



Last Chapter Unfinished:
The Making of the Official *Qing History* and the Crisis of Traditional Chinese Historiography

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Abstract:

The making of the official *Qingshi* (Qing History) during the turbulent years of early Republican China epitomizes the flux and complexities of modern Chinese historiography in an age of transition. It had long been routine practice in China for a newly-established regime, in assuming the mantle of legitimate rule, to authorize an official history of the previous, overthrown dynasty. With twenty-four “orthodox histories” as preceding models and a more or less standardized layout, composing the twenty-fifth one should have been a feasible task. However, the making of the history of the last dynasty was besieged with unprecedented changes and challenges: universal kingship and the mandate of Heaven had collapsed, the continuity of cultural tradition was put into doubt, and, most important of all, the past was no longer fixable

in a static picture for the present to capture. In short, along with the fall of the last dynasty, the genre of “orthodox history” itself became history. The making of the *Qingshi* not only provided the final chapter of Chinese dynastic – orthodox – history but arguably the last chapter of traditional official historiography as well.

This paper delves into the making of the *Qing History* by the Bureau of Qing Historiography established in 1914, its rushed publication in 1928 under the title *Qingshi gao* (Draft Qing History), and its banning by the Nationalist government in 1930. Special attention is paid to how the leading compilers, many of whom deemed themselves Qing royalists, attempted to preserve or recapitulate a collective memory of Qing China and thus how their narrative was intertwined with their concern for political and cultural identity. As the Qing court had long established the Bureau of State Historiography and precompiled its own dynastic history, the compilers of the *Qingshi gao* were overwhelmed by the weighty legacies left by their Qing counterparts and were able neither to digest all the archives thoroughly nor to reexamine their preprogrammed memories from different perspectives. The Republican memory of the Qing, as exemplified by the final version of the *Qingshi gao*, was conditioned by the imperial memories already established by the Qing.

The making of the last dynastic history remains an unfinished enterprise. One issue is certain: the *Qingshi gao* published in 1928 will never be officially authorized as one of the “orthodox histories,” if only because there is no longer any agency capable of this act. On the other hand, it is also irreplaceable, for its narratives, its arrangement of themes, and its choice of personalities represent to a certain extent a collective effort by a specific group of intellectuals in the dynasty-republic transition period. The *Qingshi gao* serves as an ideal lens through which we can examine the perspective of these compilers. Not only will the *Qingshi gao* live forever, but also Qing history as such will forever remain in draft. Perhaps efforts to compile an “ideal” complete Qing History will never cease, but they are unlikely to be enshrined as the conclusive interpretation of Qing History. Indeed, the earlier Twenty-four Histories also have become incomplete drafts open to further revision.

From the perspective of modern historiography, all of the previous Twenty-five orthodox histories should be redefined as the Twenty-five history *Drafts*, tentative accounts aiding but not defining our understanding of the

past. The Twenty-five Histories can thus be treated as partial collections of historical resources, rather than cherished as (re-)presentation of historical facts. They are deemed either as “raw” or “cooked” materials, which need further digestion. Accordingly, the *Qingshi gao* belongs in their company and is a fitting orthodox history after all, with or without any arbitrary official authorization. Any history is but a draft to approach the past.

永遠的清史稿：
官方記憶的斷續與傳統史學的危機

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摘要：

1928年，纂修歷十四載的《清史稿》匆匆付梓，不僅為更迭環復的天朝秩序寫下結語，也為紀傳體例的傳統官方史學劃上句點。然而這段在時局動盪中草就的結語似乎還留著待續的伏筆，句點之後仍有許多耐人推敲的問號。

按照舊代成例，新朝為前代修史，既有總結過去、通古鑒今的意義，也象徵承繼正統的權力宣示。雖然民初清史館編修《清史》，前有歷代官史的體例足供參考，兼且有清一代官方記錄的保存較前代更為多樣全面，但與過去截然不同是：當更迭循環的天朝秩序崩解之後，究竟民國新政府是應該依循傳統的紀傳體裁，為中國最後一個朝代作官方歷史定位？還是應該擺脫舊體例的束縛，以嶄新的視界與格局來定位過去？隨著最後一個皇朝的解體，預定作為中國最後一部朝代「正史」的

《清史》，注定無緣經由官方授權的方式成為「欽定」的「監本」。然而官修清史之所以持續至今將近一個世紀的難產，恐怕不僅受制於政治與世局的外緣因素，更與現代史家在重現歷史時所面對的挑戰息息相關。

本文試圖針對民國撰修《清史》，從開館、編纂、刊行、遭禁以至擬議重修過程中的學術動態與政治牽連，進行系統的考察，並特別將之放在近代中國史學發展的脈絡上加以衡量。如果按照傳統的界定，「正史」可視為當朝對前代的一種「官方記憶」，那麼誰是「官方」？又該如何「記憶」？便成為攸關定本《清史》的兩項根本課題。本文關注的焦點並不在於評斷《清史稿》的得失功過，而是藉由《清史稿》製作與刊行過程中衍生的各項課題，探討位於政治與文化交集裡的傳統官方歷史書寫所面臨的現代困境。雖然民元以降政局世事的擾攘與 1949 年後兩岸分治的現實，或許是左右官本清史成書定案的外緣因素，然而更嚴峻的危機，恐怕是隨著歷史材料定義的擴大、歷史事實衡量的改變、與歷史書寫價值的重估，對整個傳統史學所造成的衝擊。

儘管缺弊叢生的《清史稿》不可能會真除為正本的《清史》，但是作為民初一群特定知識份子所編纂的歷史作品，《清史稿》將永遠不會被取代，因為它提供了理解民初史學發展一個側面的重要線索。過去依傍於政權認證的「正史」，其正統地位其實並不如想像的穩固。而隨著傳統「正史」迷思的解構，從現代史學的眼光看來，以前經由皇權欽定的「二十四史」，終究不過是「二十四史稿」。職是之故，未來即使有比《清史稿》更完備的清史編纂成書，也只是提供另一種臨摹清朝歷史的稿本。換言之，「過去」已不再是一成不變的靜態圖像，可以由任何權威拍板定案；歷史永遠是一部未完成的稿本。

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“The common rule since *antiquity* is that the fallen dynasty is survived by its history.”

Liu Bingzhong 劉秉忠 of the Yuan, proposing the official compilation of the *History of Jin Dynasty* (1115-1234)

The last dynasty of imperial China was overthrown nearly a century ago, yet its memories continue to haunt modern China. When the *Qingshi gao* 清史稿 [Draft Qing History; hereafter *QSG*] was first rushed into publication in 1928, it was intended, as its title indicates, to serve as a tentative draft for future revision and extension in the expectation that it would eventually be finalized as the official *Qing History*, an authorized twenty-fifth “orthodox history” (*zhengshi* 正史) of imperial China. Now three quarters of a century have passed, but still no standard version of the *Qing History* has been written to replace the *QSG*. As a draft of a would-be “orthodox” version of the Qing history, the *QSG* continues to circulate today as the last chapter of the “series” of Chinese dynastic histories. Its admitted makeshift nature seems to be frozen in the flow of time forever. One might say that the official memory of the last Chinese dynasty has yet to be made. Or is its history destined to be unfinished forever?

It was long routine practice in imperial China for a newly established regime, in assuming the mantle of legitimate rule, to authorize the official history of the dynasty it had overthrown. With twenty-four orthodox histories as preceding models and the layout of the “orthodox history” more or less fixed, usually comprising of Imperial Annals, Treatises, Chronological Tables, and Biographies of Personalities, composing the twenty-fifth history should have been feasible. However, the making of the history of the Qing dynasty was confronted with unprecedented changes and challenges: the universal kingship and the Mandate of Heaven had collapsed, the continuity of the cultural tradition was in crisis, and, most important of all, the relevance of the past to the present had become trivialized. To be sure, the story of the making of the *Qing History* is not only the final chapter of Chinese dynastic history but also the last chapter of traditional official historiography. In this article, I first delve into the making of the *Draft Qing History*, and then discuss how it exemplified the crisis of traditional historiography in twentieth century China. The advent of the modern nation-state not only irrevocably broke the symbiosis of official historiography and political authority, but it also sub-

verted traditional approaches to the past and ways to preserve memories. In short, our vision of the past is now in flux and any attempt to define a standard or orthodox version of it is doomed.

From Making to Banning: the Republican Qing History Project

The office for the compilation of the history of the Qing dynasty, the Bureau of Qing Historiography (Qingshi guan 清史館), was established in March 1914 under the sponsorship of President Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859-1916). In his Presidential Edict declaring the creation of this office, Yuan proclaimed that it was “to follow precedents of the former twenty-four *Histories* by compiling a faithful work of the past two-hundred odd years.”¹ Zhao Erxun 趙爾巽 (1844-1927), a former governor-general of the overthrown dynasty, was appointed general director. Zhao was hardly known for his scholarship, nor had he ever demonstrated an interest in the writing of history. Yet it was certainly the chance of a lifetime for Zhao to immortalize himself by supervising this historical project.

As an exercise of power, Yuan Shikai’s support of the compilation of the *Qing History* was an emblematic way of declaring own his legitimacy of his regime as the successor state to the Qing. Indeed, after accepting his assignment, Zhao Erxun reminded Yuan that “in the past, dynasties maintained a cluster of intellectuals to engage in the compilation of [official] books.” Moreover, the installation of the Bureau of Qing Historiography could invite the participation of “reclusive worthies (*yixian* 逸賢).”² Here, by “reclusive worthies” Zhao implicitly referred to those scholar-officials who withdrew, or were forced to withdraw, from the political arena after the fall of the Qing Dynasty. Thus initially more than one hundred compilers were engaged, but half of them failed to report for duty and never involved themselves in the

¹ “Presidential Edit,” *Zhengfu gongbao* 政府公報 (hereafter *ZFGB*) no. 660 (Mar. 9, 1914).

² Quoted from Shiliang’s 爽良 (1851-1930) biographical sketch of Zhao Erxun. See Shiliang 1968: 3.11. By the same token, in May of the same year Yuan Shikai also set up the Bureau of National Historiography (Guoshi guan 國史館) and assigned Wang Kaiyun 王闓運 (1833-1916), a renowned classical scholar, to be in charge of collecting and recording history of the republic.

compilation.³ Nonetheless, these assignments were political rewards that Yuan Shikai used to win the support of former Qing scholar-officials for his presidency and eventually his proposed emperorship in 1915.

However, Yuan's "imperial dream" was soon shattered and his sudden death in 1916 led to a shortage of funds for the Bureau. After Yuan's death, the maintenance and operation of the Bureau mainly relied upon the contributions Zhao solicited from the northern warlords, notably Wu Peifu 吳佩孚 (1874-1939) and Zhang Zuolin 張作霖 (1875-1928).⁴ The project was momentarily suspended during Zhang Xun's 張勳 (1854-1923) brief restoration of the abdicated Qing Emperor Puyi 溥儀 in 1917. The resurrected dynasty certainly would not tolerate the completion of its own orthodox history, which acts as an obituary or an epitaph to a fallen dynasty.

Although the *Qing History* was still far from completion by 1927, Zhao Erxun, in spite of opposition even from some compilers, brought it to publication.⁵ In his "A Few Remarks on the Publication of the *Draft Qing History*," Zhao confessed that three major considerations prompted him to publish this unfinished version: first, the current unfavorable political situation; second, the challenge of various emerging intellectual doctrines; and, finally, his own worsening physical condition. Zhao's worries soon proved to be real. The eighty-four-year-old Qing loyalist passed away in 1927, just as the Nationalist troops were approaching the gates of Beijing.⁶ Yet perhaps the most devastating threat was his second concern: with emerging new discourses, traditional historiography was facing unprecedented challenges from those who advocated a brave new historiography. The precise nature of this challenge is further discussed below; first we should examine the composition of the *QSG* itself.

³ Zhu 1971: 282-295.

⁴ Shiliang 1968: 3.11

⁵ See, for example, Xia Sun tong's 夏孫桐 (1857-1941) letters to Zhao Erxun and Yuan Jinkai 袁金鎧 (1870-1945) respectively, Xia Sun tong 1939: 6.1-3. See also Zhu 1971: 183-186.

⁶ The position of general director was assumed by Ke Shaomin 柯紹忞 (1850-1933) on the order of Zhang Zuolin. See *ZFGB* (Sept. 15, 1927), no. 4094. However, it was Yuan Jinkai and Jinliang who took actual charge of the publication.

Following the model of the *Draft Ming History* 明史稿 by Wang Hongxu 王鴻緒 (1645-1723), Zhao's use of the term "draft" to justify his rushed publication was evidently a crafty way to deflect criticism. The *QSG*, as a self-acknowledged "draft", was not to be judged by the criteria of a finalized "orthodox history" and could thus avoid any official disapproval. Nevertheless, Zhao's plan was only half realized. The first 50 of the intended total of 131 volumes of the *QSG* were published in early 1928; the final 81 volumes were later published but not circulated. The Northern Expedition launched by the Nationalists had reached Beijing by June of 1928. Consequently, the Bureau of the Qing Historiography was taken over by the National Palace Museum inaugurated in 1925. As political considerations played a role in the making of the *QSG*, so they played a role in its unmaking.

At the end of 1929, Yi Peiji 易培基 (1880-1937), Director of the National Palace Museum, petitioned the Executive Yuan to ban the publication of the *QSG*, claiming to have found nineteen mistakes in it.⁷ Upon deliberation of the report from the Executive Yuan, the Nationalist government, chaired by Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石 (1887-1975), officially banned the *QSG* in 1930 for its "preposterous narration" and its "anti-[Nationalist] Party and [anti-Republican] Nation" stance.⁸

It may seem to have been an overreaction for a chagrined Nationalist government to issue an official ban against circulating a simple historical compilation. However, behind all of the reasons listed by Yi Peiji, the Nationalist government evidently recognized that it had to exercise its authority over the shaping of the official memory of the China's last dynasty. The ban was clearly a gesture to ensure that the Nationalist Government appeared to be the legitimate heir to the Qing dynasty. Regardless of the Nationalists' attitudes toward the Qing, it was also a way to delegitimize Yuan Shikai. This ban was never officially lifted.

⁷ This petition was in fact drafted by Li Zongtong 李宗侗 (1895-1975), a French-trained historian. See Xu Shishen 1979: 815-818.

⁸ Xu Shishen 1979: 233.

The QSG and the Nationalist Government Reaction

Regardless of its political purposes, the nationalist government's accusations presented in Yi Peiji's report were not unfounded, as seconded by several contemporary scholars.⁹ The bulky *QSG*, hastily pieced together without thorough examination, let alone further integration of relevant sources, contained numerous mistakes. There were cases such as inconsistent usage of the Chinese transliteration for the same proper names of foreigners, or repetitious accounts of the same person in separate biographies. Yet of the nineteen principal mistakes Yi itemized, the most detrimental ones in the eyes of the Nationalists were the notably anti-Republican prejudices found in many passages concerning the transition from the Qing to the Republican period. For example, they perceived that the *QSG* failed to pay due respect to revolutionary martyrs, and hostile terms such as *mouluan* 謀亂 (plotting riots) and *zuoluan* 作亂 (staging armed rebellions) were employed to describe the Nationalist Revolution of 1911. Moreover, the "republican calendar" was intentionally ignored.¹⁰ The calendar was a traditional way for a new dynasty to assert its legitimacy and was thus a major issue in the early Republic. The abdicated Qing court had explicitly agreed to follow the new calendar under the "Articles of Favorable Treatment" in 1912, although there was no law saying writers or historians had to use it.

The political uncertainties of the day seem to have provided the perfect opportunity for the compilers to compose the *Qing History* with little governmental intervention. No evidence indicates that Yuan Shikai or the later warlords ever interfered. The compilers thus enjoyed a certain freedom that hardly existed in the past in the making of official histories. It seemed like a great opportunity to recapitulate the orthodox history of the fallen dynasty without being manipulated by its successor's biases. However, many of the

⁹ See, for example, Fu Zhenlun 1931, 1932.

¹⁰ Thus if a biographical subject passed away in 1915, instead of saying he died "in the fourth year of the Republican period," the *QSG* adopts either the *ganzhi* 干支 system [Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches] or awkward expressions like "a certain number of years later." For example, according to the *QSG*, Shen Zengzhi 沈曾植 (1850-1922) "passed away in the winter of *renxu* 壬戌," and Feng Xu 馮煦 (1843-1927) "was choked with tears at the news of the fall of the [Qing] State. He passed away fourteen years later." (12542).

leading compilers of the *QSG*, while preserving their collective memory of Qing China and indeed treating the Qing with great sympathy, at the same time failed to show due respect to the new Republican régime. The compilers of the *QSG* should have been aware that their abhorrence of the Republic would hinder its endorsement by the Republican authorities.

Zhao Erxun surely justified his acceptance of the historiographical assignment as an official in the Republican government on the grounds of personal considerations. As members of a Han-Martial Banner, Zhao Erxun and his family possessed quasi-blood bonds with the imperial court. His father Zhao Wenying 趙文穎 was slain in the Taiping Rebellion a mere five days after he assumed a county magistrate's seat in Shandong Province. His younger brother Zhao Erfeng 趙爾豐 (?-1912) was murdered in the 1911 Revolution while he was the acting governor of Sichuan Province. Both his father and brother have biographical accounts in the *QSG*; Zhao Wenying is listed in the "Biographies of the Loyal" (*zhongyi* 忠義) and Zhao Erfeng is listed among those who died in the line of duty fighting against the 1911 Revolution. Even though the *QSG* compilation is the work of collective efforts, the anti-Taiping Rebellion and anti-Republican tones evidently prevailed.

Yet for Zhao there was a much deeper concern than mere personal revenge. The compilers showed a real appreciation for the endeavor of the "New Policies" (*xinzheng* 新政) or post-Boxer reforms that began to be instituted in 1902. Zhao himself was, or at least so he was profiled in the *QSG*, an enthusiastic advocate of the "New Policies". He had been involved in creating the new bureaucratic system,¹¹ institutionalizing provincial vocational training for prisoners,¹² and sponsoring school-building.¹³ It is fair to say that if the *Quanxue pian* 勸學篇 (Exhortation to Learning) by Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837-1909), Zhao Erxun's close colleague, was the theoretical manifesto and practical blueprint for the "New Policies" construction, then its guiding principle of "Chinese learning as substance, Western learning as application" promised an ideal way to reform China without overthrowing its entire value system or discontinuing its cultural tradition. For Zhao and other late Qing

¹¹ Zhao et al 1998: 991.

¹² Zhao et al 1998: 4198.

¹³ Zhao et al 1998: 972.

reformers, it was the unexpected 1911 Revolution that aborted their hopeful scheme before it had a chance to succeed.

When the Bureau of the Qing Historiography was established, Yuan Shikai had just routed the southern revolutionary troops and driven Sun Yat-sen into exile in Japan, and there is every indication that Yuan's monarchical aspirations were rising above the ruins of Sun Yat-sen's republican dreams. From the viewpoint of Zhao Erxun and other compilers in Beijing, Yuan was the leader who would have carried on the *xinzheng* way of reform.¹⁴ The 1911 Revolution and its Western-colored claims to republicanism was but an ephemeral incident. But by the late 1920s, from the standpoint of the new Nationalist government, the 1911 Revolution was the very source of its legitimacy. Since the *Qingshi guan* was an official bureaucratic apparatus sponsored by the Republican government, the compilers of the *QSG* officially served in the new government. By the traditional criteria from past dynasties, they were hardly qualified to be considered Qing loyalists (*yimin* 遺民). If measured by the criteria in the "State Historiography" of the Qing set up by Emperor Qianlong, they were in fact "subjects with double loyalties" (*erchen* 貳臣). In any event, the compilers failed to fulfill their obligation to compose the official history of the previous dynasty in accordance with, or at least without infringing upon, the interests of the Republican government. Rather, the *QSG* represented the collective memory of a specific group of scholars whose narrative was intertwined with their concerns with political and cultural identity.

The QSG: Memory Haunting the Nationalist Regime

While proposing the ban against the publication and sale of the *QSG*, the National Palace Museum also proposed the composition of a "long draft" (*changbian* 長編), which would include data concerning historical events and personalities arranged in chronological order, in preparation for the writing of a new Qing History. This time-consuming project never came to full fruition. Meanwhile, the ban cast by Nationalist government could not stop

¹⁴ As Ernest Young's research clearly shows, even at his most conservative, Yuan was still part of the modernizing movement. See Young 1977: 236.

people from purchasing the *QSG*. On the contrary, it ironically resulted in promoting it.

Initially, as the Nationalist army was approaching Beijing, Jinliang 金梁 (1878-1962), a Manchu Bannerman and a *jìnshi* degree holder who was assigned to take charge of the publication of the *QSG*, not only made certain changes in the content without authorization but also surreptitiously took copies of the *QSG* and fled to Manchuria in 1928.¹⁵ Jinliang's version of the *QSG* was then published and sold in Manchuria and Japan, and also smuggled "over the Shanhaiguan Pass" and circulated into parts of China under Nationalist jurisdiction. The flagrant distribution of the *QSG* prompted the Nationalists to take concrete measures. Thus in 1934 the Executive Yuan appointed Wu Zongci 吳宗慈 (1878-1951) to scrutinize the *QSG*, and Wu completed his appraisal with a series of amendments in the following year.¹⁶ The Ministry of Education then sent Wu's report to Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896-1950) for further deliberation. Indeed, outside organizations constantly placed requests with Fu, who was then director of the leading Institute of History and Philology at Academia Sinica, for copies of the *QSG*.¹⁷ According to Fu's reevaluation, the best course was to compose a completely new Qing History, but he recognized that the current "national strength" might not be sufficient to support this project. Fu also admitted that "in the past decade historical materials have been found in abundance, and great advances have been made in historiography. These conditions have made the recomposition [of the Qing History] more difficult than ever."¹⁸ Accordingly, Fu proposed lifting the ban against the publication of the *QSG* on condition that Wu

¹⁵ For a general comparison of the differences between Jinliang's edition and the original *QSG*, see Zhu 1971: 79-98.

¹⁶ Unfortunately, Wu's works preserved in the archives of the Executive Yuan were destroyed during World War II.

¹⁷ In a letter attached to the *QSG* that was sent to the general secretary of the Academy of Science of the U.S.S.R. upon request in 1932, Fu Sinian wrote "this work, although a most valuable source of reference, contains numerous mistakes and was written with a strong anti-republican prejudice. For this reason, our government has rightly forbidden its publication and sale." He asked that "this matter should not [be made] known to others and the views of this book should not be taken as the final conclusions of the Chinese historians. See *Shiyusuo dang'an* No. 362-6 (dated Dec. 26, 1932)

¹⁸ Fu Sinian 1979: 245-247.

Zongci's appraisal report and amendments be appended as guidelines. Fu's suggestion of 1935 was not answered officially, since before long the Nationalist government found itself occupied with more imminent crises, domestic as well as international.

In 1960 the Nationalist government in Taiwan finally launched a belated project to compose a new *Qing History* "from the viewpoint of the Republic of China."¹⁹ Yet this project mainly consisted of a revising the existing *QSG* rather than the composing a genuinely new Qing history. Only the last of its eight volumes provides five major supplements to the *QSG*: the Annals of the Southern Ming; Biographies of Ming Loyalists; Biographical Profile of Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功 (1624-1662), the Ming general who fought against the Qing and colonized Taiwan; Biographical Profile of Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全 (1813-1864), leader of the Taiping Rebellion; and Biographies of Nationalist Revolutionaries. Conventionally, with few exceptions, each of the previous "orthodox histories" was confined to a single dynasty, and thus the Annals of the Southern Ming and the Biographies of Nationalist Revolutionaries in the new *Qing History* were but uncoordinated appendages. The committee responsible for the compilation of the new Qing History was not organized by the Academia Sinica or the Bureau of National Historiography (Academia Historica) but by the Research Institute of National Defense established in 1959 and headed by President Chiang Kai-shek. The political agenda was to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Republic of China, and it was hastily completed in just one year. In any event, it was hardly accepted as the standard version of the Qing history and as even Zhang Qiyun 張其昀 (1901-1985), director of the Compilation Committee, admitted in the preface, "this Qing History attempts to preserve the old records of the previous dynasty. Therefore it is not intended to make any major alteration of the *Draft Qing History*." Rather, "the ideal New Qing History," Zhang emphasized, "will hopefully be completed by later writers."²⁰ Not surprisingly, the "new" *Qing History* never received official recognition as the twenty-fifth "orthodox history."

In 1978 Director of Academia Historica Huang Jilu 黃季陸 (1899-1985), Jiang Fucong 蔣復聰 (1899-1990), Director of the National Palace Museum,

¹⁹ Peng 1979: 299-312.

²⁰ Zhang Qiyun 1963: 1.

and Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895-1990), an eminent historian, proposed a collaboration to annotate the *QSG*. They did not propose directly revising the original text of the *Draft Qing History* but only to annotate it by utilizing the archives of the Bureau of Qing Historiography preserved in the National Palace Museum of Taipei. Subsequently, the voluminous *Qingshigao jiaozhu* 清史稿校註 (Amendments and Annotations on the *Draft Qing History*) was published between 1986 and 1991.

The latest, and probably the last effort, by the Nationalist government is the project proposed by the Academia Historica in 1988, which claimed it would edit a “final version of *Qing History*.” However, again, this project was not designed to compose a completely new Qing History but to revise and reedit the old *Draft Qing History*. The Basic Annals section was completed in 1994, but the entire plan now seems to be at a standstill for lack of funding and qualified personnel.²¹ Interestingly, while the new Qing History project came to a dead end in Taiwan, a grand project to compile a new complete history of the *Qing* was recently initiated in 2000 with the official blessing of the PRC government.²² Arguably the PRC government recognizes the symbolic significance of assuming their privilege of historical explanation by issuing an orthodox version of the *Qing*.

In sum, it appears that even as the Nationalist government sought to ban the *Draft Qing History*, it remained haunted by it. Almost every attempt to compose a new Qing History failed to confront the preprogrammed memory provided by the *QSG* but only amended it. Any fundamental reconceptualization seemed unimaginable or, if imagined, impractical.

²¹ I am grateful for Professor Zhuang Jifa 莊吉發 of the National Palace Museum, who was personally involved with this project and provided me with the closed-access version of the Basic Annals and also invaluable first-hand information on the progress and termination of this project.

²² This project reportedly has been endowed with several hundred million Chinese *juan* and is expected to be completed within a decade. An ad hoc committee, led by Professor Dai Yi 戴逸 of People's University, has been organized to coordinate the compilation, and an official website has been constructed to update its progress: <http://www.historychina.net/qinghistory/Default.aspx>.

The Official Memory of the Qing and the Official Memories by the Qing

From the inauguration of the Bureau of the Qing Historiography, the *Ming History*, generally regarded one of the best of the “orthodox histories,”²³ has been considered as the paradigm for the compilation of the Qing History. However, the resulting *QSG* was a poor attempt to emulate the *Ming History*. The *Ming History* was the product of a long process. As early as 1645, a year after the establishment of the Qing regime in Beijing, an imperial edict instituted the Bureau of Ming Historiography. This was a political statement claiming the end of Ming rule and the dawn of the new era, and only in 1679 did the Bureau seriously begin the compilation of the Ming History. Compared to the *Yuan History*, which was completed in less than one year by the Ming government, the Qing emperors seemed to be overly cautious and closely monitored the making of the *Ming History*. The *Ming History* was officially presented to the court only in 1739, and even then Emperor Qianlong ordered a thorough reexamination of the Basic Annals in 1777, emphasizing that he would “personally review” it before its reissue.²⁴ In the end there may have been no significant revisions, but the caution in proclaiming the completion of the *Ming History* illustrates how the imperial will infiltrated the project. The underlying message was evident: the *Ming History* was not written by any individual, be it Wan Sitong 萬斯同 (1638-1702), a celebrated historian who made essential contributions, Wang Hongxu 王鴻緒 (1645-1723), who privately reedited Wan Sitong’s draft to complete the *Draft Ming History*, or Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 (1672-1755), who was appointed to supervise the finalization of the *Ming History*. Rather, the *Ming History* was produced unmistakably through imperial authorization and sanction.

It is noteworthy that during the prolonged process of making the *Ming History*, the Qing court had also been developing ways to record its own history. The Bureau of State Historiography was formally institutionalized as early as the Tang dynasty. One of its responsibilities was to compose the “state history” of the previous reign periods, although this did not become a routine practice during the Tang.²⁵ In fact, the Bureau reached its zenith in the Qing

²³ See Liang 1929: chapter 8.

²⁴ Wang Xianqian 1963: 10b-11a.

²⁵ See Twitchett 1992: 160-163.

to “precompile” a comprehensive dynastic history for later generations. Besides the regular recording of the Court Diaries (*qijuzhu* 起居注) and the special assignment of compiling the Veritable Records (*shilu* 實錄) once a reign period was over, the Bureau of State Historiography (*Guoshi guan* 國史館) was in charge of the ongoing composition of the dynasty’s history, especially the compilation of various biographies. It continued until the end of the Qing to compile and supplement a full-scale orthodox history, including annals, chronicled tables, treatises, and biographies.²⁶

To be sure, the limitations of the official “state histories” had already been noted. For example, Dai Mingshi 戴名世 (1653-1714), a renowned essayist who devoted himself to the study of the *Ming History*, contended in his famous essay “On Historiography” (*Shilun* 史論), that the state history was usually flawed by pompous eulogy of the reigning dynasty or intentional concealment of sensitive facts. Thus, Dai suggested, it is necessary to “consult extensively unofficial histories (*yeshi* 野史),” which also contained biased contents or equivocal descriptions and needed further careful examination before adoption.²⁷

Surprisingly, throughout the Ming dynasty, no full-scale dynastic history was ever officially produced.²⁸ Hence the only major official sources the compilers of the *Ming History* could rely upon were the Veritable Records. Thus during the initial stage of compiling the *Ming History*, the main endeavor was to collect unofficial records and local gazetteers. In sharp contrast, the Qing court regularly compiled full-scale historical data of its own, and this ready-made state history proved extremely convenient for the *QSG* compilers. Yet, on the other hand, it became an unavoidable burden as well. Indeed the

²⁶ The Bureau of State Historiography was inaugurated in 1690, but its initial assignment was only to compose the history of the previous three reigns prior to Emperor Kangxi. Only after 1765 did the Qianlong emperor designate it to compile the biographies of the state history which it continued to do until the end of the Qing. See Qiao 1994: 27-33.

²⁷ Dai 1986: 403-404.

²⁸ In the Wanli reign Chen Yubi 陳于陞 memorialized the court pointing out that the “orthodox history of the reigning dynasty” had never been composed. Thus he proposed that the court order the composition of a State History. Yet no fruitful achievement remains. See Sun 1992: 492-494.

making of the *QSG* clearly exposes the difficulty of writing the history of the fallen dynasty without being manipulated by its precompiled accounts.

The Bureau of Qing Historiography did send official requests to the provinces for assistance in gathering relevant materials in the early 1910s.²⁹ The results, however, were limited.³⁰ Partly because of the unstable political situation that prevented them from collecting materials other than official records, and partly because of the compilers' positive attitude toward the fallen dynasty, they hardly ever attempted to aggressively reshape the memories that already had been programmed by the fallen dynasty. Unfortunately, even in terms of the official records and palace archives, as one of the compilers, Zhu Shiche 朱師轍 (1879-1969), confessed in 1928, the *QSG* failed to make full use of many noteworthy archives such as those of the State Council (*Junjichu* 軍機處), the Grand Secretariat (*Neige* 內閣), and the Imperial Household Department (*Neiwufu* 內務府). The archives of the State Council, for example, were then under the custody of the Republican Cabinet and the petition to transfer them to the Bureau of Qing Historiography was declined on the grounds of their relevance to state affairs.³¹

This does not mean that the *QSG* merely copied the precompiled dynastic history. Yet it is fair to say that it relied heavily on the archives of the Qing Bureau of State Historiography. The significance of the *QSG* would be devalued once the archives of this bureau became accessible.³² For example, in 1928 the *Qingshi liezhuan* 清史列傳 (The biographies of Qing History) was published in Shanghai. This compilation in fact consisted of biographies drawn directly from the archives of the Bureau of State Historiography. Certainly, the *QSG* contains biographies that cannot be found in the *Qingshi liezhuan*, since many of the newly written biographies were of those who died during the Qing-Republican transitional period. Yet in most cases of the biographical accounts of the same personage, the *QSG* provided no significant information not already found in the *Qingshi liezhuan*. Moreover, many crucial

²⁹ *ZFGB*, 1914, No. 888.

³⁰ Zhu 1971: 9.

³¹ Zhu 1971: 6-8

³² For a general survey of the archives of the Qing Bureau of State Historiography, see Li 1991: 309-328.

dates and events mentioned in the *Qingshi liezhuan* were omitted in the *QSG*.³³ As well, the published *Qingshi liezhuan* contained more biographies

Unless the *QSG* compilers had tried to incorporate “*yeshi*” to check or to supplement the “*guoshi*” or had adopted alternative perspectives to re-examine the official memory constructed by the Qing, they could not have composed a truly new history. In fact, they made no such attempts, and they contented themselves with materials filtered and supplied by the Qing court itself – which had had every intention of monopolizing and manipulating the way its history would be “remembered” by posterity.

The Myth of Orthodox Histories

The predicament the Nationalist government encountered in banning the *QSG* demonstrates the intricate relationship between political authority and the making of “orthodox history.” The Nationalist government’s claim to authority over the making of the *Qing History* was simultaneously a claim to political legitimacy (*zhengtong* 正統/政統) as the Qing’s successor. On the other hand, any would-be “orthodox history” also depends on the existing political authority to recognize it, which is the literal definition of “*zhengshi*” (orthodox history). The term “*zhengshi*” was first employed in the *Jingzhi* 經籍志 (Treatise of Literature) of the *History of the Sui Dynasty* to designate a distinctive historical genre. The number of the orthodox histories increased from three in the Tang to seventeen in the Song.³⁴ In the Ming, the Histories of the Song, Liao, Jin and Yuan dynasties were respectively added to the previous Seventeen Histories, and the orthodox histories were henceforth collectively termed the “Twenty-one Histories.” According to Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613-1682), a pioneering scholar of the early Qing period, the official “Twenty-one Histories” were published first by the Nanjing Directorate of Education in 1532 and later also by the Beijing Directorate of Education in 1606.³⁵

³³ Wang Zhonghan 1990: 257-278. See also Zhuang 1983: 419-446.

³⁴ Wang Mingsheng 1987: 99.3-4.

³⁵ Gu 1979: 519-521. Gu himself utilized this edition to compile the “Chronological Tables of the Twenty-one Orthodox histories” (*Ershiyishi nianbiao* 二十一史年表).

Initially, the *QSG* was intended to be officially recognized and to count as one of the orthodox histories. Even now, some scholars still favor compiling a final version of the *Qing History* that would be enshrined in the pantheon of orthodox histories. Yet in retrospect, the enshrinement of the orthodox history is a myth, since the status of the orthodox histories has never been stabilized. Since the Tang Dynasty, almost all of the orthodox histories were compiled collectively under the supervision of the imperial court. Once this collective endeavor was complete, it would be presented to the court for official recognition. However, such official recognition did not necessarily guarantee its status in subsequent dynasties. A case in point is the making of the *New History of the Tang Dynasty*. This project, sponsored by the Song Court, was designated to replace the previous history, produced during the Latter Jin from 941 to 945. The *New History* was compiled over seventeen years starting in 1044 under the leadership of Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) and Song Qi 宋祁 (996-1061). Once it was completed in 1060 and presented to the court, the older *Tang History* began to lose much of its significance and thus ceased to be reproduced and circulated. Consequently when Wenren Quan 聞人詮 in the late Ming planned to reprint the *Old History of Tang Dynasty*, he desperately searched for three years before finally piecing together a complete work from two sources.³⁶ Wenren's private reprint edition of 1538 later became the blueprint for the Qing court to reissue the *Old Tang History*.

Another case in point is the *History of the Five Dynasties*. Although the [*Old History of the Five Dynasties*] had already been completed for the Song court by Xue Juzheng 薛居正 (912-981) in the relatively brief period of the single year of 973, Ouyang Xiu worked on his own private edition from 1036 to 1053. Upon Ouyang's death, his work was sanctioned by imperial order in 1072 and published by the Educational Directorate (*Guozijian* 國子監) under the title of the *New History of the Five Dynasties*. This signified that Ouyang's private compilation shared the authority of the orthodox history with Xue's official edition. Moreover, in 1207, the Jin dynasty court in northern China officially withdrew Xue's *Old History of the Five Dynasties* from the new educational system and adopted exclusively Ouyang Xiu's version. A similar order was also issued by the court of the Southern Song in 1274. Consequently, the common usage of the "Seventeen Histories" in the Song usually excluded the

³⁶ See Wenren Quan's preface to *Jiu Tangshu*. Liu 1987: 5404.

Old Tang History and the *Old History of the Five Dynasties*. In the widely-circulated private “*Jiguge* 汲古閣 edition” published by Mao Jin 毛晉 (1599-1659) in the late Ming, both the [*Old*] *Tang History* and the [*Old*] *History of the Five Dynasties* were still excluded from the list of the Seventeen Histories.

Consequently Xue’s old version gradually ceased to circulate during the Yuan period.³⁷ It turned out that when the Qing Court in the Qianlong reign planned to collate and proofread the [*Old*] *History of the Five Dynasties*, no intact edition could be found. The restoration of the lost *Old History of the Five Dynasties* is due mainly to Shao Jinhan 邵晉涵 (1743-1796), who succeeded in retrieving fragmentary records from numerous works, notably the encyclopedic *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典 (Grand Compilation of the Yongle Reign).

Judging from Shao Jinhan’s *Niansanshi tiyao diben* 廿三史提要底本 (Draft Abstract of the Twenty-three Histories), which was probably completed by 1775 when he left the Hanlin Academy in Beijing to observe the mourning period for his mother’s death, the *Old Tang History* had already been reinstated as one of the orthodox histories.³⁸ By 1784 at the latest, the [*Old*] *History of the Five Dynasties* also re-joined the category of the orthodox histories in the *Siku Quanshu* 四庫全書 (Complete Library of the Four Treasuries). Since then, the total number of the orthodox histories was generally regarded to be twenty-four.

At any rate, the shifting status of the [*Old*] *History of Tang Dynasty* and the [*Old*] *History of the Five Dynasties* – once enshrined as the orthodox histories, then revoked in the Song, and then reinstated in the Qing – clearly demonstrates how delicate the status of the orthodox histories was. When a political regime was undermined or overthrown, the authority it once conferred upon the orthodox history could be eroded as well.

Although the *QSG* was originally intended to become the twenty-fifth orthodox history, before its publication, the *Xin Yuanshi* 新元史 (New Yuan History), completed single-handedly by Ke Shaomin 柯紹忞 (1850-1933)

³⁷ See Ji Yun’s memorial in the 49th year of the Qianlong reign (1784), in Xue 1987: 2031-2032.

³⁸ Shao Jinhan, *Niansanshi tiyao diben*, hand-copied by Zhu Xigeng 朱錫庚 in 1801. This work is stored in the Rare Collection room, Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica.

was proclaimed by President Xu Shichang 徐世昌 (1855-1939) to be the twenty-fifth orthodox history in 1921. As a life-long project, Ke's *New Yuan History* was certainly an ambitious attempt to provide a more comprehensive account of the Yuan Dynasty. Many scholars of the Ming and Qing dynasties had criticized the previous official *Yuan History*, completed in less than one year in the early Ming. Since the Ming, scholars had endeavored to provide supplements to it.³⁹ It is fair to say that Ke's ambitious work ingeniously synthesized previous versions with new evidence such as stone rubbings of inscriptions and translations of related foreign works.⁴⁰

However, inasmuch as most of the original materials remained intact for later generations to consult, the significance of the *New Yuan History* was limited. This is also true of the *QSG*. In contrast to other orthodox histories, which have preserved many records unavailable in other sources, the materials that the *Draft Qing History* was based on remain intact and available. For professional historians to conduct research on issues concerning the Yuan or the Qing, the *New Yuan History* and the *Draft Qing History* serve mostly as second-hand or even third-hand resources.

Even though it was endorsed by the President of the Republic, Ke's work has hardly survived modern criticism. Even if we accept the premise that Ke successfully incorporated previous endeavors, Ke's work cannot satisfy modern historians' search for the complete story of Yuan history. But nor can any other official history. No historical work can acquire or cement its immortality through the endorsement of a political authority. Although the status of Ke Shaomin's *New Yuan History* as the twenty-fifth orthodox history was never officially revoked (who would revoke it, anyway?), it is generally ignored by modern scholarship. It is omitted from the frequently cited edition of the "Twenty-five Histories" of the Zhonghua Press edition in Beijing and

³⁹ One of the most noted works in the Ming is Hu Cuizhong 1985. During the Qing period, more renowned scholars devoted themselves to the study of Yuan history. See *inter alia* Wang Huizu 1984, Zeng 1997, Wei 1984, Shao Yuanping 1968, and Hung 1964.

⁴⁰ Surprisingly, Ke's *New Yuan History* did not include Qian Daxin's 錢大昕 renowned supplementary work on the "Treatise of the Literature." Nor did Ke write a new one. In fact, in terms of methodological approach and textual analysis, Ke Shaomin's contemporary Tu Ji's *History of the Mongols* might be more valuable than Ke's synthesis. See Tu 1934.

in the computerized Chinese Text Retrieval System [Scripta Sinica] by the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica in Taipei. Paradoxically, the twenty-fifth history in these editions is the unorthodox *QSG*.

Traditional Official Historiography in Crisis

Ultimately, the *QSG* failed to be revised and finalized as the standard version of the *Qing History* not because of the perceived shortcomings enumerated by Yi Peiji or other scholars, for such anti-Republican narratives or factual errors could be corrected easily enough. Over the past ninety years, many evaluations have been made of the *Draft Qing History*.⁴¹ These criticisms could also be incorporated to perfect the *QSG*. The real reason for the deferment of the planned *Qing History* is that no political authority in the modern era can act like the old imperial court to authorize any Qing history as the final and official version.

The *QSG* was seriously criticized by many scholars on the basis of traditional historiographical principles. Yet the gravest challenge it had yet to face was the advent of the new historiography.⁴² In his influential essay *Xin Shixue* 新史學 [New Historiography] of 1902, Liang Qichao, the pioneer of the new historiography in modern China, critically remarked, “the Twenty-four Official Histories are not history at all, they are but genealogies of the twenty-four [imperial] families... There is not a single work ever compiled for the people of the nation (*guomin* 國民).”⁴³ To be sure, Liang Qichao was not the first scholar in the late Qing to question the significance of the orthodox histories. One of his close friends and colleagues, Xu Renzhu 徐仁鑄 (1863-1900), had already made a similar comment in 1889 that the orthodox histories were but “genealogies of the [imperial] families.”⁴⁴ Yet Liang Qichao’s essay of 1902 was the most influential in systematically criticizing

⁴¹ See, for examples, Wang Zongyan 1977, and Tong 1991.

⁴² For a critical examination of the development of modern Chinese historiography, see Huang 1997: 263-285.

⁴³ The term “twenty-four families” that Liang uses here is a figure of speech and does not denote literally twenty-four royal families in the past. For a recent discussion of Liang Qichao’s idea on the New History and its connection to traditional historiography, see Zarrow 2003.

⁴⁴ Xu Renzhu 1889.

traditional historiography. In this essay he summarized four fundamental maladies of traditional historiography represented by the “orthodox histories:” first, “they know only the imperial court instead of the nation;” second, “they know only individuals instead of society;” third, “they know only things in the past but nothing concerning current affairs;” and last, “they know only facts but no ideals.”⁴⁵ We may infer that Liang’s ideal new historiography had statecraft purposes: it was to serve the nation, to create social bonds, and to inspire the people of the nation to be involved in current affairs. In this regard, he argued that history should not be written by officials for officials. Instead, it should be written in a more accessible language for the general public. Accordingly, the traditional narration in abstruse classical language would no longer fit this purpose. Once the use of vernacular Mandarin prevailed after the May Fourth Movement, the narration in classical Chinese employed in the *Draft Qing History* became very difficult for the scholars of the new generation to emulate. This may have contributed to the difficulties in composing a new Qing History as long as classical Chinese was regarded as the only proper mode of narration.

It is noteworthy that Liang Qichao did not negate the necessity of composing a *Qing History*. In fact, when the Bureau of the Qing Historiography was established, Liang published a lengthy proposal on the stylistic rules and layout that the *Qing History* should follow. Although he compromised with the adoption of the traditional composite annals-biography form, Liang Qichao put extra emphasis on the writing of treatises (*zhi* 志) for they are, according to Liang, truly the “quintessence of the entire History.”⁴⁶ Accordingly, Liang proposed twenty-six treatise subjects in order to dissect the entire Qing History from every possible perspective. Apparently Liang’s design was to shift the focus of the traditional historiography from individual deeds to collective lives. Ideally each treatise would examine a specific theme through-

⁴⁵ Liang’s emphatic criticism of traditional Historiography was immediately echoed by many intellectuals. Ma Junwu 馬君武 (1882-1939), for example, also contended that in the past four thousand years in China “there was only the imperial court instead of the nation; there were only imperial genealogies instead of history.” See Ma Junwu 2000:46-47

⁴⁶ Liang Qichao, “Qingshi shangli” 清史商例 (Deliberations on the format of the Qing History), in Xu Shishen 1979: 34-52.

hout Qing history in terms of its continuity as well as change. However, Liang's proposal was not adopted by the *QSG* compilers.

In his preface to Xiao Yishan's 蕭一山 (1902-1978) *A General History of the Qing* of 1923, when the Qing History was still under construction, Liang Qichao pessimistically anticipated that "even if [the official *Qing History*] is completed, it will still never satisfy our expectations."⁴⁷ Liang's remark turned out to be prophetic. The *Draft Qing History* was intended to be an official history written by officials for officials, from its layout to its narration. Eventually, it became at best the last chapter of traditional historiography, which had already been cast aside by the advocates of "new historiography."

Conclusion

Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (145-86 B.C.) influential masterpiece *Shiji* 史記 (Historical Records) forged the archetypal format for the orthodox history, yet this *chef d'oeuvre* itself differed in many ways from the later orthodox histories. First and foremost, in sharp contrast to other Histories, it was intended as a general world history, or, one might venture to say, a universal history of humanity. Coincidentally, as the would-be final orthodox history of China, the *QSG* is also exceptional in many regards.

Along with the fall of the last dynasty, the genre of "orthodox history" itself became history. This does not mean that the conventional Annals-Biography layout fails to serve any historiographical purpose in modern times.⁴⁸ Ideally as a special way to approach history, the format of the Annals-Biography can thread together the complexities of history. Since it does not provide a linear narrative of history, it does not demand that the readers read from the first Imperial Annals to the last Biography. Any section can serve as a starting point for readers with specific concerns or interests to weave their own understanding of the history by their own way of threading and reading.

⁴⁷ Liang 1960: 2.

⁴⁸ A recent example of the composite annals-biography format is Luo Ergang's 羅爾綱 *Taiping tianguoshi* 太平天國史. Luo 1991.

In 1902, Zhang Binglin 章炳麟 (1869-1936), an eminent classicist and revolutionary, predicted the fall of the Qing dynasty. He also claimed “from the Yellow Emperor to the Ming dynasty, there were twenty-two Histories. After then, no more ‘History’ could be written.”⁴⁹ Zhang pessimistically reasoned that the Qing court had strove to obliterate memories of the Manchus’ tyrannical rule over China through systematic censorship and a series of literary inquisitions, which resulted in the irretrievable distortion of the past. Zhang’s negation of the possibility of restoring of Qing history might sound exaggerated, but he insightfully anticipated the obstacles facing the composition of an orthodox Qing History. The *Draft Qing History* that was rushed into publication was in many regards dictated by the narratives of the official memories preprogrammed by the Qing Court. To Zhang, composing the official Qing History was but a futile endeavor.

The making of the last dynastic orthodox history remains an unfinished enterprise. One thing is certain: the *QSG* published in 1928 will never be officially authorized as one of the “orthodox histories.” On the other hand, the *QSG* is arguably irreplaceable. Its narratives, its arrangement of themes, and its choice of personalities represents to a certain extent a collective effort by a specific group of intellectuals in the imperial-republic transition period. It is a lens through which we can examine the mentality and perspective of these compilers. Not only will the *QSG* live forever, but also Qing history as such will forever remain in draft. Indeed, the entire Twenty-four Histories have become incomplete drafts open to further revision.

With the fall of the Qing dynasty, it was not just the writing of the orthodox Qing History itself, but also the status of all of the existing orthodox histories that became problematic. As previously argued, the authority of these so-called orthodox histories was bestowed by the regimes that ruled China with absolute political power. Without such absolute state legitimization, any authoritative claims to define the past lost their ground. At the same time, one of the most significant impacts of the introduction of the new historiography was the de-authorization of the twenty-four orthodox histories on intellectual grounds. The traditional orthodox history, which allegedly intended to capture the past in its entirety, now faced unprecedented challen-

⁴⁹ Zhang Binlin 1984: 585-589.

ges. Most importantly, historiographical attention shifted away from the events and personages that had once dominated the writing of orthodox histories.

Several closely-related questions might continue to concern those modern scholars who have some interest in seeing a new version of an orthodox Qing History completed: Should the *QSG* be revised and then formalized as the official history of Qing China? Or could the *QSG* be replaced with a new and final edition by incorporating new methodological approaches, a new configuration of subjects, and even a new language of narration? Upon its completion, does a new *Qing History* need any official endorsement by a political authority? If that is the case, then, which government has the legitimate right to authorize it? Would it be the Republic of China in Taiwan that allegedly overthrew the Qing dynasty in 1911, or the People's Republic of China that has held political power in Mainland China since 1949? If there is no political authority to endorse this new Qing History as the Twenty-fifth or Twenty-sixth orthodox history, then it is open for further revision or a new version to replace in the future. In this regard, this new Qing History would be nothing but another *Draft Qing History*. Paradoxically, the *QSG* will forever survive and will never be replaced – like the *Old History of the Tang Dynasty*, or the *Old History of the Five Dynasties*, or even the old edition of the *Yuan History*, if we take Ke Shaomin's *New Yuan History* into account. Perhaps efforts to compile an “ideal” Qing History will never cease, but they are unlikely to be enshrined as the conclusive interpretation of Qing History.

In fact, the previous Twenty-five orthodox histories have all been redefined as the Twenty-five orthodox history *drafts*, tentative accounts aiding but not defining our understanding of the past. In an ambitious treatise on historical sources and studies, Jian Bozan 翦伯赞 (1898-1968), a leading Marxist historian, went so far as to argue that the so-called orthodox histories should be renamed “grand compilations of historical materials” (*shiliao jicheng* 史料集成).⁵⁰ The Twenty-five Histories can thus be treated as biased collections of historical resources, rather than cherished as presentation/representation of historical facts. They can thus be considered as offering us variously “raw” or “cooked” materials, which need further digestion. According to this perspec-

⁵⁰ Jian 1946: 6.

tive, the *QSG* belongs in their company and is a fitting orthodox history after all, with or without any arbitrary official authorization. After all, any history is but a draft to approach the past.

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