

RESEARCH ARTICLE

From the Mandate of Heaven to the modern state: the nation according to Wei Xiaobao

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the Jin Yong novel *The Deer and the Cauldron* through the lens of Etienne Balibar's theory of super-nationalism and supranationalism. The novel employs a pan-Asian racial ideology to expand national identity from Han Chinese to other ethnic groups (supranationalism) by introducing a racial Other, white Europeans, to unify warring groups. Simultaneously, Han culture is consistently uplifted as superior (super-nationalism). A critical sequence features the Kangxi Emperor asserting his legitimacy as the ruler of China to the protagonist Wei Xiaobao by claiming the Mandate of Heaven has passed from the Ming to the Qing dynasty. However, Han Chinese gallants and intellectuals constantly challenge his legitimacy because, as a Manchu, he is considered foreign. To resolve this issue, Wei Xiaobao begins constructing a racial national framework that includes Manchus. This paper further argues that Wei Xiaobao's moral relativism, unusual for a protagonist in martial arts fiction, enables the flexibility to redefine Chinese identity on racial grounds instead of moral or cultural. *The Deer and the Cauldron* illustrates the transition from the Mandate of Heaven to modern nation-state ideology in China, in the form of an irreverent martial arts fiction novel, crafted by the genre's greatest master.

Keywords: Balibar; identity; Jin Yong; legitimacy; martial arts fiction; nationalism; *The Deer and the Cauldron*

Introduction

In 1969 Jin Yong (金庸 1924–2018) began publishing his last martial arts epic serially in his newspaper *Ming Pao* (明報). *The Deer and the Cauldron* (鹿鼎記 *Ludingji*) broke the mold Jin Yong had established in his previous thirteen novels and novellas. The most obvious difference is that the main protagonist, Wei Xiaobao (韋小寶), rather than the usual moral stalwart, is devoid of most standards of moral decency. The deviation was so stark that many at the time suspected Jin Yong was not the actual author (Hamm 2005, p. 200). *The Deer and the Cauldron* is likely Jin Yong's most controversial novel. A panel in Taipei on Jin Yong's fiction, organized for the release of a new Taiwan edition of his corpus, spent three-quarters of the time debating Wei Xiaobao's personality. At another Jin Yong conference in Boulder, *The Deer and the Cauldron* and Wei Xiaobao again garnered the most attention (201). Several conflicts run throughout *The Deer and the Cauldron* and there are many themes worthy of critical exploration beyond the scope of this study. This paper will focus on the oppositional relationship between Han Chinese and non-Han peoples, especially with regard to the ruling Manchus; the protagonist's conflicting loyalties to the Kangxi Emperor and his Chinese gallant friends; and how moral relativism aids in the imagination of a new racial nation that resolves these conflicts.

The novel takes place in the early days of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) during the reign of the Kangxi Emperor (康熙 1654–1722). The Manchus have successfully invaded and taken over China,

but their hold on the vast territory is still precarious. They rely on southern allies such as Wu Sangui (吳三桂 1612–1678) to control the south, while secret societies (most notably the Heaven and Earth Society *tiandihui* 天地會 or triads) loyal to the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) challenge their rule internally, and the Ming loyalist Zheng (鄭) family rules in Taiwan. The secret societies, common to martial arts fiction – and with many amazing fighters and heroes – adamantly refuse to accept a ruler whom they view as not Chinese. Only the rascal Wei Xiaobao, who follows his own unique line of reasoning, accepts Manchu rule.

Martial arts fiction novels are often governed by the codes of *yi* (義), commonly translated as righteousness, principle, or appropriateness, which in the genre context can be considered a type of honor. This honor prizes the virtues of justice and loyalty to friends. These two *yi* virtues, while not mutually exclusive, can conflict, and loyalty to friends trumping justice has inspired moral scorn from critics towards “rivers and lakes” narratives ranging from *The Water Margin* to *The Deer and the Cauldron*. Wei Xiaobao is a character who adheres to *yiqi* (義氣), which can be considered a subset of *yi* that puts more emphasis on the rules governing friendship than other connotations of *yi* (Hazard 2020, pp. 35–45). Indeed, Wei Xiaobao is notorious for predominately focusing on this one side of *yi*, loyalty to friends. His interpretation of *yiqi*, however, almost totally removes any ideas of justice and thus enables him to follow a relativist moral code.

In his analysis of *The Deer and the Cauldron*, John Hamm identifies Wei Xiaobao’s conflicting loyalties to either the Manchu Emperor or his friends among the Han Chinese resistance fighters as a matter of *yiqi* and not *zhongyi* (忠義 loyalty to the throne/state). His concern for threats against the Emperor’s empire, like the traitorous Wu Sangui or Russian invaders, is highly personalized in terms of loyalty to a friend (the Emperor), rather than the Qing court. At the same time, he also has *yiqi* relationships with resistance fighters who oppose the Manchu Qing (Hamm 2005, p. 210). This paper argues he discovers a path through these entangled *yiqi* relationships through a racial definition of the nation and developing the parameters of a national identity that would legitimize Manchu rule. He maps out a Chinese identity that includes non-Han, especially Inner Asians, based on their physical appearance, race, and comparative similarities to Chinese vis-à-vis the white Other. His sovereign model resembles the modern nation-state of a people and their boundaries instead of imperial ideologies employing cultural, moral, and religious concepts to back their rule.

The novel narrates this transition between conflicting ideologies of sovereignty. The Kangxi Emperor legitimizes his rule through concepts that derive their claims largely through moral leadership in which the ruler and the boundaries of the state are not defined through a people and their location. The moral relativism of Wei Xiaobao, however, turns out to be an ideal ethical landscape for the nation-state to take shape. Wei Xiaobao’s relativism enables him to expand Chinese national identity to include his two rival groups of friends. Since he does not rely on moral orientations for identity, race becomes the most effective way to include all his *yiqi* relationships into one group. This is not an argument about the history of the Qing dynasty, rather how it is reimagined in modern popular culture, and how the novel connects with modern Chinese intellectual thought, which frequently promotes a racial reimagining of China.

Intersections of nationalism, race, and culture

The literary scholar and Jin Yong critic Chen Mo claims Jin Yong did not consciously put much importance on race when discussing non-Han and Han relations in the novel, but portrays cultural difference as having the utmost importance (Chen 1994, p. 407). This paper will challenge Chen’s analysis. He ignores the various ways that constructs of race are used in the novel, and China more broadly, to both incorporate and differentiate Han and non-Han.

One thread running through *The Deer and the Cauldron* is the expression of an expansive nationalist community based on race but with a Han dominated hierarchy. This is in sharp contrast to previous Jin Yong works, which largely equate China with Han Chinese and rulers from the steppe as invaders, albeit *Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils* arguably muddies this generalization. The philosopher

Etienne Balibar explains how these two thrusts are interrelated in nationalist projects. Balibar argues racism presents itself as a super-nationalism, an idea that the nation is based on a race and is obsessed with its integrity. Since it is based on a particular people, who may not be within the borders of a single state, super-nationalism becomes concerned with the return of lost individuals to the national body. This focus on people leads to questions about who belongs to the national body and the possibility of expanding it. Thus, super-nationalism often enmeshes with pan-Asian movements or supranationalism, which seeks to broaden out and potentially claim other peoples into the nation. While supranationalism expands the nation, super-nationalism becomes obsessed with the quest for a “core of authenticity,” the true nationals who have the highest claims to hierarchy (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, pp. 59–61). Balibar’s ideas help us understand how Han chauvinism, pan-Asianism, and Chinese nationalism are interlinked. Pan-Asianism, an example of supranationalism, expands the national boundaries, while Han chauvinism (super-nationalism) assures that the core group maintains the dominant position, all under the rubric of an expansive Chinese nationalism.

The “techniques of nationalization,” as identified by Patrick Hogan, provide a solid foundation to analyze how *The Deer and the Cauldron* serves to nationalize its readers to a specific vision of the nation. Among the five “techniques of nationalization,” opposability and durability are most instructive to this analysis.¹ Opposability is finding comparative Others to inform who belongs in the nation and who is an outsider. It can also work toward the occlusion of subnational and transnational categories in favor of an in-group. Durability is the construction of the nation’s ancientness and its survival through progressive history (Hogan 2009, pp. 66–123). Louisa Schein argues that the non-Han became both incorporated into, and oppositional entities of, the Chinese people. The Othered non-Han are represented as an essential part of the nation, but also help form the identity of the core of the nation, in this case, the Han. In addition, external Others can also come into play and contrast with the internal Other in identity formation. (Schein 2000, p. 106). Thus, a framework that analyzes foreign opposability along with subnational opposability is needed to better understand Chinese identity formation. Prasenjit Duara reminds us how important a sense of timelessness and durability is to the core of authenticity: “In order to be recognizable as the subject of history, the core of the nation has to be perceived as unaffected by the passage of time” (Duara 2003, p. 28). The durable Han core is easily identifiable in Jin Yong’s and other literatures.

The contributions this article makes are three-fold: to argue for a new interpretation of the nationalist and racial aspects of the novel, and that it should be viewed as part of the broader discourse on ethnicity and nationalism in China; to demonstrate that the dialogue between the Emperor and Wei Xiaobao mirrors the ideology of the Mandate of Heaven as explained by Mencius, yet this form of moral and cultural legitimacy loses its effectiveness and race becomes the most crucial source of legitimacy, while cultural markers are relegated to helping identify the core of authenticity; and to reveal how the moral relativism of Wei Xiaobao contributes to imagining a racialized nation.

Historical-intellectual background

The Deer and the Cauldron was written during a twentieth century Chinese intellectual climate greatly concerned with national identity. Late Qing reformers and early revolutionaries diverged on their conception of the Chinese nation. Reformers typically understood the nation as a lineage with an ancestor, shared territory, and included all the “yellow people” within the borders of the empire. The revolutionaries rejected this notion and claimed that the nation is comprised of a pure Han race, descended from the Yellow Emperor, who must overthrow the foreign Manchus (Dikötter 1992, p. 97). The intellectual reformer who later turned revolutionary, Liang Qichao, expressed this same divide. He originally advocated for a pan-Asian ideology of a yellow race uniting against the white race, and a broad nationalism (大民族主義 *daminzuzhuyi*) that should include the various ethnic groups of the Qing dynasty.

¹The other three techniques are: salience – the quality of being noticeable, such as monuments, flags, national maps, etc; functionality – the access to the same goods, services, and opportunities that being a part of the national community allows; and affectivity works to arouse emotions and empathetically connect people into the national community. It can also create a sense of wonder, such as through amazing landscapes and awe of the state and certain leaders.

He quickly changed perspectives and began arguing for the existence of a pure Han race who were the only genuine members of the yellow race, leaving out non-Han and other nations (85–87). These two ideologies converged when the twentieth century revolutionary states were confronted with the realities of their territory. A Han centric nationalist ideology that included other ethnic groups in a subordinate position became dominant. Two ideas took root in Republican China that are still prevalent today: the idea of a common origin for all Chinese peoples (同源 *tongyuan*), or the theory of the melding (融合 *ronghe*) of multiple peoples into a common national people (Leibold 2006, p. 183).² On the surface, these are two opposing ideas, but the results are similar. Both rest on the idea that a common bloodline is the most essential element of a nation. However, the vast majority of racial–national theories emphasized the superiority of the Han over other groups included in this framework. Various ideas developed to argue that the Han race represents a purer branch of evolution, while others suggested the Han preserve the authentic Chinese culture (181–220). Even as the ethnic boundaries of the nation expanded, a core of authenticity is continually found in the notion of Han Chinese. An examination of *The Deer and the Cauldron* and Balibar’s theories demonstrate how the expansive nation with a core of authenticity can be complementary rather than contradictory.

The Mandate of Heaven and the Kingly Way

The Deer and the Cauldron begins during the regency of Ao Bai (鼈拜 Oboi [died 1669]), a Manchu nobleman who served as regent during the early years of the Qing dynasty while the Kangxi Emperor was too young to rule. Since there are discrepancies between the novel and recorded history, we can only estimate that the story begins around 1660. The first chapter describes the Ming History Incident (明史案). The incident and ensuing crackdown on intellectuals resulted from the circulation of a book called *The Ming Historical Collection* (明史輯略). The book continued to use the Ming dynasty dating until 1644, rather than following the Qing standard of using the Qing calendar from 1616 onward. As a result, Ao Bai killed many Chinese literati. From the first chapter, ethnic conflict’s centrality to the novel is clear. Resisting the Manchus and supporting Chinese rulership is a fundamental conflict of the story. The anti-Qing fighters of the Heaven and Earth Society are heroes and moral exemplars, they support and represent the typical line of thinking that casts the Manchus as foreign barbarian invaders. The protagonist Wei Xiaobao is different. He does not have a strong prejudice against Manchus and recognizes the Kangxi Emperor as the ruler. By tracing Wei Xiaobao’s thinking, first him being persuaded by Kangxi of his moral legitimacy, then his urging of others to accept Manchu rule, and finally who he believes are traitors, we can analyze how the novel’s description of Chinese national identity evolves.

Early in the novel, Wei Xiaobao is captured by a martial arts master eunuch and brought to the Forbidden City, where he passes off as a eunuch to stay hidden. There he encounters a fellow teenager, the Kangxi Emperor. He does not recognize he is the Emperor, and believes he is just another young eunuch, so he has no qualms about engaging in practice wrestling matches with him. Before long, both seek the advice of Chinese martial artists to improve their skills and best the other (Jin Yong 2002, Ch. 4). By not adhering to proper protocol, the two youths quickly become friends.

Ao Bai is the first antagonist of the novel. He delights in violence, believes Chinese culture and writing are useless and should not be read by Manchus, and killing common folk is a useful military tool. Writing and literature are important Chinese cultural symbols, and Ao Bai pointedly criticizes young

²Archaeology in China has played a fundamental role in linking the various peoples in the modern Chinese state to a shared descent and claim for them a national belonging (Leibold 2011, p. 333). Chinese textbooks tell students that there is a straight linear evolution from Peking Man to the 18,000-year-old modern-human Upper Cave Man as proof of the antiquity and purity of the Chinese people. One textbook shows students a map of the PRC with the distribution of prehistoric remains and prods students to accept the distribution of these remains and relics as proof of the “spatial and temporal unity of the Chinese geobody” (334). The role of academics, scientists, and especially archaeology in the politics of the state cannot be underestimated.

Kangxi³ for reading Chinese writing and studying their culture. Kangxi not only studies the Chinese classics, he also believes they are important sources of morality. The first appearance of Kangxi in *The Deer and the Cauldron* is him hard at work studying the Chinese classics and recognizing their achievements. From the beginning, Kangxi advocates that the Mandate of Heaven rules China (天命王中國 *tiangming wang zhongguo*) and has granted him sovereign authority. The heroes of the Heaven and Earth Society do not accept that the Mandate of Heaven has passed to the Qing. Furthermore, as will be evident later, they even believe benevolent rule is not enough. He is Manchu, a foreigner, and not Chinese. However, since Ao Bai has held power as regent for many years, he is Kangxi's first obstacle to possessing the real sovereign authority to be the Emperor of China and must be removed.

In many martial arts novels, a powerful enemy requires an equally powerful – but moral – hero to fight them. *The Deer and the Cauldron* is not a typical martial arts novel. Helping deal with Ao Bai becomes Wei Xiaobao's first contribution to his new friend Kangxi. After a clever but chaotic plan to capture Ao Bai, in which Xiaobao proves his mettle by throwing incense ash in his eyes and smashing an incense burner over his head, Ao Bai is finally arrested (Ch. 6). Later, Xiaobao assassinates Ao Bai in his prison cell (Ch. 7). For killing a “foreign” leader who had killed many Chinese, Wei Xiaobao becomes a famous hero among the common people and recognized in the anti-Qing gallant community. Although Kangxi increased his power and authority by removing the regency, the Chinese people still do not recognize his sovereign legitimacy. In addition, the credit for killing the hated Ao Bai goes to the Chinese hero Wei Xiaobao and not to the Manchu Emperor.

Kangxi is not only concerned with increasing his power and securing his position, but also earning the support of the common people. He believes that just rulership through the Kingly Way (王道 *wangdao*), which is a set of virtues that a good Confucian ruler should embody to enact benevolent governance, could gain their support. In conversations with Xiaobao, Kangxi advocates for Mencius' political thought, especially that the Mandate of Heaven (天命 *tianming*) is a natural process not decided by people but Heaven. *The Mencius* records a conversation,

Wan Zhang said, “Is it true that Yao gave the world to Shun?” Mencius said, “No. The Son of Heaven cannot bestow the world upon anyone.” “But then, if Shun possessed the world, who gave it to him?” “Tian [Heaven] bestowed it upon him.” “Was Tian's presentation an order clearly stated?” “No,” said Mencius. “Tian does not speak. It simply reveals itself through action and event.” (Eno 2016, 5a.5 106–107)

The rest of Mencius' conversation with Wan Zhang indicates that the approval of the people works in coordination with Heaven. The Mandate of Heaven does not necessarily go from father to son, because it is Heaven that decides who is the ruler. As a result, there is ideological room for an unrelated person with different ancestors, or possibly a different ethnic group to become the ruler. Given that the new ruler practices benevolent government and the Kingly Way, Kangxi is mostly concerned with winning the recognition of the people when he tells Xiaobao the orders he received from his father, the Shunzhi Emperor (順治皇帝 1638–1661), after finding him secretly still alive as a Chan Buddhist monk in a secluded monastery:

“My father instructed me to love and cherish the common people, and never increase taxes and levies...” “Never increase levies, what's that?” Xiaobao interrupted. Kangxi gave a slight smile, “Increasing onerous taxes. Those Ming dynasty emperors indulged in wanton extravagance. When they sent soldiers to war and ran out of money, they gave orders to squeeze more taxes out of the people. The Ming officials were extremely corrupt, if the emperor increased taxes, the officials would extract double and keep half for themselves. The common folk were already

³Even though Kangxi is the reign name of Xuanye, the novel often uses Kangxi more like a personal name than a reign name, the rest of the paper will mostly refer to him in the fashion of the novel.

desperately poor, if the court raised levies this year, then again raised taxes next year, how could the people have food to eat? The harvested grains will all be handed over to the officials. If people see their families starving, their only option is to rise in rebellion. This is called officials making the people rebel.” (Jin Yong 2002, p. 847)⁴

Kangxi is appropriating Chinese traditional thought, especially Mencius, to advocate for his rule. He claims he will not increase the common people’s burdens. The leader must consider the country’s strength and the people’s livelihood together. By decreasing taxes, corvée labor, and military conscriptions, the nation will be stable and the economy will grow. Kangxi’s reasoning is reminiscent of Mencius. When a king inquired why he keeps losing battles to the state of Qi, Mencius replied,

Other rulers commandeer the labor of the summer fieldwork so that people have no way to do their ploughing and weeding. Their parents freeze and starve, while brothers, wives, and children are forced to scatter. These rulers entrap their people till they sink and drown. If Your Majesty were to campaign against such rulers, what enemies could be your match? Thus it is said that “the man of humanity has no enemies” – may Your Majesty never doubt it! (Eno 2016, 1A.5 22)

The dialogue between Kangxi and his father is a key scene for the whole novel. The Shunzhi Emperor admits he was not a good emperor. However, after he started studying Chan Buddhism, he became a moral person. Chan Buddhism is a sect of Buddhism native to China. Other parts of the novel disparage Tibetan Buddhists/Lamaism as lacking true moral character. The Dalai Lama even sends warrior lamas to kill the Shunzhi Emperor in his retirement, but Wei Xiaobao saves him from these evil lamas (Jin Yong 2002, Ch. 17–18). A hierarchy of true moral thought is established by privileging Chan Buddhism, associated with the Han, over Lamaism associated with Tibetans and Inner Asians. In addition, Chan Buddhism has great civilizing effects on the Shunzhi Emperor and guides the advice he imparts to his son.

By studying Chinese culture, Kangxi can learn the Kingly Way and obtain the Mandate of Heaven. In addition, the Chinese should not blame the collapse of the Ming and the Manchu takeover on the Manchus, but on the Chinese rulers of the Ming who lost their Confucian legitimacy. The conversation continues along this thought,

Wei Xiaobao nodded his head, “I get it now, the people under the Ming revolted because the Emperor and his officials failed in their duties.” Kangxi replied, “could it be any other way? Towards the end of the dynasty, during the Chongzhen reign, the common people didn’t have food to eat, so they rebelled in the east and revolted in the west. The Ming wiped out Henan’s rebellions, then Shaanxi rebelled, they suppressed Shanxi, and Sichuan revolts. Those hopeless masses pillaged to the east and west to survive. The Ming was brought down by their own hands. Those Chinese call it a river of men rebelling. This so-called river of refugees were forced into vagabondage by the court...However, if we Manchus want to be the emperors of China, then we will have to do much better than the worthless Ming to make it up to the common people.” (847–848)

According to the Mencian philosophy Kangxi espouses, the Ming dynasty lost the Mandate of Heaven and collapsed because of their mistreatment of the people, who were forced into the greenwood and rose up in rebellion. The Manchus won an easy victory against the Ming because the Ming lost their moral legitimacy to rule.

After hearing Kangxi’s explanation, Xiaobao thinks to himself:

⁴All translations from the novel are my own. John Minford published a colorful abridged translation of the novel. However, most of the dialogues in this paper are not in his translation.

The Heaven and Earth Society and Mu family all say the Northern Barbarians (*dazi*)⁵ occupy our Chinese rivers and mountains and they should all be hated. But the little emperor says the Ming emperors were bad and the Northern Barbarian emperors are better, but I guess that's not strange, everyone compliments themselves. (848)

Even though Kangxi is a benevolent emperor and wants to use the Kingly Way to rule China, his Manchu identity creates a problem of ethnic authenticity. Xiaobao knows that his gallant friends do not care whether non-Hans implement benevolent government, the most principal factor is that they are not Chinese. In other words, an authentic ruler of China must be ethnically Chinese, they must possess racial authenticity to legitimize their sovereignty. Xiaobao only seems partially convinced himself, certainly some of the conversation is portrayed as going over his head, it is perhaps his *yiqi* (code of honor to friends) that convinces him of Kangxi's legitimacy rather than grasping the tenets of the Mandate of Heaven. However, he needs to find a way to convince others to do the same. Kangxi tells Xiaobao,

"My father told me that these last few years of taking a vow of solitude and meditating led him to ponder the Manchus previous misdeeds. The rebel Li Zicheng forced Ming Chongzhen to commit suicide, and Wu Sangui looked to us to provide troops to defeat Li Zicheng and avenge the Ming emperor. However, the Chinese common people did not feel gratitude towards the Qing and instead made us out to be the enemy. Why do you think that is?" Wei Xiaobao responded, "I think they were confused, there's a lot of confused people walking around, and few smart ones, or they're an ungrateful lot who bite the hand that feeds them." (848)

Kangxi brings up the merit of killing the rebel Li Zicheng (李自成 (1606–1645) to argue that being Manchu should not lead people to question his legitimacy as emperor, yet these "confused" people still clamor for his downfall. Mencius speaks to a similar circumstance,

King Xuan of Qi asked, "Is it so that Tang banished Jie and that King Wu killed Zhòu?" Mencius replied, "It is so recorded in the histories." "Is it permissible, then, for a subject to kill his ruling lord?" Mencius said, "A man who plunders humanity is called a thief; a man who plunders righteousness is called an outcast. I have heard of the execution of Outcast Zhòu; I have not heard of the execution of a ruling lord Zhòu." (Eno 2016, 1B.9 36)

Since an immoral sovereign becomes an "outcast," they can be rightfully eliminated, and new sovereigns take their place. According to Mencian thought, the cruel and corrupt Ming dynasty should be overturned by new rulers and these new rulers would receive the Mandate of Heaven. In addition, Li Zicheng's wanton slaughter disqualified him, and the Manchus rightfully defeated him.

The Shunzhi Emperor urged Kangxi to not use hegemonic (霸權 *baquan*) power to control China: "The affairs under heaven should proceed naturally, you cannot force things. If you can bring benefit to the common people of the Central Plains, then that is best. However, if the common people wish us to leave, then we should go back to where we came from" (Jin Yong 2002, p. 715). If one is unable to use the Kingly Way to govern China, then you should not rule over people who do not want you to rule them. A double standard is developing in the novel. A Manchu government requires moral legitimacy, a Chinese government can rely on racial authenticity, and Chinese characters in the story would never suggest that the Chinese rulers willingly cede power and return home. Kangxi believes he employs the Kingly Way. He optimistically trusts that if he just gives the Chinese more time, they will recognize his legitimacy. Whether he is successful or not is one of *The Deer and the*

⁵韃子(*dazi*) is used in the novel as a derogatory term for Manchus. It is a premodern term for various peoples of the north. John Minford translates the word as Tartars.

Cauldron's most significant conflicts. However, at its root, his problem is not an issue of the Mandate of Heaven, but of race.

Even though Wei Xiaobao figures Kangxi is already one of China's best emperors, many other Chinese do not accept his right to rule. The novel illustrates one such episode when he tries to persuade four famous anti-Qing literati of Kangxi's merit:

Wei Xiaobao took the opportunity to say, "That's right! The little emperor said that although he's no sage (*niaoshengyutang*),⁶ but he's at least as good as those Ming emperors, maybe even better. I've never studied, can't read, and can't really say if this is right." Gu, Zha, Huang, and Lü looked at each other, thinking of all the Ming emperors, from the first to the last, if they weren't cruel and brutal, then they were muddleheaded and confused. Is there one who could surpass Kangxi? The four were the great Confucian scholars of their day and thoroughly knew their history. They could not deny the truth and unwillingly nodded their head in agreement (1797–1798).

John Hamm analyzes this scene as the scholars grudgingly accepting Kangxi's legitimacy in the nodding of their heads (Hamm 2005, p. 208). These four famous scholars may recognize that Kangxi is a superior ruler to all the Ming emperors. In their hearts, however, they cannot accept a Manchu as the ruler of China and ultimately reject his legitimacy. The Mandate of Heaven works in a practical sense as well. If the country is governed well, then there will be fewer hardships and potential economic flourishing. The impact of natural disasters can also be mitigated, and famines relieved through releasing grain stores and other programs. These four scholars understand this possibility and worry that the common people will soon forget the Ming dynasty and support the Qing dynasty under the wise rulership of the Kangxi Emperor. However, the four scholars can never accept a non-Han as their emperor. Instead, they hope to build a new Han Chinese dynasty, different from the Ming's corrupt and cruel system. They even encourage Wei Xiaobao to become the founder of this new dynasty (Jin Yong 2002, pp. 1799–1800). The fact that he is illiterate and morally lacking, especially compared to Kangxi, is not important because he is a racial hero. Kangxi's moral rule is viewed as a threat to these scholars because it may blind the people to his ethnic Otherness. These literati are abandoning the concept of moral legitimacy for racial authenticity.

The Mandate of Heaven discussion in the novel brings moral legitimacy to the forefront. In "Being Chinese," Myron Cohen argues traditional Chinese identity's essential element was culture and civilization: "Being civilized, that is, being Chinese, was nothing less than proper human behavior in accordance with cosmic principles." However, the modern Chinese states have forcefully rejected this traditional identity in favor of an identity based on the nation-state (Cohen 1994, p. 39). The idea that culture is the key signifier of Chinese identity is referred to as culturalism. Specifically for China, the universal appeal of Confucianism allows for people from different ethnic backgrounds to accept Confucian teachings and become Chinese subjects or rulers. Accordingly, race should not be as strong of a determining factor as described in this paper. Kangxi already accepts Chinese culture, reads the classics, and promotes the use of Confucian political ideology in ruling. However, the Heaven and Earth gallants do not seem concerned with benevolent government and the literati believe the Manchus gaining legitimacy through Confucian universalism is a threat. Benevolent rule will only trick the commoners into accepting foreign rule and must be guarded against.

Culture, however, still plays an important role. Weijie Song argues Jin Yong's fiction "reconfirms Han primacy." While non-Han rule is a historical fact, modern readers can celebrate that the non-Han rulers also have to "openly identify with Han culture." In addition, the triumph of Han martial artists is a ubiquitous theme, which to Song symbolizes "the eventual cultural victory of the Han nationality" (Song 2007, p. 131). As described earlier, Kangxi and Wei Xiaobao learned from Han

⁶Xiaobao can never remember the four sage rulers: Yao, Shun, Yu, and Tang and instead remembers the names as *niaoshengyutang* (鳥生魚湯) – gibberish which literally translates to bird, birth, fish soup.

martial arts masters to improve their abilities beyond the Manchu wrestling techniques they first studied. In the novel, Han martial arts, along with Chan Buddhist and Confucian teachings, are elevated above techniques and teachings from non-Han peoples. The Kangxi Emperor in *The Deer and the Cauldron*, and the Qianlong Emperor in *The Book and the Sword* (書劍恩仇錄 *shujianenchoulu*),⁷ are regularly described as being fascinated by Chinese culture and ascribe superiority to it. Song further explains, “In the complicated process of cultural dominance and resistance the non-Han rulers are Sinicized in that culture becomes not only an undeniable historical fact but also the Han people’s fantasy. That non-Han people identify the Han culture as their spiritual home is always a topic which Han people indulge in” (141). The pervasive discourse of assimilating non-Han creates a national salience for the core of the nation to readily recognize and identify with. However, Song misses how culture is rejected by *The Deer and the Cauldron*’s characters as a method to incorporate non-Han into the nation. Instead, as will be developed in the next section, a discourse centered on phenotype expands the scope of national identity. Culture becomes a tool that creates hierarchies and identifies who is the core of authenticity within a racial nationalist identity framework. Manchus, Inner Asians, and other groups can all be Chinese, but only Han Chinese, the inherent possessors of this culture, can be in the national core of authenticity.

Racial authenticity

The characters in the novel are unconvinced by a moral or cultural argument for legitimacy to rule in China. However, an Other, even more fearsome, with an offensive physical appearance arrives and changes the legitimacy debate, white Europeans. Wei Xiaobao travels to the edges of Manchuria and discovers a Russian imperial outpost encroaching on Qing territory. Through the arrival of the white Other, *The Deer and the Cauldron* projects the constant ethnic conflict of previous Jin Yong novels as internal, while the new threat is external and racial. The Manchu Qing dynasty can then become a Chinese dynasty, not just through assimilation, but a process of racialization that expands Chinese identity to incorporate other peoples as Chinese.

In the time of the Kangxi Emperor, most people would have viewed the small skirmishes between Manchu and Russian forces, which ended with the signing of the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689, as a conflict defending and settling the borders of the Manchu homelands and Qing territory. *The Deer and the Cauldron* recasts it as a defense of inalienable Chinese territory against dangerous white Europeans. Even the Manchu-hating gallants, who are currently conquered by the Manchus and are sworn to overthrow them, inexplicably view these small bands of Russian imperial soldiers as an even greater threat than their Manchu conquerors. Wei Xiaobao tells his master, the Heaven and Earth Society helmsmen Chen Jinnan,

“Master, I don’t fear those green eyed red-furred Russians, as long as you don’t look too much at their faces. But their guns are really fierce, one boom from a gun, and no matter how great of a hero you are, you can’t defend it.” Chen Jinnan replies: “I share this worry. Wu Sangui and the Manchus are bleeding each other, it truly is an opportunity from Heaven to restore our Chinese homeland, but you expel the tiger from the front door and a wolf enters through the back. If we chase out the Northern Barbarians, then the even fiercer Russians will come again and occupy our beautiful country. What is the correct path?” (Jin Yong 2002, p. 1189)

The narrative does not provide Chen Jinnan with any reason to believe the Russians are more dangerous than the Manchus. The Manchus are the ones currently occupying his “beautiful homeland” and he and his fellow gallants frequently mention the massacres perpetuated by the Manchus. In addition, the Russians in *The Deer and the Cauldron* are only interested in Manchu territory and Siberia.

⁷The novel reveals that he is a Han Chinese who was switched out as a baby. A popular myth that functions as another way to define away the accomplishments of a non-Han emperor as Han Chinese.

This land suddenly becomes important to Chen Jinnan because the narrative prompts the reader to read twentieth and nineteenth century events into the seventeenth century. The novel is mapping the current national territory onto history, and then fills it with a newly imagined homogenized people. This gives the territory of the nation-state a much greater sense of durability.

Wei Xiaobao urges the gallants to accept a modern pan-Asian racial logic for including the Manchus. He proclaims, “Northern Barbarians also have yellow skin, black eyes, and flat noses, no different than us. Their language is also about the same. Foreign devils with their red fur and green eyes, speaking their jilgulu jibber jabber, who can understand that?” (930). These statements are indicative of the racial homogenization that takes place in the novel. The Manchus are described as just the same as Chinese because of their physical appearance, but this new similarity appears because of the oppositional relationship established between Chinese and white Europeans. Xiaobao also claims Manchu and Chinese languages are “about the same,” despite the languages belonging to different language families. The story is also set very early in the Qing, before Manchus began speaking Chinese more commonly. In forming national identity, the in-group is typically imagined as homogenized, while the differences with out-groups are exaggerated (Hogan 2009, pp. 80–81). A focus on “Asian” appearance versus “white” appearance also mirrors popular modern ideas and theories of a pan-Asian yellow race. *The Deer and the Cauldron* emphasizes the differentness of white Europeans, while largely disregarding differences between Chinese and Manchus, and instead promotes similarities in physical appearance. Race becomes the dominant criteria to determine identity in the novel.

When Wei Xiaobao first encounters Russians in northern Manchuria, the lascivious Xiaobao becomes the paramour of the Russian Princess Sophia. This love affair carries strong nationalist considerations. Unlike the Chinese women he collects throughout the novel, he does not pursue her, but is aggressively and passionately pursued by her. The only wife to pursue Xiaobao is the improper Manchu Princess Jianning. However, she only has eyes for Xiaobao and remains completely loyal to him, despite his addition of new wives. On the other hand, for the Princess Sophia, Xiaobao is only her favorite lover, she has plenty of others to satisfy her wanton desires, even if they are incomparable to Xiaobao (Jin Yong 2002, Ch. 36, 48). While critics have complained of his immoral behavior, unlike women, the sexual behavior of men is rarely turned into a national issue. Louisa Schein notes the importance of female sexuality to the nationalist cause. Their reproductive health and vital role as child-bearer and transmitters of traditional culture to the next generation is a common theme and demonstrates the importance of women maintaining moral standards. However, the reproductive ability of women is also a threat to the nation, for if they produce offspring with foreign men, they can pollute the national bloodline. The standards of national female morality are often set by portraying the internal and external others as “sexual misfits.” The sexually deviant conduct of these misfits helps establish the norms by which the national women should live (Schein 2000, p. 108). However, Xiaobao’s sexuality and immoral behavior has little to no national consequence. The Princess Sophia storyline signifies that white women do not possess the moral qualities of Chinese women, and the licentiousness of this one white female character in the novel is on full display, effectively increasing the opposability of white Europeans. At the same time, Princess Jianning is morally lacking compared to Xiaobao’s Han wives, yet still superior to Princess Sophia.

One could read the inclusion of the Russian threat as an allegory for the Sino-Soviet tensions and border conflicts which partially occurred while the novel was being written. This is a reasonable interpretation and surely a factor. However, broader concerns are at play than the concurrent threat of war. The degree to which the novel depicts Russians as a racial Other, not an ideological enemy nor traditional hostile neighbor, supports the argument of a strong racial opposability theme running through the narrative. The appearance of the Russians is vital to the framework for Chinese identity the novel develops. Furthermore, the racialization of these seventeenth century border skirmishes reframes them as part of a long history of white imperialist threats. Reading the novel as a time capsule may overlook important theoretical implications, such as ideas pertaining to the interplay of legitimacy, morality, race, identity, and nationalism that were relevant to readers in the late 1960s and still are today.

Wei Xiaobao’s clever ruses to defeat the Russians mark an important evolution from gallant hero to nationalist hero. Up to this point, he was mostly motivated by *yiqi* to assist both sides of the Kangxi

and Heaven and Earth Society conflict. His friendships split his allegiances, but the encounter with the Russians provides an opportunity to unite these bonds in a common cause. Fighting the Russians, he is not only a Manchu official and trusted confidant of the Emperor, but also fighting for the Chinese as well. In this case, he is less motivated by *yiqi* to his friends, or even *zhongyi* to the throne, but loyalty to the nation. During Wei Xiaobao's mission to Taiwan to oversee the transition of the island to Qing authority, he begins to solidify his view that the Manchus are Chinese, but also maintains an internal hierarchy that places Han Chinese on top. Even though Xiaobao has become a Manchu noble at this point, he still demonstrates great admiration for the Ming loyalist Zheng Chenggong (鄭成功 1624–1662). When he discusses the war between the Qing and Zheng Chenggong with the Chinese General Shi, who fought against the Zheng family, he states, "General Shi, only someone who fights foreign devils should be considered a real hero. Chinese killing Chinese, killing more Chinese, doesn't count as a hero. Isn't that right?" (Jin Yong 2002, p. 1641). Later he comments, "Chinese fighting the red-furred devils, sinking their ships, and driving them out, now hearing about that is pleasing to the ear. But fighting your own people, that's nothing special" (1644). Xiaobao is taking a direct shot at General Shi when he criticizes his victories against the Ming loyalists as brother killing brother, a civil war. Benedict Anderson tells us that an important aspect of building a nationalism is remembering and forgetting. Old wars and massacres between belligerent adversaries are recast as fratricidal. This holds true for both conquerors and the defeated (Anderson 2006, pp. 200–203). For Xiaobao, the yellow race should not fight other yellow races, for they are blood brothers, not in the symbolic sense common in martial arts fiction, but in the biological. To him, the real hero is Zheng Chenggong, not for his military victories against the Qing, but because during his flight from Fujian, his fleet defeated the Dutch colony in Tainan, Taiwan, and forced them to leave. A true Chinese hero is one who defeats other races, especially white foreigners who encroach on Chinese territory. Yet, Zheng Chenggong receives no criticism from Xiaobao for his attacks on the Qing, while Qing commanders like General Shi are castigated for fighting against Ming loyalists.

General Shi does not share Xiaobao's views:

Wei Xiaobao said: "Hey, this whole time you're just another great Chinese tr..." This last word "traitor" he forcibly swallowed. General Shi became red in the face and thought to himself: "you call me a Chinese traitor, I see you as just a fake Manchu. We are cut from the same cloth" (1642).

General Shi cannot grasp that Wei Xiaobao is operating on a new – "higher" – level of ethnic consciousness. Even though General Shi has apprehensions over serving the Qing, he views Xiaobao as being worse than him for praising anti-Qing fighters, while also hypocritically serving the Qing. General Shi operates on private loyalty and revenge, he only joined the Qing to attack the Zheng family after Zheng Chenggong executed his family. Xiaobao maintains an inconsistency in his ideology throughout the novel. He argues for the acceptance of the Manchus as authentic Chinese, but also considers anyone, other than himself, who has helped them as traitors to China, especially Wu Sangui and General Shi.

While Wei Xiaobao works to include the Manchus through the opposability of the white Other, he is also building a hierarchy that subordinates the Manchus to Han Chinese:

Wei Xiaobao said: "Red-furred devils" talk sounds like farts, they have yet to attack Jinmen and Xiamen, isn't that right? When our great Qing says something, they mean it, didn't they finally send their forces to attack Taiwan? Even though it took twenty or thirty years, it wasn't too late. General Shi, when you led the attack against Taiwan, I don't know, were any red-furred devils helping you from the inside? General Shi could no longer contain himself and suddenly stood up and angrily retorted: "Marquis Wei, we both serve the court, both are officials of the great Qing, why do you treat me coldly and are always provoking me?" (1641)

Wei Xiaobao will continue to look down on General Shi for betraying the Ming,⁸ the true Chinese dynasty, and fighting against Ming loyalists, even though they both currently serve the Qing. Fighting against the Ming loyalists who forced the Dutch out of Taiwan also earns the suspicion of collusion with the “red-furred devils.” However, Xiaobao can excuse his own service to the Qing through his role in defeating the Russians in northern Manchuria. He also argues the Qing are the most capable to defend China against the white Other, both in Fujian and in the north. The Chinese should accept the Qing government because it can defend the yellow race from the white Other. The Qing finds its legitimacy not in its cultural achievements, but in its ability to defend China, for the time being, against white threats. This contrasts with the common assertion by late nineteenth and early twentieth century Chinese nationalists that the Manchus failed to defend Chinese territorial sovereignty from European threats. One can extrapolate that the novel is suggesting the Qing lost legitimacy at the point it could no longer protect China from these foreign threats, whereas the early Qing earned legitimacy by defending the borderlands against white encroachment. At the same time, he befriends anti-Qing fighters but another Han Chinese serving the Manchu court, General Shi, receives his opprobrium for fighting other Chinese, a clear double standard.

The ending of *The Deer and the Cauldron* settles the matter of who has Chinese identity through a racial definition in which physical appearance and descent seem to be the primary factors in deciding the nation. After Wei Xiaobao declines the opportunity to help the Confucian scholars revolt and become emperor, he is surrounded by a group of gallants angered by his disloyalty. After a conflict is avoided by the help of two of his old friends, one of the angry gallants says to him while walking away, “Master Wei, you go home and ask your mom if your dad is Chinese or Manchu. To be a good person, one cannot forget their ancestors” (1804). This fighter believes the Chinese and Manchus are two different groups, with different cultures, histories, and most importantly ancestors. Xiaobao thinks that phenotype is a better indicator of national belonging, and believes Manchus and Chinese are of the same race, and thus nation. Yet, he still feels the need to settle the different opinions on Chinese identity and discover who his ancestors really are. He finds his mom at her brothel to ask about his father:

Wei Xiaobao pulled his mother into a room and asked, “Tell me, who’s my pops?” Wei Chunfang glared at him, “How should I know?” Wei Xiaobao furrowed his brows, “Before I was in your belly, who had you been with?” Wei Xiaochun replied, “Your mom was a beautiful woman in those days, I had lots of customers every day, how can I remember so many?” Wei Xiaobao responded, “All of those customers were Han right?” Wei Chunfang answered, “Of course there were Han men, but also Manchu officials, and Mongolian officers as well.” Wei Xiaobao asked, “How about foreign devils?” Wei Chunfang became angry and yelled, “Do you take me for some kind of rotten whore? Even do it with those foreign devils? Hot damn! If Russian or red-furred devils come here, I would beat them out with a broom.” Wei Xiaobao could finally heave a sigh of relief, “That’s good!” Wei Chunfang lifted up her head in recollection and said, “At that time, there was a Hui man who often visited me, fine looking fellow, I often said to myself that my Xiaobao has a nice nose, sorta like his.” Wei Xiaobao responded, “You’ve had Han, Manchu, Mongolian, and Hui customers, how about Tibetans?” Wei Chunfang looked very proud of herself, “How could I not? Before getting in bed, this one Tibetan lama always had to read his sutras, while he read, his eyes would be popping out of his head ogling at me. You have a naughty pair of eyes, just like that lama!” (1807).

This is the last passage of the novel and expresses its final view. It follows the early Republican model of the five nationalities of China: Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Tibetan, and Hui.⁹ The dialogue

⁸He also plays a role in Chen Jinnan’s death, who is an anti-Qing commander.

⁹Hui (回) in Republican era usage can encompass all Muslims (practicing and non-practicing) in China, but in the PRC refers to a specific recognized minority group, that is itself quite diverse. The PRC usage does not apply to Turkic-speaking Muslims.

also emphasizes the physical appearance of the prospective fathers and the repulsive characteristics of the Other. Wei Xiaobao even embodies this expanded nation in his own physical characteristics. The only difference in physical appearance for the Hui patron is his fine nose. This passage imagines the ethnicities within state borders as largely physically undistinguishable, making their belonging to the same state ideologically appropriate. In Jin Yong's novel *The Book and the Sword*, the protagonist travels to Xinjiang and by merely changing into Uyghur clothes is able to disguise himself as Uyghur. Even in close quarters, such as his flirtations with Princess Xiangxiang and interactions with the men in camp, the Uyghurs cannot tell he is Han Chinese (Jin Yong 1999, Chs. 13–14). In this imagining, differences between the members of the in-group are minimized and the nation is expanded, while throughout *The Deer and the Cauldron*, differences with the out-group are grossly exaggerated.

Weijie Song interprets this scene differently. He supports the notion that Wei Chunfang displays a “broad nationalist” (*daminzuzhuyi*) consciousness, or “yellow race centrism.” She naturally resists alien peoples who are “different from Oriental people in terms of race, color of skin, and other physical features.” However, he states, “Wei Xiaobao’s national/individual identity is permanently enveloped in a dense fog because of Wei Chunfang’s open and tolerant gesture to the Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Muslim, and Tibetan patrons. In this sense, the so-called distinctions of a pure race/nation/state identity are collapsed, questioned, and parodied...” (Song 2007, p. 139). Weijie Song misses how the “broad nationalism” of Wei Chunfang, and Wei Xiaobao’s parentage, does not complicate Chinese identity, but simplifies it. Creating a standard for who is Chinese and not Chinese in a complex multi-ethnic state that makes claims on the national identity of people both within and outside its borders is harder than determining who is “yellow” and who is “white.”

Chen Mo has a slightly different interpretation of the final scene. He claims Wei Xiaobao is a “*zazhong*” (雜種 “mixed breed”), and there is no way to tell his ethnicity (民族 *minzu*) from his blood lineage. Therefore, the only way to know for certain what Wei Xiaobao is, is through the cultural elements that he displays. From a cultural perspective, he is an authentic Han to the core (地地道道 *dididaodao*). Thus, culture is the real signifier of ethnic identity (Chen 1994, p. 407). Chen is assuming that Han identity is the end goal. Instead, Xiaobao’s unknown lineage is a supranationalist expansion of the national body. He is right about the role of Xiaobao’s culture in a sense, however, in this case, culture does not identify nationality, rather it helps determine hierarchy and the core of authenticity in an expanded racial nationalist framework. The novel depicts this through the privileging of Chinese martial arts, learning, Mencian thought, and Chan Buddhism over Lamaism and other traditions. The novel even describes Xiaobao’s potential Lama father as eagerly breaking his vows.

Unity

Heroic narratives often involve an external enemy, especially heroic war narratives, and a usurper of legitimate authority (Hogan 2009, pp. 213–214). The novel is complex in that it describes five usurpations or potential usurpations. The first is the regent Ao Bai’s usurpation attempt to make his regency permanent and sideline the young Kangxi Emperor. He represents the non-Han who do not acquiesce to Chinese culture, and are vehemently opposed to anything Han Chinese. Wu Sangui already completed a usurpation by helping the Manchus, but he has a master plan to take the throne from Kangxi and install himself as emperor. Kangxi is regarded as a usurper by most Chinese characters in the novel. Indeed, one of the main conflicts of the novel is that for the majority of characters, a rightful ruler does not exist, the last claimants to the Ming throne having been killed by the Manchus and Wu Sangui. Instead, the Han Chinese characters decide the most important criteria is that the rightful ruler is Han Chinese, no matter how unqualified he may be, hence the four scholars encouraging Wei Xiaobao to revolt and take the throne. The fourth threat of usurpation is from the Russians. They have attempted, and are currently attempting, to usurp “Chinese” territory in Manchuria. The Manchus, for their part, defended the northern border against the Russians, and the Dutch dare not return to cause trouble with a strong Manchu government in charge. Wei Xiaobao argues for

the legitimacy of Manchu rule to protect the borders against white incursion. In addition, a most wicked, super usurpation plot is revealed towards the end of the novel between the traitor usurper Wu Sangui, the foreign Other – the Russians, and secessionist Dzungars and Tibetans.

Wu Sangui is thus portrayed as a double traitor, first he betrays the Han Chinese core to the Manchus, and then he collaborates with Tibetans, Dzungars, and Russians to divide a China the Qing made whole. He is both a small nationalist, who will allow Tibetan and Mongolian independence if it helps his cause, and a colonial collaborator. Thus, he is the most significant national enemy faced by Wei Xiaobao and Kangxi. Traitors, secessionists, and imperialists are all in cahoots to carve up the national territory, and are enemies to both the nation, and the national core. The small nationalists (*xiaominzuzhuyi*) – the Han nationalist fighters like the Heaven and Earth Society – eventually recognize this super usurpation as the ultimate threat, but their petty mindedness still cannot accept the authenticity and legitimacy of the new national imagining. Overall, the novel portrays the Heaven and Earth Society gallants in a positive light. Their Han chauvinism is criticized, but in a more light-hearted manner than the harsh accusations leveled at the usurping Wu Sangui, Ao Bai, Russians, Dzungars, and Tibetans. Han chauvinists should be prodded to see the errors of their exclusionary ways, but not castigated. The most significant critique is that their narrow-mindedness prevents them from recognizing that only the Qing dynasty can stop this grand usurpation plot to divide China.

The narrativizing of these secessionist threats enhances the salience of these non-Han groups as untrustworthy subnationals to be feared. In addition, the threat is linked with a foreign imperialist group who is intent on invading what is now Chinese homeland. Hogan recognizes that in-groups are often not completely unified. One aspect of in-group hierarchies is trust and fear. People who are deemed untrustworthy or invoke fear are often considered subnationals and given a lower status in the national hierarchy (115–117). Balibar's core of authenticity describes this condition. An in-group is frequently created with a core of authentic members, while there are other groups outside of this core but still inside the in-group. There is both an internal force pushing these non-core in-groups toward homogenization with the core, while also maintaining distinctions.

Opposability has a dual unifying effect. Hogan states, "Opposability involves two things: (1) polarization or near polarization of in-group and out-group and (2) categorial unification of the in-group and, to a lesser extent, categorial unifications of the out-group" (80). This process occurs in *The Deer and the Cauldron*. The novel blends the Russians and Dutch together and to an extent with all white people through descriptions like "Russian devils" and "red-furred devils" (the Dutch). The Other becomes a unified threat, and the in-group needs to be unified to stop this threat. The novel's persistent focus on the white Other's "fur" further polarizes them from the in-group.

Conclusion

Chinese dynastic legitimacy partly rested on a moral rule, as signified by the Mandate of Heaven. This creates a moral discourse around what is the Kingly Way and how the sovereign and government officials should behave. Martial sects and even scholars in *The Deer and the Cauldron* mobilize to challenge the state, but on racial rather than moral grounds. They even view the possibility of Manchu rulers being morally superior and incorporating Chinese political philosophy into their governance as a threat that might deceive the people. Moral relativism weakens morality as a source of identity, enabling other identities to supersede it. The moral relativist Wei Xiaobao can become a hero in this world. Wei Xiaobao seeks to simplify the moral logic even more by imagining a racially united China against white Others. He wishes for the gallants and the Manchus to unite as a single Chinese race against a "foreign" enemy. Rather than judging patriots and traitors by their allegiance to the Manchus or the Ming dynasty, he judges them according to their contributions in fighting "white" threats to "China." However, he still indicates that fighting against the Manchus is less problematic than fighting for them against Han Chinese – the core of authenticity.

The moral identity of martial gallants is built on relationships and reputation according to honor codes. Wei Xiaobao is largely guided by his loyalty to his friend Kangxi and his master-disciple

relationship with Chen Jinnan. Many of his decisions, and even discourses about race, are motivated by his desire to harmonize his close relationships with two people who are diametrically opposed to each other. In a short essay, Jin Yong claims that Wei Xiaobao embodies two distinctive Chinese traits, adaptability to the environment (*shiying huanjing* 適應環境) and loyalty to friends (*yiqi*). Jin Yong argues that *yiqi* is quintessential to martial arts fiction and if one displays this quality, they can still be a hero despite other moral failings. Furthermore, adapting to changing environments has allowed the Chinese people to survive through multiple invasions and chaotic times (Jin Yong 2019, pp. 52–53). Xiaobao's embodiment of these two Chinese characteristics can help explain his conceptualization of Chinese identity. His loyalty towards friends leads him to find a way to include both his Manchu and Han friends inside the same category. His willingness to adapt to the environment with little concern for principle allows him to break with convention and suggest a new Chinese identity that benefits his current situation. He maintains the all-important loyalty to friends ethic, but breaks principle by adapting to whatever the situation calls for. In other words, he adheres to the narrowest version of *yiqi* without the expansive moral connotations of *yi*. Crucially, as morality loses importance in claiming legitimacy and moral identity declines, it becomes easier to focus on racial identity, which can be manipulated to expand or contract, to define the nation, its people, and rulers. Without a strong moral code, Wei Xiaobao is unencumbered to reimagine the nation.

The Deer and the Cauldron encourages a racial conception of identity as the basis for a supranationalism that includes non-Han peoples. The narrative fits with other twentieth century intellectual efforts in history, archaeology, and evolutionary theory that make similar claims on the racial authenticity of the nation-state. The novel follows Balibar's logic of a "super-nationalism," working in concert with supranationalism. Super-nationalism is based on race and a racist conception of the nation. Since the focus of authentic identity is on race and a people, place and some cultural considerations lose importance. Thus, diaspora communities and lost nationals are sought after and welcomed back into the nation (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, pp. 60–61). For China, this means that overseas Chinese can be easily imagined as part of the national community. At the same time, a focus on people encourages a pan-Asian movement, to expand the boundaries of national identity, in this case, a type of pan-Asianism centered on the nations and peoples bordering China. Based on the descriptions provided in *The Deer and the Cauldron*, anyone with East Asian features can fit the criteria of Chinese national identity. This type of pan-Asianism is visible in modern Chinese political and intellectual thought. Almost every bordering ethnicity is included as a national minority and, as Leibold argues, the relationship between these groups is commonly portrayed as ancestral and racial (2006, pp. 181–220).¹⁰

Wei Xiaobao's moral relativism and anti-hero antics could also lead readers to reject his version of the nation. Thus, one cannot claim with any certainty that Jin Yong is attempting to convince his readers of the nation according to Wei Xiaobao. Indeed, the farcical nature of the novel could lead one to question the racial national framework developed by its story. However, the narrative does solve the riddle of who has the legitimacy to rule China, as discussed by Kangxi during his subtle invocation of Mencian thought, by reframing Chinese identity around physical appearance in opposability to white Europeans. Whether readers enjoy the anti-hero Wei Xiaobao or are repulsed by him, he remains a popular character among the Chinese reading public, they are confronted with the ideas he puts forward. This paper elucidates how this racial nationalist narrative thread progresses, its broader implications, and connections it shares with premodern and modern Chinese thought.

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¹⁰Japan is the outlier, since post-World War II politics changed pan-Asianism discourse and crucially, there is not a long-standing Japanese community in Chinese territory, whereas land-bordering peoples more easily migrated before hard nation-state borders were established, or the border moved on them.

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