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978-1-107-06884-1 - Across Forest, Steppe, and Mountain: Environment, Identity, and Empire in Qing China's Borderlands

David A. Bello

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Across Forest, Steppe, and Mountain

In this book, David A. Bello offers a new and radical interpretation of how China's last dynasty, the Qing (1644–1912), relied on the inter-relationship between ecology and ethnicity to incorporate the country's far-flung borderlands into the dynasty's expanding empire. The dynasty tried to manage the sustainable survival and compatibility of discrete borderland ethnic regimes in Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, and Yunnan integrated within a "Han Chinese" imperial political order. This unprecedented imperial unification resulted in the great human and ecological diversity that exists today. Using natural science literature in conjunction with underexploited and new sources in the Manchu language, Bello demonstrates how Qing expansion and consolidation of empire was dependent on a precise and intense manipulation of regional environmental relationships.

David A. Bello is an associate professor of East Asian History at Washington and Lee University.

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Washington and Lee University



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The multicultural Qing is reconsidered in “multi-ecological” terms of three borderland case studies from northeastern Manchuria, south-central Inner Mongolia, and southwestern Yunnan. Human pursuit of game, tending of livestock, and susceptibility to disease vectors required imperial adaptation beyond the cultural constructs of banners or chieftainships in order to maintain a “sustainable Qing periphery” based on these environmental relations between people and animals. The resulting borderland spaces are, therefore, not simply contrivances of more anthropocentric administrative fiat, but environmental interdependencies constructed through more “organic” and conditional relations of imperial foraging, imperial pastoralism, and imperial indigenism.

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*To the memory of my father, Anthony E. Bello
and to my mother, Dorothy J. Bello*

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Just as it is certain that one leaf is never totally the same as another, so it is certain that the concept “leaf” is formed by arbitrarily discarding these individual differences and by forgetting the distinguishing aspects.

Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense”

We select from out of the presented only the aspects of our interest and neglect the rest; to the rest that is neglected we become first indifferent and then blind; in our blindness, we claim completeness for the aspects that we have selected. We seize them as absolute, we cling to them as the complete truth, we become dogmatic.

K. Venkata Ramanan, *Nāgārjuna's Philosophy*

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Notes on Translation and Transliteration

Italicized foreign words in the main text are Chinese pinyin romanizations unless otherwise identified. In general, with some exceptions, Manchu (“Ma”) words are romanized according to Jerry Norman’s transcription system; Mongol (“Mo”) terms have been romanized according to the transcription notes in Atwood, *Young Mongols and Vigilantes*, xv–xvii; Russian (“Ru”) is romanized in accordance with the transliteration notes in *Russia’s Conquest of Siberia*, lxxi–ii.

I have generally followed Janhunen, *Manchuria: An Ethnic History*, for transliteration and correlation of regional indigenous ethnonyms, an inexact science at best (125–28). My own modifications have been made mainly to distinguish between subgroups of the modern Ewenki by adding a hyphenated prefix of the conventional Qing term, e.g., “Solon-Ewenki” and “Kiler-Ewenki.” The conventional Qing terms of Hejen and Fiyaka (*He-zhe* and *Fei-ya-ka*, respectively, in Chinese) have been retained because it is difficult to directly link these terms to either of their putative modern ethnic equivalents, the Ghilyak and the Nanai.

Inner Asian, primarily Manchu, words for which I have found only Chinese versions have been rendered in *pinyin* linked by hyphens. This procedure is also used to signify conventional sinicized versions of these words (e.g., the Chinese Mu-lan for the Manchu Muran). Inner Asian toponyms have generally been transliterated in Manchu or Mongol, as appropriate, with some exceptions. Alternate transliterations of various Manchu, Chinese, and Mongol terms can be found in the index.

Aimag and *aiman* refer to Mongol and Manchu (including all indigenous northeastern peoples) “tribes,” respectively. Translations from the Chinese in all cases retain “tribe” for *buluo* and “barbarian” or “tribal”

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for *yi*. When discussing Uliastai groups before their incorporation into the Qing banner systems, I use *otog*. I use “banner” for all incorporated Mongol groups. Some justification for these usages from archival sources can be found in NFY, KX 2-1676: 276; MWLF, QL 1/9/26 [03-0173-1192-018.1], QL 12/7/19 [03-0173-1078-003], QL 1/9/26 [03-0173-1192-018.1], QL 12/7/19 [03-0173-1078-003], QL 23/12/13 [03-0177-1734-007].

Taxonomic nomenclature for various species mentioned in premodern documents is problematic, particularly in Chinese. *Dongzhu*, for example, can refer to pearls from one or more of several mussel species. *Diao* can refer to the marten genus or to its species category of *Martes zibellina* (i.e., sable). The association of *Panax ginseng* with *rensheng* is also imprecise. With a few exceptions, I have provided this nomenclature in the index only for select entries to provide limited clarification of vague, but important, forage terms.

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I am deeply gratified that the editors of this series, John McNeill and Edmund P. Russell, along with Deborah Gershenowitz and her staff, quickly granted this book a very welcome and distinctive publishing niche. Easy access to material resources was provided by, first and

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