An Examination of Manchu Sinification as Reflected in the Central Government of the Early Ch'ing Period

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Of the non-Chinese peoples who have entered and occupied the China proper during the course of Chinese history, the Manchus are often considered to have become the most thoroughly and obviously sinified, particularly in their imitation of the central government system. A scholar of an earlier generation in China has stated that when the Manchus first entered China, "in all official positions they followed the Ming administrative system. Any small additions or deletions at this time were mainly the result of differences in the Manchus and Han Chinese people. Consequently, minor changes were merely to facilitate the rulers."[1] This opinion is basically supportable. However, the establishment of the central government offices in the early Ch'ing period does not "completely imitate the Ming system" as it appears on the surface. Not only did the Manchus make changes, but they also had a standard and a purpose for sinification. They did not completely and blindly accept the traditional Chinese system in its entirety. From the specific examples given below, we can see the conditions of that time and the attitude of the Manchus themselves towards sinification.

First, the establishment of the *Liu-pu* (六部) or Six Boards: When *Nurhaci* established the Later Chin (後金) empire, in addition to such general military leaders as the noble rulers of the Eight Banners, he especially appointed five high ranking ministers and subordinate officials (in Manchu language called *Jargūci),* altogther ten in number, to assist in the management

1. Hiao I-shan 蕭一山, *Ch'ing-tai t'ung-shih* 清代通史 (*A general history of the Ch'ing dynasty*), Vol. 1, p.50, rev. ed. Taipei, 1951.

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of state affairs.[2] The final decision in government affairs, besides resting with the great Khan *Nurhaci,* rested with the various noble princes (*beile* in Manchu). In 1622, *Nurhaci* ordered the eight princes as *Hošo beile* （和碩貝勒） to discuss together the governmemt of the state.[3] The next year, he again set up eight great officials as assistants and used them to examin into whether or not the eight *Hošo beile* were just and fair.[4] He also commanded them to evaluate successes and failures in state affairs as well as to deliberate concerning military matters. In 1626, *Nurhaci* passed away from illness, and his son *Hong Taiji* (or *Abahai*) succeeded him as emperor. One month after *Hong Taiji* ascended the throne, he first ordered the eight great ministers who were in charge of banner affairs to participate in discussing governmental matters. This was the first step in diminishing the great power of the *beile.* [5] In 1631, the emperor issued an edict following the Ming Dynasty system. He established the Six Boards, and each Board still had a *beile* to manage Board affairs, each with several Ch'eng-cheng （承政） and ts'an cheng （參政） to assist them.[6] Later in 1644, the Manchus entered China proper, and the organization of the central government was altered greatly. The management of Board affairs by *beile* was stopped, Ch'eng-cheng were changed into Ministers （shang-shu 尚書） and ts'an-cheng became Vice-Ministers （shih-lang 侍郎）. Manchus and Chinese were appointed as Ministers without a fixed quota. For the most part, the Vice-Ministers were appointed with one Manchu and one Chinese.[7]

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2. *Ta-Ch'ing Tai-tsu kao-hung-ti shih-lu* （大清太祖高皇帝實錄，*Veritable records of Nurhaci*), 4:21a, Tokyo, 1937.
3. Ibid., 8:16a.
4. Ibid., 8:18a.
5. *Hong Taiji*（皇太極） is commonly known in Western literature as *Abahai.* Because the origin of the name *Abahai* is unclear, I prefer to refer to him by the name *Hong Taiji,* which appears in the old Manchu documents, In this article, I have romanized Manchu words according to the P. G. Von Möllindorff system. Concerning the eight ministers joined and discussed governmental matters, please see Chiang Liangchi's Tung-hwa-lu（蔣良騏，東華錄）, p.17, Peking, 1980.
6. *Ta-Ch'ing Tai-tsung wen-huang-ti shih-lu* （大清太宗文皇帝實錄），9:11-12.
7. *Ta-Ch'ing hui-tien shih-li*（大清會典事例，*Precedents and edicts pertaining to the collected statutes of the Ch'ing dynasty)*, 19:11b; 15b; 18b; 21b; and 20:3a; 6b. (Taiwan rep. ed., 1963).

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From the brief history of the establishment of the Six Boards given above, we can see that in the early Ch'ing, they did indeed imitate the Chinese system in setting up offices for Six Boards of the Civil Office, Rites, Revenue, War, Punishments and Works. However, from 1631, the Manchus first started to deviate from their policy of following the Ming system in all things, because at the top of each Board there was a *beile* to manage Board affairs, and the official titles Minister (shang-shu) and Vice-Minister (shih-lang) did not continue. At the same time, officials in charge were Manchus, Mongols and Chinese, appointed side-by-side, so that it would be inevitable for them to contain one another's authority. Even though the Manchus entered China proper in 1644 and dispensed with *beile* control of Board affairs, as well as changing Ch'eng-cheng and ts'an-cheng into Ministers nad Vice-Ministers, all on the surface completely imitating the Ming system, they nevertheless appointed Manchu and Chinese officials side-by-side, an act assuredly not reflecting sinification. And also in 1651, once again *beile* were put concurrently in charge of Board duties. This was stopped once again in the following year 1652.[8] But in the first year of Yung-cheng reign (1723) still once more Imperial Princes and members of the Grand Secretariat were concurrently put in charge of Board affairs. These all were appointed by the Emperor, and this too was quite different from the Six Boards system of the Han Chinese. In summary, the Manchu attitude towards sinification indicates that they did not necessarily accept the Han Chinese system in its entirety. The organization of the Six Boards is an example of this.

Second, the Grand Secretariat（nei-ko 內閣）and the Hanlin（翰林）Academy: In 1629, *Hong Taiji* ordered the scholars to divide into two sections and work, respectively, on the translation of Chinese books and on the keeping records of the Manchu state affairs, in terms of both its achievements and its mistakes. The government institution where these scholars served was called the Literary Hall（Wen-Kuan 文館）.[9] After seven years, *Hong Taiji*

8. Ibid., 19:11-22 and 20:1-8.

9. *Ta-Ch'ing Tai-ts'ung Wen-huang-ti shih-lu,* 5:11b.

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changed the Later Chin Empire into the Great Ch'ing Empire. His reign title was also changed from T'ien-tsung （天聰）to Ch'ung-te （崇德）. In accord with the vast scale of the Great Ch'ing Empire, the literary institute expanded its structure and also changed its name to Nei san-yüan （内三院, Three Inner Courts）: the Inner Court of Historiography（Nei kuo-shih-yüan, 内國史院）, the Inner Court of Secretariat（Nei Pi-shu Yüan, 内秘書院）, and the Inner Court of Literature（Nei Hung-wen yüan, 内弘文院）.[10] This change in organization not only increased the scope of this body's official responsibility, but at the same time also enhanced the substance of the Grand Secretariat and the Hanlin Academy.

After entering China proper in the first year of Shun-chih（順治）reign (1644), there was no lack of officials from the Ming dynasty who had surrendered to the Ch'ing. Moreover, the Grand Secretaries, from the government established previously in Manchuria, follow Prince Regent *Dorgon* and the Emperor Shun-chih to Peking. Therefore, in 1644, the Three Inner Courts of the Ch'ing system and the Grand Secretariat and Hanlin Academy of the Ming system both existed side by side for a short period of time. In 1645, the government issued an order unifying these two institutions, but they still took the Three Inner Courts as the mainstay and only added the two characters Hanlin to the name of this institution, giving rise to the Nei Hanlin Kuo-shih yüan （内翰林國史院 the Inner Hanlin Court of Historiography）, the Nei Hanlin Pi-shu yüan （内翰林秘書院，the Inner Hanlin Court of Secretariat） and the Nei Hanlin Hung-wen yüan,（内翰林弘文院 the Inner Hanlin Court Literature).[11] In the same year, the Emperor issued an edict increasing the responsibilities of the Three Inner Courts.[12] And in 1651, Ch'ing court ordered again that the rank of the Grand Secretary and that of the Minister of each Board be the same, thus enhancing the position of the Three Inner Courts.[13] However, in 1658, the Emperor Shun-chih, in imitation of the offi-

10. *Ta-Ch'ing hui-tien shih-li,* 11:1a.

11. Ibid., 11:11b.

12. *Ta-Ch'ing Shih-tsu chang-huang-ti shih-lu*（大清世祖章皇帝實錄，*Veritable records of emperor Shun-chih*）, 15:7b.

13. Ibid., 56:17b.

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cial structure of the Ming Dynasty, changed the Nei san-yüan (the Three Inner Courts) into the Nei-ko (the Grand Secretariat) and Hanlin yüan (the Hanlin Academy). Obviously, this was a step towards sinification. Nevertheless, the Manchus deeply feared that the excessive abuse of Secretariat authority that occurred in the Ming time would appear again. Thus, they reduced the rank of the Grand Secretaries to the fifth rank and separately established the Hanlin Academy.[14] When viewed from the perspective of the governmental system, this seems to have been transforming the Ch'ing system into the Han Chinese system, but in reality it was only a reduction in the authority of the Grand Secretary of late Ming Period.

In 1662, after the Emperor Shun-chih died, the conservative faction of the Manchus seized political power. They took as pretext the fact that "the office of the Three Inner Courts was established in the time of the *Hong Taiji* time" to once again disband the Chinese Grand Secretariat and the Hanlin Academy and to reestablish the Three Inner Courts.[15] This was a reaction of the Manchus against sinification and also represented a revival of the Ch'ing Dynasty "ancestral system". However, in 1670, after the Emperor k'ang-hsi 康熙 overturned the conservative influence of the Manchus, he again issued an edict that the Three Inner Courts change into the Grand Secretariat and be organized according to the old precedent from the 15th year of the Shun-chih reign (1659).[16] As a result of this, the foundation of the Grand Secretariat was finally formally established and gradually developed. But in the time of Yung cheng （雍正）reign, they further established a Chün-chi ch'ü（軍機處, the Grand Council）, which absorbed the real authority of the Grand Secretariat so that the latter again became an organization with no real authority.

The historical facts narrated above concerning the repeated establishment and disbanding of the Grand Secretariat and the Hanlin Academy clearly reveal the competition between Manchu and Chinese culrtue at that time. In

14. Ibid., 119:6-7.

15. *Ta-Ch'ing shing-tsu Jen-huang-ti shih-lu*（大清聖祖仁皇帝實錄，*Veritable records of K'ang-hsi emperor*), 3:9ab.

16. Ibid., 33:27a.

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addition, it illustrates the fact that the Ch'ing emperor's attitude towards sinification was rational and had limitations.

Third, the Office of the Ch'i-chü-chu（起居注，Notes on the Emperors' Daily Activities）: Notes on the Emperors' Daily Activities is a special archival document that records the works and actions of the Emperor. This important record was kept by a close attendant to the Emperor and has an extremely long history in China. Some scholars maintain that the Recorder of the Left（tso-shih 左史）and the Recorder of the Right（yu-shih 右史）in the Chou（周）Dynasty are the forerunners of the Office of the Ch'i-chü-chu. However, it is certain that in the Eastern Han（漢）there were already those in the palace who made a record of the emperor's activities.[17] To establish an Office of the Ch'i-chü-chu in the Ch'ing Dynasty was, of course, the result of sinification. Nevertheless, several items, which are worthy of our careful scrutiny:

1). The Ch'ing Dynasty Office of the Ch'i-chü-chu was established late. It was about the tenth year of the K'and-hsi reign (1671) when it formally started its work and begun to record the activity of the emperor.[18] This Office was established in imitation of the Chinses system, but it was set up late and only after court officials had petitioned for this on several occasions.[19]

2). Normally speaking, the Office of the Ch'i-chü-chu daily made a direct historical record of the emperor's edicts, his words and actions, the memorials of the high ranking ministers, etc. Consequently, the emperor placed great emphasis upon this record. The responsible officials followed the emperor and wrote down his important activities. However, after the K'ang-hsi emperor established this central government office in about 1671, he did not treat this unit and its officials both Manchus and Chinese with consistent and uniform respect. For example, in 1675, he issued an order that the Diarists need not

17. For details, please see Chu Hsi-tsu's（朱希祖）"Han Tang Sung Chi-chü-chu kao"（漢唐宋起居注考，Notes on the Imperial Diary in the Han, Tang and Sung Dynasties), *Kuo-hsuen chi-Kan*（國學季刊）, Vol.2, No.4, Peking University.

18. *Ta-Ch'ing shengtsu Jin-huang-ti shih-lu,* 36:15b.

19. Ibid., 27:4a and *Ta-Ch'ing shih-tsu chang-huang-ti shih-lu,* 71:15b; and *Ta-Ch'ing hui-tien shih-li,* 1055: la.

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accompany him when he visits his grandmother.[20] Later he also felt that when discussing secret matters in the court the Diarists should not neccssarily attends.[21] In 1682, he not only gradually limited the activities and arthority of the Diarists, but he went one step further to express doubts about the moral character and loyalty of these officials. He also suggested that these officials were not making a record of matters according to actual facts but often had private inclinations to embellish, add or delete.[22] From this we can see that although the K'ang-hsi emperor depended upon the ancient Chinese system to establish an Office of the Ch'i-chü-chu, he did not have the respect for the arthority of this Office like most Chinese emperors.

3). The Office of the Ch'i-chü-chu was established in the early years of K'ang-hsi, but in the 57th year of his reign (1718), he issued an order to eliminate this central governmemt organ because the officials leaked secrets from imperial palace and, in recording affairs, "were negligent and perverse."[23] It was the first year of Yung-cheng (1723) before this office was re-established, it having been shut down for more than four years.[24]

In summary, the establishment of the Office of the Ch'i-chü-chu in the early Ch'ing indicates that the sinification of the Manchus was based on the attitude of "selecting its best and following it while changing what was not good." It can also be said that they used a realistic assessment of advantages and dis-advantages as their standard for evaluation.

Fourth, the Imperial Household Department: The Office of the Imperial Household (Nei-wu fu 內務府 in Chinese), during the Ch'ing Dynasty, was an institution that managed the affairs of the emperor's family such as clothing, food, travel, marriages, funerals, celebrations, sacrifices, etc. In the Ming Dynasty these affairs were all managed by the eunuch-controlled Thirteen Yamen. However the Ch'ing government was quite different from the Ming

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20. *Ta-Ch'ing sheng-tsu Jen-huang-ti shih-lu,* 54:13b.
21. Ibid., 84:15ab.
22. *Ta-Ch'ing hui-tien shih-li,* 1055:14-15.
23. *Ta-Ch'ing sheng-tsu jen-huang-ti shih-lu,* 271:23ab; 272:2; 278:9-15.
24. *Ta-Ch'ing hui-tien shih-li,* 1055:4-5.

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Dynasty in this regard and did not follow the Han Chinese system at all. When the Manchus first entered the Peking, they just established a new office called Nei-wu fu (Imperial Household) to manage the emperor's family.[25] In 1658. the Shun-chih emperor abolished the Imperial Household Department, and following the Chinese system of the Ming, he established the Thirteen Yamen of the Eunuchs. This can be considered a true expression of sinification. However, the arthority of the eunuchs was highly restricted if compared to that of the Ming eunuchs.[26] Moreover, three years later, When the Shun-chih emperor died (1661), the Thirteen Yamen of the Eunuchs was abolished again, and the Imperial Household Department was restored and contiuned to function.[27] After the K'ang-hsi reform of the government during the 8th and 9th years of his reign (1670-1671), the Manchus more-or-less followed the Chinese system, utilizing the old institutions of the Ming Dynasty. But with regard to the Office of the eunuchs, unlike the case of such institutions as the Grand Secretariat and the Hanlin Academy, they did not restore the Office of the Thirteen but continued the Imperial Household Department to serve the emperor's family until the end of the Ch'ing Dynasty. And again, the K'ang-hsi emperor also established the Ching-shih fang（敬事房）in 1677 to regulate the eunuchs, causing the eunuchs truly to become inferiors who were "to answer commands"[28] Later, Ch'ing Dynasty emperors were able to follow their ancestors' system so that the Ch'ing Dynasty did not have the problem of eunich tyranny disrupting national government affairs. Thus, the eunuchs offices of the Ming and Ch'ing were quite different, it can be said that in this regard, the Manchus did not imitate the Chinese system.

Besides this, the establishment of certain offices, such as the Censorate（Tu-ch'a yüan 都察院）and the Department of Colonial Affairs（Li-fan yüan 理藩院）, is worthy of discussion. From the point of view of the offi-

25. Ibid., 1170:1a.

26. *Ta-Ch'ing shih-tsu chang-huang-ti shih-lu*, 76:16-17 and 77:3-4.

27. *Ta-h'ing sheng-tsu jen-huang-ti shih-lu*, 1:21-22.

28. *Kung-chung tse-li*（宮中則例, *Precedents of Ch'ing Inner palace)*, Vol. 4. under the item of K'ang-hsi 16th year, 5th month.

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cials and the duties of the Censorate, both before and after the Manchus entered China proper, except for the fact that Manchus and Chinese were put in positions of authority side-by-side, a situation unlike that druing the Ming period, there is no doubt that this office possessed the nature of a traditional Censorate.[29] But the establishment of the Department of Colonial Affairs was entirely different from that of the Censorate. In the beginning, this office exclusively managed Mongolian affairs (and later both Mongolian and Tibetan affairs)[30] and was a new creation of the Manchus. Because the Department to Colonial Affairs managed non-Chinese affairs, the responsible officials were mostly native Manchus and Mongols. Therefore, among the offices established at the beginning of the Ch'ing, the Department of Colonial Affairs was one that had almost nothing to do with the Ming system.

If we summarize what has been described above, we can understand that the establishment of central government offices at the early years of the Ch'ing Dynasty was not like most scholars have imagined--i.e., that the Manchus completely duplicated the Ming system. From the perspective of the circumstances surrounding the establishment of such offices as the Six Boards and the Grand Secretariat, or the Office of the Imperial Diary and the Imperial Household Department, it can be demonstrated that the Manchus, when appropriating the institutions and organization of the Ming often had conditions or limitations and were not willing to accept the previous system in its entirety. They would undergo a period of rational consideration and would not simply follow what had been established before. Moreover, they selected and followed what they found good with a primary emphasis upon self-interest. This type of attitude towards sinification was already apparent in the early times. For example, not long after the Six Boards were established in 1631, the Chinese official of Later Chin Empire Ning Wan-wo（寧完我）, who recommended to *Hong Taiji* that the Ming system should not be com-

29. *Ta-Ch'ing hui-tien shih-li*, 998:1a and *Ch'in-ting ta-Ch'ing hui-tien* (Kuang-hsü edition), Vol. 69.

30. At fisrt, the Office for manging Mongolian affairs called "Mongolian Yamen", *Hong Taiji* later changed its title into "Li-fan yüan or the Department of Colonial Affairs", please see *Ta-Ching tai-tsung wen-huang-ti shih-lu*, 42:2a.

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pletely followed, said in a memorial:

> "…… Although the *Ta-Ming hui-tien* (大明會典, Collected statutes of the Ming Dynasty) is a good book, if our country acts today in complete accord with that book, it will not succeed. They ruled the empire for two or three hundred years, their borders stretched for thousands of miles, and their wealth was incalculable. But the Book, from the time of (their founder) Hung-wu (emperor) to the present, was revised on numerous occasions. Why, today, do we not dare to alter a single character? …… We should consider the fact that the rulers and ministers of a particular age must have a system for that particular age!"[31]

We can see that whether we are consideting the Six Boards or the *Collected statutes of the Ming Dynasty,* at that time it was thought that "to completely follow another's actions will not be successful", for each age ought to have its own creations and must respond to change. This is the basic attitude in the early Ch'ing to using the Chinese system, and it is also one of the important reasons for the success of the Manchus in ruling China.

Of particular note is the fact that while the Manchus understood that sinification could not be avoided, and while they accepted the spiritual essence of the system of the Han Chinese, they still paid attention to the preservation of their own culture. In 1634. *Hong Taiji* sent down an order changing all the Chinese names of officials and Chinese names of cities of Later Chin Empire into Manchu. At that time, he said:

> "I have heard that when a State receives the heavenly mandate to establish a government, each State has its own system and does not simply follow precedent. There never has been a case where a new group rejected its national language and turned away to learn the language of another State. Matters that do not neglect origins are able to continue a long time and last forever without being replaced. The various Mongolian princes rejected the Mongolian language, and, for their names,

31. Lo Chen-yü (羅振玉), compiled, *Shih-liao ts'ung-k'an ch'u-pien* (史料叢刊初編 *Miscellaneous Historical materials of early Ch'ing period*), Vol. 2, p.35, Peking, 1924.

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> they all followed the Lama system, bring their State's fortune to a decline into weakness. Now the names of officials in our State are all based on the Chinses language and follow its old titles. To know that something is good and be unable to follow it, or to know that something is bad and be unable to eliminate it, in both of these we have not yet secceeded. I have received the Imperial task, and how can I change my State's system and follow after that of another? Henceforth, the names of officials and the names of cities ought all to be changed into Manchu."[32]

This passage clearly indicates that the Manchus were determined to preserve their own culture. At the same time, they also considered that the Mongol's belief in Lamaism had caused the decline in their national fortune, and they believed "to know something is bad and be unable to eliminate it" is not right. In fact, just before and after entering China proper, the Manchus devotion to Lamaism also possessed a good deal of political significance. They believed in Lamaism, but they did not fawn upon Buddha; they treated the Lamas with courteous respect, but they did not enter the Lamism. Rather, they promoted the Yollow Lamaist religion as a means of controlling the Mongols, Therefore, the Manchus utilized the Lamaism of Tibet in early Ch'ing Period to rule the Lamaist world of Mongolia and Tibet. But they did not, like the Mongols, believe in Lamaism and thereby bring about the daily decline of their State.

In conclusion, during the early years of the Ch'ing Dynasty, the Manchus were willing to transform the government system and did not entirely rely upon the Ming Dynasty organization. Sinification was only one tactic for the longrange goal of controlling China. Just like using Lamaism to dominate the Mongols or believeing in Lamaism but not fawning Buddha, the Manchus were willing to use sinification for their own purposes and were quite unwilling to be completely assimilated by the Chinese.

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32. *Ta-Ch'ing Tai-tsung Wen-huang-ti shih-lu,* 18:12-14.

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