

## **Being Enlightened by Empire? Naturalization of *Shengfan* and Establishment of *Fan* Classification System under Emperors Kangxi and Yongzheng**

Yin-yi Cheng

### **ABSTRACT**

This article traces the development of the *fan* (aboriginal) classification system established by Emperors Kangxi and Yongzheng. During early Qing rule, *fan* tribes were recognized and classified according to their tax payment under the Village Franchise System. Fengshan eight tribes and Tufan thirty-four tribes were all part of this system during the reign of Emperor Kangxi. Instead of being levied at rates that varied from year to year, tribal tax payment became fixed and was thus taken as one of criteria for naturalization of aborigines. What triggered the subsequent wave of mass naturalization of *fan* tribes was neither their loyalty to nor their being enlightened by the empire. Rather, it was a move ‘pushed’ or promoted by *sheshang* (tribal businessmen) and *tungshih* (interpreter) to keep up with the Qing policy and to curry favor from the local officials. Commercial interests rather than patriotic sentiments were what motivated the aborigines to become naturalized.

In face of the mass naturalization trend, the Qing Empire refined the classification system for aborigines. Toward the end of Kangxi reign, the initial dichotomous categories of ‘*tufan*’ (tax-paying aborigines) and ‘*yefan*’ (literally, wild/untamed aborigines) adopted from the classification under the Zheng regime were changed into ‘*shufan*’ (literally, cooked aborigines) and ‘*shengfan*’ (literally, raw aborigines), respectively. Nevertheless, the distinction between the two categories was neither well defined nor standardized. Further changes were introduced by Emperor Yongzheng. Upon termination of the naturalization policy, the third category ‘*huafan*’ (naturalized aborigines) was added to denote those naturalized *shengfan* who lived beyond the Qing boundary but paid tax to the empire. Again, there existed no clear differentiation for the three groups, especially between ‘*huafan*’ and ‘*shufan*’. It was during the reign of Emperor Qianlong that

aboriginal boundary was demarcated and distinction among aborigines was drawn according to whether they lived within or beyond the boundary and whether they paid tax to the Qing government or not.

Through examining the evolution of the *fan* classification system, this article points out that people classification under Qing rule was more than a culturo-political product of celestial imperialism but closely related to the state policy and governance.

**Keywords:** Naturalized *Sheng Fan*, *Sheng Fan*, *Shu Fan*, Wave of Mass Naturalization, *Fan* Classification System, Gboro Mambo