

# Empire, Nation, and Beyond

Chinese History in Late Imperial and Modern Times —  
A Festschrift in Honor of Frederic Wakeman

Edited by Joseph W. Esherick, Wen-hsin Yeh,  
and Madeleine Zelin





INSTITUTE OF EAST ASIAN STUDIES  
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# Contents

Contributors.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Part I: Unofficial Accounts .....	15
1. Manchus as Ethnographic Subject in the Qing .....	17
<i>Mark C. Elliott</i>	
2. Fictional and Real-Life Rulers: <i>Journey to the West</i> and Sixteenth-Century Chinese Monarchs .....	38
<i>Richard Shek</i>	
3. The Disputation of the Body Snatchers: Scandal in Chinese Legal Culture.....	58
<i>Melissa Macauley</i>	
4. Spatial Decorum, Transgression, and Displacement in Shen Fu's <i>Six Records from a Floating Life</i> .....	78
<i>Ann Waltner</i>	
Part II: Politics in Economy .....	103
5. Eastern Sichuan Coal Mines in the Late Qing .....	105
<i>Madeleine Zelin</i>	
6. Rural Commercialization, Polder Reclamation, and Social Transformation in Modern China .....	123
<i>Robert Y. Eng</i>	
7. "Native" and "Foreign": Discourses on Economic Nationalism and Market Practice in Twentieth-Century North China .....	149
<i>Linda Grove</i>	
Part III: Beyond the Binary .....	167
8. <i>Shards of Ming</i> : Culture and Improvisation in Enterprises Great and Small .....	169
<i>Lionel M. Jensen</i>	
9. Terror and War at the Turn of Two Centuries: The Boxer Crisis Revisited .....	192
<i>Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom</i>	

Part IV: Enduring Networks .....	211
10. The Culture of Patronage in Early Nineteenth-Century China: Ruan Yuan's Circle at Canton.....	213
<i>Jonathan Porter</i>	
11. The Zhigongtang in the United States, 1860–1949 .....	231
<i>Sue Fawn Chung</i>	
12. Two Generations of a Chinese Family .....	250
<i>Joseph W. Esherick</i>	
Part V: Contesting Narratives.....	273
13. Beijing University as a Contested Symbol.....	275
<i>Timothy B. Weston</i>	
14. History in Modernity: The May Fourth Movement and Shanghai.....	292
<i>Wen-hsin Yeh</i>	
Index.....	309

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# Introduction

JOSEPH W. ESHERICK, WEN-HSIN YEH,  
and MADELEINE ZELIN

In this collection of essays, a group of Frederic Wakeman's former students join efforts to celebrate the lifetime accomplishments of their much admired teacher. The common thread that runs through these essays, each a part of larger projects with their respective trajectories, is a shared understanding of the historical enterprise that stems from years of studying with Fred. All essays reflect a certain concern with the present while examining the past. All subscribe to the notion, albeit in varying ways, that there is neither erasure nor escape from that past. The contributors seek to show patterns of the past by reading records and bits of evidence that have survived the decay of time, whether because of or despite the intent of their producers. These sources range from archival documents, textual testimonies, institutional manuals, genealogies, local gazetteers, informal miscellaneous writings (*biji*), unofficial publications, personal recollections, and popular fiction to large-scale compilations—materials first introduced under Fred's guidance in his scores of History 280G historiography seminars for doctoral students. All are used with attention and sensitivity to the purposes and biases of the sources' authors balanced with the conviction that beyond the politics of discourses and representations there lie historical processes, and it is the historian's unending challenge and task to seek their description. Finally, all essays collected here, as in Fred's writings, approach the past with sensitivities to the dynamics of politics, the power of cultural or ideological norms, the complexities of local infrastructures, and the significance of human choices.

The core of this volume thus lies in its inspiration by and reference to the research, teaching, and service of Frederic Wakeman, whose distinguished scholarly career spanned four

memorable decades at the University of California in Berkeley. From the heat of protests in the 1960s to the lure of the splendor of Greater China at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Fred read the pulse of the world as he pursued his research and teaching. His life, in its endless rounds of professional travels, university administration, student meetings, classroom lectures, library reading, archival visits, collegial tennis, and Faculty Club drinks, seemed typical enough for a university professor. Yet he was hardly a creature of habit or the commonplace. His published works roam the historical terrain of at least seven centuries, from the first emperors of the Ming to the newest occupants of the palaces in Beijing. His travels in China took him from a sunrise atop the Putuo Guanyin temple in the East China Sea to sunset over the desert horizon hundreds of miles beyond Urumqi, from the launching spot of the Qing Great Enterprise in the Manchurian forests to the mountain villages of the Taiping rebels in the woods of Guangxi. As a graduate student he explored the triangular transactions of tea, silver, and opium that tamed the Indian Ocean for the British Empire. As a chair professor he read extensively into the early histories of the Mongols and the Manchus as he prepared lectures for the benefit of Berkeley's undergraduates, and he could be heard complaining about the absence of a Mongol language program on campus that prevented him from taking up a new research tool.

Fred's writings on China have been wide-ranging and global in perspective. His first book, *Strangers at the Gate*, draws on the captured archives of the Guangdong provincial government in the Public Records Office in London to tell the story of how English habits with their morning and afternoon tea could be linked to Chinese peasants up in arms in the Pearl River Delta. His next book, *History and Will*, underscores the point that even an arch iconoclast such as Mao Zedong drew from a historical repertoire. Although philosophers might disparage the derivative banality of Mao's dialectics and Party ideologues would faithfully study his writings along with those of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin, the magnitude of the Chairman's impact on history required the historian to probe the formation of his ideology through his youthful explorations from Kant to Hegel, Wang Yangming to Kang Youwei. In *The Great Enterprise*, Fred presents the disintegration of the Ming and the reconsolidation of the empire under the Qing as the Manchu rulers led China to its zenith of imperial stability and prosperity. There is little sympathy to dispense on the Chongzhen court

PART I

Unofficial Accounts

# Manchus as Ethnographic Subject in the Qing

MARK C. ELLIOTT

As all students of late imperial China are aware, writing anything about the Manchus during the Qing was a dangerous business. The simple reason for this was that the Qing imperial court suffered from a deep and abiding insecurity about its ethnic origins and was forever on the lookout for what it considered treasonous—that is to say, anti-Manchu—attitudes. This was especially true when such attitudes somehow found their way into public discourse, where they might poison people's minds by playing on lingering doubts that the Qing was not quite a legitimate dynasty and that they really *were* alien usurpers undeserving of the Mandate of Heaven. Thus from the Shunzhi reign on, the Manchu political elite, often assisted by Han Chinese eager to win favor from above, prosecuted scores of suspected cases of sedition (Wakeman 1985). Many of these cases are subsumed under the rubric of a Qing "literary inquisition" (An and Zhang 1990: 102–44), of which the unfortunate fate of Dai Mingshi is an outstanding example (Durand 1993). Other cases focused more on what was inscribed on the body, not on paper (Kuhn 1990). Either sort of affair could result in extremely unpleasant consequences for those involved.

Given these risks, one might reasonably expect that the only writing on Manchu history and customs done in the Qing was that officially sponsored and approved by the dynasty itself. There is indeed a fair amount of such literature, including the *General History of the Eight Banners* (*Baqi tongzhi/Jakūn gūsai tungjy-i bithe*, 1739), the *Comprehensive Genealogy of the Eight Banner Manchu Clans* (*Baqi Manzhou shizu tongpu/Jakūn gūsai manjusai hala be uheri ejehe bithe*, 1745), the *Rituals for Manchu Sacrifices to Ancestral Spirits and Heaven* (*Manzhou jishen jitian dianli / Manjusai wecere metere kooli*

# Fictional and Real-Life Rulers: *Journey to the West* and Sixteenth- Century Chinese Monarchs

RICHARD SHEK

Students of late imperial Chinese history should be struck by the intriguing correspondence between the wretched individuals who sat on the dragon throne in sixteenth-century China and the dismal as well as disdainful portrayal of rulership in fiction published during the second half of that century. The fictional works themselves seem to provide, in an uncanny way, realistic testimony to the ridicule and contempt with which rulers were held by their subjects. In some respects, then, fictional literature and storytelling in the sixteenth century reflected sentiments concerning the ruler figure that were unflattering and even outright contemptuous. It was the flesh-and-blood, real-life occupants of the throne who gave cause for such a negative perception of the imperial office.

A brief examination of the reigns and characters of the Ming emperors who ruled in the sixteenth century may be helpful in confirming this observation.

## The Zhengde Emperor (r. 1506–21)

The first Ming monarch who ascended the throne in the sixteenth century was the Zhengde emperor, Zhu Houzhao (1491–1521).<sup>1</sup> An outgoing, active adolescent who, in the opinion

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Revised from an earlier article entitled "Attitude towards Authority in *Journey to the West*," in Lu Kuoping ed., *Yu shijie jiegui—Hanyu wenhua xue* [Linking up with the world—Chinese cultural linguistics] (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 2002), 241–60.

<sup>1</sup> Biographical information on the Zhengde emperor has been derived from the following sources: James Geiss, "The Cheng-te Reign, 1506–1527," in Frederick

THREE

# The Disputation of the Body Snatchers: Scandal in Chinese Legal Culture

MELISSA MACAULEY

When Chinese peasants fought over an unpaid debt and took their dispute to the yamen court, fellow villagers took notice. When peasants fought over an unpaid debt and their anger boiled over into false accusations of murder, exhumations of corpses, and official investigations, entire counties might take notice. The perturbed official reportage that vertically headed straight up the bureaucracy to the emperor was matched by the gossip and tale-spinning that spread horizontally throughout the countryside and made its mark on popular literature and performance.

The first scenario—simple disputes resolved through local mediation or formal litigation—was more common in late imperial China. The second scenario, though not uncommon, nevertheless was not an everyday experience. This essay argues, however, that the more scandalous a legal case was, the more likely it was to sear itself on the official and popular imaginations. The outrageous, scandalous, and unusual cases of Chinese legal culture predominantly shaped negative attitudes of all classes of Chinese toward formal litigation and the official courts.

One typical scandal involved the legal exploitation of dead bodies in false accusations of murder; indeed, the dead body was the legal tool of empowerment par excellence in Chinese legal culture. An accusation of murder—true or false—would drag even the most skeptical magistrate and clerk into a dispute. The

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A longer version of this chapter appeared in Melissa Macauley, *Social Power and Legal Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), and is published here with permission of the Board of Trustees of Leland Stanford Jr. University.

## FOUR

# Spatial Decorum, Transgression, and Displacement in Shen Fu's *Six Records from a Floating Life*

ANN WALTNER

Shen Fu's *Six Records from a Floating Life* is a remarkable text in many ways. The text exists in a convenient 1983 Penguin version and has been used in many a classroom, so questions about how to read it have a practical and pedagogic urgency in the American academy that many texts in classical Chinese do not have.<sup>1</sup> It is a moving and intimate memoir of Shen's life and his marriage to Chen Yun. The text, which was completed no later than 1809, was not published until 1877, many decades after Shen's death. Although the text is always known by the title *Six Chapters* (or *Six Records*), only four chapters are extant. In 1935, a six-chapter version was published, but it is generally acknowledged that the last two "discovered" chapters are forgeries, and the text is now usually published in its four-chapter version. The text has been published in dozens of Chinese editions and has been translated into numerous languages. What first piqued my interest in the text was both its ubiquity and its strangeness. It is a memoir by a man that celebrated his wife's feistiness and eroticism, not always traits we associate with women in China in the early nineteenth century, although the more we study women in China's past, the less this surprises us. And it also provides a wealth of information about household economics and women's work. But what kind of text is it? How should we contextualize it? How should we read it? What do we learn from it?

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<sup>1</sup> I will be citing pages from Leonard Pratt and Chiang Su-hui's translation of *Six Records of a Floating Life* (New York: Penguin, 1983).

PART II

# Politics in Economy

# Eastern Sichuan Coal Mines in the Late Qing

MADELEINE ZELIN

China's remarkable economic performance during the past two decades has focused new attention on this country's less successful first attempt at establishing a modern industrial economy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There has been no shortage of theories regarding the sources of China's slow growth in the century preceding the founding of the PRC.<sup>1</sup> Among those most important to economic historians have been theories that focus on deficiencies in natural resource exploitation, in capital accumulation, and in the construction and enforcement of property rights. This chapter examines all three within context of the Baxian, Sichuan, coal mines of this period.

## Coal in Eastern Sichuan

Coal is found throughout Sichuan province, particularly in the mountainous areas bordering the Red Basin and in the limestone folds that form the periphery of the Basin itself.<sup>2</sup> Although the richest deposits were further up the Yangzi River, the Baxian hills were an important source of medium-grade anthracite. In

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Riskin provides an early summary of the arguments put forward on both sides of this debate and the scholars generally identified with each. Carl Riskin, "Surplus and Stagnation in Modern China," in *China's Modern Economy in Historical Perspective*, ed. Dwight Perkins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975). More recent theories include Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), and Roy Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Ferdinand Richthofen, *Baron Richthofen's Letters, 1870–1872*, 2nd ed. (Shanghai: North China Herald, 1903), 173–74.

# Rural Commercialization, Polder Reclamation, and Social Transformation in Modern China: State and Society in the Pearl River Delta

ROBERT Y. ENG

Dubbed the “Workshop of the World,”<sup>1</sup> the Pearl River Delta is the “regional powerhouse” that has pioneered China’s recent economic revolution and still leads the nation in per capita GDP, real GDP growth rate, and exports.<sup>2</sup> The booming cities of the Delta produced US\$10 billion in exports each month by 2003. Shenzhen, a rural township of 30,000 peasants bordering Hong Kong before its designation as China’s first Special Economic Zone in 1980, is today a modern city with at least 7 million people. It accounts for 80 percent of the world’s production of artificial Christmas trees and 70 percent of its photocopiers. One factory in Shunde alone manufactures 40 percent of the microwave ovens in global trade.<sup>3</sup> Dongguan produced 37 percent of the world’s disk

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<sup>1</sup> “A New Workshop of the World,” *Economist*, October 10, 2002. Michael Schuman and Neil Gough, “The Ties That Bind,” *Time Asia*, posted online June 28, 2004, [http://www.time.com/time/asia/covers/501040705/hk\\_economy.html](http://www.time.com/time/asia/covers/501040705/hk_economy.html).

<sup>2</sup> The 2001 per capita GDP of the Pearl River Delta (not including Hong Kong and Macau) was US\$4,142, while the 2002 per capita GDP of the Yangzi River Delta (including Shanghai) was US\$2,722. Real GDP growth rate for 1990 to 2002 stands at 17.4 percent per annum for the Pearl River Delta and 13.5 percent for the Yangzi River Delta. The figures for 2002 exports were US\$111.55 billion for the Pearl River Delta and US\$92.4 billion for the Yangzi River Delta. Michael J. Enright and Edith E. Scott, *The Greater Pearl River Delta* (Hong Kong: Invest Hong Kong of the HKSAR Government, 2004), 24–25.

<sup>3</sup> James Kyng and Dan Roberts, “The Pearl River Delta Is Attracting \$1bn of Investment a Month Amid One of the Fastest Bursts of Economic Development in History,” *Financial Times*, February 4, 2003.

# “Native” and “Foreign”: Discourses on Economic Nationalism and Market Practice in Twentieth-Century North China

LINDA GROVE

Economic nationalism was one of the central themes in the nationalist discourse of early twentieth-century China. Starting from texts like Zheng Guanying's *Warnings to a Prosperous Age* that urged Chinese to prepare for a commercial war against the West, the discourse developed in various directions. It provided intellectual support for modernization efforts and also inspired campaigns designed to involve individuals in supporting the national development effort through their consumption choices. Economic boycotts were one major tool of economic nationalism. By the early twentieth century the economic boycott, which targeted imported goods from a specified country as part of a campaign to achieve political goals, had become a major tool in the repertoire of popular nationalism. Beginning with the boycott of American goods in 1905, which protested discrimination against Chinese immigrants to the United States, patriot boycotts stressed the connection between patriotism and consumption.

Other individuals, worried by the economic challenges China faced as it was incorporated into a world trading system,

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Research for this essay was done with the support of a joint international research grant from the Japanese Ministry of Education (grant no. 11694036) for a study of Japanese influence on modern urban development in North China during the first half of the twentieth century. An earlier version of this paper was included in the summary report of the project in March 2002, and a Chinese version was published in *Chengshi shi yanjiu*, no. 21 (March 2002): 80–94. Professor Watanabe Tōru of Komazawa University headed the joint Japanese-Chinese research project.

PART III

## Beyond the Binary

## *Shards of Ming: Culture and Improvisation in Enterprises Great and Small*

LIONEL M. JENSEN

Speaking in late December of 1992 before the American Historical Association on the occasion of his installation as president, Frederic Wakeman delivered a formal address, "Voyages," at once intensely personal and interpretively provocative, that disturbed the comfort of Western historical convention.<sup>1</sup> Beginning with a childhood memory of a peremptory apartment window exchange between his father and William Rodgers on the day Pearl Harbor was bombed, he spoke with effortless facility of his family's own retracing in 1948–49 of the route taken by Columbus on his second voyage, a star-crossed trip the recollection of which enabled Wakeman to navigate narratively from the Zapata Peninsula to Chinese coolies savagely held in the holds of cargo ships at Cuban ports to the magisterial voyages of Zheng He (1371–1423). Such presentation of the sweep and breadth of history was characteristic of his comparative flourishes; however, it was the subtle, persuasive presentation of the definitive modernity of the Ming

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An earlier version of this essay was first delivered at the conference "Empire and Beyond: Historical China from the Ming to the Republic" convened in honor of Frederic E. Wakeman, Jr. at the Institute of East Asian Studies and the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, December 12–14, 1997. This second, revised incarnation is derived in part from Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), 93–9 and 102–11. I am grateful to Duke University Press for permission to adapt this previously published material.

<sup>1</sup> The presidential address was delivered on December 27, 1992, at the 113th meeting of the American Historical Association at the New York Hilton. The text of the address was published two months later. See Frederic Wakeman Jr., "Voyages," *American Historical Review* 98, no. 1 (February 1993): 1–17.

# Terror and War at the Turn of Two Centuries: The Boxer Crisis Revisited

JEFFREY N. WASSERSTROM

Many people remember exactly what they were doing when they first learned of the September 11 terror attacks, and I am no exception. What I was doing on that day, though, is less relevant for this essay, which asks how looking into China's past may help us make sense of 9/11 and events that followed in its wake, than what I was doing two weeks earlier: finishing a short essay about a crisis that took place at the beginning of the previous century and also led to an international military force taking action in an Asian country. Just before 9/11, I had been writing about the Boxer crisis of 1899–1901, which began with bands of insurgents attacking Chinese Christians and Western missionaries, reached an early crescendo with a siege of Beijing's foreign legations, and culminated with a multinational peace-keeping force *avant la lettre* freeing the hostages and carrying out campaigns of reprisal.<sup>1</sup>

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An earlier version of this essay appeared in Anna Reid, ed., *Taming Terrorism: It's Been Done Before* (London: Policy Exchange, 2005). I am grateful for comments on earlier versions of this essay by Paul Cohen, Caroline Reeves, Henrietta Harrison, Ken Pomeranz, and Greg Grandin, though none of them should be held responsible for any of the views expressed below.

<sup>1</sup> An excellent and accessible yet thoughtful introduction to the general context in which the Boxer crisis took place and summary of main events remains Frederic Wakeman Jr., *The Fall of Imperial China* (New York: Free Press, 1975), esp. 199–224. For my treatment of the Boxers, I rely here most of all on two prize-winning studies: Joseph W. Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), and Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). Other works I have relied on include Robert Bickers, "Chinese Burns: Britain in China 1842–1900," *History Today*, August 2000, 10–17; Henrietta Harrison, "Justice on Behalf of Heaven," *History Today*, September 2000, 44–51; Diana Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion: The Dramatic Story of China's War on Foreigners That Shook the World in the Summer of 1900* (New York: Walker, 2000); James L. Hevia, *English Lessons: The*

PART IV

# Enduring Networks

# The Culture of Patronage in Early Nineteenth-Century China: Ruan Yuan's Circle at Canton

JONATHAN PORTER

The intellectual and social world of the Confucian scholar-official in late imperial China was constructed not only by the formal and public bureaucratic hierarchy that created the framework for official careers, but equally by the often less formal, and more private, networks of personal relationships among members of the scholar-literati class. Not all "scholars" succeeded in becoming officials or found a bureaucratic career to their liking.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, because they shared a common cultural and social outlook, they continued to enjoy the intellectual and social company of their official colleagues and often participated in both the political process and the intellectual discourse of the time. There were, then, in a sense two overlapping subsystems inextricably linked to each other: the official hierarchy of bureaucratic office-holders spreading from central government organs down to local prefectural and district offices on the one hand and the equally pervasive community of private and quasi-private scholars and literati on the other hand. Both subsystems were national in scope but also characterized by local and regional axes of association. However, the informal community of scholars was much less dominated by the central institutions of imperial autocracy. Beside the common commitment to the regimen of the civil service examination system, what joined the two subsystems together were associations between friends, between teachers or mentors

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<sup>1</sup> A rather amorphous term, "scholar" may be broadly defined as one who held at least the lowest civil service examination degree and was therefore identified as having scholar-gentry status.

# The Zhigongtang in the United States, 1860–1949

SUE FAWN CHUNG

The Hongmen Zhigongtang (\*Chee Kung Tong)<sup>1</sup> was one of the most influential Chinese American organizations in American Chinatowns during the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Originating in south China, the Zhigongtang was a secret society that advocated the overthrow of the Manchu government (established in 1644) and loyalty to the fallen Ming dynasty (1368–1644). In addition to these goals, the organization provided important mutual aid services to its members similar to those of clan and district associations but without nativity requirements. Unlike the traditional associations, the American Zhigongtang was part of a loosely connected international network aimed at politically unifying all overseas Chinese and inspiring Chinese patriotism among some of its leading members in the United States.

Because of the secret nature of the organization, there is only fragmentary information to provide some insight into its history and activities. Contemporary Western sources such as newspaper articles are often inaccurate because reporters misunderstood events within the Chinese American community or chose to sensationalize their reports. Organizational documents such as membership lists, ledgers, and receipts are impossible to obtain because most are still kept secret or were destroyed. However, banners and other documents from the Zhigongtang in Tuscarora and Carson City, Nevada, and Tucson, Arizona, as well as recent

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<sup>1</sup> Cantonese names and words as determined by common American immigration "official spelling" are preceded by an asterisk on first appearance. Otherwise, when the characters are known, pinyin romanization is used with the exception of Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek.

## Two Generations of a Chinese Family

JOSEPH W. ESHERICK

In their book *Generations*, William Strauss and Neil Howe analyze American history in terms of five great cycles of four generations each. While often more provocative than convincing, the book reveals certain undeniable patterns in American life. Most striking to those interested in recent American history is the long dominance of the "G.I. Generation" of World War II, a dominance that extended through the presidencies of Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, and Bush. The exceptional longevity of this "greatest generation" makes one think about other extraordinary generations in history.<sup>1</sup>

Modern Chinese history features several unusually long-lasting and influential generations. The "Tongzhi Generation" dominated Chinese politics from the rise of Zeng Guofan and the Hunan Army through the death of Li Hongzhang, with Empress Dowager Cixi the pivot of power in the Qing court. Steeled in the long and bloody struggles against Taiping, Nian, and Muslim rebels, this group represented both the "last stand of Chinese conservatism" and the cautious pursuit of military self-strengthening against Western imperialism.<sup>2</sup> In the twentieth century, the "Revolu-

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<sup>1</sup> William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069* (New York: William Morrow, 1991). Tom Brokaw has recently memorialized the World War II generation in *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998), though Joseph J. Ellis gives that honor an earlier cohort in *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (New York: Random House, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> One might provisionally include in this generation people born between 1810 and 1835, which would include Zeng Guofan (1811–72), Zuo Zongtang (1812–85), Hu Linyi (1812–61), Li Hongzhang (1823–1901), Ding Richang (1823–82), Zeng Guoquan (1824–90), Liu Kunyi (1830–1902), and Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908). See Arthur W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943–44; Taipei: Literature House

PART V

## Contesting Narratives

## Beijing University as a Contested Symbol

TIMOTHY B. WESTON

Beijing University (or Beida), founded in 1898 as the Jingshi daxuetang (Imperial University), was the only project to survive the coup that brought an end to the Hundred Days Reform Movement that same year. Since then, Beida's history has been intertwined with the course of modern Chinese history like no other institution of higher education.<sup>1</sup> No other school's history serves as a better barometer of the painful transformation in relations between intellectuals and state power in the modern era. Debates about the proper role of universities in society, whether they should be wholly dedicated to scholarship and learning or whether they should also have a directly political function, have been a constant feature of modern Chinese history, and Beijing University, generally considered to be the top university in China, has been at the center of those debates. The school's centennial anniversary in 1998 therefore was a highly significant event. A difficult-to-control symbol like Beida, whose prominence is inextricably bound up with the May Fourth Movement, posed a significant test for the Communist Party as it set out to celebrate the institution's hundredth anniversary. The Party's keen interest in the anniversary can be seen in the fact that the main event, which took place at the Great Hall of the People on May 4, 1998,

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<sup>1</sup> Previous scholarship has helped illuminate this point. See, for example, Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960); John Israel, *Student Nationalism in China, 1927–1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966); Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); and Wen-hsin Yeh, *The Alienated Academy: Culture and Politics in Republican China, 1919–1937* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1990).

## History in Modernity: The May Fourth Movement and Shanghai

WEN-HSIN YE H

As economic changes reshaped the Chinese social and political landscape in the 1990s, a new ideological position, dubbed "neoliberalism," emerged to dominate intellectual discourse in China. Working closely with state planners who pushed for further intensification of the reform through interactions with the global economy, the neoliberals advocated for greater devolution of political and economic power from the center to the locale, a more extensive use of the contract system, the furtherance of a comprehensive course of privatization of ownership, and the legitimization through legislative means of the interests and the classes that were coming into being.<sup>1</sup> Their advocacy alarmed social critics, loosely referred to as the "neoleftists," who expressed concerns about the disappearance of social security for the weaker members of Chinese society, the lack of transparency and accountability in the process of enterprise privatization, the growing steepness in income disparity in a disorderly marketplace, and the pervasiveness of corruption and embezzlement, which besiege every level of the power hierarchy.

Both parties agreed that Chinese reform must continue, and there was no going back to the centralized system of planned economy of the early decades of the PRC. There had been little consensus, however, on the proper course of such changes. There had also been much debate about acceptable levels of social costs that were inevitable in the furthering of economic "transition." The debates tested the resourcefulness of ideological categories that have been enshrined in the past century. They mobilized,

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<sup>1</sup> Wang Hui, *The 1989 Social Movement and China's Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 59.

# Index

- Abe Takeshi, 162n21  
account books, 113–14, 120, 121  
Acquaviva, Father General Claudio, 178  
Afghanistan, invasion of, 197, 202, 210  
agriculture: and coal mining in eastern Sichuan, 107, 109, 118; commercialization of, 124, 126, 144; and land reclamation, 127–28. *See also* rice cultivation  
Ah Lee Lake, 238  
alchemy, 43  
al Qaeda, 9, 196, 197, 198–99, 201, 203, 207, 210  
Aleni, Giulio, 184  
Anhui Army, 252, 261  
Anqing. *See* Ye family of Anqing  
Anti-Rightist Movement, 270, 287  
*Arizona Daily Star*, 240  
arranged marriages, 267, 269  
Asad, Talal, 32–33  
Austro-Hungarian Empire, 196  
  
Ba Jin, *Family*, 268  
Bailey, Paul, 151  
banditry, 142–48, 193n4, 257. *See also* robberies  
*Baqi Manzhou shizu tongpu* (Comprehensive Genealogy of the Eight Banner Manchu Clans), 17, 31  
*Baqi tongzhi* (General History of the Eight Banners), 17  
Barkersville (British Columbia), Zhigongtang in, 234n10  
Baxian archives, 112  
Baxian hills (Sichuan), 105–6, 107, 108–9, 111, 120, 122. *See also* coal mining  
Beida: anniversary commemorations, 12, 275–76, 276–77, 278–80, 282, 284, 288, 290–91; and the Anti-Rightist Movement, 287; and the Communist Party, 275, 276, 285–88, 289, 291; during the Cultural Revolution, 288; Democracy Forum, 289; and the Hundred Flowers Movement, 286, 287; and the May Fourth Movement, 12, 275, 276, 282, 284, 285–86, 287, 289–90; mission of, 275, 276–77, 278–79, 281, 282, 289; as mnemonic site, 283–86, 288, 289, 290, 291; in the 1930s, 12, 283; in the 1920s, 12, 276–82, 283, 284; political activism at, 278–79, 281–82, 283, 288, 289–90; as symbol, 275, 276, 283, 287, 288  
Beida Emergency Student Association, 281, 282  
Beida spirit (*Beida jingshen*), 276, 277, 279, 281, 284, 285, 286, 288–89, 290  
Beida Student Association, 278, 279  
Beijing: Boxer crisis in, 196, 200, 202–3; and Chinese modernity, 298; Qing banners in, 21–23