

Problems of Anti-“Alien” Racism among Conservative Chinese

Part Five: Root Causes of Han-Chinese Racism

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China historically has been a multi-ethnic and multi-racial nation with frequent outbreaks of social conflicts between the landowners and landless peasants, and between the Han-Chinese, the majority ethnic group, and other minority groups. The Han-Chinese ruling classes frequently used military conquests and coercive cultural assimilation to grow their powers and to ease up the internal tensions among different social classes of Han-Chinese; these tensions were caused by economic disparity between the haves and the have-nots and by shortage of fertile arable land, and especially by land annexation whereby the rich peasants took over the land that belonged to the poor peasants before, to become big landowners. The Han-Chinese today speak different regional “dialects” that are very different from each other, preventing any oral communications from taking place without using the writing of Chinese characters. These “dialects” are actually different languages and their differences are as large as those between French and Italian, or even between French and German; this is so because when the ancient Chinese mixed with ancient Mongolians in the north and Viet peoples in the south, due to military conquest or peaceful intermarriages, they mixed their languages as well; the “dialects” used in Southern China, except South Fukienese which is about 90% close to the ancient Han-Chinese spoken in the Luoyang region of Hebei Province today and spoken as the official language of the Han-Chinese feudal regimes up to the Tang Dynasty, are all mixtures of ancient Han-Chinese and ancient languages of the so-called One Hundred Viets tribal peoples (the descendants of these peoples, except Vietnamese who broke away from China, have become either ethnic minorities of China or Han-Chinese speaking “dialects” in Southern Provinces); the “dialect” spoken in China’s Northern Provinces today, or the “Northern Dialect” is a Mongolian-style Han-Chinese “dialect,” created by ancient Mongolians who conquered Northern Provinces and mixed with the local Han-Chinese residents. The Mandarin today, the official “Language of General Communication” (“Pu Tong Hua”), has been developed by the Manchus on the basis of the “Northern Dialect,” but integrating vocabulary and grammatical elements of the Manchu language, which like Japanese, Mongolian and Korean, belong to the Altaic-Tungusic linguistic group, and promoted by the Manchu-led Qing Government as “Guan Hua” (“Language of Government Officers”) for civil examinations; the word “Mandarin” literally means “Manchu” (“Man”) “Gentlemen” (“darin” or “great man,” a respectful title for

government officers). Thus, Han-Chinese are not a “pure race” in terms of genetics as claimed by Chinese ultra-nationalists and racists, but a mixed people between ancient Chinese, ancient Mongolians, ancient Viets and others; the only thing that culturally defines Han-Chinese is the written form of language, or the Chinese Characters. With the advance of modern biological and linguistics sciences, the myth of a “Pure Blood Han-Chinese Nation” as promoted by the Chinese nationalists has been dismissed, so is the notion of “Han-Chinese Cultural Supremacy.”

In the past three thousand years, before the start of Modern Times, Europe has experienced only a few dynastic regime changes but China has experienced over twenty-four, each one broke out within intervals of 100 to 300 years causing death tolls of between 50% to 75% of population. In Europe, although after the collapse of the ancient Greco-Roman Empire, political powers were segmented along localized ethnic lines, the Roman Catholic Church served as a highly centralized and stratified institution which, with its extensive networks of charity and social services, has effectively eased the social conflicts between the rich and the poor and between the small nation-states and thus promoted social stability and relative peace among Europeans. In China, such instrument of social harmony did not exist during the feudal times; thus, much more frequent outbreak of civil wars between rich and poor or between different political entities controlled by different ethnic groups. Historically, the ruling classes of the Han-Chinese majority ethnic groups frequently used military means to expand its control, pushing minority peoples to border areas. This is why most of minority ethnic or racial groups in China live in mountainous or less fertile land.

This process that was going on for more than 2,000 years in feudal China is quite similar to what happened in the United States in modern times when the White settlers seized a lot of land from the Native American tribes. The Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) has been notorious for its wholesale genocidal massacres of minority ethnic groups in China especially in Sichuan Province, and along its borders with the Mongolian and Manchu tribes; the Ming Dynasty was overthrown by peasant rebels who built two separate regimes; both continuing the same genocidal wars against the minority ethnic groups; these rebels, together with the remnants of the Ming Dynasty for a combined total of three million troupes, was later defeated by the Great Qing Government troupes of less than two hundred thousand fighters, headed by the Manchus tribesmen in coalition with Mongolian tribes and Han-Chinese dissidents; the Manchus were then a classless tribal people with a social structure quite similar to that of the Native-Americans but transitioning into a stratified feudal society; however they still preserve some cultural values of primitive tribes and they integrate these with Han-Chinese feudal system to make the later more humane and more oriented towards the protection of the rights and benefits of the poor at grass-roots, such as tax cut for the poor peasants and introduction of taxation on the traditional Han-Chinese ruling class, i.e., the literati-gentry landowners, confiscation of land and other properties that belonged to the Ming Imperial House (estimated by modern historians to be around 20% of all national wealth) and their redistribution among landless and property-less peasants, elimination of indentured servitude in public projects and replacing it

with paid labor, establishment of social welfare networks at grass-root level, and emancipation of the pariah groups; in fact, whenever a new Manchu Emperor was enthroned, he would start promoting some social reforms for the benefits of the lower classes or “proletariat” in the Chinese society. These enlightened social policies gained support from the lower classes of the Chinese society, and eliminated the chances of Han-Chinese elites, i.e., landowners and potential warlords, of using nationalistic propaganda to incite violent rebellions against the Manchu and Mongolian aristocratic “aliens.” When the Qing Imperial troupes marched all over China Proper, they put up posters with big characters to explain the social reforms of the new government in public places, causing rebel troupes to surrender; only two cities in China with heavy concentration of Ming Dynasty ruling elites, Yangzhou and Suzhou, offered strong resistance but the rebels have been crushed by Han-Chinese Eight Banners of the Qing Government, because these Han-Chinese were the most hateful of the oppression and exploitation of the Ming Dynasty elites. This process is called “Spreading Announcement to Pacify the Country” (传檄而定); and the contributions made by the Manchus to China’s social progress is now recognized by a lot of Chinese historians, both inside the official circles and at the grass-roots. The Manchu imperial rulers also used a combination of diplomacy through inter-ethnic marriage among Manchu and Mongolian aristocrats, and among Manchu aristocrats and Han-Chinese elites, of economic benefits, and of military actions to unify five previously separated entities, i.e. China Proper, Tibet, Mongolia, Manchuria, and Xinjiang (the “New Territory,” sometimes called Eastern Turkistan by Western mass media), into a centralized and stable Chinese Empire (the Qing Dynasty). For 300 years, the Manchu aristocrats, less than 1% of China’s population, used the method of “indirect rule” to govern China; they supervised local elites who governed their own local areas and made sure that all ethnic groups in China were treated on the basis of equality. This principle of “indirect rule” was later used by the British Empire to control its vast territory world-wide.

Manchu Government ended in 1912 due to armed rebellion by China’s newly emerging capitalist class headed by Sun Yat-sen’s Chinese Nationalist Party, with financial support from Japanese Amur River Society, which was intended to annex China’s Manchuria provinces and later was responsible for starting World War Two and banned by General Douglas MacArthur’s United States Military Occupation Authorities in Japan. The overthrow of the Great Qing Empire and its replacement by the Republic of China regime did not make China a true democracy according to Anglo-American standards; China was soon plunged into bloody civil wars among different factions of elites, mostly Han-Chinese ruling classes, which, unlike the Manchu aristocrats who carefully handled problems of economic and cultural conflicts among more than 50 different ethnic groups, various warlord regimes during the Republic of China era openly practiced the policy of Great Han-Chinese Chauvinism and forced assimilation of minority groups, causing the Outer Mongolians to break away from China with Soviet support in the 1920s, and the Uyghurs to almost succeed to breaking away from China in a bloody campaign of ethnic cleansing of Han-Chinese settlers in Xinjiang, also with support from the former Soviet Union.

To sum up, during most of the period of feudal rule, Han-Chinese ruling classes were dominant in China; and they promoted the concept of Han-Chinese cultural supremacy to justify military conquest and forced assimilation of other ethnic groups. As a tiny ethnic minority, the Manchu and Mongolian aristocrats, the principal founders of the Great Qing Empire, promoted the values of globalism and multi-culturalism. The Alliance of Chinese, predecessors of the Chinese Nationalist Party, made anti-Manchu propaganda to incite the majority Han-Chinese to rebel; and they restored traditional Han-Chinese racist mentality, which is the direct root cause for Han-Chinese racism at present time.