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Edited by John K. Fairbank and Kwang-Ching Liu

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF CHINA

General editors

DENIS TWITCHETT and JOHN K. FAIRBANK

Volume 11

Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, Part 2

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GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

In the English-speaking world, the Cambridge histories have since the beginning of the century set the pattern for multi-volume works of history, with chapters written by experts of a particular topic, and unified by the guiding hand of volume editors of senior standing. *The Cambridge Modern History*, planned by Lord Acton, appeared in sixteen volumes between 1902 and 1912. It was followed by *The Cambridge Ancient History*, *The Cambridge Medieval History*, *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, and Cambridge Histories of India, of Poland, and of the British Empire. The original *Modern History* has now been replaced by *The New Cambridge Modern History* in twelve volumes, and *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe* is now being completed. Other Cambridge Histories recently undertaken include a history of Islam, of Arabic literature, of the Bible treated as a central document of and influence on Western civilization, and of Iran and China.

In the case of China, Western historians face a special problem. The history of Chinese civilization is more extensive and complex than that of any single Western nation, and only slightly less ramified than the history of European civilization as a whole. The Chinese historical record is immensely detailed and extensive, and Chinese historical scholarship has been highly developed and sophisticated for many centuries. Yet until recent decades the study of China in the West, despite the important pioneer work of European sinologists, had hardly progressed beyond the translation of some few classical historical texts, and the outline history of the major dynasties and their institutions.

Recently Western scholars have drawn more fully upon the rich traditions of historical scholarship in China and also in Japan, and greatly advanced both our detailed knowledge of past events and institutions, and also our critical understanding of traditional historiography. In addition, the present generation of Western historians of China can also draw upon the new outlooks and techniques of modern Western historical scholarship, and upon recent developments in the social sciences, while continuing to build upon the solid foundations of rapidly pro-

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gressing European, Japanese and Chinese sinological studies. Recent historical events, too, have given prominence to new problems, while throwing into question many older conceptions. Under these multiple impacts the Western revolution in Chinese studies is steadily gathering momentum.

When *The Cambridge History of China* was first planned in 1966, the aim was to provide a substantial account of the history of China as a benchmark for the Western history-reading public: an account of the current state of knowledge in six volumes. Since then the out-pouring of current research, the application of new methods, and the extension of scholarship into new fields, have further stimulated Chinese historical studies. This growth is indicated by the fact that the History has now become a planned sixteen volumes, including the earliest pre-dynastic period, but which still leave out such topics as the history of art and of literature, many aspects of economics and technology, and all the riches of local history.

The striking advances in our knowledge of China's past over the last decade will continue and accelerate. Western historians of this great and complex subject are justified in their efforts by the needs of their own peoples for greater and deeper understanding of China. Chinese history belongs to the world, not only as a right and necessity, but also as a subject of compelling interest.

JOHN K. FAIRBANK

DENIS TWITCHETT

June 1976

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PREFACE TO VOLUME 11

While generalizing is required in all thinking about history, it becomes a special problem in the case of China's history. 'China' is in fact one of the largest generalities used in modern speech. The term represents the largest body of people in one of the biggest land areas over the longest recorded time – a four-dimensional non-pareil. Just to think about 'China' or 'the Chinese' is to rise to a level of generality (measured in persons or years or acres) that in other fields of history would seem almost infeasibly high. Europe since the Minoan age is a smaller entity. To say, with our greater knowledge of Europe and comparative ignorance of China, that European history is more complex would be presumptuous. Until modern times the Chinese record was more extensive. Perhaps China's greater sense of unity produced more homogeneity than in Europe, or perhaps this is partly an illusion created by the traditional Chinese historians' primary concern for social order, the state and its ruling class.

In any case, China's historical record with its already high level of generality is now being studied in search of syntheses and unifying concepts to give peoples of today some image of China's past. This is urgently needed, but the difficulties are great: the public need for a generalized picture often coincides with a popular seeking for predetermined conclusions, in order to allocate blame and identify villains, or to acknowledge guilt and regret it, or to justify doctrines and reaffirm them, as the case may be.

This means that what the historian of China contributes to his history must be scrutinized with even greater care than usual, especially in a history of China written by outside observers. For example, modern Chinese history in the West has been in large part a history of foreign relations with China, the aspect of modern China most easily studied by foreigners. Of course the multiplicity of foreign influences on China since 1840 (or since 1514) is plain to see. It has even become customary to date modern times from the Opium War, a foreign invasion. But all such impacts from abroad formed only a small part of the Chinese people's day-to-day environment, in which the surrounding landscape and inherited ways remained

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dominant and changed only slowly. Is it not likely that foreign influences will in time bulk less large in the landscape of nineteenth-century China? Not because they will shrink in size or significance but simply because they will be overshadowed by the accumulated new knowledge about China's indigenous experience.

Volume 10 of this series begins not with the foreign commercial invasion and Opium War but with the view from Peking – the institutional structure of the Ch'ing empire in China and Inner Asia early in the nineteenth century. This is followed by Peking's growing domestic problems of administrative control and social order in the first half of the century. Similar signs of internal malaise as well as signs of rejuvenation appear in the accounts of the Taiping and the Nien rebellions and of the tortured success of the Ch'ing restoration. China's economy, and even her military institutions, shows the inner dynamics of an ancient yet far from stagnant society. In the face of unprecedented strains, millions of men and women knew how to survive. It is evident that by the end of the dynasty the eighteenth-century triumph of Ch'ing arms and governance in the Manchus' Inner Asian empire had actually set the stage for the expansion of the Han Chinese from China proper into the spacious borderlands of Manchuria, Mongolia, Sinkiang and eastern Tibet – a great secular migration consequent upon China's phenomenal population growth that began even before the eighteenth century.

The rise of the Canton trade – a two-way street – is only the best-known part of this great Han expansion in numbers, migration, trade and even investment. Part of this Chinese expansion had indeed already taken place overseas, parallel with the expansion of Europe. It occurred beyond the Ch'ing frontiers in that realm of maritime China which forms a minor tradition roughly half as old as the great tradition of the continental, agrarian-bureaucratic empire that dominated the official histories. Seafaring enterprise in the form of the junk trade from Amoy and Canton to South-East Asia (Nanyang, 'the southern seas') long antedated the arrival of the European colonial powers in that region. One has only to think of the Southern Sung navy taken over by the Mongols, of their expedition to Java in 1292, and of the early Ming expeditions across the Indian Ocean in the period 1405–33. Granted that the emperor's leadership of maritime China was foreclosed by the resurgence of Mongol power in the 1440s which pre-empted Ming attention, and by the eventual succession of the Ch'ing as another Inner Asian, anti-seafaring dynasty, the fact remains that in the South-East Asian colonies of the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, British and French the European rulers increasingly relied upon Chinese merchants and middlemen to handle retail trade and perform the tasks of

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licensed monopolists and petty tax collectors. These overseas Chinese (*Hua-ch'iao*, 'Chinese sojourners') became a special middle class in the European colonies, just as they became indispensable also to the rulers of Siam, where one of them indeed founded the Chakri dynasty that still reigns at Bangkok. Though unappreciated and sometimes denounced by Peking, the seafarers and entrepreneurs of maritime China thus participated in the commercial revolution of early modern times and the colonialism to which it gave rise in South-East Asia.

When this accelerating growth of international trade at length forced its way into China through the Tiger's Mouth (Hu-men, Bocca Tigris) below Canton, merchants of Canton, Swatow and Amoy both in legal trade and in the opium trade were among the prime movers in the subsequent growth of international contact. Despite the plethora of foreign commercial records and the present paucity of Chinese, we know that the foreign trade of China was a distinctly Sino-foreign enterprise – in fact, once the treaty ports were opened, the foreign firms' compradors handled most of the trade both into China from the ports and out of China through the ports. Hong Kong, Shanghai and the other places of trade became Chinese cities no matter what the foreign residents may have thought about their sovereignty, their treaty rights or the fire-power of their gunboats. It is almost equally true to say that Chinese participated in the foreigners' opening of China as to say that foreigners participated in China's commercial opening of herself. In the rapid growth of the East India Company's great staple trade in tea at Canton c. 1784–1834, the tea, after all, came from China. Taken together with the Chinese farmers or traders in far-off Sinkiang or Manchuria, the seafarers and entrepreneurs of maritime China bespeak the vitality of the Chinese people, especially since they received scant help from their own government.

If foreign trade was a two-sided process in which both Chinese and foreigners actively participated, there is also another consideration with which to appraise the foreign influence in late Ch'ing history: during the nineteenth century, foreign contact bulked larger and larger in the experience of almost every people. The great migration from Europe to the New World had long preceded the more modest movement of Chinese overseas in foreign vessels after mid-century. For the British public the Opium War was of less strategic relevance than the First Afghan War, the Boxer Uprising was only a spectacular incident during the long grind of the Boer War. For most peoples industrialization came from abroad; the centre of gravity in many aspects of change was seen to lie outside the country. International science and technology, like international trade and politics, increasingly contributed to the global life of a world society. In this per-

spective it seems only natural that outside influences should have played an unprecedentedly larger role in late Ch'ing history.

China's entrance into world society has now laid the basis for historical interpretations that are themselves an ultimate form of foreign influence. These interpretations align the Chinese experience with that of other peoples. This is done first with 'imperialism' and secondly with 'modernization'. These approaches are by way of analogy, seeking to find in China phenomena found universally elsewhere.

Both imperialism and modernization are terms of almost meta-historical scope that require precise definition and concrete illustration if they are to be of use to historians. In a general way imperialism implies foreign initiatives while modernization suggests domestic processes. In its economic aspect, imperialism in the case of China stopped short of colonialism. No plantation economy was developed by foreigners solely for an export market. Even the classic Marxist agent of disaster, the import of factory-made cotton textiles, did not destroy China's handicraft production of cloth; it was sustained into the second quarter of the twentieth century by the supply of cheaper machine-made cotton yarn that could be used by otherwise unemployed members of farming families whose weaving could not have fed them by itself but could nevertheless add a tiny bit to their meagre family incomes. The fact that in the 1930s perhaps 70 per cent of China's cotton cloth still came from handlooms indicates how strongly Chinese families felt compelled to make use of their unemployed labour power. Handweaving indexed their poverty. In thwarting the domination of factory-made cloth, it also suggests how China's people on the whole escaped becoming a mass market for foreign goods (with the exception of cigarettes and kerosene for illumination) simply by being too poor. This example may suggest how much more we need to know about the internal aspects of China's relations with the outside imperialists in the late Ch'ing.

The psychological impact of imperialism, though slow to accumulate, was less uncertain. As time goes on, imperialism as a theme in modern China's history may become more substantial in the realm of thought and psychology, conducive to the rise of nationalism, while it may stand up less well in the quantified field of economics. Chinese ideas of foreign exploitation are already more broadly and easily documented than such exploitation itself. The aggressive assertion of foreign privilege is the major fact in the record, and on this level the missionary vied with the merchant. The imperialism of warfare and gunboat diplomacy, treaty rights and the foreign presence, became very plain to all at the time and is clearly remembered in the national heritage today.

A more recent outsiders' view, the concept of modernization, as applied

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to China suffers from being a catch-all for the concepts of the social sciences developed mainly in the modern West. The effort of the social sciences to be objectively value-free may sometimes be contaminated by their being a culture-bound product of the West. If so, this should be a temporary problem that will be obviated by the growth of a world culture. More serious is the high level of generality inherent in the term modernization. We take it to be a prehension into unity of the ideas of progressive development exemplified in all the social sciences including history. Modern times see widespread growth which brings complexity, change and development in the analytic realms of the economy, the polity, the society and the culture. But the modernization process in each of these realms is defined in the terms of the discipline concerned. To posit a single principle at work in every realm across the board is a further act of faith. This may be a logical satisfaction and yet difficult to apply to the confused data of history. Do we really gain in understanding by promoting the adjective 'modern' to the status of an abstract entity, 'modernization'? The term may become a useful basket, like 'life', in which to carry a load of things largely unknown, messages undeciphered, mysteries unresolved. Like any term, once reified as a thing in itself, it may become a substitute for thought.

As the corpus of modern historical research and writing on China grows and develops, we should expect less demand for the over-arching generalizations that give preliminary structure to a new field of learning. The concrete experience and conscious concerns of the late Ch'ing era should receive major attention, as they do in many parts of this volume. While literature and the arts remain regrettably beyond our scope here, the history of philosophical and political thought gives us major insights into what happened and how. In brief, the late Ch'ing response to the West now begins to seem like only a minor motif; the major process was China's continued response to the Chinese past in the light of new conditions including the West. Stimulus, in short, is where you find it, and stimulus without response is no stimulus at all.

For example, the deterioration of the Grand Canal transport system to feed Peking roused an effort in the 1820s to revive the sea transport of government rice around Shantung, an institutional arrangement within the tradition of the statecraft (*ching-shih*) school of practical administrators. Only in the 1870s were steamships adopted to meet the problem. Again, the doctrinal basis for the self-strengthening movement, to defend China by borrowing Western technology, may be viewed as an application of traditional statecraft in a new context. Only in the 1890s, after many disasters, were ideas of evolutionary progress and social Darwinism

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smuggled into Confucianism as a necessary platform for the reform movement. And in the end, the principal struggle of the reformers was not against imperialism directly but against those Chinese traditions that had made imperialism possible. Late Ch'ing reformers and revolutionaries both accepted the ancient Confucian adage, 'If you can keep your own house in order, who will dare to insult you?' China's strength must come from within. For scholars trained in the classics, the chief source of inspiration for China's future was still her past. For today's historians of the late Ch'ing, this puts a premium on understanding China's great tradition as well as the nineteenth century. There is no substitute for our knowing what the generations before Sun Yat-sen actually had in mind.

Mary Clabaugh Wright (1917–70) left her mark on the history of late imperial China through her students and friends and in two books dealing respectively with the 1860s and the 1900s – the initial and final periods of the present volume. *The last stand of Chinese conservatism: the T'ung-chih Restoration, 1862–1874*, which developed from her Harvard dissertation of 1952, analysed the problems and policies of the Ch'ing regime comprehensively as few have done before or since. *China in revolution: the first phase, 1900–1913*, edited from a conference she organized and presided over in 1965, is the first all-embracing study of the subject that embodies the results of modern scholarship from half-a-dozen countries. From 1945 to 1959 Mary Wright built up the Chinese library of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford and then from 1959 until her untimely death was Professor of History at Yale University. Since this volume of the *Cambridge History of China* is so indebted to her pioneering work, we dedicate it to her.

October 1977

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