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Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2005. Pp. xx, 725. ISBN 978-0-674-01684-2.

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Peter Perdue, professor of history and Asian civilizations at MIT, is the author of many publications on China and its role in Central Eurasia.¹ The present complex and multi-faceted book recounts a vast enterprise by three able Manchu rulers of China's Qing dynasty during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Of the three protagonists at the beginning of the struggle—China, Russia, and Zungharia—only the first two survived at the end, the Zunghar state and people having been eliminated and eastern Central Eurasia absorbed into the Chinese empire. *China Marches West* is divided into five parts with sixteen chapters, plus appendices, detailed footnotes, and an extensive bibliography of archival and manuscript materials, published primary sources in Russian and Chinese, and many secondary sources. New and old maps, illustrations, plus an index and notes on names, dates, weights, and measures make this book magisterial in scope.

Part One, "The Formation of Eurasian States," provides background in three chapters. Central Eurasia, extending from Ukraine to the Pacific Ocean and Siberia to Tibet, was inhabited mainly by nomadic peoples with no natural boundaries separating them. Most records concerning the nomads were written by their "civilized" neighbors, who characterized them as "universally greedy, primitive and poor" (21). Since ancient times trade has linked the great civilizations bordering Central Eurasia, most notably the Silk Road connecting the Chinese and Roman empires and lands between. The region as a whole was politically united only in the thirteenth century, under Genghis Khan and his successors. The Chinese empire and the nomads of Central Eurasia rarely enjoyed peaceful relations. Nomads raided the sedentary Chinese who retaliated with punitive campaigns and wall building; stability was always transient.

Most of Part One relates the formation of three Central Eurasian states: China, Russia, and Zungharia. In the late fourteenth century, a major shift between the settled states and nomadic peoples of Central Eurasia began with the defeat of the Mongol Yuan dynasty in China by the Han Chinese Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Early Ming warrior emperors campaigned deep into Mongolia, pursuing the Mongols to the shores of Lake Baikal, but failing to destroy them. The Mongols enjoyed a brief resurgence under Tamerlane, but his death in 1405 brought disunity and bitter strife between rival groups. After 1450, China relied on a defensive strategy against the nomads by building defensive walls and regulating border trade. Construction costs and the maintenance of large garrisons along the Great Wall exhausted the Ming treasury and contributed to the economic distress and peasant revolts that ended the dynasty. The succeeding Qing dynasty (1644–1911) finally and decisively solved China's two-millennia-long problem with the nomads of Central Eurasia.

As Ming power declined, a vassal chief named Nurhaci in northeast China (Manchuria) began unifying his people, later named Manchus, who practiced both farming and herding. He organized them into a formidable army under a banner system with an effective administration. Nurhaci and his son Hong Taiji recruited eastern Mongols living in Manchuria and eastern Mongolia to be Manchu subject allies and adapted the Mongol alphabet to create a written Manchu language. They conciliated Han Chinese by creating banner units for them also and recruiting them to staff the civil government. Luck then transformed the emerging frontier Manchu state into a national dynasty: after a peasant rebel army entered the Ming capital Beijing in 1644 and the emperor committed suicide, the Ming army commander at the eastern terminus of the Great Wall allied with the Manchu regent (for Hong Taiji's five-year-old son) to oust the rebels. While

1. See *Exhausting the Earth: State and Peasant in Hunan, 1500–1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U Pr, 1987), "Military Mobilization in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century China, Russia, and Mongolia," *Modern Asian Studies* 30 (1996) 757–93, "Comparing Empires: Manchu Colonialism," *International History Review* 20 (1998) 255–62, and "Strange Parallels across Eurasia," *Social Science History* 32 (2008) 263–79.

the Chinese general chased the rebels to their doom, the young boy was placed on the vacant throne, becoming Emperor Sunzhi of the new, Qing dynasty.

Meanwhile the westernmost Mongol realm, the Khanate of the Golden Horde, was breaking apart. Muscovy (later Russia), its would-be successor, emerged victorious by dealing with the Kazans and other nomads much as the Manchus had in their successful relationship with the eastern Mongols. After incorporating Kazan into the Russian empire, the tsars continued expanding across Siberia to the Pacific, using Cossacks to subdue native peoples and to build a chain of fortresses along river banks to guard the conquests. The cold climate and poor agricultural resources precluded large-scale settlement of Siberia by Russian peasants. The area was, however, valuable for its fur trade with China and Europe, and later for minerals. As Russians advanced toward Lake Baikal in the seventeenth century, they met new groups of western Mongols called Oirats, a branch of whom, later called Zunghars, sought Russian help against the Manchus to their east. Another Oirat tribe, called Kalmyks in Russia and Torghuts in China, soon migrated westward and settled along the Volga River, becoming Russian vassals.

A Zunghar state in western Mongolia emerged under a chieftain named Galdan. The Zunghars had converted to the Yellow Hat branch of Tibetan Lamaist Buddhism headed by the Dalai Lama. Galdan Khan and his successors and several incarnations of the Dalai Lama formed mutually supporting relationships that offered prestige and sanctuary to the Zunghars in their struggle against China. To prevent Tibetan support of its antagonist, China moved to conquer neighboring Kokonor or Qinghai and control Tibet. Although Zungharia was the smallest and least powerful among the Central Eurasian states, it profited from a trade route between Russia and China that crossed its territory.

In Part Two, "Contending for Power" (chapters 4-7), Perdue treats the century-long struggle between China and Zungharia that also involved Russia diplomatically. In 1662, a seven-year-old boy ascended the Qing throne as Emperor Kangxi. His sixty-one year reign, the longest in China since the first century B.C., was one of the greatest: "Kangxi's dynamic intervention [in Central Eurasia] transformed the Qing from a promising but limited enterprise into an unprecedented project of expansion. The Mongol campaigns signaled most definitively this transformation of the Qing into a Central Eurasian empire with world significance" (133). Kangxi had to deal early on with major rebellions in southern China. Galdan, a nominal vassal of the Qing, seeking recognition as the pre-eminent frontier lord of the Qing empire, conquered two important oases, Hami and Turfan (in present-day Xinjiang) to gain additional resources, then demanded part of Qinghai for its access to Tibet. Kangxi, fearing collusion between Galdan and the Dalai Lama, sought a peaceful solution to frontier tensions and hoped to negotiate terms of trade, tribute, and other matters. But Kangxi's conciliatory stance only emboldened Galdan, who drove the Khalkhas, an eastern Mongol tribe, from their headquarters at Karakorum and chased the defeated survivors into Chinese and Russian territories.

Galdan and his successors' capacity to cause chaos along their frontiers led China and Russia to negotiate treaties (in 1689 and 1727) delineating the border between their empires and stipulating the locations and terms of trade between the two states and the repatriation of refugees and deserters. The tribal nomads became subjects of either Russia or China and were no longer free to move as they wished. Significantly the Zunghars could not any longer play Russia against China and vice versa. Perdue refutes the assertions of modern nationalistic Chinese and Russian historians that their countries conceded too much in the treaties, maintaining that realpolitik motivated both sides to demarcate a boundary neither fully controlled.

In 1690, Kangxi personally launched a three-pronged campaign against Galdan with 60,000 troops. Illness, blunders, supply problems, and unrest in southern China prevented a decisive victory and Galdan escaped. Kangxi used the next six years to solidify his relationship with other Mongol tribes, notably the Khalkha. He invited their leaders to a meeting at Dolon Nor, where he overawed them by a huge display of Chinese military might, flattered them with lavish gifts, and tamed them by fixing their tribal borders and imposing Manchu officials to supervise their affairs. He also improved his supply lines and took steps to cut communications between the Dalai Lama's and Galdan's headquarters.

In 1696, Kangxi launched his second anti-Galdan campaign with three armies totaling 72,970 men. Two hundred and thirty-five large and 104 light cannon had to be carried on camel backs for the last 580 kilometers. The units that set out from Beijing traveled 1,740 km. to reach the appointed destination. Although decisively defeated at the Battle of Jao Modo, Galdan and a few followers still escaped capture. After two more campaigns, Kangxi accepted the surrender of many Zunghars in their homeland and treated them generously. Galdan, however, had again eluded capture, necessitating a new campaign in 1697. This brought the oases in southern Xinjiang and Qinghai under Qing control and ended in Galdan's death by suicide or poisoning. At a great victory celebration in Beijing, Galdan's remains were scattered and obliterated, although most of his lieutenants, his wife, and children were granted amnesty.

Although the Zunghar people survived, they caused no more trouble for Kangxi, who had enjoyed campaigning with his men, living a rough camp life, and diligently recording his experiences. At war's end, he set his European Jesuit experts to map the conquests, which resulted in a modern atlas of the empire. He also ordered scholars to set down a detailed history of his campaigns, to signify that the nomads would not reduce Qing China to a defensive posture as they had the previous dynasty. His policies also presaged China's permanent control of the northwest—the Qing would accomplish what its great predecessors, the Han and Tang dynasties could not.

Although much reduced, the Zunghars were not finished because Galdan's nephew and rival, Tsewang Rabdan, began rebuilding the shattered state. He avoided clashes with the Qing, instead focusing on trade with Siberia, developing good relations with Russia, and warring against the Kazakhs to expand westward. For the remainder of his reign Kangxi consolidated his control over Mongol tribes in Mongolia and Xinjiang by planting military colonists in the oases, building roads, and establishing granaries to stockpile food. He also sent one of his sons on an expedition to Tibet that ousted Zunghar forces there and began cleaning up the murderous intrigues among the Mongol chieftains and clerics in selecting their top religious leaders, the Dalai and Panchen Lamas. Under his grandson, Qianlong, China gained final control over selecting the top lamas.

Kangxi's son and successor, Emperor Yongzheng (r. 1724–35), made it his goal to finish the Zunghar state and secure Qing suzerainty over Tibet. He brought Qinghai under firm control and severed the ties of the Mongol people and lamaseries in Qinghai with the Dalai Lama. He also removed the current Dalai Lama from power.

In 1727, Yongzheng negotiated the Treaty of Kaikchta, which fixed a 2,600-mile border between Russian Siberia and a Qing vassal, the Khalkha Mongols, and prevented Russia from aiding the Zunghars in a future showdown. Tsewang Rabdan died in 1727 and was succeeded by his son, Galdan Tseren. Subsequent war between Qing and Zungharia yielded no clear victor. Though Yongzheng had not taken personal command, he blamed himself for not finishing his father's work. Being a diligent and capable administrator, however, he made institutional reforms that ensured ultimate victory.

Emperor Qianlong, Yongzheng's son and successor (r. 1736–95), completed Kangxi's work by rebuilding the damaged economy and improving the infrastructure that focused on northwestern China—a project that took eighteen years—while maintaining peaceful trade with the Zunghars. Meanwhile the Zunghar state suffered from civil wars among Galdan's Tseren's three sons and daughter. In 1755, Qianlong charged one of the sons with usurpation and sent in two armies, each 25,000 strong. Thanks to the Treaty of Kaikchta, Russia declined to help Zunghar leader Amursana, who fled to Russia in 1757 and soon died of smallpox. Perdue explains that

Large number of Zunghars were submitting to the Qing, who regarded them with great suspicion. Those who appeared “completely trustworthy” were allowed to move to the interior pastures after September, 1757, but the slightest indication of disloyalty justified their extermination. The emperor clarified that he “did not formerly have the intention [of eliminating the Zunghars]. It was only because they repeatedly submitted and then rebelled that he had to wipe them out.” ... With this policy, the Qing succeeded in imposing a “final solution” to China's northwest frontier problem, which lasted for about a century. The Zunghars disappeared as a state and a people and the Zungharian steppe was almost completely depopulated (284–85).

A contemporary official history estimated the total Zunghar population at 600,000: 40% died of smallpox, 20% fled to Russia and Kazakh lands, 30% were killed by the Qing army, and the remainder, women and children, were made bond servants. New groups of people were sent to populate the empty space, including almost 100,000 surviving Torghuts who returned from Russia rather than submit to military service imposed by Tsarina Catherine II in 1771.

Part Three of *China Marches West*, “The Economic Basis of Empire,” comprises chapters 8–11. We learn that Zunghar leaders met their military needs by developing trade and agriculture. They used Russian, Swedish, and Chinese captives to teach their population a range of skills including manufacturing, mining, and cartography. The Qing, though faced with much greater logistical and economic problems due to challenges of terrain—deserts, steppes, and mountains, enjoyed far greater human and economic resources. Qing leaders moved simultaneously along several fronts in preparation for the struggle. Militarily they brought other frontier tribal areas of mixed populations under firmer imperial control: for example, they eliminated a back door for Zunghar infiltration of Tibet by incorporating Qinghai, home to Mongols, Tibetans, and Han peoples. In addition, Han and Manchu relocated to Qinghai promoted economic development. Military colonists, poor farmers from neighboring Gansu province, and convict exiles were settled in Xinjiang to develop agriculture, horse raising, mining, and other economic activities, which the government too optimistically hoped would create a self-sufficient economy. Such policies followed Han- and Tang-dynasty precedents and still continue under the People’s Republic. Government bureaus also kept precise statistical records of rainfall, harvest, and public works, while efforts to relieve famine, something rare in pre-modern governments, anticipated the modern welfare state.

In Part Four, “Fixing Frontiers” (chapters 12–13), Perdue discusses how modern Eurasian states established fixed, stable boundaries following conquests. He notes, too, that early Qing emperors traveled widely, Kangxi commanding armies and making tours of inspection. Though a desk general, Qianlong spent four months a year throughout his reign touring his realm, sometimes with Central Eurasian vassal chiefs in tow to impress his subjects. Imperial tours, victory celebrations, the commissioning of paintings and engravings of victorious battles, and the erection of huge commemorative stone steles at battle sites, along borders, and in the capital city reminded all of the dynasty’s great accomplishments. Stele texts were in four languages—Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian, and Tibetan—showing the multiethnic composition of the Qing empire. Qing monarchs broke new ground in commissioning authoritative campaign histories to signify that their victories were divinely willed.

In Part Five, “Legacies and Implications” (chapters 14–16), Perdue traces how early Qing achievements still impact modern China with its multiethnic self-image. He also compares Qing accomplishments with those of, for example, Russia, France, and the United States. In the latter case, he points out that just as the Qing conquest of Central Eurasia seemed to fulfill China’s historic mission, so too, Americans once idealized their country’s expansion from coast to coast as “Manifest Destiny.” Perdue also debunks older interpretations of China’s growth, based on new evidence. He offers interesting ideas, for instance, to explain why Qianlong took the decision to wipe out the Zunghar people when victorious Chinese rulers had not previously annihilated defeated foes. Han Chinese rulers had simply regarded the nomads as beyond the pale of civilization and thus built walls to segregate them. On the other hand, because Manchus also originated from Central Eurasia, they naturally viewed Zunghars as humans, and therefore expected them to respond to ethical appeals. Thus, when Zunghars rejected Qing’s moral persuasion, they were deemed traitors whose extermination was justifiable.

China Marches West fully accomplishes its author’s goal of demonstrating that “The Qing conquest decisively changed the history of the Chinese empire, the Russian empire, and the Central Eurasian people between them” (518). In its scale and range of information, this important scholarly book is a major contribution to the literature of the history of early modern Central Eurasia. While too detailed and complex for the general reader, it is must reading for scholars and advanced students of the history of this area and era.