



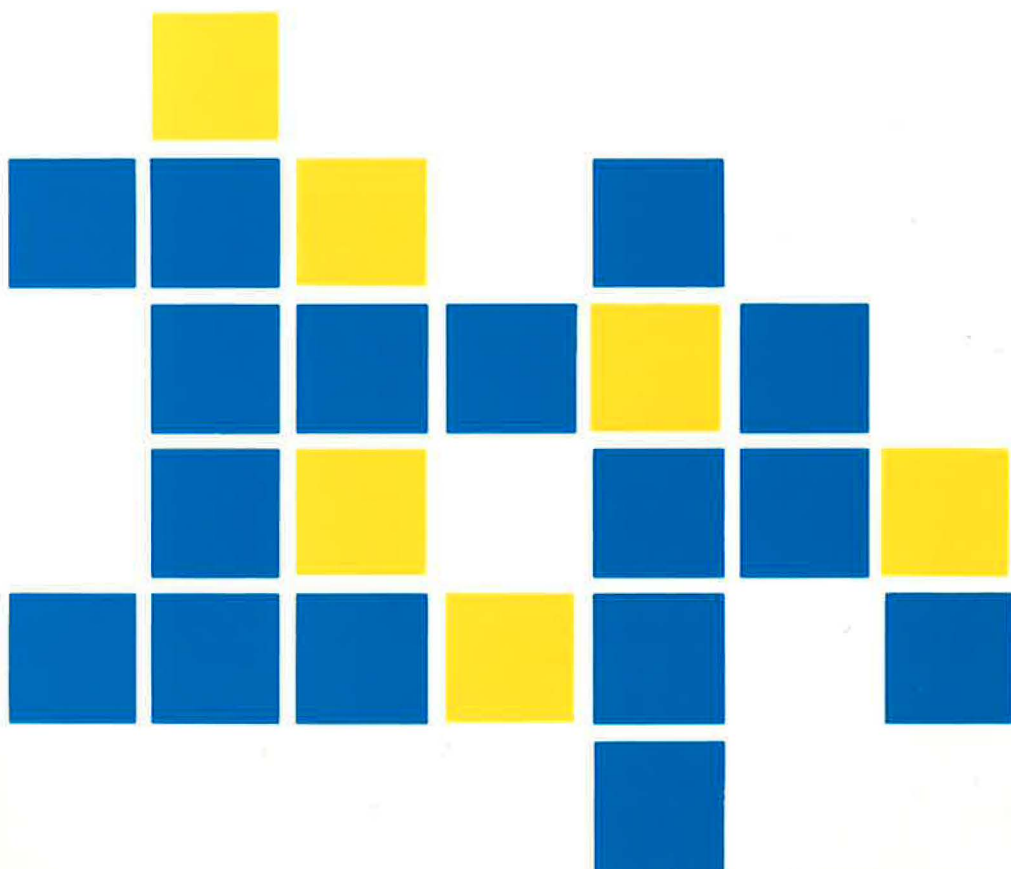
INSTITUTE OF EAST ASIAN STUDIES
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China's Quest for Modernization

A Historical Perspective

EDITED BY

Frederic Wakeman Jr.
and Wang Xi



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Contents

Preface	vii
1. Approaches to the Study of Modern Chinese History: External versus Internal Causations	1
WANG XI	
2. Middle County Radicalism: The May Fourth Movement in Hangzhou.....	22
WEN-HSIN YEH	
3. The Evolution of Modern Chinese Society from the Perspective of Population Changes, 1840–1949	50
ZHANG KAIMIN	
4. Historical Demography in Late Imperial China: Recent Research Results and Implications	65
JAMES LEE	
5. Modernization and the Structure of the Chinese Economy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.....	87
MADELEINE ZELIN	
6. A New Approach to China's Century of Great Transformation, 1840s–1940s	129
LUO RONGQU	
7. Western Learning and Social Transmutation in the Late Qing.....	150
CHEN JIANG	
8. Dowager Empress Cixi and Toshimichi: A Comparative Study of Modernization in China and Japan.....	175
DING RICHU	

9. Political Parties, Party Conflicts, and Society in Early Republican China	191
YANG LIQIANG	
10. Intercultural Connections and Chinese Development: External and Internal Spheres of Modern China's Foreign Relations ...	208
WILLIAM C. KIRBY	
11. The Emergence and Development of China's Modern Capitalist Enterprises.....	234
ZHANG GUOHUI	
12. Popular Protest and Political Progress in Modern China.....	250
ELIZABETH J. PERRY	
13. Power Structure and Modernization Policies in Twentieth-Century China	267
MARIE-CLAIRE BERGÈRE	
14. The Influence of Shanghai's Modernization on the Economy of the Yangzi Valley	279
ZHANG ZHONGLI and PAN JUNXIANG	
15. State and Civil Society in the History of Chinese Modernity	300
PRASENJIT DUARA	
16. Civil Society in Late Imperial and Modern China.....	325
FREDERIC WAKEMAN, JR.	
17. Issues in the Evolution of Modern China in East Asian Comparative Perspective	352
JOSHUA A. FOGEL	
Contributors	382

Introduction

FREDERIC WAKEMAN, JR.

In May 1992, with the help of the Ford, Luce, and MacArthur Foundations, a conference on the various historical perspectives of China's modernization was held at Fudan University in Shanghai.¹ The convenors of the symposium were Professor Wang Xi, then deputy director of the American Studies Center at Fudan, and I, then director of the Institute of East Asian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

The choice of the word "modernization" proved difficult for both sides of the symposium membership. Because of ongoing struggles within the Chinese government between "conservative" Party officials who resisted privatization and marketization, the term "modernization" was not used in the Chinese-language version of the conference's designation.² Our Chinese colleagues' ideological uneasiness was matched on the Western scholars' part by a feeling that the very invocation of "modernization" was already *parti pris*, recalling the assumptions of the 1950s and 1960s about the need for helping the "underdeveloped world" to "take off" and catch up with the advanced industrial countries of the West.

Yet, doubts about modernization theory notwithstanding, we all recognized the immediate relevance of the topic to the policies that Deng Xiaoping's government was then pursuing. And, precisely because China's political economy was in such a state of

¹ We also wish to express our gratitude to Joan Kask, who attended the conference as assistant director of the institute; to Elinor Levine, who worked as a special research assistant on the project; and to Joanne Sandstrom, who as chief editor at the Institute of East Asian Studies saw this book through to completion.

² It was, however, featured in the title of the Chinese symposium volume published three years ago.

flux, we also realized that by uncovering the historical underpinnings of modernization, we would as well expose our own perspectives on the nature of long-term social change in China from the late imperial period down to the present.

Population Growth

The most secular of long-term changes discussed in this collection of path-breaking essays is population growth. As James Lee notes, between 1700 and the present, China's population "exploded" sevenfold from 175 million to 1.2 billion: a rapid rise during 1700–1800, a slight deceleration from 1800 to 1950, and then another sharp acceleration from 1950 to today.³ This macro-social growth has, of course, been noted by other demographers and historians. In addition to Ping-ti Ho's classic study,⁴ the work of Dwight Perkins has calculated a sixfold increase in population between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries, thanks to increasingly intensive cultivation and the expansion of arable land rather than long-term increases in per capita output.⁵

Lee's contribution to the study of China's population development, on the other hand, has been based upon the unusually detailed life histories contained in imperial genealogical records and in the household registers of populations like the beekeepers of Liaoning who served the Imperial Household. These records, discovered and used by Professor Lee and his collaborators during the 1980s, have made it possible to conduct microsocial analyses of demographic behavior that underscore the uniqueness of the Chinese population's productive behavior.⁶ In contrast to Western European population characteristics (high proportion of bachelorhood, late marriage, high marital fertility, "natural" morality dictated by exogenous epidemiological patterns), the Chinese practiced early and universal marriage for females, polygamous

³ James Lee, "Historical Demography in Late Imperial China: Recent Research Results and Implications."

⁴ Ping-ti Ho, *Studies on the Population of China, 1368–1953* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959).

⁵ Like Ester Boserup, Perkins sees population growth as an invisible hand. See Ester Boserup, *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth: The Economics of Agrarian Change under Population Pressure* (New York: Aldine, 1965); and Dwight Perkins, *Agricultural Development in China, 1368–1968* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).

⁶ This assumes to a certain extent that the imperial Manchu genealogical records can be taken as typical of the Chinese population as a whole.

ONE

Approaches to the Study of Modern Chinese History: External versus Internal Causations

WANG XI

From the end of the Second World War through the decade of the 1970s, American scholars of Chinese history commonly took the following approach to the study of modern Chinese history: Chinese society during the modern era was stagnant, lacking any internal impetus by which to overcome the limitations of traditional society. Only after the West came knocking on its doors in the mid-nineteenth century did it undergo drastic change and begin to evolve into a modern society. Put forth by John King Fairbank, this approach, which emphasizes the influence of external factors on Chinese society, is known as the "impact-response approach."¹

During the 1970s, this approach met with a serious challenge. The first to attack this mainstream thinking was a young scholar named James Peck. In October 1969 he published a work entitled "The Roots of Rhetoric: The Professional Ideology of America's China Watchers."² This work, which was a direct attack on Fairbank, characterized the impact-response approach as an apology for imperialist aggression. Fairbank responded to Peck's charge in the famous "Exchange between Fairbank and Peck." Although Peck's criticism was directed mainly at Fairbank, it implicated

¹ In this paper, external approach, external cause, and external factors are synonyms. Internal approach, internal cause, and internal factors are also synonyms. For a typical expression of the "impact-response approach" see S. Y. Teng and John Fairbank, *China's Response to the West* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), 1.

² James Peck, "The Roots of Rhetoric: The Professional Ideology of America's China Watchers," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 2.1 (October 1969): 59-69.

TWO

Middle County Radicalism: The May Fourth Movement in Hangzhou

WEN-HSIN YEH

The May Fourth Movement of 1919 occupies a special position in scholars' consideration of modern China as a result of the convergence of two sets of historical constructions. The official textbooks explaining the rise of the People's Republic, first promulgated by the new socialist state in the 1950s, identified 1919 as the very moment when cultural iconoclasm was joined to the political activism of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle: the watershed affecting the flow of all subsequent revolutionary history. In the West, May Fourth was singled out as the time of patriotic awakening reached as a result of intellectual exposure to such Western liberal values as science, democracy, liberty, and individualism.¹ The May Fourth Movement has since been characterized variously as a response to Western liberal influence; as a product of education abroad in Japan, Europe, or America; as an awakening to the call of international Bolshevism; and as an evaluative rejection of traditional Confucianism as the primary source of authority. Whether liberal or revolutionary, these intellectual developments were then seen as the inspiration for a

This essay first appeared in *China Quarterly*, December 1994, pp. 903–925. Reprinted by permission.

¹ See, e.g., Chow Tse-tsung's highly influential *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), passim.

THREE

The Evolution of Modern Chinese Society from the Perspective of Population Changes, 1840–1949

ZHANG KAIMIN

Population changes are closely related to economic development; each influences and is affected by the other. Especially when a traditional society develops into a modern society, population changes reflect a very important aspect of the modernization of the society. Therefore it is important to observe the evolution of modern Chinese society from the perspective of population changes. This kind of research is difficult, however, because available statistical data are both insufficient and open to dispute. This essay does not aim to give a statistical evaluation of the problem, but to observe the course of the development of modern Chinese society from the viewpoint of several characteristics of population changes in modern China and to initiate some discussion of this problem.

Slow Increase of the Population

From 1840 to 1949, China was involved in consecutive wars, natural disasters, political reforms, and social upheavals. All these left a clear mark on China's population. The population increased rapidly up to about the middle of the eighteenth century. After 1852, population growth not only decreased quickly but actually declined. Then, beginning in the 1870s, there was a slow increase, which was sustained until 1949. The drastic fluctuation in population reflected the tragic life of the Chinese people and the hesitant progress of the modernization of Chinese society.

Historical Demography in Late Imperial China: Recent Research Results and Implications

JAMES LEE

Between 1700 and the present, China's population "exploded" sevenfold, from 175 million to 1.2 billion. Figure 1 outlines the contours of this sustained process of population growth. We can distinguish three rough stages: a rapid rise from 1700 to 1800, a slight deceleration from 1800 to 1950, then a sharp acceleration from 1950 to today (Ho 1959; Schran 1978). Moreover, despite recent state efforts to restrict nuptiality and fertility, the number of Chinese will continue to increase, although at a slower rate, until the middle of the next century. By then the population will be at least 1.5 billion. In consequence, contemporary China faces unusually severe economic, ecological, and social constraints.

Western historians have long been fascinated by the social and economic implications of China's population explosion. Indeed, nearly all Western attempts to understand the macroeconomic processes of the recent Chinese past are conditioned by the rise in population beginning in the late imperial period. The consensus is that population processes played a decisive role in both expanding and restraining Chinese economic development (Elvin 1973; Myers 1980; Perkins 1969). On the one hand, rising population density initially led to intensified production, heightened commercialization, and greater urbanization (Skinner 1964, 1965a, 1965b,

In this essay I have borrowed freely from the fruits of my collaboration with Cameron Campbell, Ju Deyuan, William Lavelly, Wang Feng, and R. Bin Wong. I thank them for their continuing efforts, in particular those of Campbell and Wang. I would also like to thank Tim Dyson, Bill Lavelly, Liu Ts'ui-jing, and R. Bin Wong for their critical readings of an early draft of this paper as well as other assistance.

Modernization and the Structure of the Chinese Economy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

MADELEINE ZELIN

It has now been more than a decade since China embarked on a program of economic reform based on the gradual reintroduction of family farming, private enterprise, and increasing dependence on the market as the mediator of supply and demand. In observing the economic practices and institutions that have emerged as part of this evolving process, Western scholars have frequently noted the reemergence of patterns of economic interaction and organization reminiscent of prerevolutionary days. This essay examines some of the key institutions and structural characteristics of the late traditional and early modern Chinese economy in an effort to provide a base for evaluating the long-term trends affecting the evolution of the Chinese economy to the present day. Because of the limits set on the length of these essays, I can do this only in general terms. It should be noted at the start that my approach to the modernization process in China falls somewhere in between those scholars who even today see China's population and overall backwardness as having posed an insurmountable obstacle to development and those who would argue that China in the early twentieth century was already undergoing sustained national growth in productivity and real per capita income.

An earlier version of this essay appears in *Perspectives on Modern China: Four Anniversaries*, ed. Kenneth Lieberthal, Joyce Kallgren, Roderick MacFarquhar, and Frederic Wakeman, Jr. (Armonk, N.J.: M. E. Sharpe, 1991), pp. 68–102.

A New Approach to China's Century of Great Transformation, 1840s–1940s

LUO RONGQU

The century from the Opium War in 1840 to the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 was a period of great transformation from traditional society to modern society. The foundation of the PRC, however, was not the end of this transformation, but rather the conclusion of its first chapter.

The era of the great transformation is also termed the era of great transition. As early as the turn of the century, Liang Qichao pointed out in an essay entitled "On the Transitional Era" that "present-day China is undergoing a great transition." He went on to describe the great difficulty in China's transitional period:

For thousands of years, China maintained itself in a fixed position without moving one inch forward, therefore had no taste whatsoever of what transition was like. Yet, lashed by the turbulent waves of the great oceans and spurred by the violent storms of the nineteenth century, this bastion of inveterate antiquity, this stronghold of obdurate tradition, has been experiencing gradual decay and collapse, and as a result the whole nation has had to trek along a rugged path of transition.¹

The core of this transition was the shift from the agricultural era of a traditional way of life to an era characterized by modern modes of production. This was the most important transformation in Chinese history.

¹ Liang Qichao, "Guodu shidai lun" (On the transitional era), in *Liang Qichao xuanji* (Selected works of Liang Qichao), ed. Li Xinghua and Wu Jiayun (Shanghai: People's Publishing House, 1984).

SEVEN

Western Learning and Social Transmutation in the Late Qing

CHEN JIANG

China's pursuit of modernization began only under the repeated lashing of the West in the late Qing period. The germination of modernity in the old society of China was, nevertheless, evident well before the outbreak of the Opium War. Embodied in the handicraft industry were seeds of the capitalist relations of production. In addition, suspicion of and protest against the monarchic tradition and dictatorship were manifested in the critical reasoning and rebellious spirit of the progressive intellectuals who urged political reform and ideological emancipation. The docking of the *Cornwallis*, a British warship, at Xiaguan, Nanjing, in August 1842, however, set back the social evolution of China when the British wrung a treaty from the Qing government. Unable to develop itself according to its own desired path, China began to undergo "the most difficult, most painful" transmutation like "the chrysalis of a silkworm or the exuviation of a snake."¹

The Western learning, which began its diffusion in China under the escort of opium, industrial products, strong ships, and powerful cannons in colonial expansion into the East, was resisted by some, embraced by others. The dissemination of Western learning thus played an integral part in the social transmutation of modern China and, at the same time, exerted a complicated but significant influence on the modernization of the country. These efforts and their effects were particularly noticeable in the late Qing period. It is, therefore, worthwhile to further research the history of the dissemination of Western learning and its relations to the change of Chinese society in the history of modern China.

¹ Liang Qichao, *Yinbing shi heji* (Collected works from the ice-drinker's studio) (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989), 5:47.

EIGHT

Dowager Empress Cixi and Toshimichi: A Comparative Study of Modernization in China and Japan

DING RICHU

In the 1840s and the 1850s, Western countries through force of arms compelled China and Japan to open their ports for trade. Because of differences in economic, political, and cultural conditions in the two countries, the authorities adopted different ways to cope with the crisis.¹ China was then characterized by centralized authority and imperial despotism. The Qing emperor at first failed to respond. Only as foreign insults deepened did he begin to support the "self-strengthening" advocated in the authorities' calls for gradual reform. The conservative policy had little effect, however, and political deterioration continued. Japan, meanwhile, was governed by the *bakuhan* system, with a *bakufu* (nominally assistant to the emperor but actually the most influential figure in the country) and his more or less independent *hans* (domains) sharing among them much of the political power. Many of the low-ranking samurai, influenced by Dutch and Western learning, joined together under the impact of the Western invasion. Taking advantages of animosities between the imperial court and *bakufu*, and between *bakufu* and the strong domains of their country, they actively engaged in antishogunate activities in their base areas, or those strong domains, finally overthrowing *bakufu* through civil war. A united new regime representing the interests of the rising bourgeoisie was established, and comprehensive and effective

¹ About the question, see Ding Richu and Du Xucheng, "Analysis of the Successes and Failures of Capitalist Modernization in China and in Japan in the Nineteenth Century" (in Chinese), *Lishi yanjiu* (Beijing), no. 1 (1983).

Political Parties, Party Conflicts, and Society in Early Republican China

YANG LIQIANG

After the overthrow of the Qing dynasty, the first republican government in Chinese history was established. As sanctions against political parties vanished, a large number of political organizations quickly emerged, and party conflicts became a daily occurrence as the main bourgeois parties and associations involved in the conflicts quarreled with one another. Such dissension benefited only the autocratic and imperialist warlords, bureaucrats, and politicians headed by Yuan Shikai and Li Yuanhong, who used the opportunity to seize power. The collapse of the Qing did not produce the independent and prosperous China the Chinese bourgeoisie envisaged.

I

The Revolution of 1911 formally put an end to the Chinese monarchy. On January 1, 1912, a provisional revolutionary government was formed in Nanjing. It was welcomed with enthusiasm by many, for they believed that their ideal of a strong and prosperous China was going to be realized. In the height of this enthusiasm, various political parties and associations were formed. Most were led by the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie. They published their own manifestos and proposed their own political, economic, educational, cultural, and even behavioral programs for the future. As Ding Shanzai (Ding Shiyi) wrote, "Organizations were formed in a crazy fashion, and political parties sprang up like spring grass."¹ As early as November 1911, Wu

¹ All sources are in Chinese except where noted otherwise. Ding Shanzai (Ding Shiyi), "Political Parties in the First Year of the Republic," *Guoshi* 1 (1913): 12.

Intercultural Connections and Chinese Development: External and Internal Spheres of Modern China's Foreign Relations

WILLIAM C. KIRBY

A conference concerned with the study of China's modernization must deal with the history of China's modern foreign relations. "Modernization," however variously defined and attempted by Chinese governments, has had as a central goal the improvement of China's relative position among nations. To that end, for governing elites of successive Chinese regimes from the late Qing until the present, "modernization" (or "self-strengthening" or "nation building") has involved two related but potentially conflicting goals: the containment of foreign power and influence and the attainment of foreign expertise. The first objective, handled by the state, was to assert and defend Chinese sovereignty in diplomacy and war, in an international environment that appeared to threaten China's national existence. The second goal necessarily involved sets of intercultural connections that included but went beyond the realm of formal state-to-state ties. This essay focuses primarily on the second area. To that end, it first examines connections between foreign *policy* and foreign *relations*; second, it discusses the internal aspects of China's foreign relations and assesses the period when the "private" realm of Sino-foreign economic and cultural relations was at its height in the first quarter of this century; and third, it examines subsequent Chinese efforts to reassert state control over the entire complex of intercultural exchange, private and public. In that context it focuses on the Nationalist period and uses Sino-American relations as a case study.

ELEVEN

The Emergence and Development of China's Modern Capitalist Enterprises

ZHANG GUOHUI

Chinese feudal society had reached such a stage after two thousand years of development that by the Ming dynasty the improvement of social productive forces and an influx of silver from abroad allowed a distinctive commodity and money economy to flourish. This development lasted until the eve of the Opium War. The formation of a huge commodity market based on divisions of labor resulted in the gradual emergence of a feudal market for productive forces. This development helped furnish objective conditions for the formation of an antagonistic relationship between capital and labor. Thus even without the invasion of foreign countries, China would have developed into a capitalist country. The First Opium War disrupted China's independence, however, distorting the normal course of Chinese history and, during the formation of the semicolonial social order, enabling the emergence of modern capitalist enterprises. The process of this development bears its own characteristics.

I

To make feudal China a market for foreign commodities and a supplier of raw materials, foreign capitalists brought into China new techniques and tools of production, along with corresponding capitalist management and commodities.

These new techniques and tools of production introduced a new type of productive force, which could not be accommodated by the feudal relations of production. The history of the development of Europe's modern economy shows that Britain outran

Popular Protest and Political Progress in Modern China

ELIZABETH J. PERRY

Theorists of social change have long been interested in the relationship between popular unrest and political development. Whereas Marxist-inspired "conflict theorists" tend to see protest as a precondition for political progress,¹ Weberian-influenced "modernization theorists" usually view popular unrest as an impediment to political development.² China, thanks to its extraordinary record of both popular protest and political change, offers an important test case of these competing interpretations. Over the past century and a half, few other countries have experienced such dramatic turmoil and transformation. How, then, are these processes linked in the Chinese case? Have widespread and

¹ An excellent example is Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966). Moore suggests that there are several revolutionary paths to "modernization" (which he defines as the commercialization of agriculture): bourgeois, aristocratic, and peasant. Each is launched by a different social class; each has distinctive political and economic outcomes. Other works that acknowledge the role of revolution in political "modernization" (defined as state building) include Charles Tilly, Louise Tilly, and Richard Tilly, *The Rebellious Century, 1830-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), and Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Although none of these authors is an orthodox Marxist, all show Marxist influence in their approach.

² Here the classic statement is Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968). See also Gabriel Almond and G. Bingham Powell, *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966). Modernization theory was heavily indebted to the work of Harvard sociologist Talcott Parsons, who did more than anyone to popularize Weberian approaches among American social scientists.

Power Structure and Modernization Policies in Twentieth-Century China

MARIE-CLAIRE BERGÈRE

For a long time Western studies of contemporary China have been dominated by conceptual patterns borrowed from political science; relatively little attention has been paid to historical perspectives, although the People's Republic's debt to imperial traditions of central control, local elite activism, and bureaucratic administration have been emphasized by some China historians. On the whole, however, the studies of pre-1949 and of post-1949 China have been kept separate and have proceeded as distinct intellectual efforts.

China's current modernization efforts invite us to look back at similar experiences, launched in the late nineteenth century or the early twentieth century, most of which failed or half-failed.

Among the many observations that can be drawn from such comparisons, the resilience of tradition appears as a very important one. Of course such a rich and diversified tradition as the Chinese one offers both incentives and obstacles to modernization policies. In this essay I shall be concerned with the problem of power structure: of state institutions and social organizations and their mutual interactions. What is assumed is that the Four Modernizations policy owes some of its difficulties and limitations to patterns inherited from the pre-1949 period.

As is well known, late imperial administration and officials lacked specialization: they were "virtuous generalists." At the local levels, officials had acquired such control over resources that they were able to bargain with their superiors rather than simply accept their orders. Networks of officials bound by mutual obligations and patron-client ties had developed. The imperial bureaucracy was becoming less and less responsive to central policy. The declining ability of the Qing court to respond to late-nineteenth-

The Influence of Shanghai's Modernization on the Economy of the Yangzi Valley

ZHANG ZHONGLI and PAN JUNXIANG

Insufficient research has been done on the subject of modern Shanghai's influence upon the economy of the Yangzi Valley. This essay shows that if, by the nineteenth century, cities in China had not formed "unified complete urban systems, and [that] there were only several regional systems with merely some fragile links between neighboring systems,"¹ then at the very least, the situation underwent great changes in the 1920s and 1930s. This was especially true of the regions along the Yangzi River, which has been called the "Golden Waterway." With the emergence of a number of big cities such as Shanghai and the gradual modernization of these cities, their importance to the middle and lower reaches of the Yangzi was greatly heightened as the economic links between cities along the river strengthened with each passing day, the interaction between them became more and more apparent.

The Modernization of Shanghai's Urban Economy

By the middle and late Qing dynasty, Shanghai, being the hub of water transportation, had gradually become the center of tax grain transshipment in southeast China and it earned the sobriquet "the gateway to the sea and the river, the metropolis of

¹ G. W. Skinner, "Regional Urbanization of Nineteenth Century China," trans. Chen Ke, in *Chengshi shi yanjiu* (Research on urban history) (Tianjin: Tianjin Education Publishing House, 1989), 1:87.

State and Civil Society in the History of Chinese Modernity

PRASENJIT DUARA

In recent years Western historiography of China, following, in part, a revival of interest in civil society in the West, has witnessed a vigorous discussion on the question of whether or not China had a "civil society" and, by implication, what kind of role this civil society could play in modernizing China. I wish to intervene at two points in this ongoing debate: At an empirical level I will try to contribute materials on state-society relations from the rural areas of the north China region in the hope of expanding the discussion which has had, in accordance with the Western model, a principally urban focus. At a theoretical level, I seek to counter the extreme objectivism in which the discussion has been embedded and to suggest that the very direction in which Chinese society would move in the early twentieth century was shaped as much by the presence of "objective" forces and conditions as by the way in which Chinese history was conceptualized, or more precisely, narrativized at that time.

Civil Society and Western Historiography of China

The reappearance of interest in European civil society has spawned a good deal of terminological confusion, and I will try to clarify my own usage of the term from the outset. Civil society represents a domain of private and collective activity autonomous from the state. It includes economic activities as well as associational life and the institutions of sociability, but excludes political parties and institutionalized politics in general. The "public sphere," in particular the bourgeois public sphere of the eighteenth century conceptualized by Jürgen Habermas, is a

Civil Society in Late Imperial and Modern China

FREDERIC WAKEMAN, JR.

Why have Western historians devoted so much attention recently to the question of civil society and the public sphere in China? A special panel on Civil Society in People's China was organized at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in New Orleans during April 1991.¹ Several papers were devoted to this same topic a month later in Paris at the American-European Symposium on State and Society in East Asian Traditions.² In November 1991 a forum was held at the Wilson Center in Washington to discuss the question "Did China ever enjoy a civil society?" The Center for Chinese Studies at UCLA hosted a debate on the civil society and public sphere issue on May 9, 1992. And finally in October 1992 there was a symposium in Montreal under the aegis of the Joint European-American Committee on Cooperation in East Asian Studies entirely devoted to the civil society/public sphere question and focused on places of assembly and discussion (schools, academies, salons, temples, social halls, teahouses), media for the circulation of ideas (printing, story telling, lateral and vertical channels of communication), and the role

An earlier version of this essay is Frederic Wakeman, Jr., "The Civil Society and Public Sphere Debate: Western Reflections on Chinese Political Culture," *Modern China* (19.2), pp. 108-138, © 1993 by Sage Publications. Reprinted by permission of Sage Publications, Inc.

¹ Among the papers given was a remarkably interesting study of contemporary Chinese state-society relations by David Wank titled "Merchant Entrepreneurs and the Development of Civil Society: Some Social and Political Consequences of Private Sector Expansion in a Southeast Coastal City."

² See, for example: Philip A. Kuhn, "Civil Society and Constitutional Development"; and David Strand, "An Early Republican Perspective on the Traditional Bases of Civil Society and the Public Sphere in China."

Issues in the Evolution of Modern China in East Asian Comparative Perspective

JOSHUA A. FOGEL

Theoretically, China's modern historical experience may be compared to that of any other country or region in the world. However, it makes no sense, I would argue, to compare China's long and elusive quest for modernization to the similar experience of any land other than those with which it has shared a cultural heritage. Nineteenth-century China may have had stray economic, social, or even political characteristics in common with a host of countries around the world; its leaders' vision of what modernity would ultimately mean for China might even have shared traits with distant lands and cultures. However, the construction of any plan for modernization—economic, military, social, whatever—was, first and foremost, a cultural construct fashioned out of a set of assumptions about the world and China's capacity for change within it. Even as Chinese leaders sought the things (*wu*) possessed by the West (*yang*), the conceptualization of this approach and what it meant for China were culture specific—that is, it was created by Chinese and would have to fit "China"—just as was the understanding (or misunderstanding) of what the forces unleashed by such a program might mean in the social or political realm. Thus, to compare China with India or Great Britain or the United States or Tanzania approaches meaninglessness. It would be not unlike comparing apples and oranges, qualitatively different though both fruit.

For this general reason, and others to follow, the countries with which China is best compared for purposes of understanding its modern evolution are Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. For hundreds of years, these countries looked up to China as the fount not of a

Contributors

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