Mårten Söderblom Saarela

The Early Modern Travels of Manchu: A Script and Its Study in East Asia and Europe.
Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020. Pp. ix + 301. Hb, \$69.95.

To say that the publication of a book is overdue is no uncommon occurrence; to say that a long-awaited book has finally been written by a highly capable author does not happen every day. Although the contribution of the Manchus to late-imperial China has been studied with renewed vigor since the discovery of new archival sources in the 1990s, there has been no book devoted exclusively to the gestation, cultural interpretation, and eventual fate of Manchu as a historical language. Further to the sheer linguistic expertise of Mårten Söderblom Saarela, the author also managed to open up a relatively obscure chapter of East Asia's historical culture to a global public in a generally intelligible way. And not merely East Asia's history: by virtue of Jesuit linguists, Manchu entered the European circle of knowledge from the very beginning of the Qing era (1644–1911). This book therefore also bears testimony to the contribution of missionaries belonging to the Society of Jesus throughout the centuries.

In his quest to approach a learned general public beyond the small circle of Manchu specialists, Saarela's work sets the scene by summarizing the history of languages and scripts in imperial China, of the Manchu script and of the wider world's interest in Manchu. The creation of Manchu Studies, initially under the aegis of Jesuit missionaries, is also succinctly dealt with in the Introduction ("A Cultural History of the Manchu Script"). Here, the author asks sharp questions concerning the relevance of language within polyethnic empires and also on the Jesuits' role as cultural and scientific intermediaries between Chinese erudition and European enlightenment (9–13). Jesuit services as court missionaries and *de facto* diplomats on behalf of the Qing rulers, e.g. when negotiating with Tsarist Russia, propelled the study of Manchu as part of Europe's quest for knowledge of China in the eighteenth century.

Chapter 1 ("To Follow Fuxi or Kubilai Khan? Written Manchu before 1644," 17–42) pursues the genesis of written Manchu, via Old Uighur, Mongol, and Jurchen/Old Manchu, initiated by the celebratory ode to the new written language "Muduri mukdeke ucun" (17). In typical fashion for this book, also the scripts of other languages in Central Asia are being introduced.

The next chapter ("The Beijing Origins of Manchu Language Pedagogy, 1668–1730," 43–74) takes us on the unique journey of this Tungusic language into Qing China. Using an etymologically accurate analysis—not least also of the Chinese medium (e.g. on "wen 文" and "zi 字" (46)—explanations of early Manchu grammaticalization are provided, incorporating the reception of the Manchu idiom via the learners' own perspectives: Jurchen/Manchu, Mongolian, Chinese, and

European. Early Han Chinese linguists feature at the forefront of this historical reconstruction of how a Tungusic language was being taught to (mature) students with Chinese as their first language (cf. Shen Qiliang's 沈啟亮 pedagogical efforts (64–70 and 100–110). In my experience, this is the first occasion that the linguist-scholars Shen Qiliang, Liao Lunji 廖綸璣, Wu-ge 舞格, and Liu Dou 劉斗 are introduced to a Western audience in combined format. And even here we encounter the Jesuits, as useful comparators rather than forming the crux of historical analysis. The rather disparaging views of Magalhães, Meadows, and Langlès on the syllabic way of teaching Manchu (53) are fine examples, as is the insight we gain from the stone plates used for printing Manchu script in places of learning far beyond the boundaries of dynastic power (58–59).

The next two chapters (Chapter 3, “Phonology and Manchu in Southern China and Japan, c. 1670–1716,” 75–96; Chapter 4: “Manchu Words and Alphabetical Order in China and Japan, 1683–1820,” 97–121) take us beyond any European influence, namely into the Chinese scholar-official circles far removed from the seats of Manchu influence. Xiong Shibo 熊士伯 is one such example. He believed that Manchu characters had been created *ex nihilo*, rationalizing their oblique / descending vertical brush strokes as the equivalent of the same phenomenon in Chinese calligraphy “*pie* 撇” (87). Here, we also learn that the Jesuit Nicolas Trigault provided the inspiration for Xiong’s study in 1626 of the Latin alphabet (《西儒耳目資》, 83–90; Arnold J. Bauer, “Christian Servitude: Slave Management in Colonial Spanish America,” in *Agrarian Society in History: Essays in Honour of Magnus Mörner*, ed. Magnus Mörner, Mats Lundahl, and Thommy Svensson). Saarela’s interpretation of Xiong is the most thorough analysis of this “marginal linguist, largely ignored to this day” (90) in Western scholarship. The same goes for the Japanese scholar Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠, who had familiarized himself to such an extent with the Chinese community in Nagasaki that he became the director of a local Translation Society 譯社, studying Chinese sounds via the medium of Manchu transcription (91–93). “Manchu Studies” in the Western sense never established themselves, however; Manchu rather became an offshoot of the contemporary interest in Japanese phonology, similar to the interest of monk Keichō 契沖 in ancient Japanese pronunciations (94–96).

The Jesuit translation effort comes to the fore in full might in Chapter 5 (“Leibniz’s Dream of a Manchu Encyclopedia and Kangxi’s *Mirror*, 1673–1702,” 121–44). Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz dreamt (126) of the compilation of universal knowledge in the shape of a trilingual encyclopaedic dictionary, enlightening an educated society. By means of Jesuit intellectual and technical know-how as well as Leibniz’s own mathematical insight, the highest rungs of the Qing state were to be converted in analogy to Europe following the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), and his Dictionary—alongside clocks, maps, and etchings

for the Qing court—would become the “key to the China mission” (127). Leibniz suggested that Bouvet compile a comprehensive Manchu-Chinese dictionary, approved by the Kangxi emperor, following the model of Denis Diderot’s *Encyclopédie* (122–25) or Antoine Furetière’s *Dictionnaire universel*. Leibniz’s dream, in one way, proved correct: that Manchu could become a linguistic bridge between Europe and China (144). However, before Leibniz could convey his idea to the throne, in 1708, the *Han-i araha manju gisun-i buleku bithe* (Dictionary [mirror] in Manchu language commissioned by the emperor) was published in Beijing. This was timely, since Dominique Parrenin wrote in 1723 that everything ever written in the Manchu language ought to be compiled, lest the new generation of Manchus forget their ancestral tongue (132).

Chapter 6 (“The Manchu Script and Foreign Sounds from the Qing Court to Korea, 1720–1770s,” 145–68) deals with neighboring Korea. Hangul had by the 1640s already for centuries functioned as an important phonological laboratory for transliterating other languages (155), frequently for Buddhist texts. With its bi-&tri-partite letter clusters, Hangul provided an accurate tool for reconstructing the pronunciation of early Qing Beijinghua—and Manchu. In the Qianlong period, phonetic dictionaries were compiled on the same basis, using the *fanqie* 反切 system to explain the pronunciation of Chinese characters as if they were Manchu words, with “head” and “tail,” e.g. the *Han-Ch’öngmun’gam* 漢清文鑑 (162–67). Joseph Edkins later enthused about the usefulness of this approach (168).

The last two chapters are devoted to the creation of a single-letter alphabet by Westerners (Chapter 7: “The Invention of a Manchu Alphabet in Saint Petersburg, 1720s–1730s,” 169–89) and for the purpose of printing in the West (Chapter 8: “The Making of a Manchu Typeface in Paris, 1780s–1810s,” 190–221). Following several conjectures, such as Claudio Grimaldi’s remark of 1689 to Leibniz that Manchu was derived from Arabic (176), Gottlieb Siegfried Bayer (1694–1738) managed to decipher Manchu by means of the Mongol translator “Gabriel” (a Christian convert and always drunk), as well as Russian and Swedish helpers in China. From this point onwards, Europeans understood the Manchu script in the same way as a Latin-style alphabet (180–89).

The story of the Manchu movable type invented by Louis-Mathieu Langlès (190–95, 199) is brilliantly narrated, including the author’s own photographs of Firmin Didot’s Manchu punches, now at the Imprimerie Nationale (204–5). This failed to impress Napoleon Bonaparte, who gave his preference to other Orientalists (211), whilst the aging Qianlong emperor expressed an interest in a machine which could write simple texts (207). Simultaneously, in 1784 (195), Joseph-Marie Amiot finished his Manchu-Chinese dictionary and sent a Manchu syllabary (“Alphabet Manchou”) to Bertin in France. Whilst Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat recognized the alphabetical nature of the Manchu

writing system (220), others such as Ivan Zakharov and Peter Schmidt disagreed. Saarela's chapter captures the quasi-sectarian divisions that left their imprint on the European intellectual arena, dominated by Paris.

The general conclusion makes reference to Lao She, who mentioned in his descriptions of Beijing after 1911 that many Manchu and Mongol books were available in book shops, clearly using the term "Twelve heads" (十二頭兒). Saarela eventually concludes that the polyethnic and multilinguistic nature of the Qing state was exemplified by the free linguistic discourse of the Qing era. By the time Lao She took distance from his Manchu origins, Chinese nationalism was inexorably on the rise (228–29).

To summarize, Saarela has produced a well-contextualized historical introduction to written Manchu, with ample empirical background and biographical notes. Reading in between the lines, it becomes clear that Manchu remained a status symbol until the very end of the Qing era, and that the bannerfolk of Beijing were the ultimate guinea pigs of any educational exercise concerning Manchu—to the Manchus themselves a badge of pride. The focus on the socio-political function of language is rigorously maintained throughout this book; indeed, the readers are reminded of it in the conclusions to each chapter. Furthermore, it is remarkable that *all* translations are by the author. Saarela's linguistic analysis—e.g. of the terms "mirror" (*speculum*) and 鑒 *jian* (142.)—is accurate and sharply defined. Granted, there are a few lapses to report: the very beginning (28) and the conclusion display mixed full-form and simplified characters, whilst the editor could have asked the author before dividing Chinese transliterations, e.g. "Ju-rchen" (19), "Gaol-ing" (78). The greatest mystery is the missing bibliography, which would have been very useful for this kind of study. This is perhaps Saarela's "homework" for the next edition of this monograph, which in all other respects should be regarded as a milestone in the historical study of Manchu.

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DOI:10.1163/22141332-0801P006-14

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The Imperial Church: Catholic Founding Fathers and United States Empire. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020. Pp. xiv + 311. Hb \$48.95.

In *The Imperial Church: Catholic Founding Fathers and United States Empire*, Katherine D. Moran has written a carefully crafted, precisely argued book