Reflexive Han-ness, narratives of moral decline, Manchurian subjects and "mass" societal others: a study of the Hanfu movement in the cities of Beijing, Chengdu, Shanghai, Wuhan, and Xi'an

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Andrew Malcolm Law and Qianqian Qin

Abstract

In recent years, a small but growing body of scholarly work has emerged on the Hanfu movement in China. Researchers have drawn attention to globalisation, westernisation, national lifestyles, and development, the renaissance of Chinese culture, Han racism, Han ethnocentrism and xenophobia as drivers for the movement. In this article, we suggest that of all the extant literature that currently exists on the movement, the ethnography conducted by Kevin Carrico is the most accurate portrayal of the movement as it stands. However, and drawing upon visual and interview-based fieldwork with members of the movement in 2013 and 2015, our main argument is that existing scholarship has not attended to several nuances in the movement that problematise ideas of race, the way the movement views the recent past and the othering of Manchurian subjects. Unpacking these problematics, this study advances upon existing scholarship: 1) by drawing attention to the way Hanfu enthusiasts demonstrate a great deal of reflexivity

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around the notion of race; 2) by focusing on the approaches by which Hanfuists interpret the Chinese past beyond narratives of Han ethnic decline; 3) by investigating the mode by which   Hanfuists indirectly "other" Manchurian subjects; and 4) by exploring the manner in which Hanfuists hold a broad or "mass" societal "other" as responsible for a new era of moral decline in contemporary China.

Introduction

In recent years, commentators have remarked upon the emergence of a young adult movement in China known as the Hanfu movement. From the first decade of the twenty-first century, the movement has seen millions of young adults taking part in "traditional" customs, practices and rituals while wearing pre-Qing dynasty clothes. Currently, it is estimated that Hanfu enthusiasts number in the millions with 3.56 million members in 2019 and more than six million members in 2020 (Li and Xiong, 2021). Of the extant academic work in the Chinese literature, cultural critic Zhou (2008: 135) contends that the Hanfu movement is a modern construction led by a spirit of cultural nationalism in which Hanfu enthusiasts valorise traditional Chinese history, culture, and literature. Zhou (2008: 136) also notes that the movement is most likely a response by the younger generation to speedy changes in the "national lifestyle" (including globalisation and westernisation) and a "cultural [identity] crisis." Likewise, Wang (2010: 38–39) attests that the Hanfu movement represents a return of Han "ethnic cultural identity" in an age of "globalisation" and China's "rapid development." Han (2012: 44) also views the Hanfu movement sympathetically, and particularly he views the movement in terms of a broader "renaissance of Chinese culture." Of the academic literature in English, scholars have focused on the racialising and/or Han ethnicist features of the movement (see Carrico, 2017; Chew, 2010; Leibold, 2010). In his ethnographic study, *The Great Han*, Carrico (2017: 137) examines the role of the Hanfu movement in the construction of racialised discourses and racialised conspiracy theories, which allows the movement to position a "Manchurian other." In unpacking this literature, this article begins with the following research problematics. Firstly, rather than a literature based on an agreed consensus, opinions on the motivations and ideals of the movement are quite different. Particularly, within the Chinese literature, there is a tendency to see the movement in more cultural and sympathetic terms, as opposed to a movement defined singularly by racism and Han chauvinism. Furthermore, responses to Carrico's study have questioned whether his ethnography has captured the range of motivations and differences within the movement (Chew, 2018; Clayton, 2018: Zhang, 2019).

In response to these problematics, this investigation will ask the following research questions: firstly, given that much of the research is based on limited qualitative experiential fieldwork – except for Carrico's rich ethnography – we ask whether the current

analysis of the Hanfu has captured the nuances, the internal differentiation and the broad ideas, opinions, feelings, and practices of the movement. Secondly, given the very different academic interpretations of the movement, we ask whether any of the current studies are more accurate and/or fairer in their analyses. Thirdly, given the highly direct claims of Chew, Leibold, and Carrico, we want to ask whether the charges of Han racism and/or ethnocentrism brought against the movement are fair. While this small study cannot hope to completely answer all these questions (because this study is itself only a small empirical snapshot of the movement), nevertheless, in this article, we generally support the arguments of Carrico (2017) in that they mirror many of our own findings. However, in contrast, our main argument is that current research on the Hanfu movement (including Carrico, 2017) has not adequately explored several nuances within the movement. These include the idea that the Hanfu movement mainly constructs Han-ness through ideas of race, the ways in which the Hanfu movement interpret their own past and present – particularly in relation to a discourse of decline, and the manner in which the Hanfu movement positions Manchurian subjects and/ or "others" more broadly.

In responding to these problematics, we want to make several distinct contributions to the extant literature. Firstly, we argue that race might be less of an issue than Carrico's original study advances. Secondly, we argue that while a historical discourse of Han ethnic decline is important to the structuring of the movement, this is not the only historical narrative within the Hanfu movement. Thirdly, we would argue that although some sections of the movement might well be explicitly racist to Manchurian people, not all Hanfuists hold these sentiments – and particularly, as we shall demonstrate, our respondents did not hold these sentiments. Fourthly, we argue that, rather than othering Manchurians alone, the Hanfu movement also positions a vague mass societal other as responsible for the moral decline of contemporary Chinese society.

Furthermore, in addition to these empirical arguments, we want to argue that the Hanfu movement remains an important site of social and cultural research in China (and beyond) in that it tells us a lot about the construction of Han-ness, problems of discrimination and issues relating to the position of younger people in contemporary China. This article is broken down into the following sections. In the next section, we unpack our argument and our contributions to the literature before turning to our methodology. Then our empirical analysis is divided into three main sections which deal with three problematics which are set out below. The first empirical section (entitled "Blood, Blood Ties, Blood Lines, the Han 'Race' and ethnocentrism (Problematic 1)") deals with Carrico's claim that the Hanfu movement constructs ideas of Han-ness through notions of race. The second empirical section (entitled "Discourses of Historical Decline and the Problem of the Chinese Present (Problematic 2)") explores Carrico's interpretation of the manner by which the Hanfu movement views the Chinese past and the present. The third empirical section (entitled "Problematic 3: The Manchurians as a Historical and Contemporary Cabal") unpacks Carrico's analysis of the approach by which the Hanfu movement positions Manchurian subjects and/or 'others' more broadly. Then after a short discussion, a final section concludes the study and specifically, we return to our key contributions to the literature.

A Closer Look at the Hanfu Movement: Nuances and Problematics

Drawing upon sixty-three interviews with members of the movement in 2013 and 2015 (and two interviews with subjects connected to the movement) in the cities of Beijing, Chengdu, Shanghai, Wuhan, and Xi'an, this article makes several claims. Firstly, like Chew (2010), Leibold (2010) and Carrico (2017) (what we might call the *critical literature* on Hanfu) we agree that the movement is driven by hegemonic discourses of Han identity and Han-ness. Furthermore, in this article, we want to argue that our own study supports and reinforces many of the general findings within Kevin Carrico's rich ethnography. However, despite having much in common with Carrico's (2017) own investigation, the main argument of our study is that the extant literature (including the work of Carrico) has not attended to several nuances in the movement that problematise ideas of Han racism, the way the Hanfu movement views its own history and the manner by which Hanfuists understand Manchurian subjects or "others."

To unpack these nuances then – and to delve into the ways our own study produces new arguments and material – we unpack three problematics that emerged when we compared our own data with Carrico's (2017) ethnographic findings. The first of these problematics which can be found in the work of Carrico (and others) is that Han-ness is reproduced through racial discourses constructed by the movement (Carrico, 2017; Leibold, 2010). In the work of Carrico, the idea that the Hanfu movement produces racialised discourses rests at the heart of his thesis. Indeed, in the introduction to his ethnography and in engaging with one of his respondents "Yu," Carrico (2017: 5) notes that "despite my own view that races do not exist, I cannot deny the power of racial thinking among movement members."

A second problematic in the work of Carrico rests with his interpretations of the way in which the movement views the Chinese past and the Chinese present. In chapter five of his monograph, Carrico (2017: 135) points out that the Hanfu are preoccupied with an ancient or perennial narrative of racial decline, which starts with a "distinction between Chinese and barbarians." Indeed, as Carrico contends this distinction is important because it allows Hanfu enthusiasts to argue that a "pure" Han race and civilisation has existed across millennia separate from "barbarian others." However, as Carrico (2017: 134) demonstrates, for the clothing enthusiasts, this important distinction was "historically weakened by the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368 C.E.), which is portrayed… as a barbarian invasion of civilisation proper." Moreover, as Carrico (2017: 134) notes, for the Hanfu this distinction completely collapsed with the "subsequent fall of the Ming and the rise of the Manchu controlled Qing dynasty (1644–1911 C.E.)." As Carrico (2017: 134) suggests, for the Hanfu, the ascension to power of the Qing has seen the "Chinese adopting barbarian ways, and thus the end of a once pure culture." Furthermore, in examining Hanfu discourses of the near past, he also discloses that some of his respondents viewed the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) as a clandestine attempt by the Chinese Communist Party to target "insidious Manchu culture" (Carrico, 2017: 136).

A third and important issue in the work of Carrico is that the Hanfu construct hegemonic Han identities by othering a Manchurian subject; particularly in chapter 5 of his ethnography, Carrico discusses the way his respondents held onto a tightly held racialised conspiracy theory that maintains that modern China has witnessed the emergence of an insidious and clandestine Manchurian cabal. Indeed, as Carrico (2017: 132) suggests, for his research participants, China's Manchurians are a "race" that have sought to "control clothing, food, culture, education, finance, politics, and even military power in the reform era." In Carrico's (2017: 132) reading of the Hanfu, the Manchurians are genocidal "racial agents" that are seeking "to eliminate the Han race and destroy China." In this regard, Carrico (2017: 137) maintains that in the present era for the movement, Manchu power is expressed through "a veritable ideological state apparatus" which extends "through the fields of politics, economics, and culture."

In contrast to these three problematics, we will firstly argue that ideas of race and/or more appropriately ideas of blood (ties, lines) are less important to members of the movement than has so far been said by Carrico and others. Moreover, as we shall demonstrate, rather than being explicitly (or consciously) racist and/or ethnocentric, our interviewees sought to distance themselves from racist and/or ethnocentric elements of the movement. However, in making these arguments and in drawing out the nuances of Carrico's study, we do not want to claim that our respondents were not ethnocentric. Instead, and drawing upon the work of Cunningham et al. (2004) and Hooghe (2008) we want to make a distinction between ideas of explicit and implicit ethnocentrism. Indeed, through the frame of political science, Hooghe (2008: 4) unpacks these terms through notions of expression and inhibition:

> In the explicit condition, respondents are willing to express negative stereotypes toward outsider groups; the implicit condition is characterized by an inhibition to express these sentiments despite the fact that other responses clearly indicate that the respondent is unwilling to grant the same rights and legal protections to members of outsider groups.

Following the arguments of Cunningham et al. (2004) and Hooghe (2008), we want to suggest that the Hanfu movement is implicitly ethnocentric and that this ethnocentrism (or what we might call Han-centrism) is based on a series of less-than-conscious assumptions, including the ideas that: (a) Han-ness can be conflated with Chineseness; (b) a real and/or an authentic Han-ness has been lost and needs to be recalled once again; (c) the Qing dynasty and the Manchurian's were responsible for the loss of this Han-ness; (d) the recent past or the "present" has seen a decline in moral and behavioural standards; (e) a key agent in this new era of decline is a vague "mass other" which has broad social characteristics relating to the poor, the new rich and the older generation.

Secondly, we shall also argue that ideas of China's Han racial and/or ethnic decline are not the only historical narratives within the discourses of Hanfu enthusiasts. Indeed, as we shall demonstrate in the second section of our empirical analysis, (entitled "Discourses of Historical Decline and the Problem of the Chinese Present (Problematic 2)") Hanfuists also understand that from the Maoist era, China has been on a trajectory of moral, behavioural, and spiritual decline. In this regard, rather than seeing the movement in singular discursive terms, we

argue that the movement is best viewed as a fractured assemblage of agents that are influenced by numerous discourses and ideas – some of which converge and some of which present ideological tensions and clashes; in sum, then the movement is not a unified entity, but is best viewed as a heterogeneous assemblage of discourses and materialities. In explaining this concept, we draw upon the ideas of Patton (2000: 44) who contends that assemblages are "composed of discursive and non-discursive components: they are both assemblages of bodies and matter and assemblages of enunciation or utterance."

Thirdly, we want to argue that the positioning of Manchurian subjects and/or Han chauvinism, might not be as aggressive or as symbolically violent as Carrico suggests. Indeed, as we shall demonstrate below, our respondents were often uncomfortable with the othering of Manchurian subjects and several of our respondents were of part Manchurian heritage themselves. In this respect, when the othering of Manchurian subjects did take place, this othering often took place through discussions of modern Chinese history and the Qing era in particular.

Fourthly, rather than ideas of Han ethnic decline alone, we shall argue that broader discourses concerning China's moral deterioration are also at the heart of the way our respondents understood the contemporary world. In this manner, rather than blaming Manchurian subjects, in the main our respondents were highly critical of what we might call a vague "mass societal other." Indeed, as we shall point out, this vague societal other, could not be neatly associated with one social or socioeconomic group/culture. Nevertheless, when castigating this "other," our respondents often drew on examples relating to China's poorest, its new rich and its older generations as social sites in which new forms of reprehensible moral, behavioural and spiritual values (and practices) had emerged.

Figure 1. Members of Beijing 101 middle school Hanfu group – pictures taken by the authors in February 2013.

Methodology

This research began in Beijing in February 2013 when, by chance, one of the authors on a day trip to the Yuanmingyuan gardens (February 2013) noticed several young people wearing Hanfu clothing (see Figure 1).

After meeting these young people (aged approximately between twelve and eighteen) and having conducted a few initial interviews, a process of snowball sampling began and eventually we managed to conduct a series of interviews with members of the Hanfu movement in the cities of Beijing, Wuhan, and Xi'an (throughout 2013). Then in 2015, the investigators conducted a second round of field investigations between July 2015 and September 2015 in the cities of Beijing, Chengdu, Shanghai, and Wuhan. These cities were chosen because the researchers had already built-up good contacts and social networks in our first round of interviewing in 2013 and therefore, having been awarded a second grant we went to these cities to snowball as many groups as we possibly could.

In all of the cities we visited (both in 2013 and 2015), we tried to gain interviewees from "leading" Hanfu groups. Given that there were lots of people and groups that we could approach, in the main, we selected interviewees and groups both by their reputation but also via a grounded theory approach which refers to "the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 2). Moreover, we tried to get a sense of the differing philosophies, ideas and practices that could be found in each of the groups. In total, the researchers managed to produce a rich sample of sixty-five respondents from both fieldwork periods (as captured in the Online supplemental materials – these tables should serve as a guide for the reader so that they can link our anonymous interview quotes to the Hanfu groups they were, or were not, part of). Importantly, in presenting this data, we also want to note here that two of our respondents from Chengdu claimed they were not members of the movement. However, we have included them in this study because one of these respondents (Meilin*) provided reflective insights into the movement and the second interviewee said that he was going to become a member of the Hanfu movement when he graduated (Heng*) (these two subjects are marked with an * in the interviewee column in Figure 2 in the Online supplemental materials). In this regard, sixty-five formal interviews were conducted, of which sixty-three respondents were Hanfu enthusiasts. An overview of the sample's demographic characteristics is provided in Table 1.

In terms of Hanfu club membership, overall, we interviewed people from thirteen different clubs in the cities of Beijing, Chengdu, Wuhan, and Xi'an. However, we must note that several of our respondents were in more than one club and in some instances some of our interviewees did not identify with a club (or see themselves as a member of a club) and in this study, these subjects have been defined as *independent Hanfuists*. Information on the details of club membership can be examined in Appendix A1. Further descriptive and quantitative details on the sample can be found in the Supplemental Materials.

Table 1. General Social and Occupational Characteristics of the Sample.

Characteristics	*n*	%
Gender		
Female	46	71
Male	19	29
Identity		
Han	62	95
Han-Manchurians	3	5
Employment		
Students	30	46
Hanfu business owners	7	11
Office clerks, secretarial, receptionists, and University administrators	6	9
Professionals (Engineer, journalists, researchers, and analysts)	4	6
Teachers/college lecturers and public educators (at museum heritage sites)	4	6
Other	14	22
Geographical location of Hanfu Group members		
Hanfu group members from Beijing	23	35
Hanfu group members from Chengdu	9	14
Hanfu group members from Shanghai	1	2
Hanfu group members from Wuhan	19	29
Hanfu group members from Xi'an	11	17
Non-Hanfu group members included in the study (from Chengdu).	2	3
Member status		
Hanfu group members	36	55
Independent or non-group members	24	37
Difficult to clarify	5	8

Note: N = 65. Interviewees were on average 26 years old.

Blood, Blood Ties, Blood Lines, the Han "Race" and Ethnocentrism (Problematic 1)

Like Carrico, in our own study, we found several instances in which ideas of race or more appropriately, the idea of a Han bloodline (or "blood ties") appeared in the language of our respondents. For example, in one conversation in Chengdu, we asked Ning for her opinions on the role that the Yuan and the Qing dynasties played in the evolution and development of Chinese culture and indeed Han culture more broadly. In asking these questions, we were referring to the fact that the Mongols and the Manchurians, respectively, had instigated both the Yuan and the Qing dynasties, and we were trying to understand how Ning felt about the idea of a "perennial" Han ethnic culture. In response, Ning noted that while some ethnic groups had been "very active in Chinese history" like the "Xianbei" (The Xianbei were a group of non-Chinese people existing in the North of

China during the Age of Division – which refers to the years that existed between the collapse of the Han dynasty and the reconsolidation of China during the Sui dynasty – see Holcombe, 2013) in the main, these groups had been "gradually assimilated into the bloodline of the Han" (Ning, Chengdu).

Moreover, in another conversation with Meihui and her husband Hong, Meihui described her feelings when wearing Hanfu clothing.

> When I finally put Hanfu on, I can feel the blood tie with my ancestors. If I go to [the] Terracotta Warriors, or go to the museums, I will definitely wear Hanfu, since I can feel that there are many great cultural heritages for us to inherit and pass on. I can feel that I am a part of the entity, I am the descendent of Hua and Xia. So, when I go to places like these, I can feel my blood and the culture, and my spirit, and the life course that I should work for. I can find the answer from my ancestors. So, I… no longer feel lost. (Meihui, Hanyang Society, Chengdu)

Here, in these discussions, while ideas of blood or a racial line appeared in the language of Meihui and her husband Hong, it is also noteworthy that they placed ideas of culture above the idea of a Han bloodline (and/or the idea of a Han Race); thus, in one conservation, Meihui and Hong made the following comments:

> Meihui: … we say the blood is the bloodline of Hua and Xia
> Hong: That's why I say that blood and culture are equally important, if you have to say which one is more important, I'd say culture is more important than the blood. So, we hope that westerners can also learn our culture and recognize our culture. Since our culture is very peaceful and beautiful.
> Meihui: Like the Tang Dynasty, which is very open and inclusive. They welcome all the foreigners and ethnic minorities. We hope that this peaceful culture can help this world to achieve the real peace and respect. (Meihui and Hong, Hanyang Society, Chengdu)

However, while Meihui and Hong's conversations discussions of a Han bloodline or a Han race appeared relatively clear-cut, Hong also demonstrated a certain amount of confusion over these ideas. Thus, in an earlier part of our interview, Hong made the following comment:

> Let's say it's not races. It's nationality, ethnic group. In China there are no racial differences, but different ethnic groups. The ethnic differences have… existed for a long time, we cannot overlook it. But we are not against the integration of nationalities. I think I as a descendent of the Han group, we have the culture of root. Although we have a history of 5000 years, we still can remember our ancestors. While many other ethnicities all around the world have already forgot[en] their ancestors after all the changes. (Hong, Hanyang Society, Chengdu)

Indeed, while this remark might be read as a "one off" or "throw away" opinion, we have included this quote here to demonstrate that rather than being an umambiguous discourse a narrative of a Han race and/or a Han bloodline – for the few respondents that did discuss these ideas – was relatively vague and/or poorly defined by our interviewees. In general, while Ning, Meihui, and Hong saw Han-ness through ideas of blood (and/or race), most of our respondents talked about Han-ness in terms of ethnicity and culture. Thus, for example, in one conversation, Guiren and Lanying made the following comments:

Q: So, do you think the idea of ethnicity is connected to the idea
         of culture or to the idea of a bloodline [race]?

Guiren: To Culture. I think it's more about the culture. No matter who
         you are, as long as you feel that you are closer to a certain
         culture, then you can recognise yourself as a member of
         this culture. However, it may take generations to completely
         fit in this ethnic group, it takes time to get used to the habits,
         to change your appearance.

Lanying: Some people argue that now there is no pure Han-ese. This
         idea is not accepted by us since we don't define Han by the
         bloodline, we define it according to the culture

Guiren: Some people say you have to be the decedents of Emperor
         Xuanyuan. However, we only define Han according to the
         culture recognition. (Guiren and Lanying, Beijing Hanfu Society)

Discourses of Historical Decline and the Problem of the Chinese Present (Problematic 2)

Like Carrico, in our own study, we also found much evidence for a narrative of Han ethnic decline (as we shall discuss below) and like Carrico, for some of our respondents, this story of erasure began with the advent of the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) and the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). Indeed, many of our respondents specified the Qing era in particular – under Manchurian rule – as a critical time in which Han culture had deteriorated. Thus, Jian made the following comment:

We were still highly developed in [the] Ming. However, our culture was backward after the ruling of [the] Yuan and [the] Qing, especially the Qing Dynasty. Actually, what many people do not know is that the *Han culture* we know [today] was distorted by Qing rulers. When we [are] talking about the traditional culture the first word comes in[to our] mind[s] may be "Feudal," and "Nucai" (slavery), actually this Nucai was invented by [the] Qing. Also, they had many literary inquisitions, like [the] Kangxi Dictionary. The aim was to change Chinese characters. So, under the rule of Qing, we fell behind and became very weak, and [we] end[ed] up [being] invaded by other countries. (Jian, no strong affiliation to any group, Shanghai; with my emphases added in bold)

Likewise, in another interview, we noted the ferocity with which one of our respondents described the Qing dynasty and its effect on the "culture" of the Han people. Indeed, in one discussion, Hong made the following remark when asked about the "discontinuity" of Han culture:

> It's because of the coming of [the] Qing soldiers. They are savages from the north, and our own dynasty had its own problems, natural disasters, famines, which caused some internal conflicts, the peasant uprisings, and weakened the sovereign. Then the Qing soldiers came and entered the central China, became the rulers of China. They took some measures, forcing Han people to change their hair and clothing styles, as well as other ethnic discrimination policies. (Hong, Hanyang Society, Chengdu).

As can be observedhere, in Hong's discourse the use of the expression "savages from the north" draws upon the metonymic language of the Chinese/Barbarian distinction Carrico discusses. The notion of savages, which is being used here conjures up the idea that the Qing Manchurians were a violent "uncivilised" people. Moreover, and mirroring Carrico's investigation, many of our respondents, argued that the Qing period had left an indelible mark on contemporary Chinese culture even after the dynasty had collapsed – a blemish that was ultimately negative. Thus, in reflecting upon the Republican era (1911–1949) and indeed the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), some of our respondents argued that the Qing rulers had constructed an unfavourable understanding of "traditional" Chinese culture which had remained even after the dynasty had ended. Thus, Jian made the following comment:

> So, under the rule of Qing, we fell behind and became very weak, and [we] end[ed] up [being] invaded by other countries. After the May Fourth activity people began to reflect and think the problem is because of our traditional culture. The traditional culture they knew was the culture distorted by Qing rulers. Also, later the Cultural Revolution. (Jian, no strong affiliation to any group, Shanghai; with my emphases added in bold)

Moreover, for some of our interviewees, the Qing dynasty had also created a culture of "slavery" that was still influential in modern China. Particularly, Junjie in Wuhan discussed the unequal relationship between people in different positions of power in contemporary China (with the implication that these relationships had their roots in the problems of the Qing era):

> Looking at the relationship of senior and junior officials in our governments these days, the junior officers must flatter senior and powerful colleagues, there are many problems of corruption, bribery and so forth. This also is true in many companies where there is no equal relationship between employers and employees, what the higher-level people emphasize is an absolute obedience. These are all different forms of slavery. (Junjie, Independent Hanfuist, Wuhan)

Societal, Moral, Behavioural, and Spiritual Decline

However, where some of our respondents blamed the Qing period (as a key turning point before China fell into an era of decline), for some of our interviewees, other epochs including the Maoist era and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) were equally important markers (or starting places) of a new age of decline. Furthermore, rather than Han racial and/or Han ethnic decline, for our respondents, these points in time were important because they were associated with the beginning of a new era of moral and/or behavioural decline. Thus, one of our interviewees, Shan, suggested that the Cultural Revolution had played a major role in the decline of contemporary values and discipline in the present. Indeed, she stated that the revolution had severed the

> line between right and wrong, which [has then] reshaped people's ideas and values. Nowadays when we see it, we feel there is an absence of the sense of recognition or the sense of binding and discipline. So now many people nowadays have no such an idea or awareness to do it in a polite or good-manner way. (Shan, Hanfeng Huayun Hanfu Society, Wuhan)

Importantly, this depiction of the Cultural Revolution departs very much from Carrico's own interpretation of the way his own respondents read this period in China's history. Furthermore, while some of our respondents cited the Maoist era as the starting place of a new period of moral decline, many of our interviewees blamed the recent past, the present and/or "nowadays" as the origin of a new moment in which "Chinese values" had become lost. Thus, in one conversation, Lanfen compared the "standards" of the ancient world with those of the present:

> For instance, in ancient times, there were many standards to judge whether a person is successful. One could earn the recognition and respect of the society merely because he was a good man, he was filial and obedient to his parents, or because he was literate. Nowadays in China, however, there is only one possible standard to judge a person, money, and social status. We have abandoned many basics, morality, and good behaviours. (Lanfen, Beijing Hanfu Society, 2015).

As can be seen in this quote, Lanfen (and others we interviewed) maintained that money and social standing were the main form of social and cultural measurement in today's China.

Reflecting this sentiment, in another interview, Ning, mentioned that China had been a materialistic society "for too long" and specifically, she felt that the pace of contemporary Chinese life was causing some people to "feel superficial or anxious" (Ning, Sichuan University Hanfu group). Similarly, in another conversation, Ning reported that because of the speed of modern Chinese society, people had forgotten to enjoy life and their surroundings; indeed, she stated that Chinese people were always in a hurry "to hit the road" and had forgotten to "take a rest or see the scenery along the way" (Ning, Sichuan University Hanfu

group). When asked about the causes of this change of culture (or loss), some respondents discussed the role of western values in everyday Chinese life; indeed, Ning reflected on changes in Chinese education and particularly she suggested that a traditional Chinese classical education has been replaced by western ideas, knowledge, and skills:

> We are oriented by the western cultures and values because of all the turmoil we have experienced, and we need[ed] to rise up, so we have deployed many advanced knowledge and skills from western society. In the meantime, however, this will influence our education. (Ning, Sichuan University Hanfu group)

Moreover, the rise of new forms of materialism, money and status were also equated with a loss of traditional forms of "etiquette" and "good" social behaviour. In one instance, then, Jianyu stated that there were fewer societal requirements around one's behaviour and he felt that such a loss of standards was resulting in moral decline and the rise of violence in China:

> Well for instance now there are many angry drivers these days, when they drive cars, they will become very violent, the emotional instability. (Jianyu, independent Hanfuist, 2015)

In another conversation Qingling reported that traditional values such as filial piety and respect for one's juniors had also disappeared in Chinese society: a loss of values, which would be damaging to China's future:

> Many people nowadays, for instance, cannot be filial [and] obedient to their parents and juniors. Why is that… because they don't think this is important. Nationally, if every person is like this, then we won't have a future. (Qingling, Guhua Cultural Society, Wuhan)

Importantly, while the loss of the moral and behavioural standards of today's China might be read through a broader discourse of Han ethnic and/or Han cultural decline, we felt that for many of our respondents, it was not the Yuan or the Qing era that had brought about the "decline" of China. Rather as we have suggested here, for our respondents other periods including the Maoist era, the Cultural Revolution and even the recent past (or the present), were to blame for China's deterioration. Secondly, rather than pitching China's decline in terms of the loss ofHan ethnic culture, for many of our respondents China's degeneration was also based on the lessening of China's moral and behavioural standards.

Problematic 3: The Manchurians as a Historical and Contemporary Cabal

While discussing the Qing dynasty as the origin of a contemporary era of Han ethnic decline, some of our respondents were explicitly clear that the *Manchurian people*

themselves were the key agents in this period of suppression. In this regard, Meihui made the following comment about the idea of "Manpower" in the Qing period:

> The whole Han culture and Hanfu have been cracked down for 300 years by manpower, which led to the fact that now we cannot find our own things, lost ourselves, the ego. (Meihui, Hanyang Society, Chengdu)

As can be seen in Meihui's statement, the Manchurians are *historically* blamed for their *past suppression* of the Han people and the production of longstanding psychological trauma, which is further interpreted as having damaged Han people's sense of self and/or ego. In terms of the present, like Carrico, we also encountered several instances when Manchurian subjects were being othered, although in the main Manchurian subjects were often being othered indirectly. Thus, like Carrico, typicallythis form of othering took place when our subjects talked about the Qipao and/or the Cheongsam, which was regarded as being mainly western and Manchurian origin. Indeed, in these instances, because of the non-Han origins of the clothing, many of our respondents contended that the Qipao could not represent a core Han-ness (and sometimes even a broader Chineseness). Moreover, many of our respondents also rejected the Qipao as being too modern (as this form of clothing is only several centuries old), whereas Hanfu clothing was viewed as being much "older" and therefore somehow more representative of a deep Han-ness and/or an authentic Chinese culture.

However, we did encounter respondents who thought the Qipao was beautiful and in one instance, one of our interviewees – Rong – told us that they would happily wear a Qipao, even though she was a member of the Hanfu movement (Rong, Guhua Cultural Society). In general however, and in contrast to Carrico's own study, we found that many of our subjects were careful *not to* position and/or castigate those with Manchurian heritage in the present. Thus, despite blaming Manchurians for 300 years of "Manpower" (during the Qing dynasty), Meihui also made the following comments about the role of Manchurians in the present:

> Like we treat the Man people now, they are an ethnic group of China, and we are brothers. We treat them friendly. We just need to make it clear that in the history Hanfu was not abandoned due to natural reasons… (Meihui, Hanyang Society, Chengdu).

Furthermore, some of the most interesting discussions of Manchurian subjectivity came from those members of our study who themselves had Manchurian ethnic heritage (three subjects in total). Particularly, of all the interviews, the comments made by Lanfen of Beijing Hanfu Society were the most interesting. To be sure, when we asked her about whether she felt included in the Beijing Hanfu Society, she told us that the society was fully inclusive, and no one had ever demonstrated any prejudice against her because of her Manchurian roots.

Here then like Lanfen, at various times, several of our respondents were keen to point out that the Han and China's ethnic minorities should *not be* separated by hard cultural

and/or ethnic boundaries. Thus, in conversation with several of our respondents, we were struck by the way our interviewees were quite critical of a "pure" Han culture. In discussing these issues with two members of the Beijing Hanfu Society, Guiren and Lanying made the following comments:

> Q: Is the Han culture you are trying to revive a mixture of all the
>   ethnic histories of China? Is it pure and distinct, or
>   connected?
> Guiren: Han culture? … I don't think there is an idea of [a] pure
>   culture when you are talking about culture.
> Lanying: Especially considering Han culture has thousands of years'
>   history, it has received influence from external cultures, and
>   itself has different dynasties.
> Guiren: It's nothing remained still and unchanged. The culture of
>   Song and Min are distinct from Shang and Zhou. It's very
>   inclusive, and it can do self-elimination. (Guiren and
>   Lanying, Beijing Hanfu Society)

Hanfu Reflexivity and Anti-Chauvinist Sentiment

However, while many of our interviewees were keen to point out that discrimination against Manchurian people did not exist in their own Hanfu societies and circles, some of our respondents expressed concern that some factions of the movement might discriminate against Manchurian people (and ethnic minorities more generally). Indeed, while Lanfen told us that she had never experienced any prejudice in her own group (as we have demonstrated above), she cautioned that some Hanfu societies in some regions of China might well be different. In one conversation, she stated that

> There are some people from other regions… but I don't think they are getting at me. They probably feel that Beijing is a city once influenced greatly by the Man nationality, they call Beijing "Hudu." (Here when Lanfen uses the word "Hudu," we understand that this word comes from the term "Hu" that means an "outsider" or "foreigner." In this regard, when Lanfen uses the word, we take it to mean that she is referring to the Han chauvinistic idea of an "outsider's capital") but they did not say some very personal… or only target me. (Lanfen, Beijing Hanfu Society)

Moreover, in another discussion, Lanfen pointed out that whilst the early movement had indeed been racist, especially to Manchurians, the movement had evolved and was now more concerned with clothes and culture:

> Very very early [on], a majority of people promoting Hanfu in the first place… [were] very radical and [were] ethnocentric nationalists. They have their expectations for Han Nationality, insisting that as Han people you should be like this or like that. They have

[racial] discrimination. They think that Man Nationality is the ethnic group that have exter-minated our Han regimes and terminated the cultural inheritance of our national group, "*Feiwozulei*" (非我族类). (The word "*Feiwozulei*" (非我族类) means not of our race and/or breed. Here Guo Yang is referring to the way some members of the Hanfu movement defined Manchurian's as "Feiwozulei"). But now when people see the Hanfu clothes, espe-cially those primary and high school students, they will not have such an idea. They only think these clothes are very beautiful. This is a transition from radicalness to pure ideas about clothes, toward clothes and cultures, which offers evidence that Hanfu is developing and thriving. (Lanfen, Beijing Hanfu Society)

But, despite her generally positive and inclusive reading of the movement, many of our other respondents were less convinced. Thus, some of our interviewees pointed to a racist and/or Han Chauvinistic fringe in the movement that was not representative of Hanfuists as a whole. In discussing this chauvinistic fringe, Hong and Meihui made the following comments:

I won't deny the existence of these people [Han chauvinism]. This is a large group, and we cannot say that we are all on the same page. However, I think the mainstream, or the ideas we uphold is that we are all equal, the ethnic equality. Also, we don't care [about] what other ethnic groups [are] thinking, but we have the responsibility to revive our own things. We have been lost for so long, so we need to revive it. It's very reasonable. Also, I have to say that the extremer the online comments are, the easier people paying attention to that. If you don't really go deep to get a thorough understanding, you will easily expose yourself to these extremists. (Hong, Hanyang Society, Chengdu)

We have some internal divergence. Initially there were two websites, Han Net and Sky Han Net. One emphasizes clothes and culture, while the other one upholds nationalism and Han Chauvinism. (Meihui, Hanyang Society, Chengdu)

Moreover, when talking about ideas of Han Chauvinism, Guirenmade the following remark:

Most of them are active online, and most of them are "Jian Pan Xia." Since online many people tend to be very excited, actually in the real-life people tend to be more rational, like organising Hanfu activities, you need to be calm and committed. (Guiren, Beijing Hanfu Society)

Here importantly then, as our respondents were keen to point out, the movement did have an extremist or chauvinist edge; nevertheless, as our interviewees maintained, these extre-mists were the exception rather than the rule and many of our research participants were keen to distance themselves from these people.

Of all the Hanfu groups we met, the *Beijing Hanfu Society* seemed to be most con-scious of the problems of Han chauvinism. Particularly, of the people we interviewed

from this group, often respondents demonstrated a fair degree of reflexivity around the idea of Han-ness and Chineseness. Thus, in one instance, Guowei pointed out that while Chinese culture is often represented by Han culture, he felt uncomfortable with the idea that Chinese culture *could only be defined by Han ethnic culture*.

> If it's about Chinese culture, then I may think of the Chinese culture that is mainly represented by the Han culture. Of course, I can't say Chinese culture entirely belongs to Han culture, but at least its main representation is Han culture. Since once you mention China, the old Chinese people, drinking tea, calligraphy and many other things, these are the representatives of Han culture. However, we can't say that Chinese culture only has Han culture, because there are other national minorities, if we say Chinese culture is Han culture, it's unfair to them. (Guowei, Beijing Hanfu Society)

Furthermore, in another highly interesting discussion, Lan reported to us that Beijing Hanfu Society had created a test to "weed out" Han "extremists" (which we understand the notion of extremists to mean Han chauvinists) who wished to be members of Beijing Hanfu Society:

> Since it is a Hanfu society, it is inevitable that some very radical applicants want to join us. So, the test is to find out whether there are some Hua and Han extremists, or people with strong ethnocentrism. We do not get these people involved. (Lan, Beijing Hanfu Society, 2015)

Likewise, Guiren communicated to us very explicitly that if the society encountered Han extremists they would hope to guide and educate them:

> If we meet some Hanfuists who are ethic extremists or Han chauvinism, we will guide them, and to mitigate their negative feelings. Some of these people are youngsters who are energetic and enthusiastic and easily to become emotional. They read some history books about Hanfu and Han people, how did the culture get lost, and easily become angry and hateful because of the miserable experience of their ancestors. They will transfer the hatred to the ethnic minority, the Manchu people in the modern society. Actually, this is unwise and not acceptable. (Guiren, Beijing Hanfu Society)

Here, in contrast to the extant critical literature on the Hanfu movement (and Carrico in particular), we found evidence of reflexivity within the movement and a particular critical disposition towards racism, ethnocentrism, and/or Han chauvinism more broadly. To boot, at times some of our respondents – particularly those in the Beijing Hanfu Society – were actively anti-racist in their own recruitment activities (even if they were Han-centric in other ways).

The "Mass Other"

Moreover, rather than simply othering a Manchurian subject in the present – as suggested in the work of Carrico – for many of our subjects often their fiercest complaints rested with a vague "mass other." Indeed, as we have suggested in our section entitled "Societal, Moral, Behavioural and Spiritual Decline," the idea of a "mass other" was tied up with an era of moral and behavioural deterioration, as opposed to a longstanding period of Han ethnic decline. Thus, in the first instance, Hanfu enthusiasts often mentioned the uncouth and/or immoral behaviour of everyday Chinese people. For example, Heng from Chengdu spoke of a series of bad behaviours in contemporary China (although as he suggested things were improving), including the "Wearing [of] pyjamas in public spaces, wear sandals, spitting everywhere, littering around" (Heng, Chengdu – no strong group affiliation; but associated with the Sichuan Hanfu group). Here, while Heng does not discuss a socioeconomic group, arguably, his positioning of pyjama wearing and spitting in public places, holds certain symbolic implications. As our conversation progressed, Heng therefore suggested that in today's China, "bad behaviour" could be associated with people from the lower classes and those without an education:

> H: I think this bad behaviour is related to the low class. Like the poor people and like the people living in the suburb and villages because they haven't very high education. So, they will behave like that. Their parents do like that. So, they will follow their parents to do that. When we say just you can see in our campus, we are from everywhere in China. Just like some students from the mountainous area, but like some students from the big cities. But you'll see all behaviour is quite similar and we behave well. It's the education play an important role of it. (Heng – no strong group affiliation, but associated with the Sichuan Hanfu group, Chengdu)

Likewise, in discussing a decline in morality and the standards expected towards people's personal conduct, Jianyu commented that often China's poorest had the lowest morals. Indeed, in one instance, Jianyu stated that:

> Most of them are like me, from the lower class, are labours and farmers, they are all lower class, since they are suffering the pressure from the life, so they don't have the sense of morality, it's an absence of morality. They neglect other people's feeling due to the attention to their own survival. (Jianyu, independent Hanfuist, Wuhan)

However, it was evident that for some of our respondents, richer people were also responsible for the proliferation of a particular kind of anti-social behaviour and a series of values that were regarded as being equally negative. Thus, several of our research participants discussed the rise of the *tuhao* (土豪), or China's "new rich" (or a "rich second generation") as a social group with negative behavioural characteristics:

H: No. Rich second generation for most people is not a positive word. Second-rich generation is just a name of the children from the rich family. It originally hasn't any bad meaning, but some special "rich second generation" they do the bad manner, so the society define the rich second generation as the bad rich family's children. (Heng – no strong group affiliation, but associated with the Sichuan Hanfu group, Chengdu)

Furthermore, Jianyu suggested that unlike the rich in the west (particularly western aristocrats), China's new rich were lacking in traditional values (rites) and education:

Jianyu: Most of the upper class is, we have a word, *tǔháo* [土豪], which I think also has an equivalent idea in the west, those new money, wealthy red neck. In the west, there are aristocratic families, and they have those rites and education, but it's rare in China. There is a difference between protocol etiquette and law and discipline rites. Law and discipline rites can be seen and expressed, to discipline people's behaviours. (Jianyu, independent Hanfuist; Wuhan)

In some instances, some of our respondents demonstrated a fondness for the idea of aristocracy and an older form of dynastic governance; however, in other moments, many of our respondents, simply longed for a stronger sense of social order that could be supported by stratification and/or the ideas of Confucius and Mencius. Indeed, Longwei stated that:

A historian or a sociologist used to say that the only solutions to solve the problems in the 21st century are the teaching of Confucian and Menci[us], and I agree with this. Since now the problems of the society is the lack of order, the loss of stratification. We don't accept this; the stratification of society can help to solve social problems. (Longwei, independent Hanfuist, Wuhan)

In other instances, some of our respondents discussed the problem of a "mass other" through themes of age. Certainly, some of our respondents were quite critical of an elderly generation who seemed to only view life through practical and/or pragmatic values. In discussing her parent's reaction to her being involved in the Hanfu movement, Rong outlined her mother and father's practical attitude to life: a life focused on making a livelihood, gaining employment and marriage:

Q: What's your parent's attitude toward your participation in Hanfu activities?

My mom always says that this is not good, that is not good, it's a waste of time and energy. But she just says so, not serious. My dad is okay. My first Hanfu was bought by him. Later he said you can do is as recreation. They think I am like a kid who is playing with these things, just for fun. They are more practical. What they care more is your livelihood, job, work and marriage. (Rong, Guhua Cultural society Wuhan)

Likewise, one of our respondents, Qingling suggested that the elder generation were only interested in doing things if there was some form of financial return:

The elder generation they are also money-worship[ers], if they feel this can bring money to them, okay I will learn it. While our generation may think okay this thing makes me happy or comfortable, so I will learn it. So, these are conceptual conflicts. Because these elder people they are too fearful to be poor, but now we think we are rich now, so we don't care about this… So, this is an economic problem. (Qingling, Guhua Cultural Society, Wuhan)

In this respect, and following on from the problematic discussed in the section "A Closer Look at the Hanfu Movement: Nuances and Problematics" (i.e. a narrative of moral decline), rather than a conspiratorial Manchurian subject; for many of our respondents a new generation of poorly behaved people, with ill manners and poor values were seen as the key agents in the deterioration of contemporary Chinese society. Furthermore, these agents were *not* seen in conspiratorial, racial or ethnic terms; instead, as we have suggested here, these agents were understood in moral or ethical terms as a vague "mass other" that was responsible for the moral decay of contemporary Chinese society.

Discussion

Reflecting on the three empirical problematics we have outlined, several further themes are worthy of discussion here. In terms of the first problematic, this study explored the way a very small number of our respondents talked about ideas of Han blood ties, a Han bloodline and/or associated notions of a "Han race." As we pointed out, in these very small cases, often our respondents referred to ideas of a Han ethnicity and/or a distinct Han culture over and above the idea of a Han race. Critically speaking, some scholars might suggest that the idea of a Han race and notions of Han ethnicity are synonymous. Indeed, as Dikötter (2005: 46) has argued, within China "notions of ethnicity, nation, and race have often been conflated in the politics of nationalism." However, while we accept that notions of racism and ethnocentrism are highly inter-related, in our interpretation of our findings, we would argue that our respondents maintained a distinction, because for the most part our interviewees presented their own ideas within ethnic and cultural terms as opposed to biological ones. In this respect, our own investigation has much in common with the ethnographic findings of Joniak-Lüthi (2015) and her extensive study of native and migrant Han people in Shanghai, Beijing, Aqsu (in Xinjiang) and the Sichuan–Yunnan border area. Indeed, in her own project

Joniak-Lüthi (2015: 54) notes that "Racialised Han-ness was often less articulated." While of course, an absence of evidence does not mean evidence of absence, in our own work ideas of race were generally absent within the discourses of our participants.

The second problematic addressed Carrico's construal of the manner in which the Hanfu movement interprets the Chinese past and the Chinese present. Like Carrico, we drew attention to the approach by which our respondents discussed the Chinese past and present in terms of narratives of Han ethnic decline. However, in the second part of this section, (entitled "Societal, Moral, Behavioural and Spiritual Decline") we also focused on the way our respondents were more concerned with a narrative of moral and behavioural deterioration in contemporary China. Here, in particular, this narrative of moral and behavioural decay was constructed through themes of normlessness, rudeness, ignorance, and materialism. In this regard, we seek to challenge Carrico's assertion that the Hanfu only see the past in terms of the decline and restoration of a discrete Han ethnicity. Instead, and moving away from Carrico's position, we would argue that the movement taps into broader societal understandings of China's post-Maoist moral decline, a narrative that can be found in the writing of scholars such as Ci (2014) and Yan (2021).

The third empirical section of this article (entitled "Problematic 3: The Manchurians as a Historical and Contemporary Cabal") dealt with the fashion by which our respondents positioned Manchurian subjects and/or "others" more broadly. While we agree with Carrico that the Hanfu movement *does position* Manchurian others (as we suggest in the section entitled "Discourses of Historical Decline and the Problem of the Chinese Present (Problematic 2)"), this othering generally takes place in a more historical way – as opposed to a discourse that castigates Manchurian people in the present (again see section "A Closer Look at the Hanfu Movement: Nuances and Problematics"). Therefore, and in contrast to Carrico's ethnography, we found little evidence for the racialised conspiracy theories that he outlines; and furthermore, in our own study we found little evidence for the idea that Hanfuists view Manchurians as belonging to a cabal intent upon extinguishing the "Han race." However, by making this assertion here, we do want to imply that Carrico's data is in any way inaccurate; rather we suspect that different groups within the movement have differing ideologies. In this regard, within our own study, we found that our respondents often saw contemporary Manchurians as "brothers" of the Han people and in some cases, some of our interviewees argued that China's Han and ethnic minority populations should not be read in discrete terms.

Furthermore, in unpacking the minutiae of our data, we found that rather than a Manchurian subject alone, for the most part, many of our interviews constructed a broader narrative of the 'other' based around the notion of a societal or "mass other." As we have demonstrated, this mass other was held responsible for the moral decline of contemporary Chinese society (as discussed in the section "A Closer Look at the Hanfu Movement: Nuances and Problematics"). In unpacking this idea of a "mass other" in more detail, we noted how our respondents characterised this other via references to China's poorest, its new rich and its elderly generation; specifically, while this symbolic positioning might not be read in terms of what sociologists would call

symbolic violence – that is, oppressive ideas about one's status that are viewed as "normal" or "natural" – we would argue that the stigmatisation of "mass others" by the Hanfu speaks more to broader ideas of *suzhi* in Chinese society. Indeed, as Jacka (2009: 524) has contended, suzhi "refers to the innate and nurtured physical, psychological, intellectual, moral, and ideological qualities of human bodies and their conduct"; but arguably notions of suzhi also refer to concepts of citizenship and specifically, as Jacka (2009: 524) has noted, "discourses on how to produce the 'ideal' citizen as well as what to do about the less-than-ideal citizen." In the construction of "mass others" with poor values and poor behaviour, it is our argument here that the Hanfu also draws upon these broader ideas which reflect what Jacka (2009: 526) has called "an anxiety about modernity, a concern that China is weak and backward because its people are deficient in some way, and a conviction that in order for China to become powerful and fully modern, those deficiencies in its people must be rectified."

Conclusions

This investigation began with several research questions; firstly, we asked whether current research on the Hanfu movement has captured the nuances of the movement, including the internal differentiation and the broad ideas, opinions, feelings, and practices of the Hanfu movement. Secondly, we asked whether any of the current studies on the movement are more accurate and/or fair in their analyses; thirdly, given the critical claims of Chew, Leibold, and Carrico, we asked whether the charges of racism and Han ethnocentrism brought against the movement are reasonable and/or equitable? In trying to answer these questions, this article has made several distinct arguments. Firstly, and given the diversity of interpretations surrounding the Hanfu movement, we have explicitly argued that *Kevin Carrico's rich ethnography still represents the most accurate portrayal of the Hanfu movement to* date. Indeed, as Carrico rightly argues, a hegemonic discourse of Han-ness is indeed a major driver in the social and cultural construction of the movement.

However, in this investigation, we have drawn attention to several issues in Carrico's ethnography that are problematised by our own study. These problematics included: (1) the idea that the Hanfu movement mainly constructs Han-ness through ideas of race; (2) the way in which the Hanfu movement interprets ideas of the Chinese past and indeed the Chinese present; and (3) the manner in which the Hanfu movement interprets and positions a Manchurian subject and ethnic "others" more broadly. In responding to these problematics, we have made *three arguments*. Firstly, we have argued that while accurate, Carrico's study does not unpack the different feelings that Hanfu subjects have towards the idea of a Han race (or Han bloodline). Indeed, as we have shown a very small number of our interviewees discussed ideas of Han-ness through discourses of race – or more appropriately the idea of a Han bloodline. However, even when discussing these ideas, we noted that there was confusion surrounding these concepts and, in some instances, this small cohort of our interviewees favoured ideas of ethnicity and/or culture above notions of race and/or biology.

Secondly, like Carrico, we also found that the approach by which the Hanfu movement interprets China's past is critical to the mode in which the movement defines itself and its objectives. However, where Carrico's study indicates that Hanfu subjects were mainly concerned with a narrative of Han ethnic decline, our own study points to the significant role of a contemporary discourse of Chinese moral decline in the structuring of the movement. Thirdly, like Carrico, we also argue that the Hanfu movement, does "other" Manchurian subjects and this process of othering plays a significant role in the construction of Han identities (and the construction of the objectives and goals of the movement more generally). However, and in contrast to Carrico, we found that many of our respondents "othered" a Manchurian subject indirectly through the historical discourses of Han ethnic decline discussed in our section entitled "Discourses of Historical Decline and the Problem of the Chinese Present (Problematic 2)". In this regard, we found little evidence for the racialised conspiracy theories (against Manchurian people) that Carrico considers in his own study. Indeed, as we demonstrated in the third section of this article, many of our interviewees displayed a great deal of reflexivity and anti-Han chauvinist sentiment when it came to the discussion of Manchurian people (and minorities more broadly). Moreover, as we pointed out, some of our respondents also critically reflected upon ideas of Han-ness and the idea of a pure and/or an essential Han identity. Finally, we also made the claim that while a Manchurian subject is often positioned indirectly as an "other" in the discourses of our interviewees, a Manchurian subject was not the only "other" in the texts of our respondents. Thus, in our final empirical section entitled "The 'Mass Other'", we demonstrated that a general, (or vague), idea of a mass other – defined through broad societal attributes relating to China's poor, China's new rich and the elderly – was also positioned as a key agent in China's "decline." In this sense, as we have suggested in this article, the positioning of this mass other is bound to a moral and/or a behavioural narrative of decline, as opposed to an ethnic one.

In this respect, while this study has sought to support Carrico's important study, we have also built upon his ethnography by drawing attention to several empirical themes that run through our own work. These themes include: (1) the idea that concepts of race and/or more appropriately notions of blood (ties; lines) might be less important to members of the movement than has so far been suggested; (2) that ideas of China's Han racial and/or ethnic decline are not the only (or main) narratives within the discourses of Hanfu enthusiasts; (3) that the positioning of Manchurian subjects and/or Han chauvinism, might not be as aggressive or as symbolically violent as Carrico suggests; (4) that, rather than a narrative of Han ethnic decline, our respondents were also haunted by discourses of China's moral deterioration; (5) rather than Manchurian subjects, a vague societal other is held responsible for this new period of moral and behavioural anomie

Acknowledgements

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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Appendix A1. Number of Respondents Within Each of the Hanfu Groups (and Those Respondents who Define Themselves as Independent Hanfuists).

City	Name of group	Total	Total (%)
Beijing	Hanfu Beijing (Beijing Hanfu Society)	11	16.9
	Peking University Hanfu Society	2	3.0
	Beijing 101 Middle School Hanfu Group	7	10.7
	Dual membership of Peking University and Hanfu Beijing	2	3.0
Chengdu	Hanfu Society in Sichuan University	5	7.6
	Hanyang Society (under Chengdu municipal government)	2	3.0
	No group but sometimes attends the Hanfu Society in Sichuan University	3	4.6
	Does not see themselves as a Hanfu enthusiast	2	3.0
Shanghai	Independent Hanfuist in Shanghai	1	1.5
Wuhan	Baidu Wuhan Hanfu Society	2	3.0
	Chinese culture revival club	2	3.0
	Guhua Cultural Society	2	3.0
	Hanfeng Huayun Hanfu Society	1	1.5
	Qingzuo Hanfu Society (Wuhan Foreign Language School),	1	1.5
	Liu Yi Tang (A self-founded Hanfu studio)	5	7.6
	Dual membership: Hanfu Culture Committee and Liu Yi Tang (a self-founded Hanfu studio)	1	1.5
	Independent Hanfuists in Wuhan	5	7.6

Appendix A1. (continued)

City	Name of group	Total	Total (%)
Xi'an	Xi'an Hanfu Society (shop club)	1	1.5
	Xi'an Universities Hanfu Union	1	1.5
	Independent Hanfuists in Xi'an	4	6.1
DTC	Difficult to clarify	5	7.6
Totals		65	100

Author Biographies

Andrew M. Law, PhD, MA, BA, is a Senior Lecturer in Town Planning at Newcastle University, UK. His research mainly relates to the uses of the past, historical discourses, historical imaginaries, golden ages, historical simulacra, collective memory, nostalgia, and heritage. He has published articles and book chapters on built architectural conservation, townscapes, Mock or Faux-Tudor, the historical and green urban branding of Chinese cities (including Jining, Shanghai, Wuhan and Xi'an), colonial nostalgia in China, absent-present heritage on the Yangtze River and papers relating to tourism and heritage in China. In the last eleven years, Andrew has become an enthusiastic student of Chinese cultural studies and Chinese urban studies.

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