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“Class”, “Race” and Language : Imagining China and the Discourse on the Category “Han” in the Writing of Marxist Revolutionary Qu Qiubai (1899-1935)

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The primary aim of this paper is to investigate the discursive peregrinations of the category “Han” in the writings of the Chinese revolutionary theoretician and activist Qu Qiubai (1899-1935) ; this paper does not then deal with the theoretical and political work carried out by Qu Qiubai as the former leader of the Chinese Communist Party during the nineteen twenties, but rather focuses on the texts concerning cultural and linguistic issues that he wrote at the beginning of the thirties after retiring from direct political activism. I intend to analyze, through Qu's discourse on language and writing, how the category *minzu* (nation/ethnicity/race) and more specifically the idea of a *Hanzu* or *Han minzu* are deployed and integrated in his theoretical writing.

In his writing of the early nineteen thirties, the author made a singular use of the signifier “Han” to talk about the language/writing of the Han (*hanzi, hanyu*) as that of a racial or ethnic group understood as *hanzu*. Narrating the history of the cultural hegemony of the Han in Asia and criticizing the policy of assimilation (*tonghua*), Qu elaborated a discourse which articulated and mobilized, sometimes in a contradictory manner, the category Han both as a “race” and as a social class.

Going beyond the race/class dialectic, we will try to show that these texts question the territorial, cultural and ethnic boundaries of “China” and its homogeneity. Even if the author integrated the Han category in his discourse, I argue that his use of the notion in theoretical works dealing with the linguistic identity of China tends to deconstruct the modern invention of this homogeneous ethnic

community in two different but associated ways : the assertion of a linguistic multiplicity within the Han group and at the same time the identification of the traditional Han language and writing (*hanzi, hanyu*) with a dominant social class which overcomes this internal diversity.

### **Qu Qiubai and the modern tradition of the category “Han”**

As Dru Gladney has said, the notion of *Hanzu* or *Han minzu* in the sense of an ethnic community as the cohesive body of the nation is “an entirely modern phenomenon, arising with the shift from empire to nation”.<sup>1</sup> The nationalist ideology in China, embodying the will to invent a political nation-state, goes back to the beginning of the twentieth century as a consequence of and as an answer to the Western imperial domination: nation as a concept and as a political form was to be used by Chinese intellectuals to build a new and strong state able to compete among the family of nations. The last hundred years have witnessed the political construction of the Chinese nation-state, and this nationalist project has been sustained by the voluntarist constitution of a cultural and linguistic homogeneity. Even if, as in all nationalist narratives, this history/story functions as a fiction, the nationalist ideology which invented boundaries between China and the outer world (these being not only political and state boundaries but also cultural, linguistic and ethnic ones) is nowadays deeply inscribed in the Chinese collective imaginary. In the modern construction of a Chinese nation, the Han as an ethnic/racial community functions as a major component of the discursive construction of the nation as one and homogeneous. The category Han is now an integral part of the Chinese collective consciousness and corresponds, in the Chinese society, to what the Graeco-French social philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis called a “social imaginary signification”.<sup>2</sup>

From the first conceptualization of a “Han race” by the anti-Manchu revolutionaries to the invention of the “Han nationality” by the communists, the homogeneity of the Han community has never been questioned by Chinese nation-builders. At the same time, the fact that the territory referred to as China under the Qing dynasty greatly exceeds the physical habitat of the so-called Han, obligated Chinese nation-builders - both nationalists and communists – to integrate in different ways the inner others in their national narratives. The complex palimpsest of the narration of the “Chinese nation” is composed of different strata. The polysemy and ambiguities of the notion of *minzu* is the result of multiple intertextualities between the Japanese (*minzoku*), the European (*nation*), the Russian (*natsiya, narodnost*) and Chinese translations, besides being the consequence of the re-invention and

transformation of the meanings of *minzu* within the Chinese intellectual and political space according to various political and ideological orientations of the speakers. It is acknowledged that the first occurrences of the word *minzu* appeared at the end of the nineteenth century when theoreticians of Chinese nationalism, both reformist and revolutionary, borrowed this word from the Japanese.<sup>3</sup> The word had been constructed by the Japanese to translate the modern-Western notion of the “nation” while the idea of nation came along with the European nineteenth century “scientific” discourse of the race struggle. In the political context of the anti-Manchu discourse developed by revolutionaries at the end of the Qing dynasty, notions such as “*minzu*” and “*Hanzu*” had a racialist connotation in the texts of nationalist propagandists such as Zhang Binglin and later Sun Yat-sen.<sup>4</sup>

The connotations of the concept of *Hanzu* in the writings of a Chinese intellectual in the thirties cannot be understood without examining the semantic history of the signifiers of the community – that is national, ethnic and racial. The imaginary of the “nation” and its boundaries is a recent phenomenon in China, but it is interesting to note that in Qu's texts we can already find different theoretical and textual traditions which give it a polysemic sense often veiled by the translation of signifiers such as *hanzi*, *hanyu*, *hanzu*, *Zhongguo*, *minzu*, and so on.

As a Marxist, Qu Qiubai would probably have contested an essentialist, biological, race-based definition of Han, it is however obvious that, like his contemporaries, he had integrated the notion of a Han ethnic majority as a dominant discursive category through which to read China's politics.<sup>5</sup> In Qu's texts, *minzu* is related to the Soviet theoretical tradition concerning “nationalities” and “national question” policies. This intertextual track is strengthened by the fact that Qu spent many years in Moscow and spoke Russian fluently. The theoretical reference here is, of course, to Stalin's 1913 definition of *natsiya* or “nationality”.<sup>6</sup> In this regard, *minzu* as a community of the capitalist stage identified by the “four common” criteria of the Stalinist definition is explicit in the author's political texts written in the nineteen twenties on the so-called national and colonial question. When he mentions the *ruoxiao minzu* or “weak and small nationalities”, he refers to the ethno-cultural communities living within political entities such as the Soviet Union or China.<sup>7</sup>

The set-phrase “*shaoshu minzu*” or “national minorities”, which had a Comintern origin, already appears in the communist party literature of the nineteen twenties.<sup>8</sup> The term was used to refer to the non-Han communities within the Chinese space, including refugees from various countries and foreign residents in the concessions.<sup>9</sup> Qu uses the word *minzu* both for “small” nationalities and for the Han but we must bear in mind that in the theoretical framework of the communists, these

communities were not located at the same historical stage. In accordance with the communist literature of that time, we can say that in most cases the Han minzu was seen as the majority, as overlapping with China, and as historically in advance compared to the other nationalities in the Marxist socio-economic framework.

My purpose here is to question the position of the *Hanzu* or *Han minzu* as an ethnic category in relation to *Zhongguo* or China seen as a territory, a political entity and also a language in the writings of the author and to point out the contradictions or ambiguities in his discourse. As I mentioned earlier, the Han question was not the main concern of Qu's texts in the nineteen thirties, it was nevertheless a prevalent element in his discourse.

The author wrote extensively on the question of a common language for China which would not be a “national language” or “state language”. His critics focused on the linguistic project of invention of a standardized and uniform Mandarin-based “national language” (*guoyu*).<sup>10</sup> In his texts, the author identified different linguistic communities referring to both the *Hanzu* and other nationalities. I believe that the discursive relation between the Han, the nationalities and *Zhongguo* in Qu's thinking can be clarified by focusing on the question of language. It is a way to elucidate how a Chinese revolutionary in the nineteen thirties understood and imagined the Chinese identity, that is to say China in its political, spatial, cultural and linguistic dimensions, by revealing some ambiguities within his discourse and identifying questions on his thinking concerning the relation between the Han, the “others” and China. Are the Han located in the same level as the “others” in his imaginary of China? Is the Han category a synonym of *Zhongguo* in his texts? Does the heterogeneity and diversity of the “others” necessarily imply a homogeneous and unique Han majority?

### **The Han as China**

I would first like to insist on the arguments in Qu's essays which give credit to the habitual thesis according to which the Han category is synonymous with *Zhongguo* and, which consequently establishes the other nationalities as being outside this relationship. Let me quote here the author in a critique of the assimilationist position (*tongwen zhengce*) held by the poet and May Fourth movement the activist Liu Dabai (1880-1932). Qu aimed at proving that China, unlike in the past, no longer had the power and the dominant position -economic and by extension cultural- which

would have allowed her to impose an assimilationist policy on “alien races” (*yizu*). The dominant imperialist nations were now European countries and they were imposing their cultures on Asia and notably China's old vassal states. It is interesting to notice that in this passage *Zhongguo* and the Han are conflated :

中国的汉族在古代历史上固然是文化先进的民族，远东的安南，暹罗，缅甸，高丽，日本都受着他的影响，而采用汉族的汉字。[...]现在，中国自己的文化程度，在世界的政治经济舞台上，不能不承认是比较落后了。日本是超越了中国一世纪。[...]其他的远东民族，都自然在文化上接受先进的欧美影响，而不再受中国的领导了。中国现在还说要同化异族，用什么东西去同化人家呢？[...]中国还想用这种政策去对付蒙古西藏新疆吗？不知道联合这些民族去反抗帝国主义？<sup>11</sup>

In the historical past, the Hanzu of China was the most culturally advanced nation. In the Far East Annam(i.e. Vietnam), Siam, Burma, Korea and Japan have all been influenced by the Han and have adopted the Hanzu's Han characters. [...] Nowadays, we must recognize that China's own cultural level on the world political-economic stage is rather backward. Japan is one century ahead of China. [...] [At the same time], other Far Eastern *minzu* have naturally come under the cultural influence of advanced Europe and America and are no longer under China's dominance. China is still talking about the acculturation of alien races [*yizu*], but with what does China want to acculturate others? [...] Does China still want to apply this kind of [assimilationist] policy to tackle Tibet, Mongolia and Xinjiang? Is China capable of federating these *minzu* to resist imperialism?

In this last sentence, what is intended by *Zhongguo* is a political space or entity and the other “ethnicities” refer to ethno-cultural communities. The author clearly sets these two different types of communities apart, and the relationship between *Zhongguo*, as a political power, and the nationalities allows no confusion in this quotation. But the situation gets more complicated and ambiguous when we try to understand how the third term of the conversation - that is to say the *Hanzu* or *Han minzu* - came to be included within the discursive relationship between *Zhongguo* and its “inner others”. Qu uses the words *Hanzu* and *Zhongguo de Hanzu* to talk about a dominant culture - symbolized here by the characters Han – which deeply influenced many Asian countries in the past. Later in the essay, as he deals with the question of the assimilation of the “alien races” (*yizu*) (Xinjiang, Mongolia and Tibet), he uses the word *Zhongguo* and conflates this term with the notion of *Hanzu*. In the same way, it seems clear that in the last question quoted above replacing *minzu* by *Hanzu* would sound like a non-sense: *Does China still want to apply this kind of [assimilationist] policy to tackle the Hanzu?* It is obvious that in Qu's imaginary, the idea of China as limited to the Han community has been partly integrated. Qu gives a particular status to the Han nationality which finds its origin in the nineteenth-century nationalist invention of the category of the Han as a majority ethnic/racial community in China. This example follows the Communist party's position on nationalities at the end of the nineteen twenties which pointed to the possibility of future independence for non-Han nationalities on the grounds that they were not naturally included within the Chinese nation. It is also coherent with Qu's position in his political texts

written in the nineteen twenties where he made clear that for him “Zhongguo minzu” only included the *Hanren*, and within the Han themselves Qu said that the commoners were the sole representatives of the Chinese nation.<sup>12</sup>

### **China as a language, China as a space**

Saying that in Qu Qiubai's texts China is synonymous to the Han would be too simplistic a resolution of the complexity of the relations between the category Han, the nationalities and *Zhongguo* as a spatial, political and historical entity. I will now go a little further by questioning the relationship and differences between Qu's imaginary of the territorial and linguistic Chinese/Han space. The author recurrently used the expression *Zhongguo yuzu* or “Chinese linguistic family” as a synonym for “the languages of the Han”. As mentioned above, Qu insisted in saying that the non-Han nationalities were not included in the notion of *Zhongguohua*:

可以说：中国话是所谓中国语族的意思。因为中国境内 -- 除出苗，黎，西藏，蒙古等等不同的民族的言语之外 -- 同是汉族的言语又有许多种。<sup>13</sup>

We can say that the Chinese language means the Chinese family of languages because within the Chinese [*Zhongguo*] space, - besides the languages of different nationalities such as Miao, Li, Yi, Tibetan or Mongol, there are also numerous varieties Han nationality language.

In one and the same sentence here, we can spot a double use of the concept *Zhongguo* : first, *Zhongguo* as a geographic territory in *Zhongguo jingnei*; and secondly, *Zhongguo* defining a linguistic community in *Zhongguohua* where the notion only refers to a limited Han ethnic group. On the other hand, *Zhongguo* as a territorial entity subsumes different nationalities or *minzu* including the Han. The “geographic concept” of *Zhongguo jingnei* implies the idea of an inner and an outer China, and the term used here also refers to the old Qing dynasty imperial territory. If a Chinese map involving a sovereign territory with fixed and precisely delimited boundaries belongs to a strictly modern imaginary, it is a historical fact that the Qing had already established boundaries with their neighboring states but its “frontiers policy operated within 'zones' rather than along 'lines' ”.<sup>14</sup>

This meaning of *Zhongguo* as a political territory including different nationalities is confirmed in

another text by Qu where he notes that "[a]s a nation, China is not simply the Han nationality; there are also the Hui, the Tibetans, the Mongols, the Li, the Miao, the Yi" [中国不但是汉族的民族, 还有回族, 藏族, 蒙古族, 黎, 苗, 彝族].<sup>15</sup> The vision of China as a multinational state is in apparent contradiction with his Han-China conception. Therefore we can wonder whether *minzu* has the meaning of a political community here as in the expression *Zhonghua minzu*?

If we consider language as a major ethnic criterion we can say that the author made a distinction between an ethnic Han China and a territorial, historical, imperial China overcoming this ethnic identity. This split within a Chinese space can be read as the classic distinction made by the communists, and by Qu in his texts, between "China proper" or *Zhongguo benbu* and "frontier regions" or *Zhongguo jiangbu*. As Liu Xiaoyuan remarked, if this distinction was used by the communists within the Marxist economic theoretical framework, it still echoed older "in-grained" conceptions of the "frontier administration" or *bianzheng*.<sup>16</sup> This internal boundary between "proper" and "frontier" China also corresponded to ethnic boundaries between the Han and the non-Han read in terms of historical differences, that is to say economic differences, since the Han were considered as advanced compared to the "alien races" (*yizhong minzu*): "When applying the standard Marxist political-economic analysis to China's inter-ethnic situation, the CCP made a stark contrast between the burgeoning capitalist" China proper (*benbu*) and the "nomadic, primitive" non-Han frontiers (*jiangbu*)".<sup>17</sup>

### **contesting Han ethnicity in emphasizing the plurality of languages**

The distinction between the homogeneous Han as the Chinese proper and the heterogeneous others within a global Chinese space or *Zhongguo jingnei* covering both territories is however put in question by the author's emphasis on the plurality of languages or dialects spoken within the Han community itself. If again the author gives a cohesive identity to the Han with the notion of linguistic family, he however recurrently insists on the inner diversity within this "family" and includes in it all the languages talked inside the "Han" Chinese world such as Shanghainese, Cantonese, the language of Beijing, which were all subsumed under the concept of a "Chinese linguistic family", a notion which means, according to the author, *Zhongguohua* or "Chinese languages". In many essays, as he criticizes the *guoyu* project, Qu considers a national mandarin-based language which would be imposed on the Han population as a violence committed against



the diversity of idioms spoken in China :

对于他们绝对不应当实行所谓中国话的“国语统一”的政策。就是汉族自己的许多种方言，也不能够实行强迫的统一政策。<sup>18</sup>

A policy of so-called Chinese (*Zhongguohua*) “national language (*guoyu*) unification “ must absolutely not be applied to them [the nationalities]—just as a policy of coercive [linguistic] unification cannot be applied to the numerous dialects (*fangyan*) of the Han themselves.

It is a fact that the homogeneity of the Han majority has seldom been questioned either by Chinese nationalist intellectuals or by “scientific” scholars. Dru Gladney notes that “discussions of China generally take cultural homogeneity for granted” and argues that “there is a tremendous ethnic diversity among its “official” minority nationalities, but also that there are equally important cultural differences among China's majority population, identified as the Han people.”<sup>19</sup> Significantly, the division between the Han as the Chinese ethnic group and the other nationalities does not imply in Qu's texts the unity of the Han. Qu even goes further in rewriting history and imagining the past fragmentation of China into numerous different nations and the constitution of multiple literary languages within the territory.<sup>20</sup> According to Qu, the “Chinese family of languages” can be compared to the “Latin family of languages” and, in this perspective, he insists on the fact that there were as many differences between the European languages as there were between the Chinese “Han” languages. If we compare this imaginary to China's contemporary situation, it is relatively explicit that today in the multinational People's Republic, the so-called official “national minorities” or *shaoshu minzu* 少数民族 function, in their diversity, as the other of the unique, homogenized Han majority.

I would say that although it cannot be denied that Qu Qiubai still relied upon the category of the *Hanzu* as an ethnic community and imagined it through a Marxist-Leninist socio-economic framework, at the same time, dealing with the question of language, which is one of the most important criteria in defining ethnicity, he repeatedly noted the extreme diversity within the Han and in a sense deconstructed or at least contested an essentialist vision of the Han-based identity of the Chinese modern nation.

### **The Han as a class which overcome China's boundaries**

In taking into account the internal diversity of the Han, I argue that the author helps us to imagine in a singular way the traditional relationship between the apparent Han majority, the ancient “alien races” or modern “national minorities” and the old vassal states (*shuguo* and *keguo*) outside the Chinese imperial boundaries. Having taken for granted the linguistic diversity within “China proper”, Qu articulates this reality with the construction of a historical metanarrative involving a Han/Chinese culture (*Hanzi*, *Hanwen*, *Hanyu*) which formerly imposed its domination within the space named “Tianxia” that is to say a more or less large territory around the middle point of the Empire.<sup>21</sup> When narrating the ancient “Chinese” cultural domination over Asia, the authors stands, unsurprisingly, on a historical materialist point of view and insists on the “*Hanzu*” cultural domination as the consequence of its position as “advanced nation” in political-economical terms. In other words, if Japan or South-East Asian nations used Han characters and Han writing, it was, according to Qu, the result of an economic domination and of the political superiority of the Han.

This cultural and linguistic hegemony was not read by Qu as a consequence of a race struggle, as the domination of one nation or ethnicity over another, it was seen rather as the hegemony of a social class, that is the bureaucracy and the gentry of the Chinese imperial state. That is, the common, at least in appearance, cultural and linguistic identity (Confucian culture and Classical Chinese) in Asia was interpreted as the hegemony of a dominant class. It is not surprising to hear a Marxist using the argument of the class struggle to narrate historical evolution. But the shift, in its interpretation, from ethnicity to social class has profound implications on the way he imagines China and its identity, especially its cultural and linguistic identity. As he writes on the relations between this dominant class and the local populations (*minzhong*, *pingmin*), we can again witness a destabilization of the ethno-cultural frontiers or essential differences between a Han and a non-Han cultural space. Hence the fact that in the theoretical imaginary of Qu Qiubai, the cultural and linguistic diversity under the imperial bureaucracy cannot be understood only in terms of “Proper China” and “Frontiers China” or Han and non-Han populations and territory. This inner traditional frontier is here partly erased because Qu considers that the diversity under the dominant class also exists within the Han territory itself. Let me quote Qu' s construction of a fascinating comparative perspective which helps us to understand his geopolitical imaginary :

欧洲中世纪各国的绅士贵族用拉丁话,可是,各国民众所说的话,却仍旧是各国本地的话[...]远东的古代,各国绅士都多多少少用过汉文,然而各国民众所说的话,却仍旧是各地的”土话”[...]就全中国本部来说,古代个省的秀才举人的确用的是同一种的汉文文言,可是中国个省的民众说的却是北京话,广东话,上海话...<sup>22</sup>

During the middle ages, the European aristocratic class from different states were all using Latin while the languages of the people within these states were all local vernaculars. [...] In the Far East in ancient times, the gentries of different kingdoms used the Han written language, however the peoples of these different states spoke their own local idioms [...] Over the entirety of China proper, scholars of the various provinces province all used the same Han classical language while what the ordinary people of China's various provinces spoke was Beijing dialect, Cantonese, the Shanghainese and so on...

It is not my purpose here to assess the scientific credibility of Qu's historical reading and knowledge, but to track the way he imagines and articulates spaces, populations, languages and cultures to inform his discursive (de)construction of the Chinese nation's identity. Qu develops a comparative approach articulating three different socio-historical and political spaces so as to contest the cultural assimilationist discourse which claimed that in the past China had always been able to acculturate alien races, owing to its uniform Han writing system. We can nevertheless notice some basic differences between these three spaces: Qu uses the concept of «China proper» and thus naturally implies the existence of another and distinct part of the Chinese territory. Identifying local identities under these geographical spaces, he also mentions “*sheng*” or province in the Chinese example and deploys the term “*guo*” or country when dealing with Europe and Asia.

However, the numerous arguments the author puts forward in order to compare the European and the Chinese situations tend to deconstruct China as a nation even when reduced to the Han community. He objects to a Chinese or Han linguistic identity by insisting on the fact that this superficial unity (*biaomian de shangceng de tongyi*) and cultural homogeneity was made by the “ruling aristocratic bureaucracy” (*guanliao guizu tongzhi*).<sup>23</sup> He reads China's linguistic differences in a vertical manner: multiplicity of local idioms among the people, unity of language and culture in the dominant class.

Frank Dikotter reminds us that Liang Qichao “rearticulated traditional social hierarchies into a new racial taxonomy”.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Balibar (following Foucault) noticed that the old classical myths of race all have something to do with class distinction and especially with aristocratic identity.<sup>25</sup> In reading the word “class” behind the word “race”, it is as if the texts of Qu were inverting the process by which these two concepts had been linked.

Etienne Balibar calls “fictive ethnicity” the way populations have been “represented in the past or in the future as if they constituted a natural community, possessing an identity of origin, culture, and interests which would transcend individuals and social conditions”.<sup>26</sup> He adds that there are two common means to invent this fictive ethnicity which are language and race. In China, since the end of the nineteenth century, the category Han has been the major figure of this “fictive ethnicity”. Qu's writings are deeply imbued with this imaginary of the Han “fictive ethnicity”, a theoretical conceptualization produced by the Western political modernity and transformed in the Chinese historical context.

Qu's discourse is however disrupted by his internationalist and Marxist ideological position which leads him to read the interests and logic of the class struggles behind the signifiers of the “nation”. In this perspective, a “national language” or old Mandarin, along with its characters, do not represent an ethnic community or even a people but only the culture of the dominant class artificially veiling the internal diversity within China. His cultural work of the nineteen thirties however tended to negotiate class problematics without neglecting local identities - especially linguistic identities – which take into account but also tend to overcome traditional ethnic categories.

The essays by Qu mentioned here were written during a crucial historical moment for China which preceded the political invention of a national culture and language by Mao Zedong and his advisors during the Yan'an period, and elaborated and implemented by the communist state after the civil war. The Chinese cultural and linguistic homogeneity and national consciousness which seems so natural now was still questioned at the beginning of the nineteen thirties by intellectuals such as Qu Qiubai. He never wielded political power and did not live to witness the construction of the People's Republic of China, but, without doubt, he would have been perturbed to see a state imposing a common language or culture while concealing class hierarchies and local diversities.

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1 Dru C. Gladney, (dir.), “Clashed Civilizations? Muslim and Chinese Identities in the PRC” in *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 116.

2 Cornelius Castoriadis, *Domaines de l'homme : Les carrefours du labyrinthe 2*, Paris, Seuil, 1986, p. 280.

3 On the history of this term, see Fang Weigui 方维规, *Lun jindai sixiangshi shang de “minzu”*, “nation” yu “Zhongguo” 论近代思想史上的“民族”, “nation”与“中国”, *Ershiyi shiji*, 70, April 2002, and also Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, Hong-Kong, Hong-Kong University Press, 1996, 108-109, Michael Weiner, “The Invention of Identity, Race and Nation in Pre-War Japan” in Frank Dikötter (dir.), *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, London, Hurst and Company, 1997,

- pp. 97-117; Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, Hong-Kong, Hong-Kong University Press, 1996, p. 108-109; Joël Thoraval, "L'usage de la notion d' "ethnicité" appliquée à l'univers culturel chinois", *Perspectives Chinoises*, numéro 54, juillet-août 1999, pp. 44-55; Joël Thoraval, "Sur le concept chinois de "nation" : la décision terminologique du maoïsme", *Perspectives Chinoises*, numéro 54, juillet-août 1999, pp. 56-57.
- 4 For the various meaning of *minzu* and *zhongzu* in late Imperial China see Kauko Laitinen, *Chinese Nationalism in the Late Qing Dynasty: Zhang Binglin as an Anti-Manchu Propagandist*, Curzon Press, 1990, p. 12-14 and also Dikötter (1996).
- 5 Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白, "Xiandai minzu wenti jiangtan" 现代民族问题讲案 (1926) in *Qu Qiubai Wenji Zhengzhi Lilun Bian* 瞿秋白文集 政治理论篇, 3, Beijing, Renmin chubanshe, 1989, p. 488.
- 6 Joseph Staline, *Le marxisme et la question nationale et coloniale*, Paris, Editions sociales, 1949.
- 7 Qu Qiubai's texts in *Minzu wenti wenxian huibian*, 民族问题文献汇编 1921-1949, Beijing, Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1991: "Shiyue geming yu ruoxiao minzu" 十月革命与弱小民族 (1924), p. 62; "Lieningzhuyi yu Zhongguo de guomin geming" 列宁主义与中国的国民革命 (1926), p. 71; "Zhongguo geming de zhenglun wenti" 中国革命中的争论问题 (1927), p. 79.
- 8 Xiaoyuan Liu, *Frontier Passages: Ethnopolitics and the Rise of Chinese Communism, 1921-1945*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2004, p. 41, p. 68.
- 9 See for example, *Minzu wenti wenxian huibian* (1991), "Zhonggong liu jia er zhong quanwei taolun zuzhi wenti jielun" 中共六届二中全会讨论组织问题结论, p. 109.
- 10 Qu's essays on language and writing in the early thirties include «Zhongguowen he Zhongguohua de xianzhuang» 中国文和中国话的现状 (n.d.), *Wenji* 3, 273-279; «Zhongguo wenxue de guwu chenlieguan» 中国文学的古物陈列馆 (1931), *Wenji* 3, 251-256; "Luomazi de Zhongguowen haishi ruomazi de Zhongguowen?" 罗马字的中文还是肉麻字的中文? (1931), *Wenji* 3, 206-239; "Xin wenzi de Zhongguowen (Sin-Zongod wenze gemin)" 新文字的中文, *Wenji* 3, 280-318; "Xuefa wansui" 学阀万岁 (1931), *Wenji* 3, 174-205; "Hanzi he Zhongguo de yanyu" 汉字和中国的言语 (n.d.), *Wenji* 3, 264-272; "Zhongguowen he Zhongguohua de guanxi" 中国文和中国话的关系 (n.d.), *Wenji* 3, 257-263; "Guimen yiwai de zhanzheng" 鬼门关以外的战争 (1931), *Wenji* 3, 137-173.
- 11 Qu, "Luomazi de Zhongguowen haishi ruomazi de Zhongguowen?", *Wenji* 3, p. 207-208.
- 12 Liu (2004), p. 45, p. 91 and Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白, *Qu Qiubai Wenji Zhengzhi Lilun Bian* 瞿秋白文集 政治理论篇, 3, Beijing, Renmin chubanshe, 1989, p. 79-82. Borrowing the words of Hannah Arendt, we could argue, in a performative manner, that the creation of this modern majority of the Han category transformed people identified as Han into "Chinese by birth" while on the other hand, the people in the non-Han category would only be "Chinese by law", see Hannah Arendt, *L'imperialisme: Les origines du totalitarisme* [trad. Martine Leiris], Paris, Gallimard, 2002 [1948], p. 193.
- 13 Qu, "Zhongguowen he Zhongguohua de xianzhuang", *Wenji* 3, p. 276.
- 14 Liu (2004), p. 15.
- 15 Qu, "Xin wenzi de Zhongguowen (Sin-Zongod wenze gemin)", *Wenji* 3, p. 305.
- 16 Xiaoyuan Liu, "Communism, Nationalism, Ethnicism, and China's National Question, 1921-1945", in C.X. George Wei, Liu Xiaoyuan (dir.), *Chinese Nationalism in Perspective: Historical and Recent Cases*, Washington, DC, Library of Congress, 2001, p. 123.
- 17 Liu (2001), p. 123.
- 18 Qu, "Xin wenzi de Zhongguowen (Sin-Zongod wenze gemin)", *Wenji* 3, p. 305.
- 19 Dru C. Gladney, *Dislocating China: Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 6.
- 20 Qu, "Zhongguowen he Zhongguohua de xianzhuang", *Wenji* 3, p. 276.
- 21 Qu, "Luomazi de Zhongguowen haishi ruomazi de Zhongguowen?", *Wenji* 3, p. 206-209.
- 22 Qu, "Luomazi de Zhongguowen haishi ruomazi de Zhongguowen?", *Wenji* 3, p. 209.
- 23 Qu, "Zhongguowen he Zhongguohua de xianzhuang", *Wenji* 3, p. 276.
- 24 Dikötter (1997), p. 16.
- 25 Etienne Balibar, "Racisme et nationalisme" in Etienne Balibar et Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Les identités ambiguës*, Paris, la Découverte, 1990, p. 89.
- 26 Balibar (1990), p. 130.