INTRODUCTION: NEW ORDER FOR THE OLD ORDER

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In the grand sweep of more than three thousand years of Chinese history, the period from roughly 1680 to 1780 has been celebrated as a prosperous age. From other perspectives, the period has been disparaged as a time when China's people were held down and held back by autocratic foreign rulers. Such dichotomies reveal that the possibilities remain open for both positive and negative assessments of the period of Chinese history from the founding of the Ch'ing dynasty to the end of the Ch'ien-lung emperor's life in 1799. Without promising to resolve the conflicting historical interpretations, this introduction explores some of the issues and problems that are raised in the chapters of this volume and by interpretations of Ch'ing history to 1800 in general.

Simple historical chronology locates the subject matter of this volume after 1644, the conventional date for indicating the fall of the Ming dynasty, and before the end of rule by the Ch'ing imperial house in 1911. In terms of the historiography of the *Cambridge History of China* series, this volume is located between Volumes 7 and 8, with the shared title of *The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644*, and Volume 10, entitled *Late Ch'ing, 1800–1911*.

Volume 10 was the first volume of the entire series to be published (in 1978). In Volume 10's Introduction, titled "The Old Order," the late John K. Fairbank, who was editor of the volume and a main organizer of the entire series, characterized the late Ch'ing period as the end of the "old China" in conflict with the "outside world," especially as represented by Western and Westernizing nations pursuing imperialist interests. For Fairbank, the avowed purpose of investigating the history of the late Ch'ing and the "old order" was to better understand what he called "the great Chinese revolution," or put more generally, "what has happened in modern China, how and why" (p. 2). Although Fairbank recognized the need to try to reconstruct "views, motives and historical understanding of people at the time when events occurred," he also was committed to being "present-minded" as well as "past-minded" (p. 5), which I take to be an expression of the perspective from which he invited readers of Volume 10 to view late Ch'ing history.

1

This perspective implicitly creates a problem for readers of the present volume: If the Ch'ing dynasty after 1800 is characterized as the "old order" (and "old society" and "old China" are similar terms Fairbank also used), then how should we think of Ch'ing history before 1800? Was it also the "old order," but younger? Was it the mature, well-functioning "old order" before the advent of certain types of conflict with the "outside world" revealed its self-absorption and incapacity to effect "quick reaction to a Western invasion" (p. 5)? Nothing in Fairbank's Introduction to Volume 10 suggests or implies that we might expect to look to "earlier" Ch'ing history, that is, prior to 1800, in order to discover the beginning of the old order. By implication, the "old order" was rooted in a historical past well before the proclamation of the Ch'ing dynasty in 1636.

Ten years after Volume 10 appeared, the first of the two volumes on Ming history was published (1988). In his Introduction to the first Ming volume in the *Cambridge History of China* series, F. W. Mote stressed two general points that he held should shape readers' views of Ming history. The first is that the years of Ming rule (1368–1644) are "the only segment of later imperial history from the fall of the Northern Sung capital to the Jurchen invaders in 1126 until the Revolution of 1911 . . . during which all of China proper was ruled by a native or Han Chinese dynasty" (p. 1). Left unsaid is the implication that the Ch'ing is a period of "alien rule." Related to this, and also to Fairbank's emphasis on an "old order," is Mote's second point, that "the Ming Period witnessed the growth of Chinese civilization, . . . the maturing of the traditional Chinese civilization in that last phase of its relatively secure intramural isolation and splendor" (p. 1). This is similar to what Fairbank meant by the "old order," but with less stability and more dynamic changes. Mote pointed to tensions in the Ming experience in such matters as how variously effective the emperors and their governments were in controlling and adapting to crises and long-term trends. He also noticed the possibility of claiming the Ming system of government "as the great achievement of Chinese civilization" (p. 3). He pointed to the Ming state's "stimulating a uniform ideological basis for private and for bureaucratic behavior," which he termed a "'revised' neo-Confucian ethos" (p. 3). Expansion to the south and overseas, growth in population, literacy, commerce, and urban networks – such long-term developments occurred largely outside of the control of the Ming government but are all manifestations of "the boundless energies of Ming society" (p. 2). Celebrating Ming success, perhaps to be characterized as something like a "mature Chinese order," the perspective Mote offered is not wholly congruent with Fairbank's view of an "old order" bound to suffer revolution. They might agree that "traditional Chinese civilization" existed under the Ming dynasty, but not that it continued to exist into the nineteenth century.

Of course the Ming dynasty itself was supplanted by the Ch'ing in the mid-seventeenth century, which is where this volume of the *Cambridge History of China* picks up the story.

If the nineteenth century, the late Ch'ing period, is best described as the end of the "old order," and if under the Ming dynasty "traditional Chinese civilization" was flourishing, "mature," perhaps, but not decrepit, then how should we characterize the Ch'ing period from its inception to 1800? This is not a question of what arbitrary label to assign. It is a question involving continuity. Put simply, was the Ch'ing after 1644 predominantly continuous with, even an extension of, the Ming period? Did it somehow represent a decline from the Ming period? And were the late Ch'ing trends, after 1800, predominantly continuous with the previous century, with a decline detectable from 1644? In effect, then, the problem is whether it is appropriate to consider the period from 1644 to 1800 as a continuous transition from a flourishing Ming of the sixteenth century to a Ch'ing order in decline through the nineteenth century and reaching the precipice of the "revolutions" of the twentieth century. Or whether it is more appropriate to think of the period as discontinuous with what happened before 1644. Was the Ch'ing "order" in 1800 an order that was less than two centuries old?

In the most general terms, there are obvious stable characteristics through the three periods. Some of the continuities are institutional. During every year of the three periods there was a reigning emperor. The emperors or their surrogates had effective control over extensive resources, with some exceptions in each of the three periods when an emperor had only nominal control. Each emperor was surrounded by a coterie of especially privileged relatives and favorites. It is worth noting that this volume and the first Ming volume have chapters and chapter titles focusing on the reigns of each of the emperors, while Volume 10 on Late Ch'ing does not, which suggests a changed perception of the relative historical significance of the emperors.

There was a centralized bureaucracy with specialized civil, military, and censorial functions which managed a hierarchy of officials extending down to the county (*hsien*) level with juridical, taxing, and control powers over a population totaling more than a hundred million people. Throughout the three periods, there were fewer than two thousand counties (*hsien*) and independent departments (*chou*). There was an elaborate set of codified law and case precedent that was generally observed as the framework for the administration of justice.

Except for the founding Ming emperor in the fourteenth century, all of the emperors of the three periods acceded to the throne on the basis of who their father was. Other sets of important men also gained access to power because

they were the sons of their fathers. Although access to privileged positions was inheritable, by and large the incidence of regularly inherited, substantive political or military power – except for the emperors – was low and marginal. The inheriting individual had a claim, not a right. (Inheritance of control of economic resources, both local and regional, is another matter, but it was at least marginally less significant in all three of our periods than in contemporary Western Europe, where systems of primogeniture prevailed.)

There was an elaborate system of competitive examinations to recruit and rank potential appointees to the several tens of thousands of official positions in the regular bureaucracy and to the military officer hierarchy. Passing the civil examinations, which were formally administered at the county, prefectural, provincial, and capital levels, earned the successful candidates at each level a formal title (usually but somewhat misleadingly called a "degree"). By the act of acquiring a degree, a person was separated from commoners. Anyone achieving a higher degree could associate with his new peers on an empirewide basis without regard for whether or not he took up an appointment as an official. Possessing any examination degree, even when it was acquired by purchase rather than by success in an examination, distinguished its holder as a literatus (*shih*). The literati (sometimes called "gentry" in some writing on Ming-Ch'ing China when referring to degree-holders) constituted no more than 1 percent of the empire's adult population alive at any given time through the three periods. Preparing for the examinations involved becoming highly literate in the learned traditions built on the Five Classics associated with the figure of K'ung Tzu (Confucius, 551–479) and, with some fluctuations, the commentaries associated with the teachings of Chu Hsi (1130–1200). Acquiring the skills to read and write in these learned traditions had an indoctrinating effect, and from the perspective of observers from Western countries through the three periods, all of those who studied for and passed the examinations, and thus all those who held high civil office, were Confucians (*ju*). By extension, the governments and even the emperors themselves were characterized as Confucian, at least from these outsiders' perspectives.

In the most general terms, then, the obvious institutional continuities between the three periods might be taken to represent an "old order" and "old China." These would at least include an emperor, an aristocratic elite with some military functions, a civilian bureaucratic elite largely recruited through competitive examinations mostly testing classical learning, a local elite distinguishable from others who had not passed examinations, and all vaguely under a putative umbrella rubric, "Confucian."

There also were two long-term trends that continued from the beginning of the sixteenth century into the nineteenth century, that is, from the mid-

Ming to the late Ch'ing period. One was population growth, and the other was growth in the economy.

Although the specific numbers are disputable, and all estimates must depend on the validity of their assumptions, it is clear enough that around 1500 the population of the empire was more than 100 million and around 1800 it was more than 300 million. Two big conundrums are when the 200-million mark was crossed and how big a dip occurred during the troubles of the mid-seventeenth century. Answers depend on assumptions about rates of growth in the three centuries. The implications of the answers have an impact on historians' assessments of the period from 1644 to 1800. If the older view is more correct – that the Ch'ing empire had about 100 million people in 1680 or so and the population tripled by 1800 – then there is a strong numerical basis for pointing to the eighteenth century as a "prosperous age." If the revisionist view is more acceptable – that the Ming empire had about 200 million people by 1600 – and recognizing that the evidence does not support a claim that the population was halved during the mid-seventeenth century troubles, then a doubling of the population in the eighteenth century is akin to a doubling during the sixteenth century and not unprecedented. Without choosing between these two views of population curves, we can recognize that population growth was a long-term upward trend, implying a strong continuity across the 1644 dynastic divide. This growth continued into the late Ch'ing period.

Although counting or estimating the numbers of individuals constituting the population is difficult enough, it is more difficult to generate useful numbers to track trends in economic growth over the period from before 1500 to after 1800. It is clear that the total money supply (copper cash plus silver specie plus paper credits) increased. Although any numbers are speculative, trade within provinces, trade between provinces and regions, trade that crossed the empire's frontiers (that is, what later would be called international trade), gross agricultural product (measured in weights of grain or in numbers of calories), and gross imperial product (goods and services measured in some standard monetary unit) all can be characterized generally as exhibiting long-term upward trends from 1500 to 1800. Integration of markets and commercialization of agriculture were processes that accumulated in their effects as long-term continuities.

The mid-seventeenth-century crisis of dynastic change notwithstanding, the structural continuities imply a certain stability which might be taken as a stable "old order." The long-term trends may be a result of such stability: Stable institutions may have promoted economic and population growth. But it is also possible that the significant growth in the economy and in population had a destabilizing effect on the institutions which fostered the growth.

In other words, the manifest success of the "old order" – notably population increases and economic increases – were presenting challenges to the established order at the same time that external encroachments began to affect both the Ming and the Ch'ing polities, first in seventeenth and then in the nineteenth century.

These several continuities existed with an event which represented an obvious discontinuity that was full of consequences: the failure of the Ming government to defend Peking successfully in 1644. The Ming empire was conquered by military forces commanded by leaders who were not and did not regard themselves as identical in language or customs with the Ming leadership they were replacing or subordinating. They had invented a new name to identify themselves – Manchu – and throughout the Ch'ing period that name was used to denote those who were centrally associated with, or descendents of those associated with, the initial military campaigns for the establishment of the Ch'ing imperial house. In this sense, the establishment of the Ch'ing dynasty marked the success of another "alien" dynasty.

Since the seventeenth century and continuing to today, there have been two contrasting ways to deal with the apparent fact that "Manchus" were not Han (Chinese). The one side emphasizes that the "alien conquerors" from beginning to end remained outsiders, foreigners, to whatever might be reckoned as "truly Chinese." For this side, the foreign conquerors are to be blamed for their encroachment and deserved to be dispossessed because they continued to rule as outsiders, a minority among Han (Chinese). The other side emphasizes that the alien conquerors themselves were transformed as their military success was transmuted into an ongoing political project. This inevitably involved adopting the "Chinese" imperial political system and its values to maintain dynastic viability. In the process of absorbing and assimilating, Manchus were "sinified." The political and social contributions of their regime thus are constituents of the Chinese tradition.

In between these two dichotomous views, less political and more historical interpretations allow that the Manchu leadership of the Ch'ing dynasty was both separate (or alien) and sinified over the period covered in this volume. It is apparent that the characteristics of Ch'ing leadership, in its personnel, institutions, and implicit values, were not identical to either those of Ming dynastic leadership or "proto-Manchu" ones prior to the assumption of the self-identifying label of "Manchu" in the 1630s. In other words, as members of the Ch'ing leadership, including emperors, collectively participated in a process that might be called sinification and moved further from their local roots or origins, they also became less like the Ming leadership had been before its defeat around 1644. This can be illustrated by two further types of discontinuities.

The administrative tone set through the first century and a half of the Ch'ing dynasty (1636–1796, during which five emperors reigned) contrasts with that of the last century and a half of the Ming dynasty (1488–1644, during which eight emperors reigned). These Ming emperors were mostly dominated by or struggling for control with their leading civil officials and court confidants. The three Ch'ing emperors from 1662 to 1796, except for some uncertain years at the beginning or end of their reigns, made substantial personal efforts to secure intelligence, make decisions, and control the system of governance at their disposal. They ruled. And they adjusted the systems to enhance their command of government. In the late Ming period, the civil bureaucracy led by Grand Secretaries controlled many aspects of government, and even those eunuchs who dominated an emperor had to operate through the bureaucracy. To exercise their commands, Ch'ing emperors nurtured alternative channels. In particular, members of Manchu and Mongol noble families and imperial bond servants were appointed directly to serve the emperor's interests separate from the civilian bureaucratic hierarchies and procedures. If the Ming imperial government represented the "old order," the Ch'ing government transformed it with structural innovations and new procedures.

A second contrast between the Ming and Ch'ing periods is a function of the Ch'ing success in expanding the limits of their territorial control to more than double the size of the Ming empire. The thirteen Ming provinces and the two metropolitan regions were reconfigured as eighteen provinces in Ch'ing. This was the inner territory (the *nei-ti*), known as "China proper" since the nineteenth century. By 1760, vast stretches had been added in the northeast (later partly known as Manchuria), in the north (including what is now known as Mongolia), in the west (Sinkiang and Tibet), and in the southeast (Taiwan). These territories and the non-Han peoples living in them underwent a process of colonization. They were administered by the Ch'ing government as categorically distinct from the eighteen provinces, and generally they were under the command of personnel who were not Han (Chinese). The Ming government included non-Han personnel, particularly Mongols in military units, but the numbers and diversity of the peoples controlled from the center of the Ch'ing empire involved institutions and procedures not known under the Ming systems of government.

Weighing these major continuities and discontinuities between the later Ming period and the Ch'ing period to 1800, each of us may strike a different balance. The possibility of such opposite interpretations suggests an important aspect of the Ch'ing dynasty's success. It held a wide range of factors in balanced tension. The foreign, Manchu, non-Han characteristics of the Ch'ing imperial house co-existed with its sinified aspects. The military

side of the Ch'ing government, involved in conquest, expansion, exploitation, colonization, and domination, was paired with its civilian, bureaucratic, systemic, regularized aspects. Martial traditions and the traditions of elite, learned culture were simultaneously promoted. The conquest elite centered on imperial relatives and included Manchus, Mongols, and Han-chün bannermen. They vied for power and privilege with the learned elite, men who had passed civil service examinations and maintained social prestige even when not holding official position. One can find many more examples of balanced dichotomies or tensions in nearly every aspect of Ch'ing government, society, and culture during the century from 1680 to 1780. Many decades ago, Ch'ü T'ung-tsu analyzed the interaction of the many groups involved in local government under the Ch'ing. He described the "strains and tensions" among them and rhetorically asked why the existence of tensions did not stimulate more change. His answer for the system of local government was that "all these groups, with the single exception of the common people, secured maximal returns under the existing system" (Ch'ü, *Local Government in China under the Ch'ing*, p. 199). And, I would add, the groups also tended to minimize their risks by compromising. Taking Ch'ü T'ung-tsu's scholarly conclusion and speculatively extending it to all aspects of the period covered in this volume, we might see that the Ch'ing success, involving not only imperial leadership but the complicity of all elite groups as well, was a function of working out ways to maintain the diverse interests in something approximating a balanced tension, which required more or less continuous, expedient, ad hoc adjustments. This was the motive for generating a new order for the old order. Tensions grew, and the balance began to be lost by the last decades of the eighteenth century. In aspect after aspect, balance broke down in the nineteenth century, and finally the Ch'ing dynasty failed.

CHAPTER 1

STATE BUILDING BEFORE 1644

Gertraude Roth Li

On June 6, 1644, Ch'ing troops entered Peking and claimed the throne for their six-year-old emperor. The military success in 1644 and the subsesquent expansion of the Ch'ing empire were rooted in two centuries of Jurchen[1] multilateral relationships with Koreans, Mongols, and Chinese in the Northeast. By the early seventeenth century, Nurhaci (Nu-erh-ha-ch'ih; 1559–1626),[2] the founder of the dynasty, shifted the goal from seeking wealth and local power to pursuing a vision of an empire, and toward this end he created a sociomilitary organization that was capable of unifying the Jurchens. He laid the foundation for a political system that allowed Chinese and Mongol participation in his endeavor. Following Nurhaci's death, his son, Hung Taiji (Huang T'ai-chi; 1592–1643)[3] built on the accomplishments of his father and consolidated the conceptual and institutional foundation for a Ch'ing empire by drawing heavily on Ming traditions. The glory of taking the throne in Peking fell to Hung Taiji's six-year-old son.

THE JURCHENS DURING THE MING

The place and its people

The Liao valley is the heartland of a region known to Westerners as Manchuria, a place where forest, steppe, and agricultural lands overlap. In the sixteenth century, this region extended southward from the Amur River (Heilungkiang) and included a Ming administrative area in the lower Liao valley and the Liao-tung peninsula. In the east, it reached the Tatar Strait, the Sea of Japan, and the Korean border. In the west, it connected to what

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[1] Jurchen, an Anglicized term, is used instead of Jürchen or Jürched, with the final *d* reflecting the Mongol plural ending. However, when referring to the Uriyangkad and Tümed, two Mongol tribes, the Mongol plural ending is retained.

[2] Biography in *ECCP*, pp. 594–9. The name is also written as Nurhachi or Nurgaci. Nurgaci is an old Manchu form and appears in some early Manchu records.

[3] Hung Taiji is erroneously known in some secondary literature as Abahai. The mistake is traced by Giovanni Stary, "The emperor 'Abahai': Analysis of an historical mistake," *Central Asiatic Journal*, 28, Nos. 3–4 (1984), pp. 296–9. His biography, *ECCP*, pp. 1–3, can be found under "Abahai."

9

in the twentieth century was Jehol,[4] extending northwest from the Great Wall to the Mongolian pasturelands on the slopes of the Greater Khingan Mountains (Ta Hsing-an ling). Because most Chinese activities in Manchuria were carried out via Jehol, this area – particularly its southern portion, also known as Liao-hsi – was of great importance to the history of Manchuria. During the Ming this area was home to various groups of Eastern Mongols, who in Chinese records are often referred to as Tatars, though this term at times included Jurchens.

Manchuria's main ethnic group was the Jurchens, a people who in the twelfth century had established the Chin dynasty (1115–1234). The name Jurchen itself dates back at least to the beginning of the tenth century, or perhaps, if it is to be identified with the name of the Su-shen tribes, even as far back as the sixth century B.C. "Jurchen," the standard English version of the name, derives from the Chin dynasty Jurchen word *jusen*, which may have reached the West via its Mongolian version of Jürchen.[5] The original meaning of *jusen* remains uncertain.

During the Ming dynasty, Chinese distinguished three groups of Jurchens: the Wild Jurchens (Yeh Nü-chen), the Hai-hsi Jurchens, and the Chien-chou Jurchens. At times they also referred to the three groups collectively as Wild People (*yeh-jen*). The Wild Jurchens occupied the northernmost part of Manchuria, which stretched from the western side of the Greater Khingan Mountains to the Ussuri River and the lower Amur, and bordered on the Tatar Strait and the Sea of Japan. This area was a sparsely populated hinterland to the more populous Liao valley and contained various tribal groups, primarily the Hūrha (Hu-erh-ha),[6] the Weji (Ma. "forest"; Chin. Wo-chi, Wu-chi, or Wu-che), and the Warka (Wa-erh-ha or Wa-erh-k'o). Wild Jurchen hunters and fishermen supplemented their economy by pig raising and, where possible, migratory agriculture. Mongolian influences were considerable, especially in the west.

Named after the Sungari River (Sung-hua chiang), which during the Yüan and Ming dynasties was also called the Hai-hsi River, the Hai-hsi

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[4] Jehol was a province from 1929 to 1955. Its southern portion is now part of Hopei and its northern portion is part of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (Nei Meng-ku tzu-chih ch'ü).

[5] The Chinese transliteration of the original Altaic word is *nü-chen*, which was changed to *nü-chih* as the result of the Liao dynasty taboo on the character *chen*. In the tenth century the character *nü* served to render an affricative ju (= džu) and seems to have soon been replaced by characters like *chu*. Henry Serruys, *Sino-Jürčed relations during the Yung-lo period (1402–1424)*, Göttinger Asiatische Forschungen Band 4 (Wiesbaden, 1955), p. 1, n. 1. In Manchu the Jurchen word *jusen* becomes *jušen*, but *nioi jy*, reflecting the Chinese *nü-chen*, also occurs.

[6] After T'ang times Hūrha, sometimes also written as Hūrka (Hu-erh-k'o), referred to the region along the Hūrha River (Hu-erh-ha chiang), an early name for the Mudan River (Mu-tan chiang). By the Chin period Hūrha was also known as Huligai (Hu-li-kai). During the Ming the word Hūrha was used more loosely, referring to the area or the tribes of the Mudan River area, but sometimes including the Weji and Warka tribes. See Lucien Gibert, *Dictionnaire historique et géographique de la Mandchourie* (Hong Kong, 1934), p. 281.