially outside of China, but it certainly does not present the viewer with any concrete view of Chinese and certainly not of Qing authority.

## A Russo-Chinese Perspective

Younghusband's presentation of Central Asia is a uniquely proto-nationalist European way of understanding the region and was strongly influenced by his own military background and the interstate contests of the day. Younghusband and his publishers produced this map specifically for a European audience that would have been

positively receptive to its messages. Naturally, this perspective was not the only one that existed at the time, nor the only audience. The map in Figure 2.2 of Qing Tibet was produced for a Chinese audience...by a Russian company. The unique relationship between those producing and those intended to view the map is worth considering. It shows that although many of those creating these maps and providing the data were European, a demand for this information and portrayal did exist at least to some extent within the Qing Empire as well. The Russian company A. Ilyin in St. Petersburg created this map in 1904 for a Chinese audience, during a period when the Qing government was rapidly attempting to modernize. It seems to draw from many of the same sources European maps did, but with a tremendously different result. Although a majority of Europeans may have held a different view of Central Asia from their Chinese counterparts, those same Europeans making the maps were not entirely ignorant of how the Chinese viewed themselves.

Unlike Younghusband's map, the one intended for a Chinese audience has many clear and distinct borders. The map key indicates several different types of boundaries, including provincial boundaries in bright green and national boundaries in muted green, with each region distinctly defined in relation to the others, Tibet from Xinjiang for example. To their mind, there was no question regarding the sovereignty of the Qing state in these regions. It is worth pointing out again that the Russian firm produced this map in 1904, the same year that Younghusband completed his expedition to Tibet securing British rights in the region over concerns about Russian intervention. The Russian tone at the time was clearly anti-British and the Russians would have been quick to back Qing

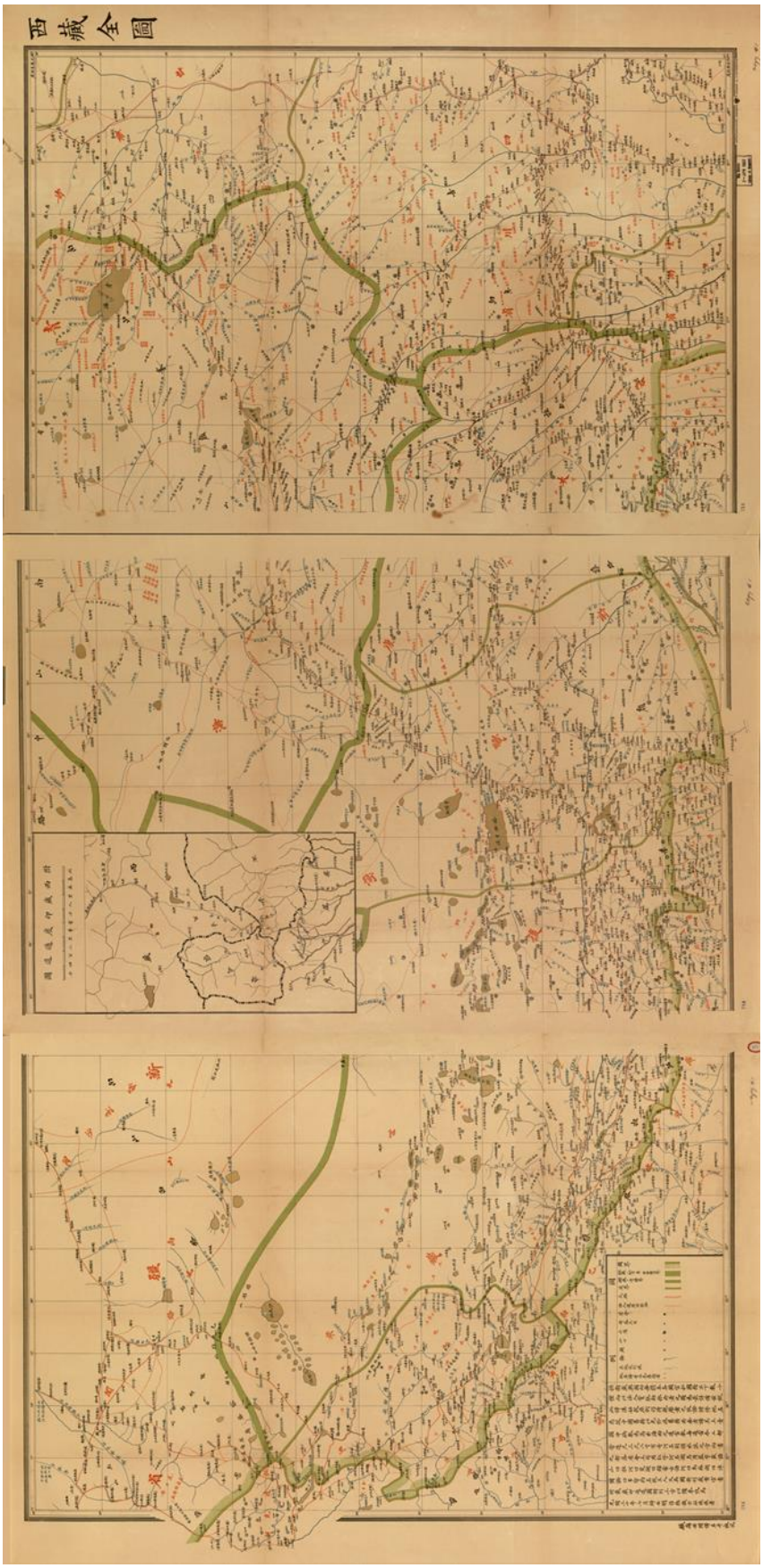


Figure 2.2: Map of Tibet produced by Russian company, 1904

claims to the region over those of their British rivals as both powers sought to limit the influence of the other in Asia. Thus, both the map makers and the map consumers would have had a vested interest in reinforcing Chinese ties to Tibet and the surrounding regions. Both the Chinese and the Russians had a strong motivation to counter British claims in the region. While the three may have had a history of rivalry in Central Asia, it occasionally behooved them to ally together against one power to preserve a balance of power. While the more common alliance seems to have been European powers against Asian powers, the opposite did clearly occur, with ties shifting every day. Younghusband remarks fighting with his Russian counterpart one night, and celebrating together the next.[17] The move towards drawing distinct and very clear borders paralleled emerging Chinese nationalist notions of a clear and concrete sole sovereignty in the region to defend their frontiers against encroaching imperial forces.

The map not only embraces a nationalist notion of boundaries, highlighting them prominently in bold green strokes, but also adopts other tools used in modern nation mapping. The primary example of this was the inclusion of latitude and longitudinal lines that would help to enforce their claims in relation to a global system. The information itself used to produce the map due to its Russian publication was also gathered by these scientifically focused explorers from the European nations themselves. Although there is clearly then the ability to replicate a similar mapping style to these European maps, this one instead emphasizes political features. For instance, Younghusband's map labels a select few major cities, while the map of Tibet on the other hand labels numerous cities dotted thickly throughout. This serves several purposes, the obviously practical one of

[17] Younghusband, *The Heart of a Continent*, 101.

which is that these are places that the empire administers. Each town represents the existence of many people, for the state, taxes, for Chinese citizens, perhaps they represent family, friends, places they might travel too. For a European audience, these are places of relative insignificance to understanding the travels of an explorer like Younghusband. To European governments, the citizens of other governments would have been largely inconsequential and their lack of depiction on a map indicates instead the unclaimed nature of the region. Just the opposite is true for the Chinese, as labelling all the cities possible only enhances their argument of possession through population.

All localities on the Tibet map are labelled in Chinese, and even those called by other names are indicated by parentheses as being transliterated. Choosing to list these places by their Chinese names helps link them further with China. These cities are presented as clearly Chinese, and the cities themselves are evidence of Chinese presence, if not through an ethnic tie than through administrative ties. During the late Qing, the government often issued incentives for Han populations to migrate to frontier regions in order to more firmly establish control, as we have seen with Xinjiang. Ethnicity was increasingly viewed as a fixed aspect of identity, and increasingly linked to concepts of nationhood. Nationalistic powers could increase their claims to sovereignty by demonstrating an ethnic link with a territory, in the spirit of procession being nine-tenths of the law. As we see in the Qing, and later the Nationalists' and the Communists' claims to multiethnicity, politicians often combined or utilized different strategies of sovereignty, and having Han migrants in a majority Tibetan region aided both multiethnic and Chinese possession rhetoric. In any event, proving Tibet to have a significant settled

population sufficed to refute notions of the region as an unclaimed terrain open to British or Russian designs.

This map, then, does not show an untamed wilderness, but rather a carefully tended and populated province. Natural features are included for practical reasons, such as rivers and mountains, but without the obsession for drawing them down to every crevasse. Instead, natural features are shown mostly as they pertain to travel between regions. Mountains are indicated only as peaks unless it is necessary to also show a pass between them. The rivers are shown as major highways, with each way station indicated in the same style as the major roads. This attention to routes demonstrates a highly developed region with many physical connections to the rest of the empire rather than an unexplored frontier. The reality was probably somewhere in between what Europeans tried to convey and that which the Chinese tried to convey. This region was not unclaimed but nor was it fully incorporated into a unified whole. Both sides saw two futures for the frontier regions, a future that teetered between these two extremes.

## AUREL STEIN

Aurel Stein was a Hungarian-British scientist who conducted expeditions of a predominantly archeological nature throughout what is today northern China. Unlike Younghusband, scientific societies rather than the British government sponsored the majority of Stein's travels. The maps then have a greater veneer of scientific neutrality, without an express military intent behind them. Stein's personal interests in the region centered on mapping the blank areas of the maps for scientific categorization, particularly ancient landscapes in terms of archeology. While not directly connected with the government, information gathered by Stein and other researchers like him provided the British and other European governments with not only strategic information of the region but also served to help define territory in the context of the wider nationalist system. Their contributions were often recognized not only by their individual nations; Stein himself, in addition to his innumerable academic honors, received knighthood in 1912, but often received accolades from foreign governments as well.

Stein completed three expeditions in Central Asia mapping and excavating ruins along the old Silk Road. The areas that roughly correspond to modern regions are: a 1900 Xinjiang expedition, a 1906 Gansu expedition, and a 1913 Mongolia expedition. At the conclusion of these expeditions, Stein combined the information he gathered into comprehensive maps based predominantly on his own measurements with some verification an addition by other explorers. This map (Figure 3.1) depicts the oasis town

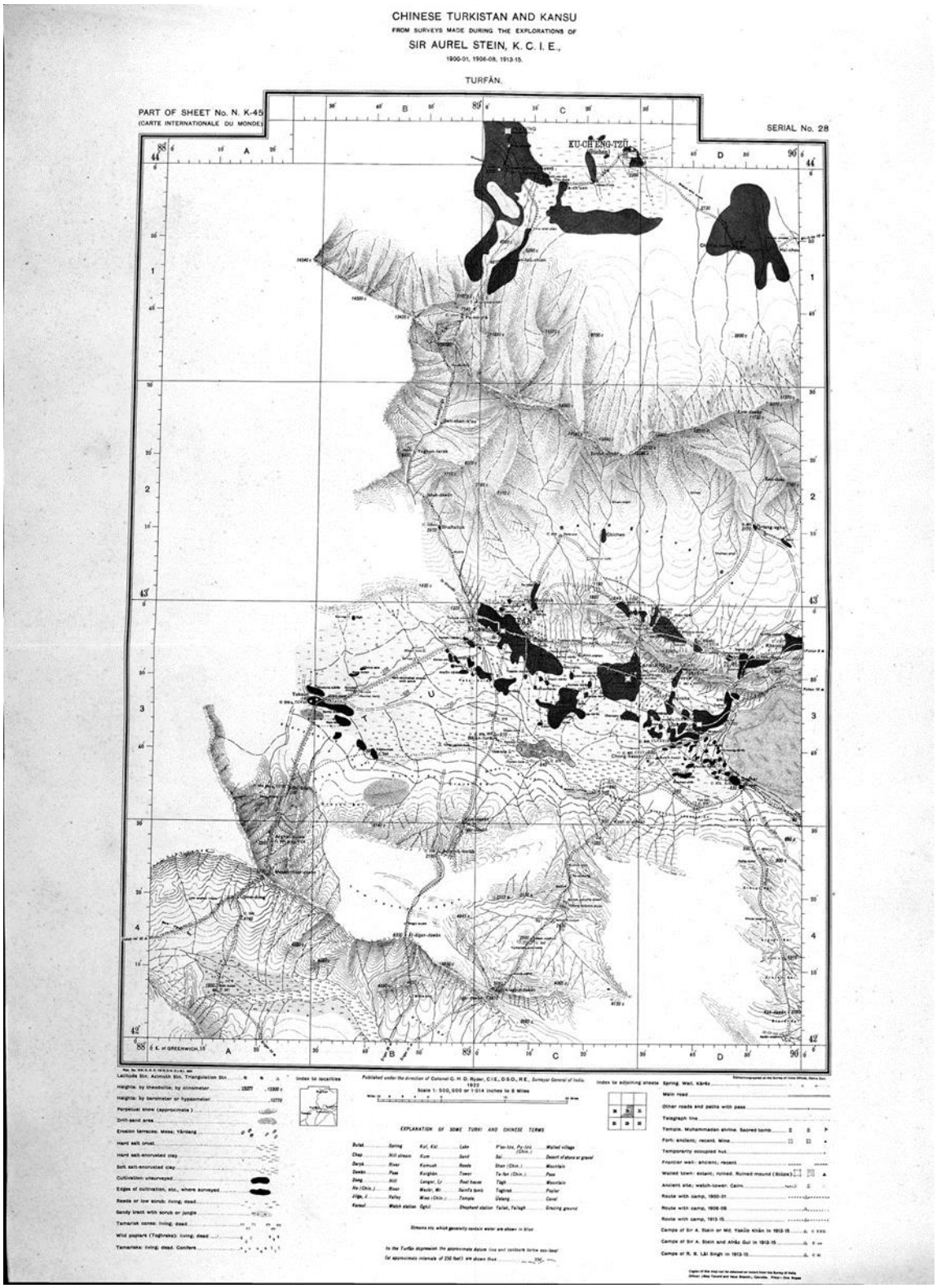


Figure 3.1: *Chinese Turkistan and Kansu*
by Sir Aurel Stien, 1908

of Turfan [modern: Turpan] in Xinjiang and the surrounding region southeast of Urumqi. Stein published this map along with a few dozen others in his work *Innermost Asia*.[18] Turfan had in the past been a stopping point along the Silk Road, and in recent years still functioned as a stopping place for many explorers, including Younghusband, Stein, and Hedin. As with many cities of any size in Xinjiang after the opening of migration and general rebellions, it consisted of two sections, a Han section, and a Uyghur section. Taken primarily from data collected during his three expeditions prior to 1916, these maps were being drawn immediately after the fall of the Qing Empire. Despite the scientific techniques used in its creation, Stein and his publishers still made choices in their depiction of these regions that reflect their understandings. Most importantly, these choices seem to indicate a lack of political cohesion present in earlier and later maps.

Perhaps the most notable feature in this map of Turfan is the blank areas. A significant portion of this map is not filled in at all, and some other maps in this collection have more empty space than they do filled space. Stein only maps areas where information collected was consistent with the prevailing mapping techniques of his day. Although this method is in keeping with a scientific approach, and is meant to represent his own findings, leaving these areas completely blank presents these regions as unknown and undiscovered. Naturally these regions were not blank to the people who lived within them or travelled through them over the years. As an oasis town along the old Silk Road, travelers had been crossing the region for centuries at least, and yet by showing them as blank, this map would seem to imply that these areas are an untouched wilderness never before seen.

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[18] Sir Aurel Stein, *Innermost Asia: A Detailed Report of the Explorations in Central Asia, Kan-su and Eastern Iran* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1928)

The decision to produce a map with known areas blurring gradually into the unknown lies in part with the obsession of the day to place remote areas onto the neat grid of latitude and longitude. This scientific drive to catalog and categorize created a vision of the land in relation simply to its spot on the globe, in its own neat little box. While we continue to utilize this global grid for mapping, the modern tendency is to reference areas in relation to their place within a nation or in comparison to surrounding nations. The key shown below this map has two reference markers to show the map in relation to other areas. One on the left shows a tiny cut away of Turfan relative to some other localities, and the one on the right with Turfan labelled as sheet 28 shows this map's position in relation to the other grid maps produced in this series. This map in no way relates Turfan to a nation at large. The only link at all to a wider polity beyond its immediate neighboring cities comes to us from the title of the series, *Chinese Turkistan and Kansu*. The map seems in no way to imply a larger Chinese nation, but nor does it relate these areas to any other nation or even any type of independent borders either. Turfan as shown here is simply a town at the edge of a still uncharted wilderness.

It is also important to note that this focus on depoliticized grid squares presents a marked contrast to other types of maps in that the location of even the cities themselves, apart from their relation to a larger entity, are not given the lion's share of attention. The map is named for the principle city within the scope of the map, but it is not the center focus like earlier maps would have been. Again we see that the primary vision of the map is its place within a global perspective. The city itself, or routes between cities, or the city in relation to the central government is not the main concern. Instead, we see a shift to

envisioning mapping as a tool for cataloging the planet, and thus limiting the agency of a Chinese state or the cities themselves.

This map also represents a fascinating picture of the region's multiethnic nature linguistically in its translation of local geographical terms. Local words for natural features such as lake or mountain are left intact on the map itself and translated below. However, the words are not all derived from the same language. In this case, both Uyghur and Mandarin are represented. Even more significantly, only one language is given for a particular feature.[19] For instance, the English "lake" is translated from Uyghur *kul*, but the English "mountain" is translated from the Mandarin *shan*. Other maps in this series and others contemporary with it seem to follow this same strategy, and often include additional languages such as Mongolian. In this case, the majority of features are labeled with Uyghur names, with a handful of Mandarin terms. This unusual (to the modern viewer) way of categorizing landmarks along different linguistic lines within the same map is not explained in Stein's memoir on the mapping process, but it seems to indicate that he labeled features by whatever name it was known to its local inhabitants. This is consistent with the fact that even today, Turfan's population consists predominantly of individuals identifying as Uyghur with a minority population of Han identified individuals.

This usage of local language unintentionally lets local voice shine through. In the shadow of the labels, we can perceive the outline of those local people guiding explorers like Stein. Stein frequently utilized the same local guides as his colleagues, with many European explorers choosing to employ the same local assistants who had experience

[19] The one exception is the English word "pass," which is given for both languages.

helping other Europeans. While each map may be overwhelmingly the view of a single European explorer, throughout each is occasionally the same quiet whisper of those who actually inhabited these spaces rather than simply passing though. The story of these large mapping projects is predominantly one of national and geopolitics, yet they only exist due to the assistance of those with deep indigenous context. To them, these areas were not unexplored, or necessarily tied to some wider national entity. In fact, little to no national sentiment likely existed in a region like Turfan beyond the possibility of some clinging association with the former Qing.

The overall impact of labeling the map by local place names in this way reinforces the sense of decentralization, while also contributing to a vision of the landscape as divided ethnographically. Without relating these ethnographic clusters to a larger political entity such as the fallen empire or the emerging nation, the viewer is left with a sense of fragmentation, that these regions are only connected by their shared presence in the same arbitrary grid square; it was quite the opposite during the Qing era, when languages functioned in a Universalist context. As a universal ruler, negotiating meaning between languages was the sole prerogative of the emperor.[20] Imperial monuments marking important places often had inscriptions in multiple languages, highlighting the emperor's authority as the legitimate ruler of all those linguistic groups. Emperor Qianlong especially paid a great deal of attention to the importance of linguistics in a multiethnic society and his responsibility as superordinate conveyor of meaning and authority across all groups. In an almost poetic symbolism, Qianlong sought

[20] Moris Rossabi, *Governing China's Multiethnic Frontiers* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004) 132.

to utilize the Manchu language as a focal point for translating between other languages.[21] Since it could often be difficult to translate foreign words into Chinese script, Qianlong promoted first translating foreign words into the relatively new Manchu phonetic script and only then translating them into Chinese and *vice versa*.[22] Unfortunately, this process required not only more work, but could be unnecessarily complex and did not remain the norm for long after his reign, although the emperors retained their claims to final authority over language in the empire.

Language, particularly in Xinjiang and the other frontier territories, has always held political and cultural significance. Xinjiang's primary spoken language today, Uyghur, formerly known as Eastern Turki in its native form (not transliterated into Manchu or Chinese as often happens in official documents), was written in an Arabic script. In the year 1928, Atatürk in Turkey had switched the country over to a Latin alphabet. Out of fear that ethnically related Turkish groups both within Xinjiang and in areas controlled by the Soviets would be influenced by a pan-Turkish movement, officials in the Soviet Union advocated the adoption of the term Uyghur rather than Eastern Turki for the language and people and promoted a Cyrillic alphabet.[23] In the 1950s, the CCP attempted to institute a pinyin system to strengthen ties to China, and local activists eventually succeeded in allowing Uyghur to be written again in an Arabic script. And this is still in transition as some are again pushing for a Latin script to better engage with technology as global citizens. And so we see how transliteration not only

[21] Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy*, 36.
[22] Ibid
[23] Jon Justin Rudelson, *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism Along China's Silk Road* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 59.

functions for the purposes of translation and understanding, but also functions as a cultural adhesive with many groups vying for recognition.

Language has become intimately tied to ethnicity and the arguments surrounding ethnicity and nationhood. As Mullaney has demonstrated in his work on the first census administered by the CCP,[24] the government adopted the linguistic distinctions, though not the script, made by European explorers for a quick classification of identity. The choices European explorers made when classifying or utilizing local languages were later used by the Communists in their ethnographic considerations. Stein's map or those like it would have been useful to the Chinese government in determining local ethnic concentrations, which would come full circle when they determined how to draw local political boundaries of these same frontier regions.

One factor that is somewhat unique to Stein's mapping of the region is his attention to mapping not only space but also time. He includes details of features of historical and cultural significance, including shrines, tombs, and ruins. A majority of features one might find on maps of his contemporaries, such as towns, forts, walls, and the like, for Stein are always distinguished as current or ancient. In this way, his maps show not only the region's current reality but a cross-section of space across time. By doing so, Stein explicitly linked the past with the present, in the emerging landscape of the Chinese nation. The relationship between applying cultural aspects to a "scientific" map goes unquestioned, but it demonstrates how authoritative mapmakers viewed their own interpretations of representing the world. Just as a modern map supposedly represented the only "accurate" way of viewing the world rather than a series of visual

[24] Thomas S. Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2011)

choices on a mathematical frame, anthropological interpretations represent the only "accurate" way of viewing civilization. In China and around the world, we see European's declaring themselves the stewards of world culture as the rightful heirs of civilization from the ruins of ancient Greece, Persia, and China, to name a few. This included both claiming authority to "rescue" historical artifacts, as well as controlling their true interpretation.[25] Stein and others thus seemed to claim these ancient sites as global commodities rather than what we might now consider national heritage or even local identity. While the claim to history as a shared procession of all humanity may be a noble sentiment, by perceiving themselves the first among equals, the Western academic establishment denied the dignity of those closest to the artifacts themselves, not only in China but around the world.

Part of the mythos of a shared nationality often implies that of a shared history, projecting the nation as something ancient and inseparable from the earth itself. Even the term "national awakening" so often used in China and elsewhere implies that the nation is something that has always been, growing or sleeping, but ever present.[26] Henry Em, in his study of the historiography of Korean nationalism, warns against the dangers of reading the modern nation into the past, and states that the history of a nation is often extended into a past where such a political construction did not exist.[27] Yet despite the danger for historians to accept this premise of a nation existing in perpetuity, Benedict

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[25] Jeff Kyong-McClain and Geng Jing, "David Crockett Graham in Chinese Intellectual History," in *Explorers and Scientists in China's Borderlands 1880-1950*, ed. Denis Glover and Stevan Harell (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), 211-237

[26] John Fitzgerald, Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 16-45.

[27] Henry Em, The Great Enterprise: Sovereignty and Historiography in Modern Korea (Dunham: Duke University Press, 2013)

Anderson's work demonstrates how this mythos of a shared and eternal history is one of the principle factors that influence the formation of modern "imagined communities."[28]

Stein's linking of the past with the present presented a powerful tool for building nationalism. In his map, but also in his analysis of the excavations and artifacts collected, there existed the potential to interpret these historical remnants favorably or not towards the formation of a Chinese nation. If the ruins could be tied to a "Chinese" culture, it would help support the new state's historical claims to the modern places in which they were found. As we see in the case of fellow archeologist David Crockett Graham and his excavations in southern China, his interpretations of distant sites as related to an ancient Chinese culture gave him grudging tolerance from the fledgling Nationalist government.[29] Even so, this aspect of nationality formation eventually became deemed so valuable by the government that they gave exclusive access to Chinese scientists and how to interpret the historical evidence underwent periods of intense debate from the nationalist era, to the communist era, and extending into the present. Stein himself would be refused entry for a fourth expedition as the government underwent just such a period of careful historical scrutiny. These sites continued to be politically solvent from the Nationalist Era onward. The work of European scientists was not abandoned but reappropriated for national rather than imperial purposes.

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[28] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*
[29] Kyong-McClain and Jing, "David Crockett Graham in Chinese Intellectual History"

## Non-European Voices

It is important to remember that these expeditions rarely, if ever, were conducted by Europeans alone, but typically had help, whether that be for simple things like porters, knowledgeable aides like guides, or outright assistants and collaborators making measurements and conducting observations. Just as the Imperial Qing had valued the information and testimony of informants on the frontier based on a hierarchical system of perceived trustworthiness in the empire, so too did the British. As we have seen in British descriptions of Qing territory as "unexplored" or blank, explorers dismissed official Chinese accounts of the landscape outright. Yet they too had to rely upon the assistance of others to complete these ambitious cartographic explorations. The maps produced by these explorers do not represent simply the perspectives of one explorer, because their creation depended on the input of many voices. Often, these cartographic mosaics attempted to privilege certain voices over others in a structured and hierarchical fashion, to spackle the rough edges of diverse input into a single smooth picture. Just beneath the surface, however, we can see not only the multitude of contributing perspectives but also their sometimes conflicting nature.

The European explorers themselves to a European audience would have seemed the premier source of authority in the map, and indeed, their (and their publisher's) perspective of the realities of the space considered would have taken precedence and given the work a thick veneer of authority. Interestingly though, the explorers might sometimes not take all or even a majority of the measurements themselves, that strictly scientific aspect from which the entire medium supposedly drew its legitimacy in modern mapping. Due to the painstaking intensity of the task, European explorers often relied on

the surveying talents of trained Indian aides. By the time of the late Qing, trained Indian professionals had come to serve as imperial agents themselves, with a perceived position in the hierarchy of trustworthiness from a British standpoint, just below Europeans themselves. The British would have viewed the contributions of a properly trained Indian surveyor above those of a Chinese scientist and especially above that of a local frontier resident. For this reason, the contributions of Indian surveyors as individuals have survived in British maps.

Aurel Stein's projects are notable in that they often credit the collaboration of his Indian aides, listed as R.B. Lal Singh and R.S. Ram Singh. R.B. and R.S. are abbreviations of titles the British Government in India awarded to exemplary or pedigreed Indian subjects.[30] This case offers an example of non-European agents of empire. R.B. Lal Singh after joining the military in his youth quickly progressed in the Survey of India Department where he participated in the famous Great Trigonometrical Survey of India. He later would accompany Stein on at least two of his three expeditions, as well as occasionally assisting other British explorers in other trips. Lal Singh was not merely an assistant, but conducted many surveys in conjunction with, and occasionally apart from, Stein. He is credited with collecting several of the data points used individually in Stein's *Memoirs* detailing the information collected to create his maps.[31]

Ironically, the sources the British probably valued least, the local guides and porters, probably knew the land the best. Their very ability to act as guides serves as perhaps obvious proof that these local assistants had a close familiarity with their local

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[30] R.B. for *Rao Bahadur* or honorable prince, and R.S. for *Rao Sahib* of lesser rank meaning honorable sir.
[31] Daniel and Stephen Sander, "Rai Bahadur Lal Singh: Sir Aurel Stein's Surveying Companion," in *Sir Aurel Stein: Colleagues and Collections*, ed. Helen Wang (London: British Museum, 2012)

landscape and that it certainly was not "unexplored" to them. Without their knowledge of the local landmarks, routes, and water sources, the expeditions quite easily might have ended in failure and even death in the arid climate. Hence, although their depiction of the landscape might have been due to the explorers' interpretations, and the Indian surveyors' measurements, the inclusion of the various landmarks, routes, and general habitat owes itself to the guides who led the team there based on their previous knowledge. The very ability to conduct such an enterprise would have further relied upon the services of not only guides, but translators, porters, and any other number of locals relegated to tasks perceived to be suitable based on their nonstatus in the British imperial system. The local story can often be lost in the bigger history of competing states, but it was they who unveiled the region to the world at large.

These different people all contributed their different understandings broiling just beneath the surface, their voices being carried from the dusty steppes of Xinjiang on the outskirts of a distant empire to the damp sitting room bookshelves of England. It can be difficult at times to separate the many strands of their combined efforts, but not impossible, as previously discussed with the treatment to local language in Aurel Stein's map of Turfan. The important point, however, is that these maps are not as static and uniform as they seem, and it is entirely possible with a little prodding to unearth the messy collage of this imperial endeavor. The contributors in this enterprise had very different conceptions of empire, statehood, and space in general.

# FREDERICK WULSIN

With the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1912, their successors would be left with the question of what would become of the remnants of a vast multiethnic empire. In this transitional period, it was not yet clear what kind of China would emerge. Whether China as a nation would incorporate the entirety of the Manchu's conquest, or whether they would maintain a more ethnically homogenous country within the confines of the Great Wall was a question hotly contested not only by those on the frontier, but among Han circles as well. However, a more practical concern in these early days of the Republic took precedence, whether or not the fledgling nationalist government even had the wherewithal to rule the vast territories of the former Qing. A National Geographic expedition led by Fredrick Wulsin into what would become China's northern frontier, specifically the autonomous region of Inner Mongolia, offers a glimpse into China at this pivotal moment. With the Qing Empire having fallen only a decade before, their former subjects seemed to be holding their breath as the various regions of the empire tottered between independence and unity.

Fredrick Wulsin was an American explorer who had previously undertaken expeditions in Africa and China's Shanxi province, and in 1923 was sponsored by the National Geographic Society for the "Central-China Expedition." The eleven-member expedition (including Wulsin's wife and another American couple) traveled from the then most distant northern outpost of China's railway system, Baotou, in Inner Mongolia, to

the city of Wang Yeh Fu, and then through modern-day Ningxia and Gansu. His goal was to collect natural specimens, and also document Northwestern China's people and places. Although not a geographical mapping expedition, his attempts to create a record of the region's peoples offers an important supplement to understanding the Nationalist's adoption of a multiethnic state. For Wulsin, who would later become a professor of anthropology, this historical corridor of trade between China and central Asia offered a rich intersection of peoples and cultures, including Han, Tibetan, Hui, and many others. His narrative account of the journey, published in National Geographic's May 1926 issue, as well as his roughly two thousand photographs, focus closely on the people he met and observed along the way.

Figure 4.1 shows Frederick Wulsin (left) posing with two Hui soldiers assigned to help escort the expedition.[32] Their presence represents the complicated political fragmentation of the region at the time. No real central government had yet to emerge in

Figure 4.1: Fredrick Wulsin with Hui escort troops (white helmets), 1927

[32] Joseph Fletcher, *China's Inner Asian Frontier: Photographs of the Wulsin Expedition to Northwestern China in 1923* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979)

1923. Instead the Hui General Ma Fuxiang, who later pledged his allegiance to the Nationalists, ruled the region. Even once the Nationalists did take nominal control after the Northern Expedition of 1928, the exhausted government in Beijing did not have the strength to control the countryside directly, and were often forced to rely on local leaders like Ma Fuxiang. Yet, despite the lack of a central political authority during Wulsin's travels, and the continued influence of local political figures even later, there seemed to exist a symbolic recognition in much of the former empire to a sense of continued unity above and apart from any national sentiment.

The two soldiers shown in Figure 4.1 arrived later on in the expedition as Wulsin's group moved beyond the reach of even Ma Fuxiang. However, it was thanks to the general's letter of introduction to his kinsman Ma Qi, a warlord in the town of Xining, that he supplied them with this added protection in the relatively unstable area. Both Hui generals would be instrumental allies to Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government in the factional fighting within the nationalist movement that would shortly emerge. According to Wulsin himself, the Hui were "in practical control of the whole frontier from [Xining] through [Hezhou] to [Taozhou]." Not only that, but Wulsin also notes intense ethnic tension in the Northwest. "People say that the Tibetans have it in for [Ma Qi] and his men, because of the heavy taxes he levies, and that when next the Moslems have trouble with China a Tibetan army will strike them in the back."[33]

This quote poses an intriguing contrast between logistical and symbolic authority. On one hand, we see the Hui generals very much in charge of the region, as evidenced by their military control and the collection of taxes. On the other hand, despite clear tension

[33] Fletcher, *China's Inner Asian Frontier*, 24

between the Hui and the local Tibetans, Wulsin implies that it is their recognition as agents of a larger political entity, be that China as a nation without a government or as former Qing subjects, that keeps those dissatisfied with the commanders from rebelling. The question remains why areas like those traveled by Wulsin, so far from Beijing, still seemed to recognize a nonexistent central ideal in spite of the fall of the dynasty and a clear move towards local authority.

Wulsin presents the frontier as a place of extreme ethnic diversity, with many different groups not clearly defined as either united or divided. Like the political decentralization, the inherent multiethnic characteristic of the Chinese state that would emerge later on in this period is only just taking shape. It has aspects of both due to its transitory state, but it does demonstrate the potential tendency towards an emerging idea of unification if not an inevitable one. Wulsin's work at once divides the people in these territories into categories while linking them to China. The ideology of a multiethnic nation that the Nationalists would come to embrace was in part a reaction to the "realities" of ethnic difference as determined by the European anthropologists like Wulsin, instead of viewing these groups in terms of shared interests of constituencies, for instance.

Wulsin so distinguishes the different ethnicities in the region that he even claims their camels to be different. "The Chinese make their camels work all winter, leaving them no opportunity to put on fat and build up resistance to hardship. Camels owned by Mongols, on the contrary, usually make only two trips a season, and can, therefore, start out in the best condition…"[34] Rather than seeing this difference, if accurate, as related to

[34] Frederick Wulsin, "The Road to Wang Yeh Fu," in *National Geographic* (1922) 197

the sedentary nomadic lifestyle of the camels' owners, Wulsin generalizes the situation as related to race and proceeds to make an assessment of how the groups treat their animals based on his own needs from the animals. In other words, by choosing to emphasize ethnic difference, explorers like Wulsin encouraged the emerging state to consider their constituencies based on their ethnic backgrounds. Their work did not unite or divide the areas of the former empire in and of themselves, but instead merely emphasized ethnicity as a variable by which to consider and measure notions of unity and division.

Clearly, Western anthropologists did not introduce the concept of categorizing groups based on ethnicity, as the centuries of Qing multiethnic rhetoric and evidence will suggest. Rather, cataloging ethnicity and transforming it into a salient criteria in debating sovereignty is a feature shared by nearly all the imperial powers around the world and in Asia, including China, Britain, and Russia. The information and conclusions drawn from this supposedly pure scientific enterprise could be and was utilized by these powers in different ways, though the explorers themselves might attempt to promote their perceptions as definitive and neutral. Thus, despite Wulsin's work highlighting distinctions and variety, it can still be used to discover and promote a sense of unity, and observations like his could be fitted into a nationalist rhetoric. For one thing, despite the ethnic variety, Wulsin does link these areas both in terms of a shared history of Qing rule. Also, while his expedition is a case study of the fracturing of central authority, he still includes these regions as part of a unified China. Even the title of the expedition itself, the Central-China Expedition, links these regions to China, and may help explain why authorities favorable towards the nationalist movement were willing to assist him in his

endeavors. Indeed, if Britain and Russia could claim sovereignty over a diverse group of peoples, there seemed no reason why China could not claim the same.

The Nationalists, with their "five peoples one nation" slogan, and then the PRC's recognition of fifty-five *minzu* or nationalities, both championed an ideal of China as a nation of ethnic diversity.[35] These governments both borrowed from broader Qing concepts of a multiethnic polity, and from more specific findings and ideas of foreign nationalists. We see that the advent of China as a nation owes its creation to both distinctly Chinese historical experience specific to the region, but also to international concepts of nationhood specific to that era. Wulsin's work on ethnicity, as a small part of foreign explorers in China, represents only part of the much larger interchange of ideas concerning ethnicity and nationalism. Early Nationalists borrowed understandings of what constituted an ethnic group in China from Stalin's stated criteria of having a shared territory, language, culture, and economy. The PRC term for *minzu* itself, usually translated as both ethnicity and nationality, intimately tying the two concepts, is a loan word taken from Japan, which at the time was undergoing its own process of national synthesis.[36] In this exchange of ideas, Wulsin and other explorers' arguments were simply some of many that would come to influence an already larger conversation about ethnicity and its relationship to nationality.

Wulsin's expedition, of course, is not representative of all the former Qing territories nor the entire nationalist period. Many areas were run by warlords not partial to any national cause, and several regions did indeed declare their independence. However,

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[35] Dru Gladney, *Dislocating China: Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern Subjects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004)
[36] Gladney, *Dislocating China*

what this case makes visible is how although actual central government authority no longer existed in the former Qing territories during this era of increase local power, these territories remained symbolically linked to the extent that they remained fragilely tethered together. Judging from Wulsin's expedition alone, this link seems to result from the weight of a shared history held over from the Qing.

*The Road to Wang Ye Fu*, the article Wuslin wrote for the National Geographic based on the expedition, focuses on the frontier town and capital of the tiny Mongol kingdom of Alashan. In Wang Ye Fu, we see that the local political arrangements forged by the Qing were still very much in place at this moment in time. While in Wang Ye Fu, Wulsin met with the local ruler, not a new nationalist agent, or a warlord, but rather the former Qing official, a prince whose family had in years past cemented their alliance with the Qing through intermarriage [Figure 4.2].

Figure 4.2: Fredrick Wulsin posing with former Qing official

Although power in Beijing had changed hands, life in the countryside could continue largely uninterrupted. The prince, and many men in Wulsin's photos and around the country, continued to wear the queue and some "still wore the caps and buttons of old Manchu times."[37] The continuity of the institutions installed by the Qing and cemented by time continued for some time after the collapse of the Dynasty in Beijing.

While Qing institutions on the frontier differed by place and circumstance, this network of rule sufficiently connected the regions enough that a semblance of unity persisted to the extent that a rhetoric of connection still proved valuable to local leaders. This historical momentum of a connected empire continued to function although the velocity, if you will, decreased. As we can see in declarations of independence, however, that momentum could not have continued indefinitely without some new impetus, and as we see in the absence of true central authority, the connections between these territories began to disintegrate quite rapidly. China's next rulers would have had to develop their own ideology of legitimacy if they hoped to incorporate Qing areas of conquest into a Chinese nation—which, at the time, it was not at all clear that the public favored.

## Scientific Cooperation

Explorations in China relied a great deal on international cooperation. The history of China's so called semicolonial status, with many different European powers vying for their respective interests generally at the expense of the Chinese, created a unique atmosphere for these powers to work in conjunction as they might not have been able to do in any other setting. Because none of these powers desired total control over the entire

[37] Fletcher, *China's Inner Asian Frontier*

region, even parties that in other instances might be rivals were able to cooperate scientifically. This setting of relative equality among European powers allowed for rapid scientific progress, with no small number of them traversing the continent. By mapping such a vast expanse in a relatively short amount of time, the builders of modern China benefited quickly from the information, which they then had the ability to use in visualizing the nation for both other countries and their own citizens.

One famous example of cooperation existed between Aurel Stein and his contemporary, Swedish explorer Sven Hedin. Stein often relied on Hedin's preliminary maps of central Asia in his own work. As Estaban Morin notes in his paper summarizing the professional relationship between these two men, each served an important function for the other.[38] For Stein, Hedin at once inspired him and guided him. Morin notes him as stating "I have the advantages of Sven Hedin's experiences…one of the most valuable sources of information [for me] was Sven Hedin's book *Through Asia*…"[39] For Hedin, Stein's travels helped to validate his own research, and provided additional details to improve his later maps. The geographical cooperation of these two men is simply one example of the combined efforts of the multitude of European explorers mapping out Asia at this time. While each may have worked largely independently, the information and the data they collected served to produce one unified vision of China.

Maps published depicting central Asia were often the amalgamation of the information collected from multiple expeditions. Even a map representing a particular expedition often relied on data taken from earlier measurements, if only for verification.

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[38] Esteban Morin, "Fraternity on the Silk Road: The Relationship of Aurel Stein and Sven Hedin," in Sire *Aurel Stein: Colleagues and Collections*, ed. Helen Wang (London: British Museum, 2012)
[39] Ibid

Take Stein's map of the city Turfan [modern: Turpan] for instance. This map utilizes data collected from all three of Stein's expeditions, and relies on even earlier measurements as well. This particular map was published in Stein's multivolume work *Innermost Asia: Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia, Kan-su, and Eastern Iran*. He wrote separately about the work that went into producing this sheet and the others in his *Memoir on Maps*. For latitude and longitude measurements, for example, Stein at times uses other explorer's findings as verification for his own, in one passage saying, "The longitude shown in our map for the town of Lukehun, 89˚ 41' 30'', receives welcome confirmation from the value 89˚ 42' 28'' which Roborovsky's astronomical observations indicate for his meteorological station, established close to that important town." [40] At other times, others uses their measurements to compliment his own, "In addition to the latitude observations recorded below, several others taken by Mr. Clementi on the main road and by Russian explorers have also been used."[41] Even Russian explorers made their data available to Stein, a British agent. Despite the realities of the Great Game, even these rivals cooperated in this setting of combined European interests. Without mapping the region, neither power would have been able to accurately make their own border claims on the frontier. Within China itself, neither had any overriding concerns.

[40] Sir Aurel Stein, *Memoir on Maps of Chinese Turkistan and Kansu* (Dehra Dun: Triognometrical Survey Office, 1923)
[41] Stein, *Innermost Asia*

## SVEN HEDIN

Sven Hedin's eight-year-long Sino-Swedish expedition from 1927 to 1935 represents a rare example of the Nationalist government working in direct conjunction with the many European explorers mapping Asia at this time. The Swedish explorer had already led three expeditions in Central Asia before being commissioned for this final journey, with team members documenting from Beijing to the Tarim Basin. The Nationalist government helped partially fund the expedition, and at their suggestion included Han Chinese scientists. In addition to scientific pursuits, archeological work, and general mapping of the interior, Chiang Kai-shek commissioned Hedin's team to survey potential locations for a future motorway tying to Xinjiang's capital, Urumqi.[42] Their support illustrates not only the importance of mapping for developing a modern state, but also presents an example of the Nationalist's conscious effort to expand their control of former Qing territories.

As we have seen in the case of Wulsin's expedition, the former Qing Empire at this time had been undergoing a period of political turmoil and decentralization. At the start of Hedin's expedition, Chiang Kai-shek's government was in the middle of the Northern Expedition, their military attempt to subjugate the various regional warlords under a central authority. The Nationalist's authority over the former Qing was being put

[42] Sven Hedin, *History of the Expedition in Asia, 1927-1935 vol.3* (Goteborg: Ei. Anders Boktryckeri, 1944)

to the test and their inability to effectively control the regions they claimed shows prominently in the expedition records. For instance, despite the assurances of the Nationalist government, Hedin's teams (the scientists under his leadership often split off temporarily to pursue their own work) found themselves caught up in a complex and violent political situation.

The Kuomintang forces were in the midst of fighting to gain authority over the regional warlords, but in the rapidly shifting alliances, it could be difficult to tell with any certainty which side represented what. The last Qing-appointed governor of Xinjiang had fled following the 1911 revolution, and Xinjiang experienced a changing cast of warlord governors. The first of these, Yang Zhengxin, functioned as governor at the very start of Hedin's expedition, exchanging communiqués with Nanjiang about Hedin's travels before being assassinated in 1928. Hedin and his team met with his successor in Urumqi, one Jin Shuren who shortly afterwards evoked the ire of the fledgling Nationalist government for engaging in independent treaties with the Soviets. As a result, the KMT allied itself with the young Gansu general, Ma Zhongying, whom they charged with bringing down Jin. Ma Zhongying later detained Hedin and his forces shot out their tires.[43] Eventually, however, a different warlord previously allied with Jin and the Soviets by the name of Sheng Shicai who fought against Ma Zhongyin during Hedin's travels became governor with nominal KMT support. Eventually, Sheng too would be ousted from power as he attempted to play the Soviets and the KMT against each other. Hedin's travels in Xinjiang, then, took place in an intensely unstable political landscape with a chaotic shifting of power. The Nationalist government in Nanjing had little control over

[43] Hedin, *History of the Expedition in Asia*

Xinjiang beyond the power to lend their support to the ally of the moment. This mapping project then aimed to create a clear picture out of a landscape that was anything but, in an effort to trumpet Nationalist claims louder than that of any other claimant, be they the numerous warlords or the infringing Soviets.

Given the tumultuous circumstances, the Nationalist government's interest in expending resources and support to Hedin, even if not always effective, indicates a level of increased regard for the information gathered by the expedition. In fact, Chiang Kai-shek himself briefly met with Hedin and his academic counterpart Professor Siu regarding their mission.[44] Clearly, the Nationalists held the information the expedition hoped to gather of some importance. This is likely due to the fact that the information gleaned by such an expedition could help bind the increasingly independent regions into a unified nation. The main request of the Nationalist government, to find possible routes for motorcar routes, would physically tie Xinjiang to central China. The maps likewise offered practical information for actual control of the region by the Nationalists. Conceptually, the maps could and did present a symbolic tie between Xinjiang and coastal China. Even the archeological research offered the promise of historical ties as interpreted in light of a continuous national narrative.

The cooperation between the Swedish and the Han scientists is itself a meaningful alliance. In many ways, this collaboration may have been based on practical considerations on the part of the Nationalists. For one thing, European explorers were in no short supply during this period of limited governmental control, crisscrossing the continent. Hedin himself had already conducted three successful expeditions, and such

[44] Hedin, *History of the Expedition in Asia*

experience surely was a valuable asset. Certainly, Chinese scientists had the capacity and technology themselves to conduct scientific surveys, but European mapping techniques were not merely about perceived accuracy but also offered a particular way of looking at the world through a nationalist lens. In any case, many prominent Chinese scientists had themselves received educations in Europe or the United States, and been trained in these modern methods. By working together with Western explorers and according to modern methods, the Nationalist government represented these territories in accordance with notions of modern nationalism. Both the utilization of modern mapping and their result solidified the conceptualization of the former Qing frontiers as part of a Chinese state.

In part due to the independence afforded to the Swedish and Chinese scientists under Hedin's direction, the expedition produced dozens of data points in the 1930s, which were later combined in 1950 with those of previous expeditions to publish his *Central Asian Atlas*. This map of Turfan [modern: Turpan] in Figure 5.1 in the former oasis town close to the modern capital of Urumqi in central Xinjiang covers roughly the same region that his colleague Aurel Stein had mapped in 1916. It contains information gathered primarily by the Sino-Swedish expedition as well as several others and because Hedin could draw from the data gathered over many years and more expeditions, it has far more detail and information than the maps discussed previously. In this map, we can see that notions of national sovereignty, which had been shown as in some doubt in the earlier maps, solidified under the eyes of the Chinese themselves. This map reflects the interests of the Chinese scientists who collaborated on the expedition, and the nationalist backers. Present is the idea that these regions that had once belonged to the Qing Empire

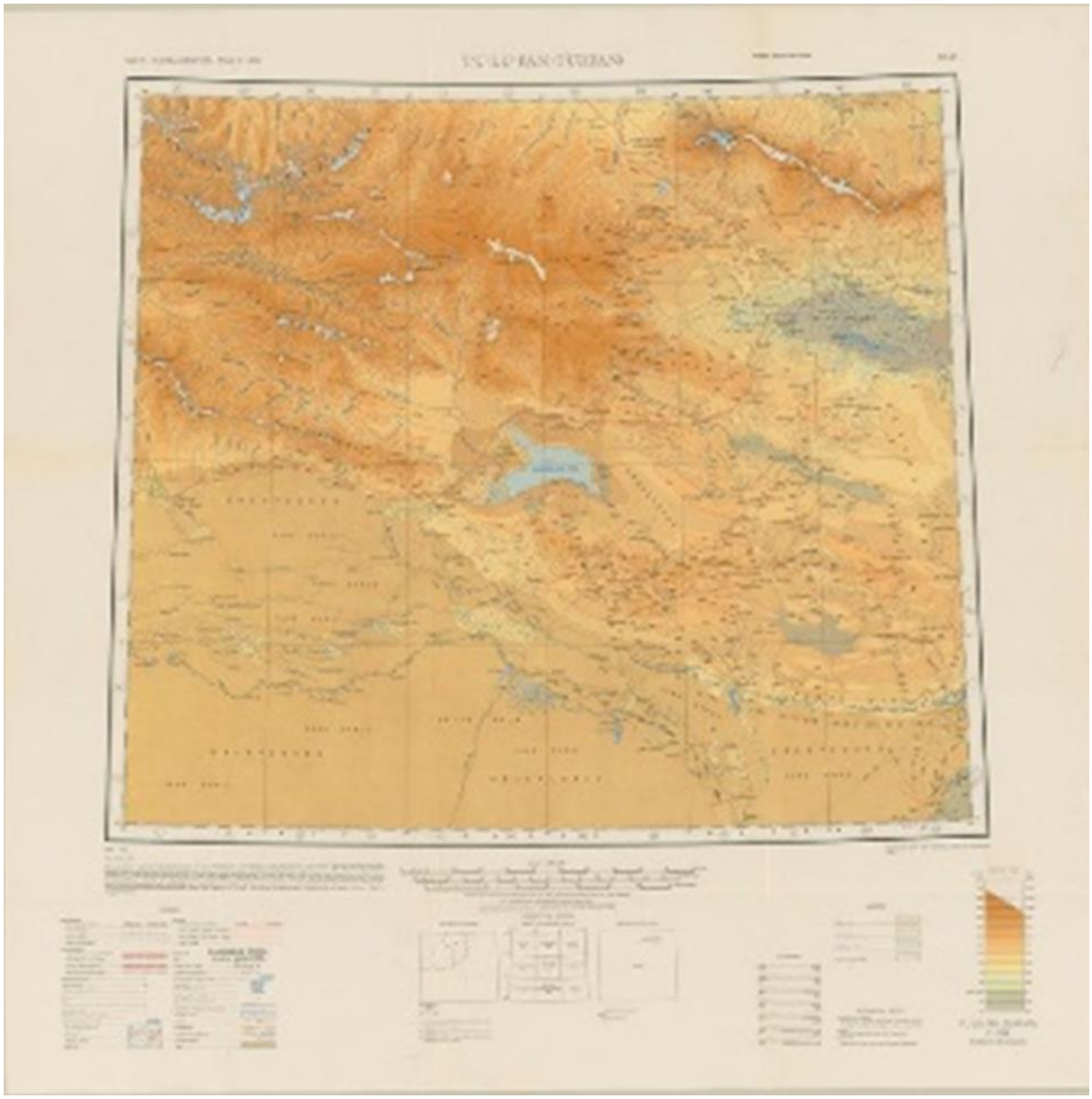

Figure 5.1: *Tu-lu-fan* (Turfan), map of a Xinjiang oasis town by Sven Hedin, 1935

should now rightfully come together under the auspices of a new multiethnic Chinese nation.

In keeping with the comparison of borders between all these maps, boundaries finally are depicted clearly on a map intended for a European audience. Both international and "primary administrative" borders are demarcated here. The international borders are distinguished between "surveyed" and "unsurveyed," thus showing that while the location of these boundaries are in some cases still being determined exactly, they nevertheless exist and the area within and without is clearly distinguished as belonging to one nation or the other. The map is careful to list the disclaimer that "The delineation of international boundaries on this map must not be considered authoritative." Since some boundaries are still being calculated precisely, the cartographers here are cautious not to offend any of the nations being illustrated. This in itself is telling; their concern for national sovereignty is a factor largely absent in the maps of Younghusband or Stein and is a result and reflection of nationalist ideology of a nations sacred rights.[45]

The distinction of "surveyed" vs. "unsurveyed" also suggests the interesting notion that borders can be surveyed in the same way natural features like mountains or lakes can be surveyed. While the process of determining a border now necessitated agreeing on the exact position of a line based on a longitudinal and latitudinal grid, the term "survey" implies that these borders are an intrinsic part of the landscape, that the explorer is simply observing reality rather than creating a reality. It is a postulate of modern mapping that borders must naturally exist, which can only be applied if we first accept a universe of distinct geographical control of a region by one power and one

[45] Pransenjit Dura, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchuko and the East Asian Modern* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003)

power only. This idea, as we have already shown, only emerged with the foundation of a nationalist philosophy despite its anachronistic assumption of continual existence throughout history.

Another facet of this acceptance of China as a modern nation visible in Hedin's map is the inclusion of a reference to the territory being mapped in relation to their respective nations. In Stein's map, we saw that the territory had only been referenced to the global grid as a place without a nation. In Hedin's map, he adds a small reference at the bottom placing the region mapped in the context of China and the USSR. These changes in how the map presents the territory within a wider framework likely resulted at least in part from the influence of the Chinese scientists themselves and respect towards the desires of the Nationalist government that helped to fund the Sino-Swedish expedition. The Nationalist government utilized the science of modern mapping in this case to showcase the national reality they wanted the world to see. After all, Hedin intended this map for a Western audience, and within the nationalist system, an individual nation gains an incalculable benefit to their sovereignty through the recognition of other self-identified and mutually confirmed nations. By mapping China according to the same methods and techniques as other nations, the Nationalists embraced similar strategies of national portrayal to other emerging nations. Perhaps also, by embracing the same nationalist techniques as other nations, China hoped to display its equal status with those states in order to validate their own geographical and political claims in international terms.

In a similarity to the 1904 Russian map intended for a Chinese audience, Hedin's map also places high emphasis on towns and methods of transportation. Hedin's map

distinguishes cities of four different sizes: Large city, city, small city or town, and village or settlement. He also distinguishes between a whopping eight types of railroads, and four different types of roads. Despite the map being primarily geographic, it does not represent the landscape as somehow uninhabited or unclaimed. The inclusion of cities and thus population, presumably citizens of China, is one method of justifying Chinese possession. The inclusion of rail lines and roads helps not only to demonstrate physical ties to the center, but also indicates active governance in the region for further justification. Like Stein's map, the glossary of geographic terms includes predominantly translations of Uyghur terms. While in Stein's map the nature of the people represented through these terms were not clearly associated with China, because Hedin's map explicitly lists this region as part of China, the inclusion of Uyghur terms places the Uyghur people as part of the Chinese nation. Their inclusion as distinct pockets of culture within the nation as a whole is indicative of the new desire to portray China as a multiethnic nation. Unlike the 1904 Russian map, which needed to translate Tibetan terms into Chinese in an attempt to claim the region, the new identification of modern China as a nation of many peoples removed the necessity of ignoring local identities. The map is choosing to represent the new China as a place of many peoples united not by their ethnic homogeneity but showing ethnic difference as one of the unique features of the nation.

While the map differs from previous maps in its treatment of features like borders, cities, and ethnicity, it remains very much a geographical map with all the inflated claims to scientific accuracy and detail as those previously discussed. Equally prominent in this this map are environmental features such as the inclusion of every imaginable type of

water resource distinguished not only by type such as spring, lake, stream, or ice, but also the salinity and seasonal variations for each type. Like Stein, Hedin also includes topographical information such as which locations are desert, forest, cultivated, etc. Not only does this careful categorization represent good science, the amount of effort devoted not only to listing but differentiating to such a specific degree indicates the level of importance accredited to this type of information. For Hedin himself, exploring the terrain personally on the ground this knowledge would have proved immensely valuable, especially considering the arduous nature of trekking through a sparely populated and vegetated landscape. For the governments concerned with this information, both the Chinese and the U.S. Army Map Service who helped produce this map, such information could present a tactical advantage. The Nationalists and later the Communists themselves would have benefited greatly from not only a military campaign standpoint should it prove necessary (as it often did during the tumultuous process of trying to gain political authority on the frontier), but also would have proved useful for further developmental projects such as road or settlement building.

One distinction in how this map treats geography compared to the others is found in the map key where a small reliability index is included directly on the map. Different regions of the map are listed as “good,” “fair,” and “poor” in terms of the “accuracy” of the surveys. This is an important consideration for a map that is intended for a more applied purpose than simple illustration, or general travel. It allows room for the inclusion of further information and for the understanding that the map may not represent the landscape with total geographical accuracy. It also serves to emphasize the map as a

scientific one, open to new data, thus conversely reasserting the map's status as an accurate representation.

Finally, rather than presenting areas beyond the scope of the survey as blank or nonexistent, implying a lack of possession, those areas that the key is forced to list as not very reliable on the map are labelled as "unexplored" or "unsurveyed." Like we saw with the unsurveyed borders, listing something as "unsurveyed" still implies its existence and possession even if not specifically within the scope of the expedition. "Unexplored" serves a similar function, indicating inclusion despite the lack of personal experience on the part of the surveyors. While these areas are surprisingly still absent of much detail even as late as the map's 1950 final publication, they are still connected by areas with some known information and as much detail as possible is filled in instead of neglecting to draw the areas at all. These unexplored and unsurveyed expanses have by this time become pockets of relatively uncharted areas rather than complete cliffs of the unknown where knowledge simply drops off.

## Chinese Scientists

The ideology and technology of this type of mapping should not be viewed as strictly European, but as indicative of a sweeping worldwide trend specific to era rather than place. In her exquisite work on cartography and ethnography during Qing colonialism in southern China, Laura Hostetler demonstrates the technologies utilized by Europeans had long been available to the Qing, and during the nationalist era, this holds true as well.[46] Although this style of geographic mapping was pioneered by European

[46] Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*

scientists, it was quickly undertaken by their Chinese counterparts and utilized for political advantage by the Chinese Nationalist government. After Sven Hedin's expedition, the Nationalist government would no longer allow European scientists free reign of the countryside or the academic establishment. So although they are not part of the main scope of this argument, it should not be forgotten that Chinese scientists had always been influential in shaping national understanding, including the field of mapping. Mapping places and peoples held too much importance to delegate their study to those outside of China's own self-determinism or national control.

One Chinese scientist, Ding Wenjiang, in particular offers a clear example of China's academia utilizing modern mapping methods with dexterity for their own surveys. Ding had received his scientific training in Glasgow where he seems to have proved by all accounts to be something of a prodigy, fluent in at least four languages with an excellent Chinese classical education and degrees in geology and zoology.[47] When Ding collaborated with Swedish scientist Johan Andersson, it was Ding who led the research and who employed Andersson. This type of professional relationship, with a European in the subordinate scientific position, represents a rarely considered situation in the immediate postimperial era cartography. While perhaps atypical, collaboration between scientists did occur and it helped to advance nation building techniques and ideologies within China.

To this end, the Nationalist government commissioned Ding to create a new map of the Republic of China according to these modern techniques, which he published in his

[47] Mangus Fiskesjo, "Science Across Borders," in *Explorers and Scientists in China's Borderlands 1880-1950*, ed. Denise Glover and Stevan Harrell (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011) 240-262

1933 work, *New Map of the Republic of China*[48] [Figure 5.2]. At the time of its publication the KMT had secured its position over most of the regional warlords and could be considered a true central government. However, it was not without opposition, with the Communists beginning the Long March this same year. Many areas listed on the map still remained outside of their effective control. Xinjiang, for instance, would rebel again in 1937, Manchuria remained the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo, Tibet continued to present problems, and Outer-Mongolia had become a Soviet satellite state in 1921. The Nationalists thus had the influence to create a state-sponsored map, as well as the motivation to utilize the talents of a Chinese scientist and nationalist like Ding, and the need to firmly defend their still not concrete claims against their adversaries.

Ding's map shares much in common with the previously discussed Russian map of Tibet due to their similar desire to promote Chinese interests on a global scale. Cities and provinces are clearly labelled, demonstrating occupation by a national population. Routes, especially railway lines, show interprovincial associations as well as technological achievement, firmly placing China as a modern nation. The map highlights the Chinese nature of the various territories through common language in the labels. Different, however, from previous charts is what this Chinese nature means. Whereas in the Russian drawn map, Tibetan towns labeled in Chinese seemed to indicate Chinese possession, Ding's map with its broader scope and equal portrayal seems instead to suggest that these regions are equal pieces of a larger entity. The map's territorial claims

[48] Wenjiang Ding, *New Map of the Republic of China* (Nanjing, 1933)

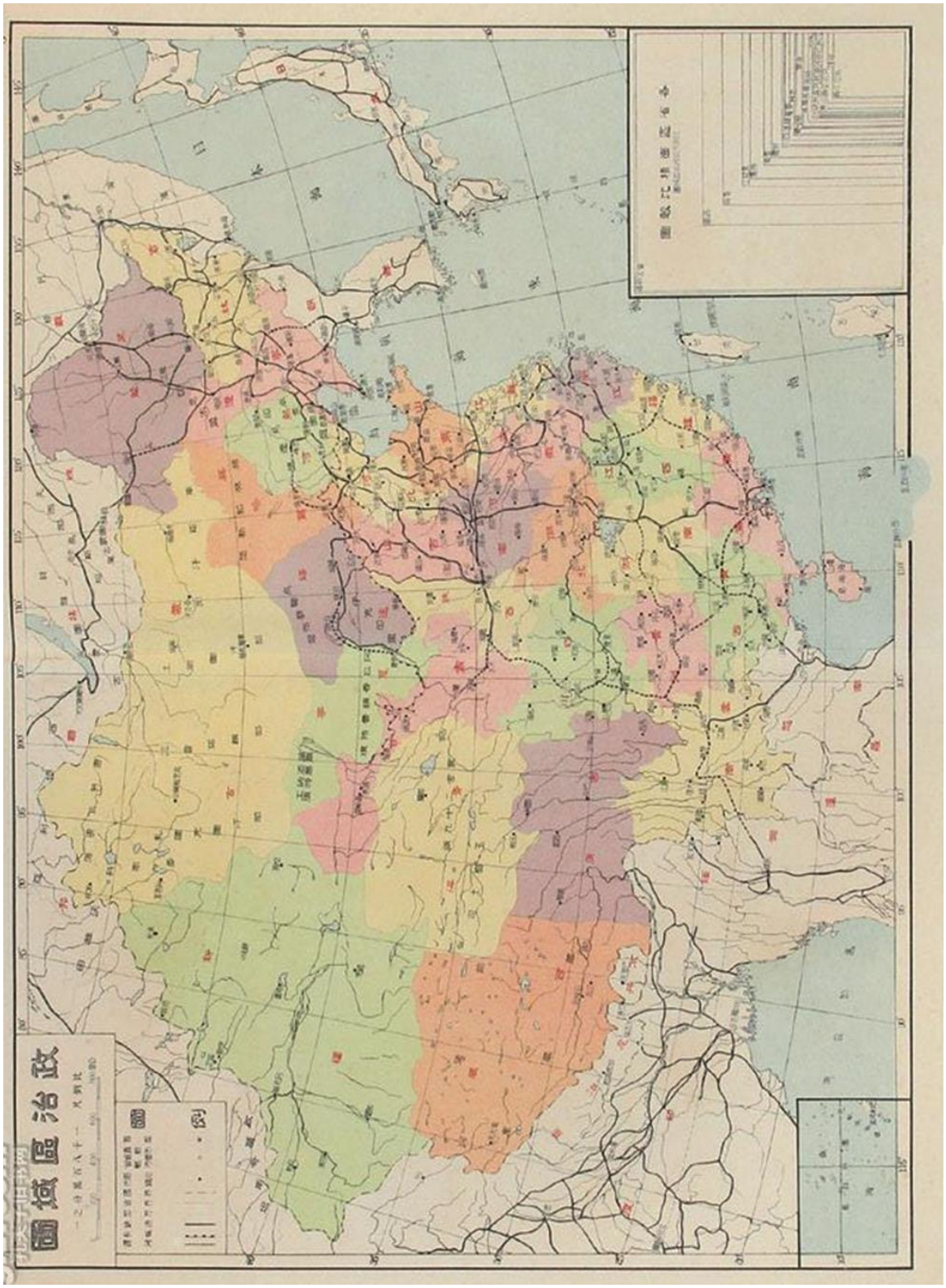


Figure 5.2: *New Map of the Republic of China* by Ding Wenjiang, 1933

are larger than those of the modern Chinese nation, most conspicuously with the inclusion of outer-Mongolia, which the Soviets took control of after the Qing collapse before it eventually became an independent nation in its own right. Also noticeably changed are the internal borders, however much of this map remains recognizable with modern maps of China. Perceptions about the nation had begun to solidify in terms of geography, but also ideology.

By commissioning Ding and scientists like him, the Nationalists formally embraced utilizing modern mapping techniques as a method of nation building. By taking charge of mapping expeditions, the young government gained the ability to represent China on their own terms, visibly delineating their possessions in relation to other nations and creating an iconic emblem of the state for the purposes of internal unity. Through the adoption of modern technologies and philosophies the Republic hoped to move beyond this tumultuous postimperial period as a member of an international community, and its promises of equal and defined sovereignty, based on the global political system of Nationalism.

# CONCLUSION

In this early formative period of China's awakening national consciousness, constructions of space and nationality differed greatly with little guarantee of any eventual consensus. The mapping and ethnic projects of European explorers contain ample evidence of this diversity of conceptualizations of the Chinese nation. This disunity in the maps includes the explorers' lack of observed political cohesion, as well as a noticeable disregard for China's claims to sovereignty in the territories of the former Qing, and finally in the diversity of voices present in each. Eventually, the Kuomintang Nationalists gained enough authority to begin shaping a new view of China as one that included the non-Han processions of the Qing Empire and deliberately embraced their legacy of a multiethnic state, adapted for nationalist purposes. The Nationalist government then laid a framework for the modern Chinese nation and articulated their claims within the newly emerging global system using modern nationalist techniques. However, with their eventual defeat, the implementation and perfection of these ideas would fall to the Communist government on the mainland.

By the time Sven Hedin concluded his Sino-Swedish expedition in 1935, the Communist and the Nationalists had already been engaged in hostilities for several years over the direction of the country. Although both seemed to hold a shared outline of China as a multiethnic nation with Qing era borders, neither group had firm control of the

frontier.[49] Shortly afterwards in 1937, the Japanese would invade in the second Sino-Japanese war and, despite their differences, would force the two factions to enter into an uneasy agreement to focus on fighting the Japanese. This tense alliance would break down in 1940, a full five years before Japan's eventual surrender. Immediately following the war's conclusion, the civil war continued in earnest, with the KMT government fleeing to their last stronghold in Taiwan, where they remain to this day, while the Communists assumed authority over the rest of the nation.

Interestingly, during the Sino-Japanese war, the Japanese attempted to reach out to ethnic minorities within China, but the overwhelming majority rejected Japanese interference, instead working themselves to repel Japanese forces.[50] It is unclear from my sources whether this rejection stemmed from a sense of common unity with China as a nation, or from their own sense of independence unfavorable to outside interference. In many ways, Japan's cries of a pan-Asian movement led by themselves resembles China's cries for a multiethnic national movement. Without claiming any special knowledge of Japanese nation building strategies, perhaps the difference in their eventual receptions by minority populations lies with notions of place within a nation. While Japan promised a place within a Japanese Empire, China promised a place within a Chinese Nation and as such, a more equal footing with other members.

Part of the reason for the Communist Party's eventual military victory over the Nationalists comes from the efforts of Mao Zedong during the Long March to build ties to rural populations. Many of the areas where the Communists could avoid the Nationalist forces during the March were regions outside of their firm control, usually

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[49] Rossabi, *Governing China's Multiethnic Frontiers*
[50] Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*

minority regions. The Communists gained a unique firsthand insight into minority concerns, and would later seek to represent these concerns in new ways upon the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Equally as important, Mao Zedong pushed for unity based on new constructs of a peasant-led shared national culture. The criteria for belonging to the Chinese nation was not one of ethnicity or language, but rather more clearly articulated as being united in a common purpose and imagined identity moving into the future.

In some ways, Mao's ideas of a shared national destiny bear similarity to those of the Nationalists, but these ideas would be expounded upon once the Communists took power. Most noticeably, the Communist interpretation of China as a multiethnic nation expanded after 1949. As briefly mentioned earlier, the first Communist census unleashed a baffling array of ethnic difference in their attempts to allow self-identification in order to fairly represent all groups. The result of this experiment in social difference led to the unruly declaration of thousands of ethnic groups, at least several with only one member. In a frantic attempt to fulfill their promises to give everyone a seat at the table, the Communist government had to quickly decide who exactly was *everyone*. So with the help of European studies on ethnic groups in China, the government accepted linguistic evidence for determining ethnicity and expanded the five groups recognized under the Nationalists to the fifty-six officially recognized groups we see in China today.[51]

The Chinese Communist Party-led People's Republic of China expanded not only the definition Chinese ethnicity, but also worked to clarify China's geographic makeup. As the Communists became established, they gained the ability to enforce many of the

[51] Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation*

territorial claims originally made by the Nationalists. For instance, the Communists eventually had the military strength to put down rebellions on the frontier and to protect their claims internationally, strengthened further by their often tenuous alliance with the USSR. With the PRC's governmental authority significantly secure, they could turn their attention to strengthening the nation's internal unity. In order to solidify national ties, to promote unity, and prevent secession between the diverse territories, the government undertook a strategy of redrawing internal geographical political classifications.

It should be noted that by the time the Communists took power in 1949, several territories had already broken away from the central state, either declaring independence outright or remaining outside of central influence. Thus, the problem facing the would-be leaders of a united China was not merely one of preventing secession, or even to halt its spread, but to actually reverse its effects. To do so, PRC officials perused four distinct strategies depending on the groups occupying the area, which judging from post-1928 maps I will categorize as: autonomy, incorporation, combination, and division. Autonomy and incorporation refer to that system of governance under which a territory came to be mapped, while combination and division refer more specifically to the border drawing process.

For those areas that presented the greatest danger of breaking away, the Communists eventually offered the promise of autonomous regions.[52] Five such autonomous regions exist today on the provincial level, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Tibet, Ningxia, and Guangxi. Smaller autonomous areas also exist within the regular provinces

[52] Autonomous regions were declared at different times, Inner Mongolia, for instance, in 1947 under the Nationalists and Xinjiang in 1955 under the Communists. These areas were all, however, later claimed by Communist forces.

on a town and city level. Regardless of the size, these tended to be areas with heavy concentrations of minority groups, particularly groups who feared the practical and political implications of joining a multiethnic state where the majority made up roughly 90% of the population. This problem held even greater salience in frontier regions where increased Han migration over the years had led to sometimes bloody ethnic conflicts. In these instances, autonomous regions offered a compromise designed to help protect minority interests within the state as a whole. Extensive debate surrounds how effective these regions are at defending minority interests today. The continued existence of independence movements is troublesome to the central government, but the fact that none have actually seceded seems to indicate autonomous regions helped achieve their goal.

Besides the creation of autonomous regions, the Communist state took different steps in less volatile regions. Outright incorporation into the provincial system sometimes occurred in areas that already seemed sufficiently tied to the nation, and would have been seen as the ideal from the perspective of the government. Full incorporation effectively tied entire segments of the frontier into the nation. A notable example of this is the province of Gansu. Gansu was in itself a multiethnic space at the crossroads of different populations, including Han, Hui, and Tibetan. For this reason, it would not have made sense to grant autonomous status for one minority group within a varied population.

Geographical considerations were not limited to either distinguishing between autonomy and incorporation. Instead, the government often fine-tuned the map of China through boundary drawing between provinces and regions themselves. It often benefited the government to demarcate internal boundaries in an effort to promote multiethnic unity. In these instances, two major trends can be identified, dividing similar groups and

uniting dissimilar groups. In some situations, the government came to split areas with large groups of minorities, as when they portioned off parts Tibet into neighboring Qinghai and Sichuan provinces. By dividing an already difficult to incorporate group into different political boundaries, it made Tibet itself more manageable. Conversely, by grouping smaller groups together into larger units, as occurred in Yunnan, the state could help create a sense of cohesion among isolated groups who might not have otherwise chosen to identify with the Chinese nation. In the case of Yunnan, because the Communists chose to identify ethnicity in terms of linguistic similarity, they could push to emphasize linguistic connections between groups that previously had no shared sense of history or cultural identity for the purpose of unity (and simplicity).

These examples of the nation-building techniques utilized by the Communist government serve to illustrate the eventual trajectory of notions of nationalism developed by the early Nationalist government. In spite of the Nationalist, and then later the Communist, government's best efforts to create a united nation through mapping and an ideology of multiethnicity, challenges continue to arise. In order to understand the various protest and independence movements still fermenting even today in areas like Xinjiang or Tibet, it is important to remember that the territory we view as China today only became a single nation due to intense power struggles and carefully orchestrated identity formation. While the unification of these diverse territories had some precedent under the Qing, it had always operated under a system of dual sovereignty that allowed for a great deal of local autonomy and never as part and parcel of a Chinese-led state. Thus, we cannot take the incorporation of these places and peoples for granted and instead must view them as constructs of an imagined national identity.

The maps produced by European explorers, then, conclusively demonstrate that the transition from empire to nation was a vibrant and collaborative process of many groups, rather than an inevitable or somehow natural progression. To view China's creation as anything but dynamic would ignore the process by which it came to be and risk misinterpreting its modern identity. The sources discussed have particular value in their relation to the creation of China as a nation in an international context. Although they emphasize Western perspectives, they are in fact a collage of many voices both local, national, imperial, and all of them intensely individual. China as a nation attempted to embrace many of these voices in its reinterpretation of itself as a multiethnic state. Just as these voices shaped the production of these maps, they shaped the land and identity of the nation the maps came to depict.

# APPENDIX

## MAPPING METHODOLOGY

Measuring longitude and latitude was one of the principle measurements surveyors had to make. Of the two, latitude is generally considered the simpler measurement to make. In order to measure latitude manually, you must measure the angle of a fixed point in relation to the horizon, either the sun or the North Star. The sun is usually the less practical option, as measurements can only be taken at precisely noon in order to create a ninety degree angle with the equator, determining exactly when the sun is at its zenith can be difficult, and it provides only a small window of opportunity for measurements. Furthermore, due to the axis of the earth's rotation, the sun will only be at precisely ninety degrees during the spring and autumn equinoxes, requiring the use of additional calculations or a calculation table to adjust for the tilt. Failure to do so can create an error of up to approximately 1,600 miles.[53] Polaris, then, is the more practical option as it does not need to be adjusted seasonally and was likely the method used by these explorers. However, this means that they could only take calculations at night, after long days of surveying, and of course, this method only works in the northern hemisphere.

[53] Based on the Earth's approximate circumference of 25,000 miles divided into 360˚, which in fact vary in distance based on distance from the equator, multiplied by the axis of the Earth's tilt of 23.5˚.

Measuring longitude was a more complicated endeavor. European scientists only developed an accurate method for doing so in 1735 with the invention of the chronometer.[54] Measuring longitude requires determining the difference in time between the arbitrary zero of the Prime Meridian and the location in question. Every four minutes of difference equates to one degree [24 hrs/360˚]. Chronometers were essentially very precise clocks set to Prime Meridian time for comparison. In order to determine local time accurately, surveyors would need to gauge local noon, or measure the angular change in specific stars across the night sky. By finding the latitude and longitude of these points, cartographers could then plot the points and use simple trigonometry to calculate the distance between them. Afterward determining their location on the globe, plane table surveying provided a means of filling in the physical features of the landscape itself. This surveying technique requires a completely level surface, usually resting on a tripod, and a scoping device called an alidade is then used to determine the angle between the viewer's position and a distant point. In order to do so, a third point must be physically measured in order to create a triangle with one known distance and two known angles (one typically being 90˚). Individual explorers sometimes used different methods of determining their known length, which ideally was longer to more accurately gauge longer distances, such as simple rulers, rope, or even chains. So precise were the explorers that some are known to take into account the temperature during measurements to attempt to adjust for any thermal expansion of the chain.

[54] http://lewis-clark.org/content/content-article.asp?ArticleID=1298

Large changes in elevation are often measured with a barometer, and because barometers are sensitive to pressure and temperature, you must measure the difference in reading between two points on a day with relatively stable weather as quickly as possible. Mercury barometers are less sensitive to weather, but would have been extremely cumbersome and fragile to utilize on a long expedition. The difficulty in obtaining all these precise observations for altitude, natural features, and position aside, other factors could also cause measurement errors. Nearly one hundred years earlier, the Lewis and Clark expedition in the United States had fallen victim to mistakes based on such small considerations as failing to account for atmospheric refraction, miscalculating the exact center of astronomical features used, and not correcting for parallax, or "the fact that navigational tables are…calculated form the earth's center…" not from the earth's surface.[55]

[55] http://lewis-clark.org/content/content-article.asp?ArticleID=1297

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