

ChinaX Course Notes

*I transmit, I do not innovate.*¹

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These are the class notes of Dave Pomerantz, a student in the HarvardX/EdX MOOC course entitled ChinaX. My ChinaX id is simply *DavePomerantz*.

First, a very big thank you to Professors Peter Bol and Bill Kirby and Mark Elliot and Roderick MacFarquhar, to the visiting lecturers who appear in the videos and to the ChinaX staff for assembling such a marvelous course.

The notes may contain copyrighted material from the ChinaX course. Any inaccuracies in here are purely my own.

Where material from Wikipedia is copied directly into this document, a link is provided. See [here](#).



Left to right: Professor Peter Bol, myself, Professor Bill Kirby. 12/18/2014. Outside of Dumplings in Cambridge.

¹ *The Analects* 7.1. See page 36.

Part 1: The Political and Intellectual Foundations of China

Week 1: The Big Picture

Section 1: Time

What is a dynasty?

A dynasty is a ruling house, an empire, an imperial family. A hierarchy of inner and outer court. It has a temporal limit and a geographic limit and it always begins as a conquest. The high points are a *shengshi* - a prosperous age. The name of the dynasty is the name of a country.

The dynasty song

(Sung to the tune of Frère Jacques. Lucky for you I didn't post a musical rendition.)

Shang Zhou Qin Han

Shang Zhou Qin Han

Sui Tang Song

Sui Tang Song

Yuan Ming Qing Republic

Yuan Ming Qing Republic

Mao Zedong

Mao Zedong

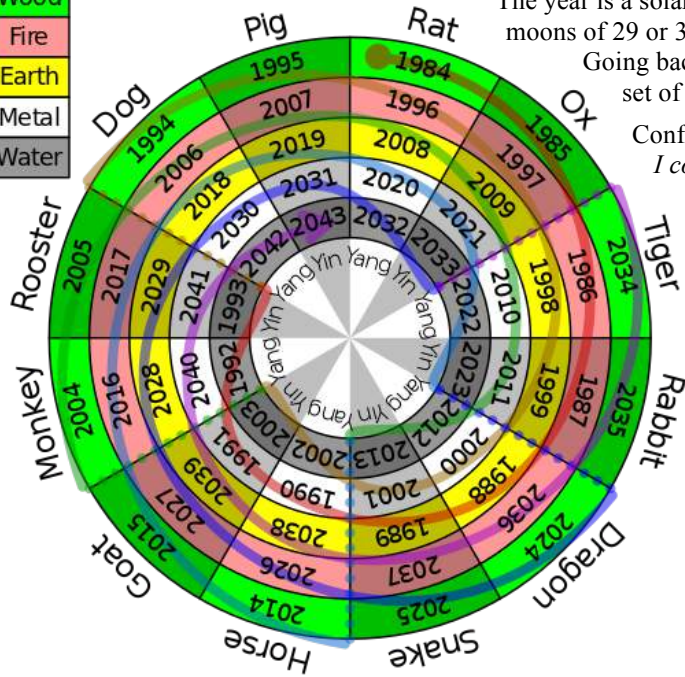
Dynasties

The name of the dynasty is different from the name of the ruling house. Ming is the Zhu family. Han is the Liu family. When the emperor is a baby, he's the successor, but he can't rule. He has a regent. There may be an empress dowager, but more commonly a regent (an acting [head of state](#) in a [monarchy](#)). All successors were male, except for one female empress, Wu Zetian, in the Tang. She ends the Tang and creates the Second Zhou.

Dynasties maintain power through force, through a bureaucracy with centralized appointment of local officials, through common ideology and through education standards among the elite. Time can be divided by dynasty, by sociology (feudal, capitalist, socialist), and by archaeological age (paleolithic, neolithic, bronze age, iron age).

Chinese Calendar and the Sexagenary Cycle

Wood
Fire
Earth
Metal
Water



The year is a solar year, 24 periods of 15 days. The calendar is lunar, 12 moons of 29 or 30 days with an extra (intercalary) month every 7 years. Going back at least to 1200 bce is the Sexagenary Cycle. One set of 12, one set of 10, for a cycle of 60 (the Jiazi).

Confucius said (*The Analects*, 2.4, see [here](#)): *when I was 50, I could understand the will of heaven.*

Wushi er zhi tianming.

[See here for Wikipedia's example of a Sexagenary cycle.](#)

Chinese Dynasties and Their Ruling Houses

Copied from [Wikipedia](#) with minor edits (removed a column) to fit on the page. See [here](#) for two more excellent timelines.

Dynasty				Ruling House or clan of houses	Years	
Name	Chinese	Pinyin	Meaning			
Xia dynasty	夏	Xià	<i>Summer</i>	Sì (姒)	2070–1600 BC	470
Shang dynasty	商	Shāng	Toponym	Zǐ (子)	1600–1046 BC	571
Western Zhou dynasty	西周	Xī Zhōu	<i>Toponym</i>	Jī (姬)	1046–771 BC	275
Eastern Zhou dynasty	東周 / 东周	Dōng Zhōu	<i>Toponym</i>	Jī (姬)	770–256 BC	514
Spring and Autumn period	春秋	Chūn Qiū	<i>As English</i>		771-476 BC	295
Warring States period	戰國 / 战国	Zhàn Guó	<i>As English</i>		476-221 BC	255
Qin dynasty	秦	Qín	<i>Toponym</i>	Yíng (嬴)	221–206 BC	15
Western Han dynasty	西漢 / 西汉	Xī Hàn	<i>Toponym</i>	Lǐú (劉 / 刘)	206 or 202 BC–9 AD, 23–25 AD	215
Xin dynasty	新	Xīn	"New"	Wáng (王)	9–23 AD	14
Eastern Han dynasty	東漢 / 东汉	Dōng Hàn	<i>Toponym</i>	Lǐú (劉 / 刘)	25–220	195
Three Kingdoms	三國 / 三国	Sān Guó	<i>As English</i>	Cáo (曹) Lǐú (劉 / 刘) Sūn (孫 / 孙)	220–265 or 280	45
Western Jin dynasty	西晉 / 西晋	Xī Jìn	<i>Ducal title</i>	Sīmǎ (司馬 / 司马)	265–317	52
Eastern Jin dynasty	東晉 / 东晋	Dōng Jìn	<i>Ducal title</i>	Sīmǎ (司馬 / 司马)	317–420	103
Southern and Northern Dynasties	南北朝	Nán Běi Cháo	<i>As English</i>	<i>various</i>	386 or 420–589	169
Sui dynasty	隋	Suí	<i>Ducal title</i> (隨 <i>homophone</i>)	Yáng (楊 / 杨)	581–618	37
Tang dynasty	唐	Táng	<i>Ducal title</i>	Lǐ (李)	618–907	289
Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms	五代十國 or 五代十国	Wǔ Dài Shí Guó	<i>As English</i>	<i>various</i>	907–960	53
Kingdom of Dali	大理国	Dà Lǐ Guó	<i>Toponym</i>	Duan (段)	937–1253	316
Northern Song dynasty	北宋	Běi Sòng	<i>Toponym</i>	Zhào (趙 / 赵)	960–1127	167
Southern Song dynasty	南宋	Nán Sòng	<i>Toponym</i>	Zhào (趙 / 赵)	1127–1279	152
Liao dynasty	遼 / 辽	Liáo	"Vast" or "Iron" (<i>Khitan</i> <i>homophone</i>)	Yelü (耶律)	907 or 916–1125	209

Jin dynasty	金	Jīn	"Gold"	Wanggiyan (𡩇𡩇𡩇𡩇 ; 完顏 / 完顏)	1115–1234	119
Western Xia	西夏	Xī Xià	<i>Toponym</i>	Li (𡩇 ; 李)	1038–1227	189
Yuan dynasty	元	Yuán	"Great" or "Primacy"	Borjigin (ᠪᠣᠷᠵᠢᠭᠢᠨ ; 孛兒只斤 / 孛兒只斤)	1271–1368	97
Ming dynasty	明	Míng	"Bright"	Zhū (朱)	1368–1644 or 1662	276
Qing dynasty	清	Qīng	"Pure"	Aisin Gioro (ᠠᠶᠢᠰᠢᠨ ᠭᠢᠣᠷᠣ }; 愛新覺羅 / 爱新觉罗)	1636 or 1644–1911	268

Section 2: Space

Place names are combinations of words that have meaning, much like the Native American names given to many U.S. locales. (Connecticut means *long river* in Pequot)

Yunnan - South of the Clouds

Xizang - Western Storehouse

Physical Geography

Tibetan Plateau

Land mass formed when the Indian subcontinent collided with Eurasia. The mountains are still rising. Tibet and Tarim Basin are arid, different from China proper. Because of the height of Tibet, all rivers flow east.

Three Rivers

Yellow River in the north, called China's sorrow because of the flooding.

Yangzi River, draining from Sichuan to the rich Lower Yangzi Region. In the middle of the Yangzi are a series of great lakes that are catchment basins for seasonal floods.

Pearl River, emptying into the Guangzhou and Hong Kong.

Mountains and Plains

North China Plain (alluvial?) drainage from the loess, which is the dust blown soil from the Yellow river.

Nine Macroregions

G. William Skinner proposed a tic-tac-toe map of 9 regions centered around river junctions and mountainous peripheries. Corresponds with the language map.

North vs South

The divider is a line between the Qinling Mountains in the West and the mouth of the Huai River in the East.



Cold and dry in the north, good for growing wheat; wet and warm in the south encouraging farming of rice. Note the monsoon, an annual cycle where wind changes from northerly to southerly.

Climate

Historical climate change



The climate cycled through periods of warming and cooling, differing only by a few degrees celsius, but enough to make for longer and shorter growing seasons. In the north, colder periods mean failed harvests while in the south, it might mean an extra crop of winter wheat.

Also, in Beijing, the main road came through the steppe (grassy plains) to the Gobi. Possibly in the cooler climate, the nomads were pushed down from the north to raid the North China Plain.

People and Geography

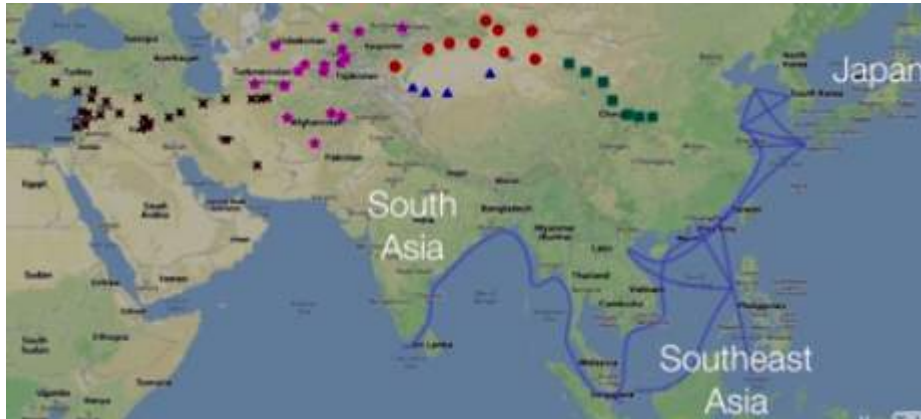
The ChinaX interactive map is [here](#).

Mountains can't be moved (yet) but rivers can be dammed, roads built, and geography changed in ways to suit the people. The old highways and the modern railways are closely related. Populations moved over time.

Silk Road and Sea Routes

The Silk Road, top, begins in the Wei River Valley, where Chang'an, the capital of the Han and Tang dynasties was located and stretches across the Tarim Basin to Central Asia.

The sea routes (blue lines on right) connect China to Japan and SE Asia (Arab traders).



Great Wall

Border between central states and tribal peoples.

Grand Canal

Connected Beijing to rice paddies in SE China.

Names of the Provinces

By direction	By physical features	
N Bei	Lake	Hu
E Dong	River (north)	He (yellow river)
S Nan	River (south)	Jiang (Yangzi river)
W Xi	Mountain	Shan

Shandong province - east of the mountains.

Section 3: Identity

Written Language

Where was writing invented?

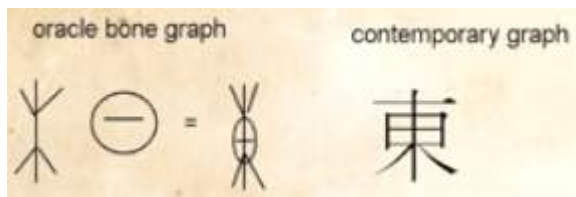
Mesopotamia:	cuneiform ²
Egypt:	hieroglyphic ³
China:	hieroglyphic (or logographic?) ⁴

None of these first written languages were based on sounds. Chinese is the only surviving hieroglyphic language, a language that represented objects.

Writing symbolized sound only in the mediterranean. From Egyptian comes Hebrew, Arabic, Davangari, Phoenician. From Phoenician comes Greek and Roman.

Because Chinese doesn't alphabetize, one written language can serve every spoken language. Even though Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese are grammatically different, the Chinese writing system can be adopted.

In fact, Chinese is more complicated than simple hieroglyphics. How do you get a concept like East? The sun rising through the trees is the symbol for a tree plus the symbol for the sun:

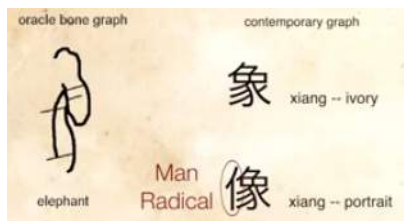


The verb *to see*, is an eye on legs:



Homophones

Only 400 distinct sounds in Mandarin. They use characters for their sound value to represent a word that has the same sound value. Xiang means both ivory and portrait, since both derived from the glyph for elephant:



We don't know how Chinese writing evolved. It spread through China, Japan, Korean, Vietnam. The tribal peoples of the north had distinct languages, deliberately to maintain a separate identity.

² [Cuneiform](#), from Wikipedia: is one of the earliest known [systems of writing](#),^[1] distinguished by its [wedge-shaped](#) marks on [clay tablets](#), made by means of a blunt [reed](#) for a [stylus](#). The name *cuneiform* itself simply means "wedge shaped", from the Latin *cuneus* "wedge" and *forma* "shape," and came into English usage probably from [Old French](#) *cunéiforme*.

³ [Egyptian hieroglyphs](#) from Wikipedia: were a formal [writing system](#) used by the [ancient Egyptians](#) that combined [logographic](#) and [alphabetic](#) elements. Egyptians used [cursive hieroglyphs](#) for [religious literature](#) on [papyrus](#) and wood. Less formal variations of the script, called [hieratic](#) and [demotic](#), are technically not [hieroglyphs](#).

⁴ [Logogram](#) from Wikipedia. This is a good article that describes the terminology of languages constructed and then modified from pictograms and ideograms.

Section 4: Mapping the Dynastic Changes in Chinese History

Video of the dynastic timeline: see [here](#). One video shows the dynasties alone, the other shows them in the context of the surrounding peoples.

At the time I wrote this, I didn't know the story they told about the changing borders: climate change, warring nomadic tribes from the N and W, internecine squabbles and coups, geographic changes.

Here's my original timeline and rather flawed analysis of what I saw in the first map video (not all that valuable!)

Conclusion. It's a lot easier to hold the southern and eastern provinces under one government than the north and west.

The Shang dynasty began in what may have been a temperate area near what is now Beijing, extending from the mountains across the plains to the sea. Over a thousand years it broke into several smaller regions, while the population expanded to the north, south, and west.

In the next 80 years the population expanded further north and south under the Qin dynasty.

Twenty years later the Han took over that territory and expanded it further. In another 120 years, the Western Han expanded in the mountains and plains to the west. 50 years later they'd contracted to the east. Too hard to hold onto the western territories? Climate change? 200 years later the Eastern Han still controlled most of the same territory. A little smaller, that's all.

100 years later, the Western Jin had taken back most of the territory once controlled by the Western Han. So what had driven the Han out of the West? In only 50 years the Jin were driven back to the south and east, ceding the west to an assortment of dynasties. Another 50 years saw the assortment of north and western dynasties collapsed under the Former Qin. The Eastern Jin remains stable.

Another 80 years saw the Song taking over the Eastern Jin and the Former Qin giving way to the Northern Wei. 100 years later, the northern wei had split into W and E. and the Song splitting into the Liang and Chen.

50 years later it was all absorbed into the Sui, but as before, the northwest territories were ceded (to what?) The Sui built the wall. Tough to keep out those raiders from the North.

In 60 years the Tang has taken over and the northwest is once again under dynastic control.

100 years later what's happening to the N and NW? Again the SE is stable.

200 years later all the territories are split into many small dynasties. The broad less populous (?) areas of the north and the southwest mountains have been taken again. How long with that last?

50 years later there are now 3 dynasties. The Southeast under the Song, the N under the Liao, and the SW under the Dali. 150 years later the Song still have the SE and the Dali still have the SW. The N continues to change hands.

130 years later the Yuan have captured all of the W and the N. The Song still control the SE. Another 100 years and the Yuan control all but the very SE, which is now under the Ming.

Less than 30 years later, the Yuan are gone and the Ming have expanded into the former Dali areas as well as into the N and W, but not into Mongolia. 200 years later the Ming have partial control of the W and N. 80 years later the Ming are pushed into the mountains to the SW and the Qing hold the entire East.

100 years later the Qing hold the largest body of land yet held by any dynasty, in all directions. 150 years later the territory is still held by the Qing.

With the exception of Mongolia, the Qing dynasty is the PRC.

Week 2: Origin Stories

Overview

Humans first populated Asia in the Paleolithic Era, the ancient stone age, close to a million years ago. The first modern humans appeared at the end of the Paleolithic, about 100,000 years ago, having migrated to Asia from Africa, or from multi-regional origins.

Agriculture was invented in the Neolithic Era, the new stone age, around 10,000 years ago, in communities called cultures.

Culture	Period	Comments
Hemudu	5000-4500 BCE	South China wetlands, houses on stilts
Yangshao	5000-3000 BCE	heavy painted pottery
Hongshan	4700-3000 BCE	pig dragon jades
Longshan	3000-1900 BCE	eggshell-thin black pottery

Cultures increased their complexity and cross-cultural interaction leading to early Chinese states. This was when the sage kings created civilization, according to the ancient texts. Huangdi, Fuxi, Shennong, Yao, Shun, and Yu.

Section 1: Introduction

There's a distinct contrast between archaeological and textual sources, with some of the researchers motivated to tell a story, to construct a meaningful path and philosophy of what China can become.

Section 2: Artifacts vs. Texts

Artifacts

Archaeology: study of human past via material remains.

Some of the earliest finds are neolithic pots made from rings of clay, stacked and smoothed and fired in a kiln, decorated with geometric shapes and animal motifs, possibly for food storage. They were found in burial sites, with decorations on top that are visible when looking down into a tomb. You can infer from the appearance and changes in different burial sites and other sites how civilization began.

We'll see later how these archaeological finds are used for political purposes, with specific motivated interpretations of history.

Text

In the *Shangshu*, the Classic of the Documents⁵, the Canon of Yao⁶ states:

Examining into antiquity, we find that Emperor Yao was called Fang Xun. He was reverential, intelligent, accomplished, and thoughtful, naturally and without effort. He was sincerely courteous and capable of all complaisance. These qualities reached to the four extremities of the empire and extended from earth to heaven. He was able to make the able and virtuous distinguished, and thence proceeded to the love of the nine classes of his kindred who all became harmonious.

He also regulated and polished the people of his domain, who all became brightly intelligent. Finally he united and harmonized the myriad states.

The Shangshu in this case depicts the benevolence of one of the sage kings, Yao: who he is, what he did, and the virtues he embodied. Most importantly, it defines the political norms for the present.

There is no agreement when the piece was written and why it was written. Qing scholars believed it was not an authentic record but a [historiography](#). There are still some truths about it. In the 20th century, historians like [Gu Jiegang](#) challenged it further, saying that it's strictly lyrical with no historical truth about how Chinese civilization was actually built.

⁵ The Classic Texts are described more fully on page 68.

⁶ There's an English translation of the Chinese text [here](#).

Section 3: Culture Heroes and Sage Kings

Emperor Yao

The text was created around 500 BCE telling a story beginning in 2500 BCE. As distinct from western mythology and religious texts, the culture heroes are people, not gods, and the stories do not begin with a creation tale. The culture heroes transform people into civilized beings, creating nets for fishing, hoes for farming, lifting people out of the life of hunter-gatherers.

The message of these stories is that Chinese civilization exists to improve the lives of people and to order society.

The Book of Documents begins with Yao, Shun, and Yu.

Yao invented government around 2400 BCE. He created a solar calendar for agriculture and a lunar calendar for counting the months. He delegated authority. He harmonized his subjects.

This same concept of harmony from the ancient texts is used politically in today's China. (See the concluding discussion on page 52).

Unlike the Western world, there is no concept of intelligent design. Yao looks to the natural world for a model to follow rather than to a Creator for judgment. At the end of his rule, Yao gives the world to Shun, the second ruler, to improve the lives of humans and to give order and proper arrangement to human society.

Again from the *Canon of Yao*, a more complete quote than the one above:

Examining into antiquity, we find that the Emperor Yao was called Fangxun. He was reverent, intelligent, accomplished, sincere, and mild. He was sincerely respectful and capable of modesty. His light covered the four extremities of the empire and extended to Heaven above and the Earth below. He was able to make bright his great virtue and bring affection to the nine branches of the family. When the nine branches of the family had become harmonious, he distinguished and honored the hundred clans. When the hundred clans had become illustrious, he harmonized the myriad states. The numerous people were amply nourished and prosperous and became harmonious. Then he charged Xi and He with reverence to follow August Heaven and calculate and delineate the sun, the moon, and the other heavenly bodies, and respectfully to give the people the seasons... The emperor said, "Ah, you Xi and He, the year has three hundred and sixty-six days, and by means of an intercalary month you must fix the four seasons and complete the year. If you earnestly regulate all the functionaries, the achievements will all be glorious.

Discussion

What made Yao an ideal ruler, in my words:

Yao was a classic example of a benevolent despot or philosopher king. A forward thinker, in many ways a scientific thinker, Yao was an exemplar of the best of human virtues, encouraging these virtues in others and bringing to his subjects an understanding and use of the natural world for the prosperity, advancement and peaceful organization of his subjects.

Shun

Yao did not appoint his own arrogant son. Instead he found a commoner, Shun, born into a nasty, dysfunctional family which he then proceeded to harmonize. The message of Shun's story is that worthiness, not family (and certainly not divinity) confers the right to rule.

Shun created rituals and ceremonies and ranks and insignia. He provided laws and punishments for every crime, including beatings, execution, exile, but not imprisonment. Prisons were not part of Chinese society until modern times. Shun offered sacrifices to gods and spirits. The message of Shun's reign was that the political system was also a social system - that is, the political system must organize society.

My thought when I first saw this: the message is in contrast to the Western ideal where the individual and his family (and perhaps his community) are distinct from the political system, with the right to bear arms against it, though I'm not sure how to make an apples-to-apples comparison with Western political development.

In fact, we later contrasted Western and Chinese ideals in the discussion of David N. Keightley's article on page 31.

Yu

When faced with an horrific flood that washed out the roads and the land, Shun called upon Yu to help him tame the waters. Yu channeled and drained rivers and dried out the land. Contrast this with Noah, who is told by God to save the animals and to passively wait until the waters subside.

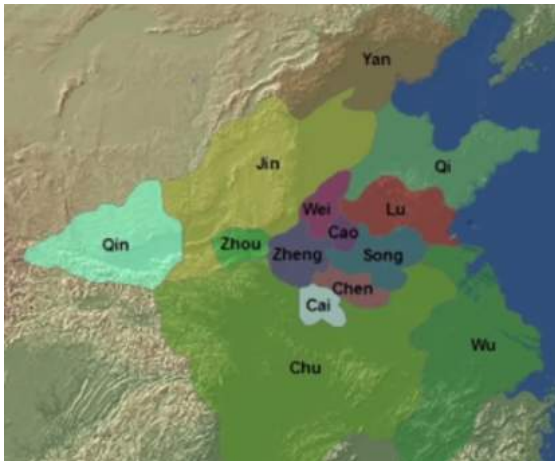
The message of Yu's story: Man Conquers Nature. This tells a story of the Chinese as a powerful people that could alter geography at will, justifying the eventual creation of the Three Gorges Dam⁷.

Shun gave the world to Yu, a worthy man, but Yu gave the world to his own son, who gave it to his son, and so forth, until Yu's dynasty, the Xia Dynasty, was overthrown by the founders of the Shang Dynasty. Although Yu created a dynasty where political power remained with one family, the ideal of Yao, Shun and Yu was to hand power between generations to the worthy, not the high-born.

With Shun began the three dynasties of ancient China, as they were recorded in the classic texts: the Xia, the Shang, and the Zhou.

Taken as a whole, this tells a coherent and politically attractive story of China as a country with a single line of rulers, from ancient emperors to the present, ideally passed from worthy man to worthy man, where the purpose of government is to mold nature and society to improve the human condition.

Why was it important to tell this story in 500 BCE? Because this was a time of many warring feudal states under a weak suzerain, the Zhou King. The classic text tells how people *wanted* to be ruled.



⁷ See page 297.

Section 4: The Origin of Archaeology in China

Modern archaeology has political meaning as well as scientific meaning (*there's a leitmotif here, with ancient texts and archaeology used for political purposes*). For Confucians, events are explained by the motivations of the leaders. Archaeologists look to the artifacts.

Archaeological research began in the 1920s with a geologist from Sweden, Johan Gunnar Andersson. He discovered Peking Man and the Yangshao culture, a neolithic culture, which he dated around 2500 BCE. He concluded that civilization came from outside China, a statement that sounded wrong to Chinese historians, and *was* subsequently proven wrong.

Highlights of Chinese Archaeology

Homo erectus, Peking Man, was a hunter-gatherer from 500,000 BCE, eating deer and elephant. The bones were lost in 1941, but the fossil remains from that period have been discovered.

Around 40,000 years ago, Homo sapiens were present in China. The Out of Africa thesis tells of waves of migrant Homo sapiens coming into China and Europe, inter-breeding with Neanderthals in Europe.

Around 16,000 years ago, Asians migrated to the Americas, not by land bridge, but by a chain of islands arcing from Northeast Asia down to Alaska, moving in fishing boats. The first peoples of North America came out of Asia.⁸

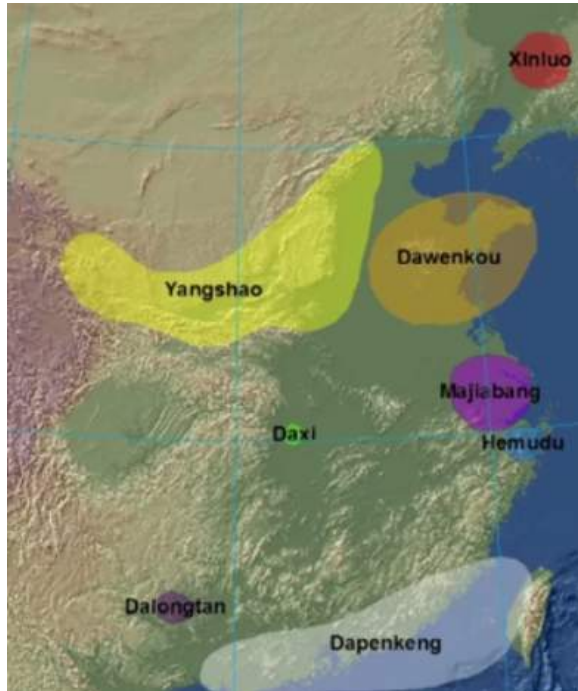
Around 11,000 BCE, in the warm and wet post-glacial peak, the same as our weather today, comes the beginning of the Neolithic era, the time of the Yangshao culture. The cultures are identified by pottery artifacts. The archaeological evidence of simultaneous distinct cultures undermines the notion of a single line of rulers, of a linear history to ancient Chinese civilization.

The Yangshao is in the region around the Yellow River where it bends north to the western part of the North China Plain. At that time, the eastern part was still marshy or underwater. Significant archaeological finds locate other cultures to the southeast.

⁸ There are two theories, the land bridge theory and the watercraft migration theory, both discussed in Wikipedia, [here](#). The watercraft theory from East Asia begins [here](#):

The boat-builders from Southeast Asia may have been one of the earliest groups to reach the shores of North America. One theory suggests people in boats followed the coastline from the [Kurile Islands](#) to [Alaska](#) down the coasts of North and South America as far as [Chile](#). The [Haida](#) nation on the [Queen Charlotte Islands](#) off the coast of [British Columbia](#) may have originated from these early Asian mariners between 25,000 and 12,000.^{[[citation needed](#)]} Early watercraft migration would also explain the habitation of coastal sites in South America such as [Pikimachay Cave](#) in [Peru](#) by 20,000 years ago and [Monte Verde](#) in [Chile](#) by 13,000 years ago. *"There was boat use in Japan 20,000 years ago," says [Jon Erlandson](#), a [University of Oregon](#) anthropologist. "The Kurile Islands (north of Japan) are like stepping stones to Beringia," the then continuous land bridging the Bering Strait. Migrants, he said, could have then skirted the tidewater glaciers in Canada right on down the coast."*

This map shows the cultural origins around 5000 BCE.



This shows a distinction between pit dwellings in the north and stilt dwellings in the south. Millet and peaches and soybeans in the north; rice, tangerines, and red beans in the south. These distinctions persist today. The map tells a story of many origins, of many separate and simultaneous cultures.

But by late neolithic, called the Longshan cultural period, the map changes to show an interaction between the cultures, a coming together while maintaining distinctions. **Longshan was marked by thin black pottery thrown on a wheel.** This period also had evidence of religious design in jade and a defensive structure created with [rammed earth](#)⁹, the use of which continues even today in the age of concrete.

By this point, government, technology, and religion have appeared, all of which will be components of the next stage - the Bronze Age in the Shang Dynasty.

Discussion: Two Burials

This is a discussion of two burial images. I don't have the images here, but a brief discussion from which, in retrospect, I can surmise the images. The following are my thoughts:

One tomb includes pottery, the other includes what appears to be a stone tool, perhaps a river rock shaped into broad knife, with a hole which might have been for carrying. If there was a lanyard at the time of burial, it might have been looped around the wrist.

The pots and tools may reflect a belief in an afterlife, that the tools and goods should be available to the deceased in their next life. It may simply be a reflection of property rights: that these items were owned by the deceased and should be left with them out of respect. Or it might have been an offering to the gods, that leaving things in the care of the dead provides a means of transporting them to the gods, especially if the dead were seen as being in some way closer to those gods during their lives (political or religious leaders). It might be seen as disrespectful to the gods or to the deceased if the living failed to leave goods or tools in the graves. Disrespect could anger the gods and bring a run of bad luck or bad weather. In agrarian societies, bad weather *was* bad luck.

⁹ From [Wikipedia: Rammed earth](#), is a technique for [building](#) walls using natural raw materials such as [earth](#), [chalk](#), [lime](#) or [gravel](#).^[2] It is an ancient building method that has seen a revival in recent years as people seek more [sustainable building materials](#) and [natural building](#) methods. Rammed-earth walls are simple to construct, noncombustible, [thermally massive](#), strong, and durable. They can be labour-intensive to construct without machinery (powered tampers), however, and they are susceptible to water damage if inadequately protected or maintained. Rammed-earth buildings are found on every continent except Antarctica, in a range of environments that includes the temperate and wet regions of northern Europe,^[3] semiarid deserts, mountain areas and the tropics. The availability of useful soil and a [building design](#) appropriate for local [climatic conditions](#) are the factors that favour its use.

Section 5: The History of the Two Stories

The Confucian story is single origin, *yi yuan*, linear central benevolent rule. The archaeological evidence points to multiple origins (*duo yuan*) with several simultaneous societies developing independently and then interacting.

The Confucian story is one of hope during a time of feudal conflict. The archaeological evidence contradicting that story appeared after fifty years of dominance of the strongest central authority in Chinese history (*the People's Republic of China?*). So this archaeological evidence was seen as a contradictory and inflammatory argument of how China *should* be: a land of multiple authorities, without a single powerful central government.

So how did and how does China today teach its own story of origin? A high school textbook from 2007 in the PRC teaches archaeology while also teaching of the Confucian story of Yao, Shun, and Yu as true historical figures. My thought: *Not unlike teaching Creationism and Darwinism in the same text.*

This is not just a debate about history, it's a debate about values, about what China should become in the 21st century.

Further, while there is archaeological evidence of the Shang dynasty - the one with hereditary leaders rather than leaders chosen for their worthiness - there is no apparent evidence of the Xia dynasty, the one depicted in the Classic Books that would lend weight to the story of a single origin.

Section 6: Interview with Professor Rowan Flad

This is a discussion which, in my opinion, is less about Chinese history per se than about the origins of humanity in Eurasia, which is a fascinating discussion in itself.

Johann Gunnar Andersson found Peking Man, Homo Erectus, in a site called Zhoukoudian. He also identified Neolithic cultures in Yangshao.

What happened to Homo erectus in China? What's the story of the "waves of migration out of Africa"?

There were two migrations out of Africa, this is clearly evident. The first brings Homo erectus to East Asia. We now believe all Homo variants evolved in Africa and migrated to Eurasia, including East Asia where we've found the largest populations of Homo erectus. Still small numbers however and the archaeological evidence has substantial gaps. We have genetic evidence of inter-breeding among the sub-species, which otherwise seemed morphologically distinct, contradicting the notion that Homo sapiens came out of Africa and wiped out every other sub-species. While the Neanderthals *were* wiped out, they also contributed to the gene pool.¹⁰

The paucity of fossils from every time period makes it difficult to draw strong conclusions about what happened to every sub-species of Homo.

See [here](#) for a fascinating visual depiction of the origin of humankind.

¹⁰ Since I wrote originally wrote this, scientists discovered that the [Denisovan](#) subspecies also contributed to the East Asian gene pool. See [here](#).

Week 3: Legitimation of Power in Antiquity

Overview

This section discusses the first three dynasties, the Xia, Shang, and Zhou.

Xia. While there is no clear, specific archaeological evidence of the Xia Dynasty, there is evidence that a large state existed in the central plains, roughly matching the temporal and geographic extent reported in the ancient texts for the Xia. According to legend, the last ruler, Jie, was a tyrant. Tang overthrew him to become the first Shang king.

Shang. 1600-1050 BCE. The Shang is the first dynasty for which there is clear archaeological evidence: animal bones found in tombs in the ruins of Yin, their last capital, and inscribed in a manner that matches the ancient texts. Yin has become another name for the Shang. The texts say that the last Shang king, Zhou, was a tyrant like Jie, and was likewise overthrown.

Zhou. 1050-256 BCE. The dynasty was *not* named after the last Shang king. King Wen, the first king of the Zhou was a Shang vassal who rose up against King Zhou. Wen's son, King Wu, the Marshall, defeated the Shang. Lasting almost 800 years, the Zhou was one of the longest dynasties in Chinese history.

(As noted in the concluding discussion on page 52, wen and wu have become the modern Chinese words for civil and military authority).

The Shang System and Its Sources

Shang burial sites show sacrificial victims in coffins with grave goods including jade, bronze daggers, and the bronze pots that were tokens of the dynasty. The Shang had several capitals, with the final capital at Anyang in Henan.

It appears that the Shang grew by sending out units of the royal lineage to establish their own capitals, in accordance with this early feudal system. These units conquered territory and became part of the Shang apparatus, going to war alongside Shang armies and linking back to the main capital, the center of wealth and religion.

Feudalism as used here means the delegation of territorial sovereignty, with feudal lords passing reign to their sons.¹¹ There's another definition in the discussion of Feudalism vs. Bureaucracy on page 64.

Bronze tokens of royal descent. Dynastic authority was distributed through a system of tokens, in this case, heavy bronze vessels. These were given to the units of the royal lineage to establish their kinship and would frequently be buried with them as well.

¹¹ My thoughts: the word [feudalism](#) is generally used to refer to the medieval European political system. Chinese feudalism may or may not be different from the Chinese word for feudal, [fengjian](#), as described in detail in the [China Sourcebook Blogspot](#). I believe the Sourcebook blog's author may be referring to the feudal rules of the Zhou dynasty, as [this Wikipedia article](#) states.

Sources of Shang - How to Read a Bronze Vessel

The Sackler Museum has the finest collection of Shang vessels in the U.S. and Zhang Changping will explain how he examines them. *Note that the observations accompanying the images are mine and not those of an historian.*

Ding



Three legs, looks sturdy, with two carrying handles. A raised vertical bar even with each leg and a bar between the legs divides the pot into six curved surfaces. Each surface has in the upper area what appears to be a tandem pair of animals (horses?) with a bird on the back of each. The bottom looks like a pack animal. (*was I ever wrong! the images are, I believe, [Taotie masks](#).)*

Inside, the pot is smooth with the mineralized remains of something on one side. The legs look like they might be hollow, but it's hard to tell. In a close-up of the inside, there's a raised bird decoration.

Fangyi - Ritual Wine Vessel



Same raised vertical bars as on the Ding. Same animal with a bird riding on its back (*note: I was wrong, make that a Taotie mask*). Built like a little house. Is that a chimney? Did their houses have chimneys and fireplaces inside, or is that an anachronistic observation and the chimney thing is representative of something else.

On the roof, the vertical bars come together like an arched structure, suggesting the chimney could be a keystone, continuing what may be my anachronism. It looks like the roof comes off to open the vessel.

Gong or Guang - Ritual Wine Pouring Vessel



Has a handle with a thumb rest and the spout is shaped like a horse's head. A bird perched on the nape of the horse's neck. From the top there's a nice artistic symmetry between the bird's tail, the horse's ears, and the ears (?) of the thumb rest.

Maybe not a horse. Maybe a dragon. Maybe a dog. Teeth are horse-like. Gong means animal.

You - Ritual Wine Vessel



Looks like a swinging handle and a cover. Everything is engraved with decorations. Same chimney-like thing that the Fangyi had. Bulbous middle over a narrow base. Beautiful workmanship.

I feel like Elwin Ransom setting out on *The Silent Planet*.¹² What are these strange and beautiful things? What do they say about the people who made them?

¹² *Out of the Silent Planet* is a religious-themed science fiction novel by C.S. Lewis, describing the voyages of an eighteenth century (?) historian to Mars, where he pieces together the nature of the peoples and their languages, as he encounters their different civilizations.

My Observations

- Wine was important to their rituals. 3 of 4 vessels involve wine. Therefore they had vineyards and understood the production of fermented goods, which keep through a winter. Fermentation includes bread, beer, spirits, cheese. Might say something about what they ate in general.
- The high quality of the workmanship and the obvious time it would take to craft the vessels indicates both the importance of the vessels and the importance of the owners. Also the deceased who were buried with them. There's a sense in which the vessels are a kind of royal crown.
- They revere animals and birds sufficiently to engrave them on their most valuable possessions. They have animals for riding and perhaps pack animals, indicating the extent to which they domesticated animals. This gives weight to what the ancient texts referred to as the virtue of the Sage Kings in controlling and domesticating the natural world for the use of humanity.

Professor Zhang Changping's Close Reading

This *ding* has two handles and two feet in parallel. That is the front. There's an inscription on the back (the bird?) and that appears to be the clan inscription.

The outside decoration is intricate and appears to be in the form of an animal or beast. Horns and ears (where I saw packs).

Professor Zhang had a lot more observations. I got lazy and didn't write them all down. Perhaps the most important was the multiple layers of decoration indicating the importance, and the time and effort spent on it.

Naturally there was an assessment question about the ding later on, which I got wrong. The price of laziness and of a middle-aged memory!

Professor Zhang Introduction to Chinese Bronzes

A large number of bronzes have survived from the bronze age. Vessels, weapons, horse drawn vehicles. Nonetheless, few are used in daily life. Most are for ritual life. Tripods (*ding*), square-shaped (*fangyi*), animal like (*gong* or *guang*),

Evolution of Decorative Patterns

What were the differences between earlier and later vessels? Compared to shape, the decorative patterns changed more over time. Earlier patterns are animal-based. At the very beginning, simple minimalist (geometric?) patterns with only one layer and with simple abstractions.

At the peak of the bronze age, the 10th or 11th century BCE (1100-900 BCE), the vessels had bas relief decorations of imaginary animals and animal masks. After that, the images gained abstraction. Earlier decorations were on the surface while later decorations were cast separately and assembled to the vessel to provide dimensionality.



Do the decorations reflect upon the society and culture? Patterns are seen on non-bronze objects as well. Animal masks appear on bone. The actual meaning is a subject of debate.

Décor vs Technology

Are the changes in the generations of the vessels strictly aesthetic or were there functional changes as well? Actually, many changes were technical. Early vessels had pointed hollow legs. By 800 BCE, bronzes had lost their social significance and therefore the need to absorb so many societal resources, so the production process was simplified.

Geographical Differences

Most vessels were excavated from the central plains. Vessels from outside the central plains were different in the Shang period, though they were influenced by the central plains. In the 10th century, differences widened as the power of the vassal states increased until by the 7th century BCE, there were different bronze cultures.

Dr. Robert Mowry On The Piece-Mold Technique

These pieces were made using a complex method not used again, anywhere else, until perhaps the 20th century.

1. Begin with a clay model.
2. Fire in a kiln to give the model strength and a hard surface.
3. Carve decorations into the model
4. Wrap clay around the model to create impressions, a female mold, necessarily built up of several pieces.
5. Shape the decorations into the impressions to cast them into the bronze, a distinctive feature of these castings, rather than cold-working the bronze after the casting.
6. Fire the impressions in a kiln. This is complicated because this shrinks them, which means the resultant bronze pieces have to fit even though the mold has shrunk.
7. Create an inner mold to give shape to the inside, otherwise the piece will be solid. Small pieces of bronze called *chapters* hold the inner mold away from the pieces of the outer mold.
8. Turn the kiln-fired impressions upside down and pour the molten bronze. Keeping it upside down ensures the bubbles, when they rise, will be on the bottom of the vessel where they can't be seen.

What does casting technique tell us?

The ding pots weigh as much as 150 kg (330 lbs), which means mining and refining 30 tons (66,000 lbs) of ore. This extraordinarily labor intensive process represents the heights of science and technology of the period.



These Chinese ritual vessels are very different from the Mediterranean bronze at left, which was hammered out and assembled at much lower cost.

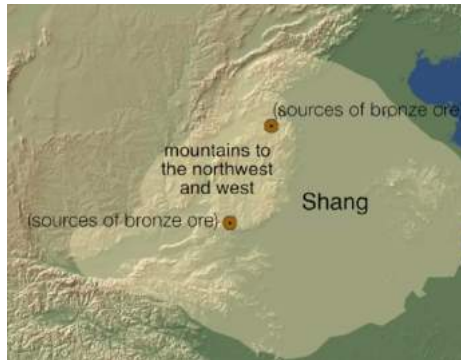
Possible Questions

If we want to understand what Shang bronzes could tell us about the society that produced them, what questions should we ask?

- Did any artifacts survive from the period of the bronze pots (11th to 9th centuries BCE) that pertain to everyday life instead of ritual life, and if so, what were they like?
- Were all of the bronze pots found in burial sites and is that because only buried artifacts survive to tell their story? That is, are the archaeological conceptions of the Shang period formed only from burial sites?
- Do any of the decorations or shapes of the Shang bronzes correspond with stories told of the Sage Kings in the Classic Book of Documents?

Shang Bronze Vessels In Their Historical Context

Where was the ore mined?



Shang had its capitals in the North China Plain. The mountains to the northwest were the likely source of the ore.

Vessels are found in gravesites and are of great significance, reflecting social status in their weight and size. They're used as offerings to the dead from the living. The nature of this offering takes us back to how the Shang legitimated its rule over many peoples.

Shang Religion



Why does it matter how the ritual vessels were used to make offerings to ancestors? They believed that giving the vessels to their ancestors gave them access to information from the dead Shang kings: whether hunts would be successful, whether military campaigns would be victorious.

They believed the ancestors had a relationship with Di or with Shangdi, the High God, the leader of all gods. The gods existed above them and within them - if you had a cold it was because a god was inside you (or not inside you). The dead ancestors communicated with Shangdi and received offerings from the living.

The Shang had erased the boundary between living and dead and found a way to have the dead assist them with the gods that control the natural world of weather, illness, and the human world of hunts and battles. Feeding the ancestors was fundamental to the Shang civil authorities, enabling them to bring in booty from war and victims to sacrifice for the continuation of good fortune for the subjects of the dynasty. Legitimation was through divine right and the accompanying obligation – the rulers

asking the ancestors to intercede on behalf of the living.

The people needed the kings to remain in power to keep feeding their ancestors to keep the good times rolling.

This was clear to people because the royalty owned and operated the only legitimate telegraph system from the living to the dead. This system was the dragon bones – the oracle bones.

Thus the notion of ancestor worship, a strong and common theme throughout Chinese history, helped legitimate the power of the Shang royalty. This will soon transform into the Zhou Dynasty's Mandate of Heaven (*tian ming*), described on page 26.

Sources of Shang - Origin of Writing

Divination and the Beginning of History

Oracle bones

These artifacts, these excavated manuscripts on bone have the very first writing. The substrate is either ox scapula or turtle [plastrons](#), the underbelly of the turtle. The bones are meticulously prepared. They are leveled, during which some layers, like the [scute](#), scraped off. Small hollows are dug into the bones as preparation for divination.



The turtle plastrons have burn marks which tell us about the divination. After the hollow was dug into one side, a heated rod was pressed into it, causing the plastron to crack on the opposite face, with a sound like bu or pu.



Two sides of a plastron shown above. On the left, the hollows. On the right the resulting 'bu' character. It's possible the shape of the crack was read as part of the divination.

The actual writing consists of concise divination statements divided into roughly these parts:

1. A preface, with a cyclical date, sometimes the diviner and occasionally the location of the divination.
2. A charge, the topic of the divination.
3. A crack number or notation, such as auspicious or inauspicious.
4. A prognostication by the King.
5. Very rarely, the verification.

For example:

<u>The Preface:</u>	The crack making was on the <i>jimao</i> day or 16th day.
<u>The Charge:</u>	It will rain.
<u>The Prognostications:</u>	The King read the cracks and said, if it rains, it will be on a <i>ren</i> day.
<u>The Verification:</u>	On the <i>renwu</i> day, the 19th day, it actually did rain.

The divination statements often come in pairs where the charge will be both positive in one statement and negative in the other, leaving you with a choice to agree with either. Many of the divination statements are questions to the ancestors, asking what they want for an offering. Grain? Wine? Human sacrifice?

For the last 200 years of the Shang Dynasty, that is, starting around 1250 BCE, history has been reconstructed from the charges found on oracle bones, confirming the textual sources of who the kings were, and when.

The oracle bones were the first written history of China.

Professor Flad: The Bones Of Oracle Bones

In this lecture, Professor Flad talks about how the scapula of different animals - deer, cattle, pig, sheep, goat, and bear - are prepared. Ridges are removed, spines are removed and then the bones are polished and thinned.

Before the burning, hollows are prepared with a circular depression and an elongated chisel mark on one side. The resultant crack has the characteristic *bu* shape. One method of retaining and concentrating power among the royalty was simply the difficulty of producing the right sound and the right shape during divination, something that we can show today is quite difficult and must have become a high art among the diviners.

The professor made a point of how difficult it was for the researchers, with all their technology and focus, to achieve the proper results of a divination, so we can see how the art of divination was a key element of the legitimization of power.

While we typically see that the examples of oracle bones in Western texts have inscribed characters, the vast majority were uninscribed.

The tradition goes back a thousand years *before* the time when inscribed bones were among the first discovered texts.

The Zhou System and Its Sources

Shang - Zhou Transition

The Shang persisted a feudal system based on resources, economics, territory and kinship. Their system had religion, a way of talking to ancestors, and a complex bronze casting technology. They had to keep the system running or the gods would turn against them. But as this system continued to work, perhaps reinforcing a sense of inevitability in the dynasty, the kings grew confident in their powers. So confident that they incorporated the word *di* into their names, that they made overly optimistic prognostications, and ultimately that they believed they were the gods themselves determining the divinations instead of the mortals discovering them.

Pride goeth, etc., and they were overthrown. The concept of the *Heaven's Mandate (tianming)* that comes with the justification of the overthrow and the legitimation of the Zhou dynasty is one of the most important concepts in Chinese history.

To reiterate what we heard in an earlier section: the Zhou begins with the king, later known as King Wen, setting up Zhou as a rival to Shang. King Wu leads his armies against the Shang, coming out of the passes in the west toward what is now called *Louyang Anyang*. After King Wu dies, his brother, the Duke of Zhou, becomes Regent to help the young King Cheng. The Duke of Zhou puts down a rebellion of Shang nobles, further establishing the Zhou.

Of great importance is this transition in the dynastic system: the Zhou legitimated itself by using writing not to inscribe divinations, but for persuasion.

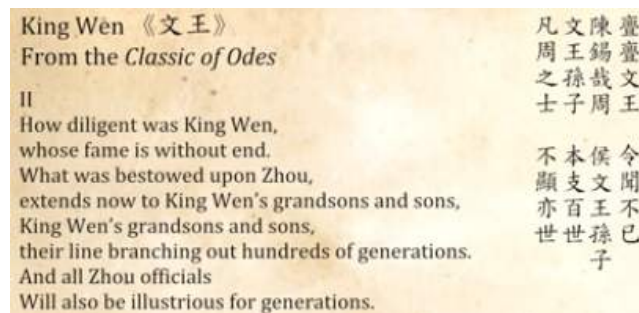
Classic of Odes: King Wen



Here is a poem from the Classic of Odes¹³ which talks about the founding of the Zhou dynasty and the relationships between heaven, god, and the Shang people.



This says that though King Wen died, he lives in heaven, where heaven is the name for the Zhou god and Di is the name of the Shang god. Deliberately it conflates the Di Mandate with Heaven's Mandate, joining the gods of the two dynasties together.



Now we hear about his descendants and his government and how large it is.

¹³ See page 68 for a discussion of the Confucian Classics.

King Wen 《文王》 From the <i>Classic of Odes</i>	濟王思世 濟國皇之 多克多不 士生士顯
III Illustrious for generations, their counsel was given reverently. Oh, how admirable were these many officials, born to this royal kingdom. The royal kingdom could bear them, they who supported Zhou. So numerous were these many officials, King Wen takes comfort in them.	文維生厥 王周此猶 以之王翼 寧楨國翼

... and how those who supported Zhou were rewarded and how they reward King Wen.

King Wen 《文王》 From the <i>Classic of Odes</i>	上商假穆 帝之哉穆 既孫天文 命子命王
IV August was King Wen, Continuously bright and reverent. Great, indeed, was the Mandate of Heaven. There were Shang's grandsons and sons, Shang's grandsons and sons. Was their number not a hundred thousand? But the High Di gave his Mandate, And they bowed down to Zhou.	侯其有於 于麗商緝 周不孫熙 服德子敬 止

Here the ballad revises history from a battle to subdue the Shang, to a welcoming submission of the Shang before the Zhou god, an acceptance of the mandate. We know they had to be conquered and that the Duke of Zhou had to suppress a subsequent rebellion by the nobles. But how much better to think they simply accepted the new Zhou mandate from Heaven.

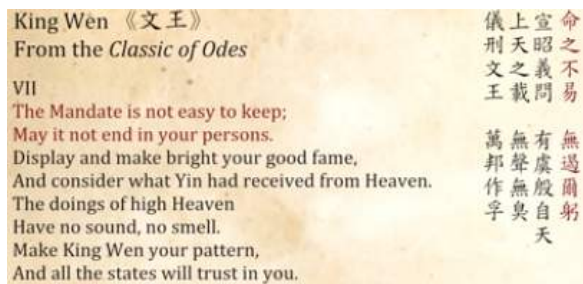
King Wen 《文王》 From the <i>Classic of Odes</i>	王厥殷侯 之作士服 蓋裸膚于 臣將敏周
V They bowed down to Zhou; the Mandate of Heaven is not unchanging. Those officers of Yin, refined and timely, now offer libations in our capital. They make offerings of libations, wearing their embroidered robes and native caps. Oh, loyal servants to the king, Think always of your ancestors!	無常裸天 念服將命 爾駟于靡 祖尋京常

Not only did they accept the Zhou but they dressed in their finery and offered wine. How nice. One of the first major pieces of historical revisionism.

What about the line *think always of your ancestors*? This is a reminder that the Shang had once had the mandate and lost it by losing their reverence for their predecessors on high, so don't *you* make that same mistake!

King Wen 《文王》 From the <i>Classic of Odes</i>	宜殷永無 鑒之言念 于未配爾 殷喪命祖
VI Think always of your ancestors, and cultivate virtue. Always strive to accord with the Mandate, and seek for yourself many blessing. Before Yin [Shang] lost their multitudes, They were in accord with the High Di. Look to Yin as you would a mirror, The great Mandate is not easy to keep.	駿師自聿 命克求備 不易配多厥 易上福德 帝

Think always of your ancestors! Keep to the mandate, bow to the god, remember the fate of the Shang lest you join them.



Again, the mandate is a burden. But you'd better indoctrinate your children in the faith, even though it has no sound or smell (there's no physical evidence of it). So the best thing you can do, the best reflection of your faith and your adherence to the mandate, is to obey this historical figure who stands in for the current leaders of the dynasty.

The Zhou System and Its Sources

Professor Bol read a section of text from the Classic of the Odes, Shijing, under the section of Daya, called Huangyi. The essence of the piece is a statement that god in heaven judged the Shang by the quality of their rule and seeing that it was lax, that same god, the god of both the Shang and the Zhou, moved his seat to the west, to the Zhou. So the god is not a divine and unshakable right of the Shang purely by inheritance, it is a given right that can be taken away and *was* taken away. And could be taken from the Zhou as well if their rule is not strict enough.

In other words (my interpretation), it is not only a justification for the Zhou conquering the Shang, but of ruling strictly over its subjects. *Hold on now! That was what I wrote immediately after the lecture, but as I edit these notes after completing Part I, I have a different view. I believe 'strict' means a strict and faithful following of the rituals, in the Confucian sense.*

Heaven's Mandate

<i>tian</i>	heaven
<i>tianzi</i>	son of heaven ¹⁴
<i>tianxia</i>	under heaven
<i>tianming</i>	mandate of heaven ¹⁵

Zhou's own ancestral god, tian, has a ruler who is the son of heaven, the tianzi, who rules over everything under heaven, tianxia.

How does god know that the Shang were unworthy and the Zhou is worthy? It helps to imagine the heavens as they must have appeared in ancient times.

In 1059 BCE, the five visible planets were aligned within seven degrees of arc. The following year, 1058, the Zhou adopt the Shang calendar for their own king, in effect making a claim on universal kingship. Jupiter was in the eighth station of its twelve year cycle. The year 1058 is the first of the Zhou mandate. Twelve years later, King Wu conquers the Shang. The King's subjects can see the justification of his mandate every night just by looking in the sky.

(For us, today, it helps to have Zhuangzi's perspective of ten thousand things, described by Professor Puett on page 49, to see the world as it was then.)

The Shang says we must make offerings to ancestors to keep them happy. The Zhou says we must behave correctly according to the same rituals and we can see that we *did* please our ancestors, they look down on us with favor.

¹⁴ The *zi* suffix has a number of meanings. It comes from the [Han character](#), which means offspring, seed, and can also mean 'master' as Laozi means Master Lao. See page 43.

¹⁵ The Mandate of Heaven derives from the Shang notion of royalty having access to the Shang Di, see page 21.

Zhou's New Conception of Ritual



This may be the beginning of religious morality, that how we behave is the standard by how we're judged. Do we act according to the rules and rituals of Heaven's Mandate?

Zhou has shifted focus from the dead to the living, from offerings to the way we make offerings. Zhou appoints not only kin but also allies, to the feudal lordships, with a shared ritual forming a larger community of the civilized. This community in these feudal states, known as the **Zhongguo**, have deliberately excluded the surrounding states from their civilization. **These are the Yidi, the barbarians.**

That word, the **Zhongguo**, the Central States, was adopted in the 20th century as the name for the country we call China.

The Classic of Documents: Shao Announcement

See [here](#) for the copyrighted text from the book.

The announcement takes place at the time a new Zhou capital is founded. The Duke of Zhou, who was also the regent of the young King Cheng, spoke:

He declares that god has changed his son, revoking the Shang mandate and awarding it to Zhou. The power of the mandate is unlimited, as is the responsibility. When the Shang failed its people, they took to the hills and heaven, too, grieved for their suffering.

The Xia lost their mandate. The Shang, too, let theirs slip away. The young king of the Zhou must heed the aged and experienced (e.g. the Duke of Zhou). He must note the failures of the Xia and the Shang (Yin). The period of their rule was not limited in years, it was limited by their behavior.

Let the young king lead not with harsh punishments but by example.

Dr. Mowry on Zhou Bronzes

The Zhou inherited the Shang tradition, casting with the piece mold technique. Superficially they look like Shang bronzes, but the handles are grander and the vessel is on a big socle (a short plinth).

Zhou Gui Ritual Food Vessel, inscribed inside the bowl



Li Ritual Food Vessel



The Shang bronzes use the taotie mask on 90% of the vessels. The Zhou also use the taotie mask, but then replace it with other things: confronting peacocks, confronting elephants.



Some of the vessels have quite a bit of writing. Some are strictly funerary, with inscriptions like "Father Ding".



Others are commemorative, for example a vessel cast with an inscription indicating that the king has granted land to someone. Thus, the vessel itself became a part of the Zhou feudal order. These inscriptions tell who, what, when, and why. They are the first written records used not for religious divination, but for propaganda, for record keeping and so forth. They are some of the earliest extant written documents in China, and the characters, while a little different from modern written Chinese are clearly the direct ancestor.

Conclusion: Zhou Moves East

Between 1200 and 800 BCE, we see the emergence of:

- Writing
- Organized religion
- A new form of political legitimacy
- A concept of morality
- A conviction that rulers must also adhere to a moral standard
- History as a way of thinking and reflecting upon oneself.

Confucius will say that the Zhou took the past -- the Xia and the Shang -- as a mirror to judge oneself.

The Zhou had two centuries of peace. The Central States, vassals of the Zhou, grew stronger as the yidi forced the Zhou to move its capital east and cede its western lands. Now smaller, surrounded by the yidi to the west and the larger, competing vassals to the east, the world of Zhou is in conflict.

This is the world into which Confucius is born.

Discussion Forum

Although both Shang and Zhou are at the beginning of China's history, later dynasties would look to Zhou as the model for civilization, rather than Shang. What did Zhou offer that Shang did not? What did Shang have that later people might have objected to? Feel free to speculate about these matters without knowing what happened next. Think back on all the various aspects of Shang and Zhou legitimation, such as bronzes, oracle bone divination, ritual odes and speeches intended to persuade, and Zhou's Mandate of Heaven. If you were a ruler about to found your own state, which system would you pick as your model, Shang or Zhou? What reasons would you give, accordingly, for your right to rule?

My thoughts:

The available evidence doesn't tell me enough to pick a model and I don't like the either-or of Shang vs. Zhou. Both had many flaws. But if we look at the pros and cons, I'm getting this:

Compassionate Rule: *Shang was compassionate early (apparently) and became authoritarian later, according itself godlike privileges to the point of incorporating di into the names of the rulers. Zhou declared themselves under Heaven, not of Heaven, and subject to the same judgment of Heaven as the people. Point for Zhou.*

Extension of Rule: *Shang extended its feudal lordships by lineage (kinship). Zhou extended through lineage but also through patronage (appointments outside the family line). I'm not sure this is a point for Zhou. Depends on how those patronage appointments are earned.*

Legitimation: *Shang legitimated through the expensive bronze vessels that only the Kingdom had the wherewithal to produce, and rituals that required advance knowledge of divination procedures. And through divine right which they achieved through prognostications that became essential to the well-being of the people. Zhou legitimated through divine right that they achieved by written persuasion. Point for Zhou – persuasion doesn't depend on the luck of the astrologer but the skill of the persuader, and it gives the people some control in that persuasion only works if the persuaded are willing.*

Overall I'm choosing the Zhou model on points. *I don't believe modern logic would work in propaganda. I'd go again with heaven's mandate and say that the heavens have asked me to improve the lives of the people and behave as the best of the Sage Kings, using the Mandate to justify my benevolent despotism.*

Week 4: The Nature of Chinese Civilization

Notes on Keightley's Article

This was one of my favorite readings in the course (*The Scholars*, page 235, was the other). It's a discussion of an article by David N. Keightley, *Early Civilization in China: Reflections on How It Became Chinese*, available for download as prepared by ChinaX [here](#), and with my annotations here (no longer available).

My annotations

Throughout the text, ChinaX poses questions in the margin, some of which I've answered in my annotations. Here are my comments:

What is the big question Keightley is asking?

Why does Keightley make a comparison based on the figure of the "hero"?

What does he use as evidence to make these comparisons?

The Greek Achilles is a hero, but is the "assassin" too? Who is the real actor in the Chinese case?

In Western civilization virtue accrued to the individual. Literature and art served the Nobles for entertainment and for philosophy and as a teaching tool.

In ancient Chinese civilization virtue descended from Heaven's Mandate through the king. Virtue accrued to the individual through his service to the state. Optimism derives from his successful service not through his moral choices. His only moral choice was to serve successfully. Further, Chinese literature was intended to serve as a propaganda tool for the state and not as entertainment.

In the Chinese case the real actor is either the noble who commands the assassin or heavens mandate who is ultimately commanding the noble.

See page 168 for more on the State vs. the Individual.

Why does Keightley associate optimism with the Chinese hero? And why would people perhaps not want to imitate Achilles? What does Keightley use as evidence for these comparisons?

Some of the evidence is simply the lack of evidence of critical thought compared to the large body of critical thought in Greek history. Other evidence is the masses of laborers working happily for the Nobles.

In a world ruled by benevolent despots, laws are unnecessary: simply trust in the goodwill and divine right of the leaders. This is optimism, having that trust.

The presence of laws in Greek history is evidence of a distrust of man, of a pessimism toward man's ability to be honest and moral.

Why does Keightley begin with the Neolithic?

Because Neolithic culture continues linearly through to modern China and therefore greatly influences the development of modern Chinese culture.

I love this quote: It is probably truer for China than for most parts of the world that as the Neolithic twig was bent the modern tree has inclined.

What difference does he see between the early and late Neolithic?

He sees growing class distinctions in burial sites and the emergence of divination.

What social role does he think the cult of the dead played in China's Bronze Age?

First it motivated and paid for increasing levels of craftsmanship to decorate the burial sites. This surely benefited society in other ways as well. Second and perhaps more important, it further ingrained in the populace the right of royalty to pass power from generation to generation.

In the late Shang, Keightley believes dynastic and religious power were closely tied together. What does he see as the three consequences of this?

First, no separation of church and state¹⁶. The King was the priest, the dynasty was the church.

Second, family and ancestor worship led directly to a tithing to the state. Keightley says this leaves no room for dissent but I disagree. I think we don't know enough about how they lived their daily lives to know how much room there might have been for dissent. We are piecing things together from their burial sites and from decorations on pottery. I'm not sure how much that tells us about daily life.

¹⁶ For more detail on the history of church and state in China, see page 184.

Maybe the daily struggle and brutality of life in that age left no room for dissent.

Third, the monism that interleaves life, death, worship, and service to the dynasty created a harmony between man and god. In ancient China man is not born in sin, man is born in a harmonious world where god, the king, common man, current life, and ancestral life are all intertwined.

Keightley comments that in China (in contrast to Greece) death was not an escape – what does he mean by this?

In ancient China, as evidenced by the sacrifices at the burial sites, if you were lowborn in life you were lowborn in death. This is what he means by having no escape.

In other words, there is no separate judgment in heaven by an omnipotent god, there is only a carrying forward of the judgment in life by the mortal representatives of god.

For Keightley, does a society in which lineages (family connectedness over many generations) endure, and which ancestor worship practices value the individual?

Keightley has been making this point all along, from Achilles and the Greek tragedies, from the mirrored images of Chinese church and state, from the continuation of one's life's role into death, and now to hammer home the point, he says the life of the family and its ancestral lineage is far greater than the death of any of its children. It's a simple extension from these points to the state subsuming the individual.

What difference does he see in Greek and Chinese attitudes toward death?

In western antiquity the gods withheld life and let death be Man's share. He achieves eternal life through the fame brought by his individual accomplishments. In Chinese antiquity the heavens granted man eternal life through his ancestral lineage and through his role in the dynasty and through his own descendents.

What difference does he see between Greek gods and Chinese ancestors?

Greek gods argue with each other, kill each other, present challenges to mortals and sacrifice mortals. The struggles of the Chinese in antiquity are not with their gods or their leaders, but with their own inability to properly serve them.

Chinese gods provide opportunities for mortal leaders to prove themselves to their subjects not through conflict with the gods but in harmony with them, in essence, to show through proper divination and other practices that they are close with the gods, so they can continue to hold Heaven's Mandate.

One could argue as well that this is simply part of the dynastic propaganda to legitimate their rule, the divine right of their lineage, and the necessary subservience of the masses.

Part of the evidence Keightley gives is the orderly and bureaucratic relationship the Chinese have with the heavens compared to the angry chaos of the Greek gods and their relationship to mortals. The matter-of-fact treatment of death lessens its importance in Chinese antiquity.

In his view why did early China not have origin myths?

Who has more respect for the past? Who has more “critical distance”?

Chinese and Greek senses of the artistic (aesthetics) differ, he argues. Who values the particular? Who values the general? Why?)

It's interesting that the Chinese felt that they had specific knowledge of an absolute moral truth, whereas the Greeks were vague in their understanding of morality, representing it as chaos and conflict.

Yet it was Greek art that was specific and evocative, whereas Chinese art was abstract and symbolic.

In Greek art the individual details are essential to the expression, whereas in ancient Chinese art, the individual details are subordinate to the abstract, as if the pinprick glow of the individual fades into the bright bright sun of the heavens. [Well, okay, since we're talking about art, can't I wax a little poetic?]

Even in bronze casting he sees evidence of a basic difference between the Mediterranean world and China. What is the difference?

Keightley argues that the invariance of piece mold casting is just another example of how the Chinese buried individual craftsmanship. And here I have to take exception. Chinese piece mold casting was a magnificent technology. True, it was specifically used as a totem to extend dynastic reign. But I'm not sure I'd use this as an example of Chinese culture subordinating the individual.

How does he explain the absence of drama in China?

Greek drama celebrated the individual while articulating the conflict that was central to Greek philosophy and government.

The Chinese, with a more abstract focus, had no individual to celebrate and no conflict to articulate, and thus had nothing to dramatize.

Why does he think the Greeks depicted the afterworld in art but the Chinese did not?

Keightley says that because the authority of the afterlife reflects strongly in this world you don't need to depict it, regardless of whether you know it. That is, you don't need to make the point.

Because moral authority was not consistent and universal in Greek society like it was in China, there was a greater need to depict the reigning gods in some manner that would tell a story of conflict resolution, to make a political or moral point.

For the Chinese, if all moral points are resolved, what story is there to tell? This is the same rationale, really, as to why there's no drama.

Let me quote from Keightley what I think is the crux of his point about drama and art:

One of the characteristic and non-Chinese features of the Iliad, for instance, is that the audience hears, and has its sympathies engaged by, both sides of the story ... This ambiguity about what and who is right lies at the essence of the tragic vision; our sympathies are not, should not, and cannot be all on one side.

What is the "strategic custom" that explains so much for Keightley? Why does he call it strategic?

This one's pretty obvious so I'm just going to quote him:

To the extent that it is possible to speak of one strategic custom or institution in the mix of early China's cultural variables—strategic because of its pervasive ability to sanctify all other aspects of life and to legitimate and reinforce the lineage—it would seem to be ancestor worship and its social and political corollaries involving hierarchy, ritual deference, obedience, and reciprocity.

What is the difference he sees in cities?

Physically Chinese cities were built of rammed earth in a regular layout centered around a single palace combining political and religious power.

Mesopotamian and ancient Greek cities were built of stone in a sprawling layout with power distributed in several institutions: political, religious, and mercantile.

Notable in its absence from Chinese cities is any evidence of class struggle. The conflict that was recorded, assuming that what was recorded is what actually happened, was strictly between nobles.

The reason? The familial strength that kept the Chinese dynasties from being fractured also kept the populace from splitting along class lines. The fracturing of Greek government and the heavy use of slave labor helped split the Greek cities into distinct class hierarchies.

The ultimate question, he says, is accounting for the differences he sees. Here he speculates about the causes of different paths of development. What does he think the causes were?

First, there were more people which encourages more grouping. Frankly, I disagree. You could equally argue that more people creates more groups, encouraging conflict, which leads to the rise of individual heroes.

Second, a favorable climate reduced conflict.

Third, cultural homogeneity, the relative unimportance of external trade, and the lack of external conflict.

Here's what I think. In our search for answers, we want causes. Sometimes it's hard for us to accept that things in life are frequently random and without obvious cause. Perhaps somewhere in China's neolithic past before recorded history there was a leader who began to encourage ancestral worship. It caught on. The practice became institutionalized setting the course for Chinese history, diverging from the course set by early events in Greek history. It was random. It could have happened in Greece, but it didn't. Not everything has to have lockstep causality.

Discussion: What makes China Chinese

My post: Looking for the nuance in Keightley's Orwellian picture

Keightley paints the character of Chinese society as one led by autocracy and lacking in the public debate and political conflict that celebrate individuals. Ssu-ma Ch'ien's assassins are heroes because they obey; not because they conquer moral dilemmas. People live their lives with the optimism and harmony of those who ask few questions. The only celebrated individuals are those of royal lineage, one after another in strict ascendancy for hundreds of years.

Keightley says the absence of internal conflict, of significant external trade, or of slave labor, led to a society stratified by class but lacking in class struggle. In other words, the people knew their place. Virtue accrued to individuals through service to those above. Great craftsmanship and technology thrived out of service to the state rather than to mercantile interests.

*In fact, I find no contradiction to this picture from what I've seen in Keightley's article and from what we've studied, but **I don't think we've seen enough to close the case.***

It's true that enormous resources went into the tombs, that class distinctions are evident within them, and that historiographers paint a harmonious picture. But to characterize daily lives of the masses when only the lives of nobles are preserved is too much of a stretch. And I'm not buying that the paintings on vases of ordered ranks of soldiers is enough to make a social statement, or that piece-mold casting intentionally strikes a blow at individuality, rather than being a technique to extend the realm, like stamping a coin. We don't know how much art was made or history written on perishable articles.

Keightley admitted that many of his cultural comparisons were more nuance than absolute, yet it seems that nuance would be the first thing lost when a civilization is buried for 3000 years.

Week 5: Confucius and Confucianism

Historical Overview



771 BCE Eastern Zhou period. Invaders from the west captured the Zhou capital and killed the king, forcing his heir to reestablish the Zhou alongside the modern city of Luoyang. The Eastern Zhou lasted 500 years, divided into the **Spring and Autumn Period**, which ended roughly in 475 BC, at which time the **Warring States Period** begins.

Spring and Autumn Period. Lasted 3 centuries. Named for a chronicle of the times: Spring and Autumn Annals. Around 200 vassal states fought for power.

Warring States Period. At the beginning of this period there were only 7 major states remaining. The Qin conquered them all by 221 BCE.

This is when the iron age was beginning, making the rituals of the bronze vessels look a bit quaint. Sharper and stronger tools led to better agriculture.

Political reforms spread, with Shang Yang's reform abolishing the Zhou aristocratic system in favor of a central bureaucracy, turning Qin into the most productive and organized state of its time. Philosophy flourished as well: over the Dao or correct

way forward, over how to govern, over how to educate. These thinkers defined elite education for two millennia.

The greatest thinker among them was the man known as Kongzi or Zhongni, or Confucius.

The Many Faces of Confucianism

Introduction



This culture of ours resides here - Rao Zongyi, calligrapher. This refers to a passage from the Analects when the founder of the Zhou is long gone and Confucius is under threat. He says, therefore, this is not his culture here with me ... Heaven protects me ... to tell people about it. *Rao Zongyi* is saying that the culture of the ancients resides within all of us, everywhere.

Another piece of calligraphy, by Dong Qichang from the late Ming, from the words of Zhou Dunyi: *Can you learn how to be a sage?* The answer is yes, and the sage they mean is Confucius.

Confucius the sage: with innate knowledge, the philosopher of human nature, the paragon of education, the reactionary. But the Confucius of the Analects is where we start.

At this point, Prof. Bol shows us around a desk with dozens of copies of The Analects, hundreds of years old, from Japan, Korea, China, Mongolia.

The Time of Confucius



Here was Confucius in the context of the time and place he lived, when states competed for wealth and power. When states warring with nobles on chariots transformed into states raising revenues to fund infantry with iron weapons.

The increasing specialization in government required greater literacy to earn a place as a retainer for the nobles. The Chinese word for this change toward literate elites is *shi*. Pronounced *shur*, see page 142. Confucius becomes one of these bureaucrats.

He's orphaned at an early age and lacks powerful relatives. He decided against being an administrator or military officer, or ritual specialist, in order to devote his life to learning.

When I was 15, I made my commitment to learning.

This learning has no skills to offer, it cannot make him rich or powerful. He says in the Analects 14.24 that the learning of antiquity was for oneself while the learning of today is to please others.¹⁷ This statement has an important implication for individual morality, which gains great emphasis in the time of the Neo-Confucians.¹⁸

¹⁷ So far this is my favorite Confucian quote, having trained as an engineer (to please others) and now learning Chinese history (for myself).

¹⁸ Essentially, this means that if knowing what is right depends on me, then I cannot rely on law and government for moral leadership. See page 168.

Confucius is loyal to the Zhou King, who is weak. He dreams of the Duke of Zhou and the Zhou dynasty, which is the source of models.

The Confucius of the Analects

THE IMPORTANCE OF SINCERITY

Once Confucius turned down an offer of a government position because he felt the ruler was not sincere. One of Confucius's students criticized his refusal. The student compared Confucius's ability to a precious jewel. "Should I keep such a jewel stored away in a case," the student asked, "or should I seek a good price and sell it?" Confucius replied, "Sell it, by all means. I, you see, am just waiting for the price." The price was, of course, a ruler who would sincerely seek his advice and act on it.

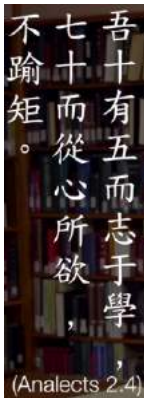
He is asked by his students, *if he had a jewel at home, wouldn't he sell it rather than keep it locked up at home?* Confucius replies that yes, he would sell, but only at the right price, that he would decide for himself what he was worth. To be a superior scholar, not a petty scholar.

He divides his loyalties: to himself, to family, to the state.

To be devoted to learning is to put oneself in tension with the demands of family and state.

The quote on the left is from page 35 of Confucianism, by Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler.

We've Lost The Way



Confucius defines the problem of the day as finding the righteous path, the *Dao*. They had lost their way, but if there's a path, someone would have walked it, therefore it has a destination and you *know* whether you're on the path.

According to Confucius and to Chinese philosophy, the *Dao* is within reach of mortal beings (epistemological optimism, see page 41). This is in contrast with Western philosophy.

In the Judeo-Christian belief, after Eve bit the apple, mortals were condemned to lives spent begging forgiveness for sin. Among the Greeks, Plato concludes that there are absolute ideas, the forms, that don't exist in the real world. In the Western world, there exists that unbridgeable gap between what *is* and what *ought to be*.

Confucius says that *I was 15 when I set my will on learning and at 70, I could follow my desires without overstepping the bounds*. He eventually learned to live a life that was proper and moral, with no need to beg forgiveness. A life that isn't possible in the West.

How to Find the Way Back



Through ritual. This is the answer Confucius gives.

For Confucius, the Way comes from the ancestors, from the antiquity of 500 years before the founding of the Zhou dynasty, to the sage kings Yao and Shun.

I like antiquity and I'm good at seeking it.

That in each ritual, each person has a role to play in harmony with others. That these rituals of daily practice are what keep us together and out of harm's way. The rituals are old, from well before Confucius was born, and therefore...

*I transmit, I do not innovate.*¹⁹

The key to good government is to let rulers act as rulers should, fathers as fathers should, sons as sons should, and so on. Confucius saw that if people played their roles society would work, even if it wasn't working then.

¹⁹ Analects 7.1, *I transmit rather than innovate. I trust in and love the ancient ways. I might thus humbly compare myself to Old Peng.*

Peng was an elder in the Shang who was fond of telling stories and passing on the traditions.

Confucian Magic

This short video was a dramatization of how the magic of ritual influences people and objects.

Jennifer Yum and Xuan Li shake hands.

When one person extends their hand, the other extends theirs as well. That simple act, the beginning of the ritual of shaking hands, creates a power to conform to a role. The one who begins the ritual, if she has virtue in herself and knows how to behave, extracts virtue from another as they take their part.

Another ritual was demonstrated when the professor asked a student to close the door. Action at a distance, mind over matter, the magic of ritual is when the student obeys.

Thus there are two kinds of magic: the lateral relationship where one person gets another to respond, and the hierarchical relationship, where a superior authority orders subordinates to obey. These are both parts of Confucian society.

Ritual with Attitude



In talking about the Ji family, Confucius notes that they use eight rows of dancers in the courtyard.

[3.1] *If this can be tolerated, what cannot be tolerated?*

In those days, eight rows of dancers were reserved for the lord, not for any nobleman. Ji was using ritual to usurp authority. This use of ritual was hypocritical, intended to defeat ritual of its purpose and strip it of meaning, weakening society.

If you can't restore meaning to ritual, to get rulers and subjects to act as they should, you can't get back on the Way.

The legalists would argue, *take these rituals and make them laws* and therefore enforce a good society. Confucius says that won't work, you have to bring the right attitude to rituals. He calls that attitude *ren* and says you can't do ritual without it, you can't make music without it.

So what is *ren*? Confucius' students ask him to define it and he responds that there is a *method of ren*. It's not about saving the world, feeding the poor, or bringing peace. It's benevolence, humaneness. Not self-sacrifice, but to see your own interests in the interests of another, to see yourself as part of a community, to want others to advance to the degree you advance yourself. To bring to your own life an attitude of concern for others.

The *method of ren* means we're acting in harmony, each for the other.

Junzi



To be a junzi, the son of a noble, means being a morally noble person. You don't have the right as a matter of birth but as a matter of learning. Learning in this case doesn't mean study, it means the true kind of learning, Confucian learning: for oneself, leading to self-transformation.

One learns to bring certain attitudes - how to serve. Confucians want to be part of the system as moral actors, to be in public service, to sell their services, but only for the right price, which really means a moral price. That is, the price to serve is that one will act only as a moral citizen who travels along the Way.

Prof. Bol believes Chinese history doesn't offer any rulers who were Confucians. Instead, at their best, they were patrons of Confucians who served beneath them.

Reading the Analects

In this section, Prof. Bol asks us to consider four questions about the Analects.

Why can the humane person abide in hardship and joy but others cannot?

Those who are clever in their words and pretentious in their appearance, yet are humane, are few indeed. [1.3]

Devote yourself to what must rightly be done for the people; respect spiritual beings, while keeping at a distance from them. This may be called wisdom.” He asked about humaneness. The Master said, “One who is humane first does what is difficult and only thereafter concerns himself with success. This may be called humaneness.” [6.20]

One who is not humane is able neither to abide for long in hardship nor to abide for long in joy. The humane find peace in humaneness; the knowing derive profit from humaneness. [4.2]

Wealth and honor are what people desire, but one should not abide in them if it cannot be done in accordance with the Way. Poverty and lowliness are what people dislike, but one should not avoid them if it cannot be done in accordance with the Way. If the noble person rejects humaneness, how can he fulfill that name? The noble person does not abandon humaneness for so much as the space of a meal. Even when hard-pressed he is bound to it, bound to it even in time of danger. [4.5]

It is humaneness that brings beauty to one’s surroundings. Should one not make the choice to abide in humaneness, how could one become known? [4:1]

The wise take joy in water; the humane take joy in mountains. The wise are active; the humane are tranquil. The wise enjoy; the humane endure. [6:21]

Meng Wu Bo asked whether Zilu was humane. The Master said, *I do not know.* He asked again. The Master said, *As for You, he might be employed to manage the military levies in a state of a thousand chariots, but whether he is humane, I do not know.* “What about Qiu?” The Master said, *In a town of a thousand households or a family of a hundred chariots, he could be employed as a governor, but whether he is humane I do not know.* “What about Chi?” The Master said, *As for Chi, when he puts on his sash and takes his place in court, he might be engaged in conversation with the guests, but whether he is humane I do not know.* (5.7)

My answer:

Humaneness comes from within, from the learning for oneself, and brings beauty to any place, as a light from within. It does not come from the hedonistic pleasures without. It is this strength and beauty found inside that nourishes one through hardship and brings one joy regardless of the world outside.

Why is benefitting the people not relevant to humaneness?

Zigong said, “What would you say of someone who broadly benefits the people and was able to help everyone? Could he be called humane?” The Master said, *How would this be a matter of humaneness? Surely he would have to be a sage? Even Yao and Shun were concerned about such things. As for humaneness – you want to establish yourself; then help others to establish themselves. You want to develop yourself; then help others to develop themselves. Being able to recognize oneself in others, one is on the way to being humane.* [6.28]

My answer:

Humaneness is not about acting directly and independently to benefit others, it is about learning for oneself and seeing oneself in others and oneself in harmony with one's own place in the rituals of society. To act broadly to benefit others isn't a bad thing, but it's not the internalization of ritual and harmony that is humaneness.

What is the Desirability of Humaneness?

Is humaneness far away? If I want to be humane, then humaneness is here. [7.29]

As for Hui, he went for three months without his mind’s departing from humaneness. As for the others, they might persist for a day or a month, but that is all. [6.5]

I have not seen one who loved humaneness, nor one who hated inhumanity. One who loved humaneness would value nothing more highly. One who hated inhumanity would be humane so as not to allow inhumanity to affect his person. Is there someone whose strength has for the space of a single day been devoted to humaneness? I have not seen one whose strength was insufficient. It may have happened, but I have not seen it. [4.6]

My answer:

If you want to be humane, you can, at any time, in any place, and each has the strength to do so. But to be humane requires strength and persistence and many do not clothe themselves with humaneness day after day as they could. Humaneness is not an object of desire that comes easily.

What is the Relationship between Humaneness and Ritual?

*If one is human yet not **humane** – what can one have to do with rites? If one is human yet not **humane** – what can one have to do with music? (3.3)*

Yan Yuan asked about **humaneness**. The Master said, *Through mastering oneself and returning to ritual one becomes **humane**. If for a single day one can master oneself and return to ritual, the whole world will return to **humaneness**. Does the practice of **humaneness** come from oneself or from others?* Yan Yuan said, “May I ask about the specifics of this?” The Master said, *Look at nothing contrary to ritual; listen to nothing contrary to ritual; say nothing contrary to ritual; do nothing contrary to ritual.* Yan Yuan said, “Though unintelligent, Hui requests leave to put these words into practice.” [12.1]

My answer

Without humaneness, one cannot participate in ritual or make music. This is what Confucius meant when he said it was intolerable for Ji to have eight rows of dancers. That one's appropriate participation flows from one's attitude.

Correspondingly, one obtains humaneness through the precise and appropriate participation in ritual, where nothing is seen, heard, said, or done that is outside the precise performance of ritual.

Interview With Professor Puett

I thread everything on a single strand.

What single strand, what coherent theory can we divine from all the disparate passages in The Analects?

Prof. Puett says that there are many contradictory passages where Confucius will tell one disciple one thing and another something entirely different. Here's an example of that:

That you achieve ren through adherence to ritual, but the rituals are worthless if you don't have ren.

Part of the power of The Analects is that Confucius doesn't make clear and obvious statements, but instead forces the reader to interpret, to deduce the meaning.

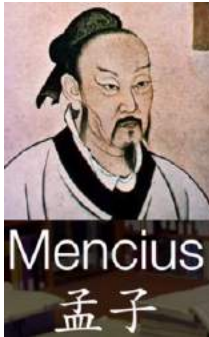
If there is a strand, it's that the The Analects is a text presenting a figure who is doing in practice what he is arguing. Look at Book 10, where Confucius is doing rituals with precision: how he walks into a room, straightens a mat. How he talks to people of different ranks.

Add these rituals to the passages and you see why the rituals matter and where the passages apply. Do we get a philosophy directly from this? Perhaps. But perhaps Confucius is leading his students to engage in the passages and the rituals to explore the philosophy themselves. Philosophy is a way of life, more humane, but more responsive to situations and to others.

So let's read The Analects with the idea of improving ourselves.

Confucius' Successors

Mencius



The two most interesting and best known people who saw themselves as followers of Confucius, not directly but generations later, were Mencius and Xunzi.

In Mencius world, Confucianism is under attack. He must answer the question, *why should we be good*, which is not a question Confucius had to answer. Confucius talked about how to be good, not why.

Mencius answers with a question, which we'll reset into modern times. If a toddler runs in front of a speeding car, do you feel anything? You don't have to act, but do you feel? You do, of course, because it's in our nature to be good.

You should be good because it's what you want to be, but that doesn't mean you *will* be good without trying.

What about a subway rider who is pushed in front of a train and dies while a photographer stand by and snaps photographs. From a Mencian point of view, it's reprehensible, he didn't seem to care. What would Mencius say about that?

Mencius' Response

He says that there's a continuum from Sages, to Worthies, to Humans. Below Humans there are Barbarians and then Animals. The photographer is a Barbarian.

So Mencius believes that if we deny morality in ourselves, we are not human.²⁰

Xunzi



Xunzi created his philosophy after Mencius was gone, in a time when wars had increased. His belief was that human nature is evil and he details the many ways in which it is. Where Mencius would say *I feel that*, Xunzi will say, *I think that*.

Xunzi's interests lay in education, history, logic, argument and debate. Not in parables. Deduction, not induction.

So how is it possible for Mencius and Xunzi to both consider themselves true followers of Confucius?

²⁰ On page 44, we'll see Mencius' objections to the Mohists and Yangists.

Discussion

As copied directly from the [lectures](#). The reading for this discussion is [here](#).

In the Analects Confucius has almost nothing to say about ‘human nature.’ Yet two of his greatest followers, Mencius and Xunzi, felt it necessary to discuss human nature at length. Many centuries later, the most influential Confucians disagreed with Xunzi’s assertion that “human nature is evil” to such an extent, that they no longer regarded him as being true to Confucius. But Xunzi certainly thought he was a good Confucian. Thus we would like you to consider, in light of these passages from their works, why Mencius and Xunzi wanted to discuss human nature, and whether they had anything important in common. Keightley held that the Chinese shared “epistemological optimism.”

Do the cases of Mencius and Xunzi support that view?

My answer:

All three are saying the same thing in different ways:

Confucius: everyone has in their nature the strength to follow ritual and thus follow the Way. If you do this, but only if you persist, you’ll be humane.

Mencius: it is our nature to be good. But not without trying.

Xunzi: it is our nature to be evil. With education, effort and conscious activity, we can be good.

Why are these three statements the same? Whether they believe we are naturally good or naturally evil, or don’t make a statement about our nature at all, they all believe that with effort and abidance to ritual, we’ll have ren and without it we won’t.

Also, in question 4, *what is Mencius’ mistake*, Xunzi says that “as soon as a person is born, he departs from his original substance and his natural disposition so that he must inevitably lose and destroy them.” Almost like Plato, that there is an ideal and mortals do not achieve that ideal. They have that ideal before birth, but the moment they’re born they begin destroying it.

What about epistemological optimism?²¹

Keightley said that the Chinese had “radical world optimism” with such trust in their leaders that it explains the lack of safeguards against the power of the state. Our three philosophers share a belief, which is mostly absent from Western philosophy, that humaneness is achieved through obedience to authority. Western philosophy replaces this with obedience to God. Confucius’ requirement for obedience to the State is the optimism, the trust in authority, of which Keightley speaks. But I’m not sure that’s the same as epistemological optimism.

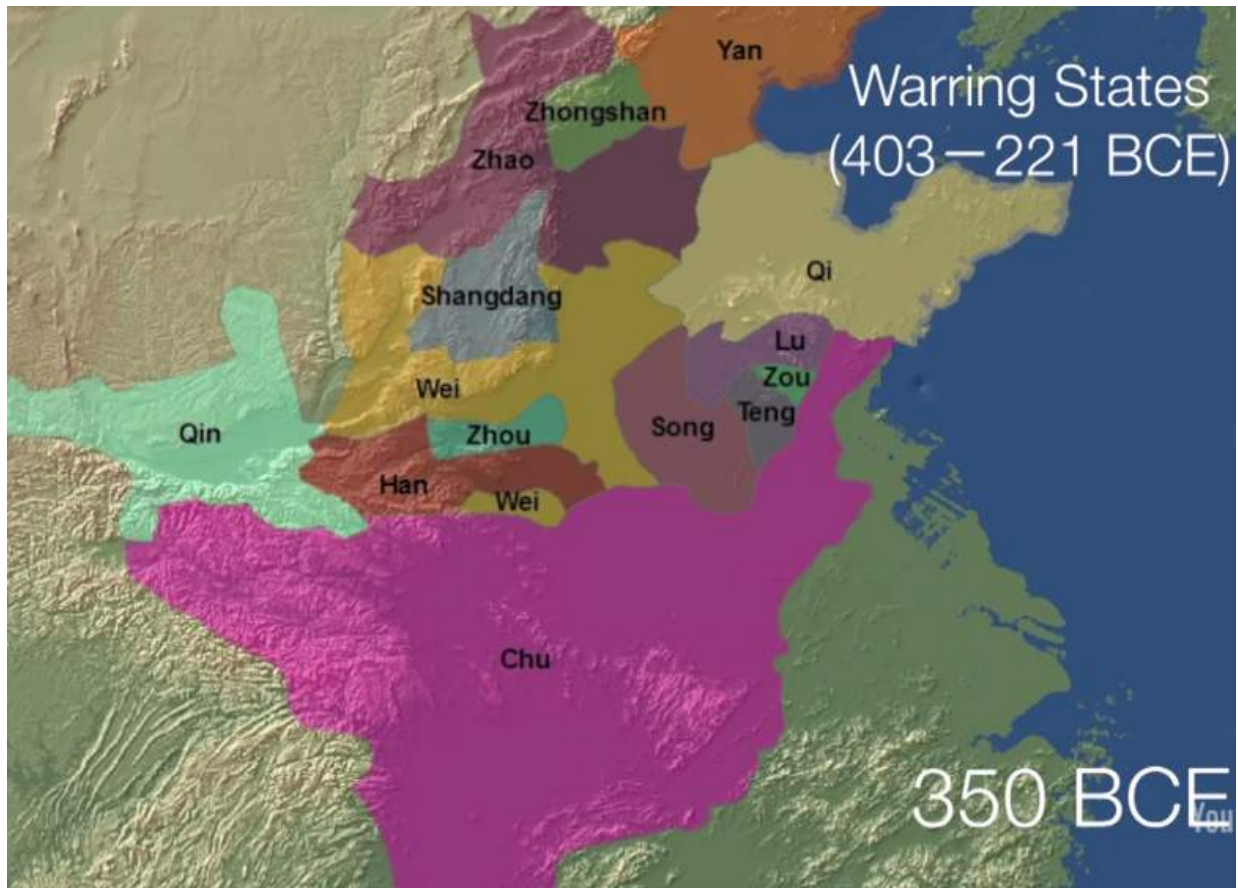
The belief that all humans can achieve *ren* may appear to be epistemological optimism, but the difficulty it requires and, for Confucius and Xunzi, the departure from desire on the one hand or from human nature on the other, doesn’t reek of optimism.

In retrospect, having finished Part 6 and re-read Keightley, the belief that humanity can ultimately triumph over evil is epistemological optimism, no matter how hard humanity has to work or how much it suffers. Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi all believed in that. The Greek tragedies did not.

²¹ Neo-Confucians also believed in epistemological optimism. See page 158.

Week 6: Competing Schools and Warring States

Section 1: The Hundred Schools of Thought



A Period of New Thinking

The Period of Warring States, 403-221 BCE, was a time of *zhizi baijia*, of Many Masters and the Hundred Schools, when a proliferation of systems of ideas and beliefs arose from a myriad of competing thinkers. It was a time when people were discovering the power of ideas and the energy of debate. The Masters offered their ideas to the rulers, tempting them with the success they might bring.

This parallels the time of Greek, Middle Eastern, and Indian philosophers bringing new concepts at a time when civilization was changing. But no one was yet convinced of how it should change or whose ideas they should follow.

Until recently the Chinese did not glorify this period. It was seen as a period of decline, with the Hundred Schools fracturing the people, in contrast to the centralized empires of later periods.

The Core Issues

Ethical. How should I act? Think of how Mencius tells us how a human *must* feel when a child falls into a well.

Political. How should the ruler act?

The Strategies

- How can we do good?
- How can we survive?
- How can I gain control over the situation?

Comparing how philosophers approach these strategies is one way to differentiate between the schools of thought.

Section 2: Strategies for Doing Good

Mozi



The suffix zi modifies the name to mean Master, see the footnote on page 1, so in the case of Xunzi, it's Master Xun. For Mozi, it's Master Mo. Followers of Mozi are the Mohists.

Born after Confucius died, he was anti-Confucian, thinking the focus on ritual was a waste. He likely came from a family of craftsmen and his school was oriented toward technology. He lived among his followers in a community that would travel among the states offering technical skills for defense only, refusing to aid in offensive military action.

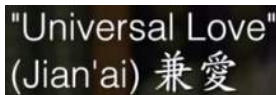
Logical Argumentation

He is the first person we know to test the validity of a proposition, that is, to approach verbal statements in logical terms. He proposed three standards for validity:

- Did the ancients think it was right?
- Is it common sense, that is, does it accord with what people generally know to be true?
- Does it bring benefit to the people?

He uses it to justify sacrifices to the ancestors, since they clearly pass standards #1 and #2 and for #3, there's a feast after the sacrifice.

Rule by the Worthy and Universal Love



Mozi was interested in universal ideas, one of which was rule by the worthy, where administrators were (1) chosen for their merit and (2) required to conform to their superiors. If everyone is chosen for merit, from the bottom to the top of the hierarchy, then there's no flaw in conformance. Merit leads merit.

The flaw is with the ruler who is chosen by heredity, but he is the son of heaven. To whom, then, does the *ruler* conform? Mozi answers: to the heaven that brings light and rain and spring. To the regular and predictable flow of the natural world. It is to these natural and universal principles that the ruler must conform, that is, concern for the well-being of his subjects.

Mozi says to take the love you feel for your father and extend it to all fathers and you will love them all equally. By extending the relationships of the family to all of the world, Mozi sees this creating harmony throughout society. He sees this as an absolute proposition that can be applied without variation.

Yang Zhu and the Utopians



I should do good for myself alone. *If I could save the world by pulling a hair out of my head, I would not do it.* Yang Zhu's followers are the Yangists.

This is the opposite of Mozi. He says that if everyone simply acts in their own self-interest, the world will be a better place. Prof. Bol asks, will this work? My feeling: it's essentially realpolitik in diplomacy; unregulated capitalism in economics. In a larger sphere of competing groups, the concept has value. In a world of individuals, that is, as an individual rather than a corporate philosophy, it has less value.

But Yang Zhu's sense of a benefit is not about wealth and power. It's about health and well-being and feeling. So in that sense, it is not about diplomacy or economics, but about pursuing one's own inner self without regard to others. My thought: in that way, perhaps it's not that different from Confucius, who says we should not go about trying to benefit the world - we should pursue learning for ourselves.

See page 168 for more on the State vs. the Individual.

School of Tillers - The Utopians.



Founders of the early communes: give us land - we'll all work in a small world of equality, with minimal hierarchy, and we'll be a model for society.

Mencius' Objections

To the Mohists and Universalizing Family

It's because the family has its own special harmony that Mozi wants to spread those feelings across society. Yet that special nature of the family makes those feelings stronger than those felt anywhere else.

Mencius asks: How can the family itself be improved?

To the Yangists and the Primacy of the Individual

Mencius argues that government is not going away no matter how strongly the Yangists dismiss it. The market of negotiation between individuals needs a government to limit excess.

Mencius asks: How do we make government better?

To the Utopian agrarians

You cannot hide behind your pots and iron tillers unless you're planning to smelt them yourselves. You need others to make your lives work. You need a market economy with trade that capitalizes on the skills of specialists.

Mencius asks: How do we make the economy work fairly for everyone?

Section 3: Strategies for Survival

Language Skepticism of the School of Names

This discussion is about an emerging sense that language is a flawed medium through which we interpret the underlying world. We'll see some examples of language getting in the way of that understanding.

The two paradoxes below are from debates between Hui Shi and Zhuangzi.

The paradox of rise and decline

日方中方
物方生方
死方

Zhuangzi, ch 33, *Simultaneously with being at noon, the sun declines; simultaneously with being alive a thing dies.*

My thoughts: Death and life, rise and decline are two sides of the same coin and this relates to ancestor worship in that the flux of life leads inevitably to heaven where the living become ancestors. Even as we begin to learn from our parents and ancestors in life, so are we learning to advise our descendants wisely from heaven.

The paradox of two centers

我知天之
燕之北越
之南是也

Zhuangzi, ch 33, *The center of heaven is far to the north and far to the south.*

My thoughts: this could mean many things. I don't know what Zhuangzi means. Sadly, I need him to lift another corner. Confucius 2.17²² and 7.8²³

Prof. Bol: To consider any instant of time as a division of rising and falling is as arbitrary as saying that any point in space is a center. There's no one right place or moment, everything in heaven and earth is one and indivisible and you should love everything inclusively.

Okay, I guessed I missed the point of those paradoxes!

A white horse is not a horse

This paradox comes from Master Gongsun Long. Logically it's true if you interpret the proposition as saying that a white horse is not the prototypical horse, that is, the definition of the set in which all horses, including white horses, belong.

Gongsun has another saying that to kill a robber is not to kill a man. *Prof. Bol does not elaborate, but there's a discussion of the Mohist discourse on logical statements [here](#).*

²² Confucius 2.17: *You, shall I teach you about knowledge? What you know, you know, what you don't know, you don't know. This is knowledge.*

²³ Confucius 7.8: *If a student is not eager, I won't teach him; if he is not struggling with the truth, I won't reveal it to him. If I lift up one corner and he can't come back with the other three, I won't do it again.*

Zhuangzi

Master Zhuang 莊子
Zhuangzi (4th c. BCE)

Zhuangzi is the first great Chinese relativist. He's a fascinating personality: witty, funny, a brilliant debater who uses sophisticated arguments to tout his ideas and not his brilliance. He considers Confucius a doddering fool. He is known for using animals to illustrate his thoughts.

He says that opinions stem from your position: the bird looks small to us but enormous to the worm. Can anything be called good and right? Why do we judge with our minds and not with our bellies? Why does the mind have the special privilege of judgment?

Am I a butterfly?

For personal philosophy, he maintains we should develop our own skills, live our lives peacefully, because life is a kind of a dream. *I dreamt I was a butterfly and didn't know I was Zhuangzi...and when I awoke, I had the question, am I Zhuang Zhou who dreamed he was a butterfly, or am I a butterfly dreaming he is Zhuang Zhou?*

See Prof. Puett's lecture on *Zhuangzi and Confucius* on page 49 for more on the butterfly dream.

Butcher Ding - Living Large with a Personal Ambition

Butcher Ding has never sharpened his knife having instead honed his skill. I found a translation [here](#):

There are spaces between the joints, and the blade of the knife has really no thickness. If you insert what has no thickness into such spaces, then there's plenty of room — more than enough for the blade to play about it. That's why after nineteen years the blade of my knife is still as good as when it first came from the grindstone.

So the question arises, does the Butcher have no ambition? To the contrary, his ambition is to live in unity with his skill rather than strive for wealth and power.

Reading: Zhuangzi and Xunzi

The reading for this section is here with my annotations (no longer available). Here are my thoughts:

I believe Zhuangzi and Xunzi are not entirely in disagreement about learning and meaning of life.

For Zhuangzi, the universe is too large for anyone to swallow whole. We should stay within our abilities and follow that portion of the Way that is our smaller path through the universe. Butcher Ding's personal Way gave him life's ambition through the understanding of the grain of an ox.

Though the Butcher may have stopped striving to learn everything, he did what Confucius advises, to learn not as a scholarly or philosophical pursuit, but to live as a gentleman, cultivating himself until butchery was wu wei.

Xunzi invokes nobility, which to Confucius was not hereditary but instead the inherent quality of a gentleman.

If you do not climb a mountain, you will not know the height of heaven.

This is in contradiction to Zhuangzi, stating that you must strive, you must put yourself in danger, but he doesn't say to climb the highest mountain that reaches to heaven, he says that by climbing even the small earthly mountains we will begin to understand how high are the unreachable mountains that touch the sky. In fact, this borrows from the Zhuangzi philosophy of relativism. That to us, like worms to the bird, heaven is an unreachably high mountain. Xunzi says that by striving we learn what it is we cannot reach. Zhuangzi says that trying to learn everything will exhaust us. Are they really saying the same thing?

In the tale of the Carpenter Shi and the oak tree, Xunzi recapitulates Zhuangzi's relativism, to see lumber from the point of the view of the tree and to limit ambition in order to preserve oneself. The tree saves its own life by avoiding usefulness in the eyes of men.

Laozi



Besides Zhuangzi, Laozi is the other great Daoist figure of ancient China. He may have predated Confucius. His book, one of the most famous in history, is The Daodejing, The Way and its Power. It begins with this famous line.

The way that can be spoken of is not the constant way.

The name that can be named is not the constant name.

Laozi would have found much common ground with Heisenberg. You can talk about the Dao, but you cannot measure it or reduce it, you cannot define it or pin it down. Instead, you can talk about how it works, which is through reversal, through cycles.

Things flicker from nothingness to existence and back to nothingness. To stay in unity with this process, stay behind it, seek the low ground. Unlike Zhuangzi, he has advice for the ruler: keep your people living simple lives of sufficiency, devoid of ambition.



This philosophy of non-action, of *wu wei*, is congruent with Zhuangzi's advocacy of the simple and unambitious path. Don't seek, don't strive. In emptiness, there is everything. If people truly lived according to the Way, you wouldn't need ritual or ren.

The way to survive is not to compete, but to stay within yourself and then you can be happy.

Section 4: Strategies for Gaining Control

By the end of the Warring States Period the Zhou king had less and less power until 256 BCE when he was overthrown. The states continued to battle fiercely. For there to be peace, someone would have to win over all the states. A number of thinkers came to the rulers with their solutions on how to succeed.

Zou Yan



He believed in Cosmic Resonance, which we'll discuss in detail on page 58, when it becomes the official ideology of the Qin dynasty. The basic idea is that cycles change the world. In the same manner that the agricultural year governs when to plant and when to harvest, history has cycles that a ruler needs to understand, to see his opportunities. The Zhou was part of a cycle and another cycle was emerging, making for an optimal time for a ruler to come forward to conquer and unify the warring states.

He saw five phases of change: wood, metal, fire, water, earth. Everything had these phases of change. To take advantage of the times, you must understand the phase you're in and act accordingly.

Further, there were yinyang books, or almanacs, found in many tombs that showed the cycles of yin and yang to assist even in daily routine.

So who will succeed the Zhou king? One who knows the cycles. As we shall see.

Sunzi - 544-496 BCE



See [here](#) for the controversy over when *The Art of War* was written. It appears in roughly its modern form no later than the early Han dynasty and possibly by the late Warring States Period. The book is about tactics, how to win in battle, with simple advice like using flags during the day and beacons at night, to keep troops together. The book has well-known slogans, like *advance when your enemy retreats; retreat when your enemy advances*. The latter was adopted by Mao Zedong as a strategy of guerilla warfare.

In a non-military sense, Sunzi said that you need to see yourself within a strategic situation, identify what's possible and act accordingly. It's a book about how to succeed, not about morality. The Viet Cong, CIA, Japanese executives, and Bill Belichick²⁴ have all studied *The Art of War*.

Han Fei



Sometimes called a legalist, he began as a student of Confucius and Xunzi before changing direction. He said that if people are basically self-interested, you should motivate them with punishment and reward, rather than relying on ritual and *ren*. If a ruler wants to secure his state, rather than indulge himself by rewarding his subjects when they flatter him, he must reward them strictly for their performance in their service to the state, and punish them when they fail. Rulers don't usually do this, since they want the state to be subordinate to themselves, not the other way around. But if the ruler can subordinate himself to the state and apply the laws in strict accordance with the needs of the state, then the state will thrive.

²⁴ Head Coach of the New England Patriots, an American football team.

Section 5: Conclusion

Secular Philosophy. One common feature among these early Chinese thinkers: they do not invoke religious philosophy, even though the people around may have worshipped ghosts and spirits and gods.

Concern with Peace and Humanity. They mostly show a real concern for the human world at the personal and political levels.

Epistemological Optimism. They generally believe that humans could figure things out and know what to do, to bring the world to peace.

So what path would China take: toward good, toward survival, toward control? That's the subject for the next module.

Section 6: Prof. Puett on Zhuangzi

This was a 45-minute lecture. I won't summarize it as carefully as the other short lectures - it's too long -- but it was superb so I want to capture the essence that made it so wonderful.

Puett says we don't know a lot about Zhuangzi, who wrote a book about himself around the 4th century BCE. Compared with the argumentation of Mozi, Zhuangzi is more anecdotal, expressing in stories the philosophy he wants us to absorb. His characters are often animals - birds and fish - and his stories are humorous. He's a Daoist so he invokes The Way.

The Way, if we could experience it, would be the degree to which we feel the world as a place in which things interrelate. When we empty ourselves of activity, we get closer to the Way. Everything is in constant flux and transformation (*that phrase gets repeated a little bit*).

All creatures spontaneously follow the Way except for humans. Cursed with minds, we must teach ourselves how to not fight the Way. Which makes us miserable.

Zhuangzi writes his text to teach us how to use our mind to become one again with the Way. Our own directed pursuit of goals cuts us off from spontaneously following the Way. But to be spontaneous is not simply to pursue hedonic joy. Spontaneity must come naturally. He shows us how to be spontaneous not by giving us rules - that would be contradictory - but by showing us how others found spontaneity in their lives. We have to find the congruence between those stories and our own lives.

He tells us of the Butcher Ding finding the spaces between the muscles, living his life by finding the Way in carving oxen. In other words, by finding the perfection in his pursuit of craft, the natural perfection availed by the interconnections and patterns of his world, he's found peace in his life.

My thoughts: This is what Mikhail Csikszentmihalyi might call *flow*²⁵, where the butcher's mind is focused on his craft without consciously needing to focus. His is an unconscious awareness of the world, which is perhaps what Zhuangzi means by spontaneous. And as Csikszentmihalyi would also insist, the butcher feels more alive at this time than at any other. So, 2500 years ago, Zhuangzi knew what we in the twenty-first century only recently learned about the mind.

Prof. Puett gives an example of a pianist becoming so proficient that she stops playing the piece as a technical effort, instead playing it to suit the mood and mentality of her listeners, having learned to be one with the instrument and the music. And thus to spontaneously react to the interplay of the music and the room.

What Zhuangzi further tells us is that we have to train ourselves to live every experience as we would train ourselves to play the piano. That life should be lived in the zone, in flow, resonating with the world because every moment is part of the Way. This is the essence of Zhuangzi's text and this is what he means by spontaneity and why it's hard to learn. There is, then, no artificial distinction between work and play, weekdays and weekends. Every moment is precious when you've trained yourself to find the Way.

And that sounds a lot like Confucius.

Yet Zhuangzi is critical of Confucius, saying that the road Confucius proposes is too directed, too goal-oriented (through it's adherence to ritual?) and thus closes you off from the Way. Though it's for exactly that reason that neither Confucius nor Zhuangzi give precise, clear steps for finding *ren* or the Way.

So try it, Prof. Puett says: train yourself to observe daily life as interrelated patterns through which you flow. And instead of fighting it, learn the skills of each moment.

²⁵ From [Wikipedia](#): In his seminal work, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Csikszentmihályi outlines his theory that people are happiest when they are in a state of flow—a state of concentration or complete absorption with the activity at hand and the situation.

Section 7: Prof. Puett on Zhuangzi and Confucius

There was no transcript at the time I wrote this, so my notes may be a little vague.

What's different between Zhuangzi and Confucius? The key for Confucius is the focus on the human, on the person who is learning the rituals. When you perform a sacrifice for an ancestor, practice as if the ancestor is present, focus on the human stand-in, on the here and now.

Zhuangzi's butcher is also learning the way by attending to daily activities. But he's not just focusing on the human - he's focused on everything, on the interplay of muscles in the ox. This is the Way.

Confucius sets aside death as something he knows nothing about. Zhuangzi counters that we're making a false distinction between ourselves as living humans rather than part of a larger world. When we die, the stuff that is ourselves returns to the world and continues to be part of it. When we remove the distinction between ourselves and the world, we will no longer fear death.

Yin and yang are two modalities of qi. Yin is soft, weak, cold, earth. Yang is hot, passionate, heaven. Laozi wants to return to the oneness of qi. He says focus on the yang.

Zhuangzi sees yin and yang as part of the endless interplay. At the height of winter you have the cold that is pure yin, but it's also the beginning of yang which brings the spring. And at the peak of summer heat yin is starting up, bringing the cool that will eventually become winter again. Endless interplay that generates life.

We, as humans, disrupt the spontaneity of nature with our planning. If we want yang, the strong-willed, we close off yin disrupting the interplay. We become miserable and we die young.

Imagine instead that you embrace the interplay of yin and yang. What does this mean in practice? Zhuangzi tells stories to show us how:

Zhuangzi dreams he's a butterfly. Was he a man dreaming he's a butterfly, or vice versa?

If you can understand the perspectives of both, you can begin to understand the ten thousand things that comprise the cosmos. If you see the world from the point of view of a butterfly, or a bird, or a rock, or another person, you can see how all these ten thousand things are part of the endless flux and transformation of the Way. And *this* is the perspective of Heaven.

There are people, *true people*, who have achieved these multiple perspectives. They can walk through water and not get wet, through fire and not get burned. What he means is by attaining this perspective you lose the fear and annoyance of other things. You'll stop sweating the small stuff. Instead, you embrace the world and let its flux become a part of you, not a problem for you.

Zhuangzi recalls many of Confucius' stories, that they consistently show how to cultivate yourself, to learn the Way, and to become an example for everyone else. Zhuangzi implies, through fantastical stories like people becoming animals, that there is no one path to the Way, that the examples of Confucius are too limiting.

If instead you train yourself to harmonize the yin and yang, learning to *flow*, see the perspectives of the ten thousand things, then you'll be spontaneously engaged in the world as it presents itself to you. What specifically should you do with your life? Zhuangzi is deliberately ambiguous. He tells you instead how to see the world differently and then you will know what to do as the world avails you of its possibilities.

Confucius says to use the daily rituals to look inside ourselves to see how we should change. Zhuangzi says to look outside yourself as well as within. And he shows us with fantastical analogies how the world looks from outside ourselves.

On a personal level, try it: when you feel the yang of anger, interpose the yin of calm. Begin to feel the resonance of the ten thousand things. Let yourself see the possibilities of the world and see yourself as capable of engaging in those possibilities.

Section 8: Prof. Puett on Laozi

Central paradox: the text seems to tell you to literally empty yourself to become close to the Way until you die and become a true part of it. But the text does not want you to literally empty yourself. Instead, become active by being inactive, alter the world without anyone noticing.

How do you become inactive yet participate in the world? You stop competing to win power. The world is interrelated. If someone is trying to compete it's because we've presented ourselves as objects of competition. When we become inactive, when we still ourselves and get closer to the Way, we'll sense these conflicts and learn to improve our relationships with harmony rather than competition.

This is similar to Confucius, who tells us to see how we relate to others. But Confucius wants us to gain a sensibility of goodness. Laozi says that when benevolence and rightness emerged, the Way was lost because that new guiding principle that put us in a position of leadership, losing the stillness that senses others. It sounds amoral to discard benevolence, but the purpose is to increase harmony. You cannot gain the stillness required to sense others, and you cannot drop the sheen of competition, when taking a position of moral leadership.

Because of this delicate contrast, the amoral to achieve the moral, the Laozi is a dangerous text.

Here's an example of applying the Laozi to the U.S. - to the proposition that all men are created equal. The words are historically false – they were written by slaveholders who were stopping the British from controlling them. At the Gettysburg address, Lincoln invokes that proposition again. The newspaper editorials of his time disagreed, stating that the Declaration of Independence was about taxation not human rights. Lincoln turned the proposition that all men are created equal into a statement of human rights, and shifted the world's context, its premise, to his new vision of that famous founding statement.

The women's suffragette movement made the same transformation, applying the English plural of the word 'men', as all people of either gender, to that same founding proposition.

So how does this relate to Laozi? Lincoln shows how we accept that this is who we are - interrelated. He puts us closer to the Way. *Note: I'm having trouble seeing the relationship with Laozi. Too much talk about the politics of the examples and not enough about the specifics of the Laozi text that relates to it...*

... further into the lecture and we're getting deeper into the Laozi, which is about getting people to accept a vision, about shifting the ground beneath the political debate. About changing people's perspectives as a means of implementing change.

Laozi says, lead by seeming to follow, co-opt the opposition and change the perspective that underlies the political debate. In this way, create a powerful change that isn't noticed. Laozi shows us techniques for manipulating people into these new beliefs.

The danger: If we use these techniques and are successful and gain power over others, we'll see ourselves as differentiated beings and no longer part of the Way. This breaks our connection with others and dooms the changes we want to bring about. What made Lincoln successful is he identified a vision that brought together a nation because he sensed the interconnections of the people of that time. He never lost the Way, he was always able to empty himself so others could enter his vision.

Discussion

Here's the question for discussion:

You have now heard about some of the principal thinkers of the Warring States period and read from some of their most influential writings. In this final part of the first ChinaX mini-course, We want you to think about the different intellectual positions that emerged from the time of Confucius through the "100 Schools." Suppose you had the power to rebuild society after it was destroyed. Which thinker among the Confucians or the Hundred Schools masters would you rely on in your effort to rebuild society? Why?

Confucius: perhaps the wisest of them all. Never a bad choice. But so very much based on ritual and ancestor worship. I'm moving on.

Mencius: it's in our nature to be good. Inot, we're not human. Doesn't work for me.

Xunzi: we're naturally evil but can find the Way with education and effort. A great believer in education, history, logic and debate. Here's a fellow who would love checks and balances and the three branches of U.S. government. A good choice, but perhaps not the best choice.

Mozi: rule by the worthy, conform to superiors. The ruler has divine right and you'd better hope he loves everyone.

Yang Zhu: everyone for themselves. On the surface appears to be realpolitik and unregulated capitalism, but is more about pursuing one's own inner self. Not a basis for a state, certainly not a modern state.

The Utopians: works well for a kibbutz, not so much on a larger scale.

Laozi. If you've ever read *The Phantom Tollbooth*, you might remember a wagon that doesn't move until everyone stops talking. ***It goes without saying***²⁶. I heartily recommend Laozi's philosophy for the U.S. Congress, especially the implied suggestion for a smaller government, but I wouldn't write a constitution on the basis of a weak federal government. One look at the EU tells me why. And I'm not sure I buy that Lincoln, FDR (especially!), and Reagan were channeling Laozi.

Zhuangzi: Ten thousand perspectives leads to universal understanding. The pursuit of perspective *is* the pursuit of humanity. In today's interrelated world, suffused with constant flux and transformation, this is the philosopher I would follow. Professor Puett sold me well!

(oops, I completely forgot to include the philosophers from the *Strategies of Control* section. Shame on me!)

²⁶ From [this website](#):

"How are you going to make it [the wagon] move? It doesn't have a —"

"Be very quiet," advised the duke, "for it goes without saying."

And, sure enough, as soon as they were all quite still, it began to move quickly through the streets, and in a very short time they arrived at the royal palace.

If that's not the essence of Laozi, I don't know what is!

Concluding Session

Profs. Bol & Kirby in discussion. Always entertaining to see those two battling ideas around.

Are these ancient rulers and philosophers the Founding Fathers of China?

Yes, in some sense. The ancient texts are the classics. Even today, people look back at them not just as history but as a source for important ideas.

There's a notion of Confucian China. What does this mean? The former president, Hu Jintao, talked of an harmonious society, perhaps recalling the ancient sense of harmony.

Few episodes in history have been more contested than China's Confucian past. The political revolution in the first part of the twentieth century fought to overturn what some said was the dead legacy of Confucianism. Mao Zedong in the Cultural Revolution needed a comprehensive effort to overturn what he called old society. A powerful anti-Confucian.

Are there political foundations from ancient China that are important to China's future?

Take the *tianming*, the Mandate of Heaven, as a concept of legitimacy. Today they call the current government of China, *Tianchao*, the heavenly dynasty. With sarcasm. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Sun Yat-sen²⁷ reminded people that *tianming* is not forever, exactly as the Zhou first proclaimed when justifying its revolution. The modern Chinese word for revolution, *geming*, means changing the mandate.

Another ancient concept, of looking to the past for models, is still relevant today. The two names, King Wen and King Wu - Wen and Wu, have come to mean civil and military (see the overview of the Legitimation of Power in Antiquity on page 16). Chairman Mao continues to hold sway, despite controversy, as the political model which sets the ideals if not the practices of the current government.

Mao Zedong compared himself with the first emperor, Qin Shi Huang, who pulled China together out of the warring states and the hundred schools of thought.

Is it possible to have the hundred schools of thought in a time of a unified state?

There are periods in Chinese history where diversity of thought and profound disagreement comes when states are setting their course, rather than dissolving. Some looked back at the hundred schools of thought and see it as a period of decline, yet this is the foundation of the intellectual richness of Chinese culture.

The idea of diversity within unity would be practiced in the twentieth century. Let a hundred flowers bloom. Let a hundred schools of thought contend.

²⁷ From Wikipedia: un Yat-sen (12 November 1866 – 12 March 1925) was a Chinese revolutionary, first president and founding father of the Republic of China, and medical practitioner. As the foremost pioneer of Republic of China, Sun is referred to as the "Father of the Nation" in the Republic of China (ROC), and the "forerunner of democratic revolution" in the People's Republic of China.

Part 2: The Creation and End of a Centralized Empire

Introduction

This is a 6 minute video of a discussion between Profs. Bol & Kirby.

At the end of Part 1, China was in disarray with many warring states and 100 schools of thought. Let's see how it became a centralized bureaucratic empire.

The Qin dynasty came out of the west conquering all other states. The Qin replaced the feudal aristocracy with a central government that sent its own officials to collect taxes and run the territories. The Qin doesn't last long, but the Han dynasty lasted 400 years and proved a centralized empire works, ironing out the relationship between government, society and the economy as it matured.

Of note, there's a **strong relationship between modern China and the Qin.** The Qin emperor, Qin Shi Huang, was famous for unifying the warring states and also for suppressing dispute by burning books and burying scholars alive²⁸. Mao Zedong compared himself to Qin Shi Huang²⁹ as someone who took control of warring states and brought unity after a foreign invasion, in his view, dominated the political scene.

The [demonstration in Tiananmen Square](#) was in support of the memory of Zhou Enlai, in support of Deng Xiaoping. People held banners saying 'Down With Qin Shi Huang', equating Mao Zedong with a brutal emperor who may have been two millennia distant but was as bright in their memory as if he'd ruled yesterday.³⁰

We'll talk about how central government was formed and how the Han eventually fell apart. **Comparing it to the Roman empire** we see how foreign invasion opened the door to a new aristocracy and a new religion, Buddhism. Meanwhile in the Mediterranean, it was Christianity.

Another parallel between China today and the fall of the Han is that the fastest growing religion, in numbers, is Buddhism, whereas the number of people who align themselves with the founding ideology of the PRC - Marxism, Leninism - are few.

So in this section we want to think about the rise of a centralized empire and its subsequent demise and how that bears on later Chinese history.

²⁸ See page 57, Qin Unity and the First Emperor.

²⁹ From Carrie Fisher in BBC News, writing in an [article that quotes Professor Bol](#)https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qin_Shi_Huang: *In fact in 1958, Mao himself made the connection between himself and Qin Shi Huang. "He buried 460 scholars alive - we have buried 46,000 scholars alive," he said in a speech to party cadres. "You [intellectuals] revile us for being Qin Shi Huangs. You are wrong. We have surpassed Qin Shi Huang a hundredfold."*

³⁰ For references to the 1989 demonstration in Tiananmen Square, see:
page 53 – Why the Tiananmen demonstrators shouted ‘Down with Qin Shi Huang.’
page 286 – Why the heavy-handed government response should not have been a surprise.
page 315 – Reference to Mao as a latter-day Qin Shi Huang, purportedly by Lin Biao in the 571 plan.

Week 7: Forging a Unified Empire: Qin

Historical Overview



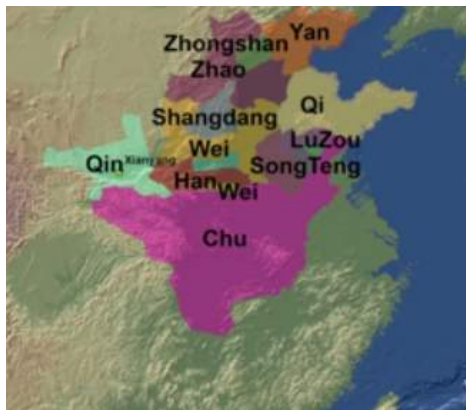
<u>Year (BCE)</u>	<u>Event</u>
350	Shang Yang reforms Qin. Decades later, Qin begins its expansion.
316	Qin turns south, colonizing the non-Chinese states of Ba and Shu, the fertile lands of present day Sichuan Basin.
256	The King of Zhou surrenders, ending the 800-year dynasty.
<u>231-221</u>	The last decade of the Warring States ends with Qin conquering the remaining six states:
230	Han
229-228	Zhou
226-223	Chu
225	Wei
227-222	Yan
221	Qi
210	Death of the first emperor and subsequent fall of Qin.

Thus is the ruler of Qin now the ruler of Tianxia, all under heaven. He replaced the Zhou feudal aristocracy with a centralized bureaucracy, imposing a unified currency, unified weights and measures, and most importantly, a common written language.

While this was going on, the tribes of the northern steppes joined forces as the Xiongnu confederation, the first inner-Asian empire. To defend Qin, the emperor built the Great Wall (Changcheng).

Though many of the institutions lasted thousands of years, the Qin fell after the first emperor's death in 210 BCE.

Forging a Unified Empire



Although the Zhou was nominally in control, it had no power to impose peace over the warring states of the third century BCE. Some other power had to arise. What is striking in the map of the period is how the Qin stands beyond the passes, small and isolated, in lands long ago abandoned to barbarians by the Western Zhou.

Qin Finds the Path to Power



Kudos to Prof. Bol. This was one of my favorite lectures.

In the third century BCE, a kind of stasis had settled over the warring states. The Zhou king had a nominal suzerainty.³¹ What sparked the Qin to fill that vacuum, driving in from the west to conquer the other states?

Prof. Bol describes a conversation between Master [Shang Yang](#) and the lord of Qin³²:



Shang Yang travels to see the lord of Qin and says, *I see that you are an ambitious man.*

The lord of Qin says, *yes I am.*

Shang Yang said, *well, tell me, do you want to be a king like the Zhou king: glorious, honorable, but powerless? Or do you want to be a hegemon, somebody who has the political and military power to make other states accept his will.*

And the lord of Qin says, *I want to be a hegemon.*

Shang Yang says, *well, you know if you do, you'll have to change your policies. You'll have to institute laws of your making.*

The advisers to the king are somewhat shocked, and the lord of Qin says, *well, if I have to change my policies, that will create opposition.*

And Shang Yang says, *it will create opposition, but if they lead to great accomplishment, people will accept the changes you make.*

The ministers, the high officials of the lords, gather round and say: *This is wrong. We know that from antiquity, ritual has been the way in which to govern well: carrying out the rituals, performing the sacrifices, providing a model for the people. Your policy, these policies of laws, break with ritual.*

Shang Yang says, *well, they do, that's true. But tell me: should you, lord, be making the rituals, or are you a slave to the rituals of antiquity?*

And again his ministers lean in and say, *but the models of antiquity have proven the test of time. We should follow them.*

Shang Yang says, *they were good in their time. But today is a different time. To ignore the opportunities today is to give up and try to imitate the ancients, and it will never get you anywhere.*

Shang Yang goes on to say that the lord of Qin has farmers, soldiers, and supervisory officials. He explains their purpose: the officials can lead the soldiers into battle with the wealth created by the farmers.

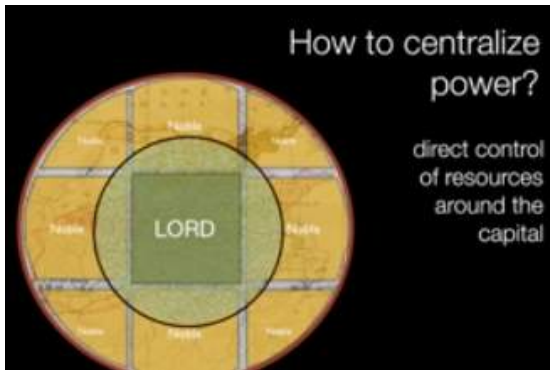
We can see the hold that the rituals have over the ministers and the appeal that conquest has for the Qin lord. We can see how the Qin lord took advantage of a moment in history to fill a power vacuum and to overturn centuries of ritual ancestor worship.

My own thoughts: Was the shift to a unified bureaucratic government inevitable, and if it hadn't been the Qin, it would have been someone else? To me, it's one of those examples where events can be viewed as driven by geography and climate and '[guns, germs, and steel](#)'. Or viewed instead as the sum of the actions of motivated individuals. It's an interesting question. There are moments, like a skier turning on a mogul, when history balances weightlessly on the actions of one person. Through the Qin lord, Shang Yang changed Chinese history forever. Was this inevitable, that the ritualistic feudal aristocracy would transform itself to a bureaucratic empire? Or without Shang Yang, would history have taken a different course?

³¹ From Google <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suzerainty>: *a sovereign or state having some control over another state that is internally autonomous; a feudal overlord.* As a nominal suzerain, the Zhou king had putative control but no real power.

³² From [Wikipedia](#) with my edits: Duke Xiao of Qin (381–338 BC) was the ruler of the Qin state from 361 to 338 BC during the Warring States period. Duke Xiao is best known for employing the Legalist statesman Shang Yang from the State of Wey and authorizing him to conduct a series of upheaving political, military and economic reforms in Qin. Although the reforms were potentially controversial and drew violent opposition from many Qin politicians, Duke Xiao supported Shang Yang fully and the reforms did help to transform Qin into a dominant superpower among the Seven Warring States.

New Ways of Mobilizing the Population



This lecture describes how the (oppressive!) Qin bureaucratic state extracted resources from its population.

In the Zhou feudal system, land was divided between the lord and the nobles, making the lord dependent on the armies of the nobles for conquest. If the nobles acceded, it was only for the one campaign. To gain independence from the nobles, the lord needed more central control of resources.

But how to transition from feudal control to direct bureaucratic control?

One way was to directly control the resources in the immediate vicinity of the lord.

Another way was to directly control any new territory that was conquered. All the central states adopted this mechanism. In particular, the Qin used an administrative unit called the **district or county, the *xian***, which even today refers to **the lowest level of administrative unit that's guided by centrally appointed officials**.



The Qin was most effective at centralizing power for these reasons:

- It could transition large under-populated territory by filling them with immigrants from wars.
- The weaker feudal nobles could be recast as officials and military officers.

The Qin redefined the state, the *Guo*, from feudal to bureaucratic.

How to Control Farmers, Soldiers, and Officials



Farmers don't like to be taxed. Soldiers don't like to fight. Officials are greedy.

Shang Yang offered the lord of Qin a solution:

- (a) Give no rewards outside the bureaucracy. In other words, destroy the merchant class.
- (b) Give no honor outside of that bestowed by the state.

Shang Yang says that to keep farmers working the land and paying taxes, make sure they can't get off the farm. Forbid luxuries so they don't have the desire to consume them. Farmers would then have no choice but to live a simple and frugal life. Don't let officials maintain slaves and estates. Raise bridge tolls so merchants can't afford to travel.³³

When Xunzi visits Qin, he sees a society with good, hardworking people, but he also sees gloom and fear.

In the Qin bureaucracy there were eighteen ranks with entry only possible through the military. To join, the elite must fight and their sons must also fight. The Qin lord ruled that households with more than two adult males would pay double the taxes, forcing families to split up to produce more wealth to afford the taxes. Households were organized in groups that were jointly held responsible for each other's taxes, encouraging snitches.³⁴

The laws were enforced impartially, however, regardless of title.

³³ Similarly, in the early Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang required merchants to carry passports, restricting their travel. See page 195. Restricting the travel of merchants crimps their ability to move goods and money and negotiate agreements.

³⁴ This is similar in some ways to Wang Anshi's advice to Emperor Shenzong of the Song, to organize households in hierarchies, in part to collect taxes and tattle on tax evaders, page 150. And to Zhu Yuanzhang's Village System, page 194. Also see Wu's Expansion of State, page 75. Also, Mao's rules for political prisoners as reported by Nien Cheng in *Life and Death in Shanghai*, page 312.

Qin Unity and the First Emperor



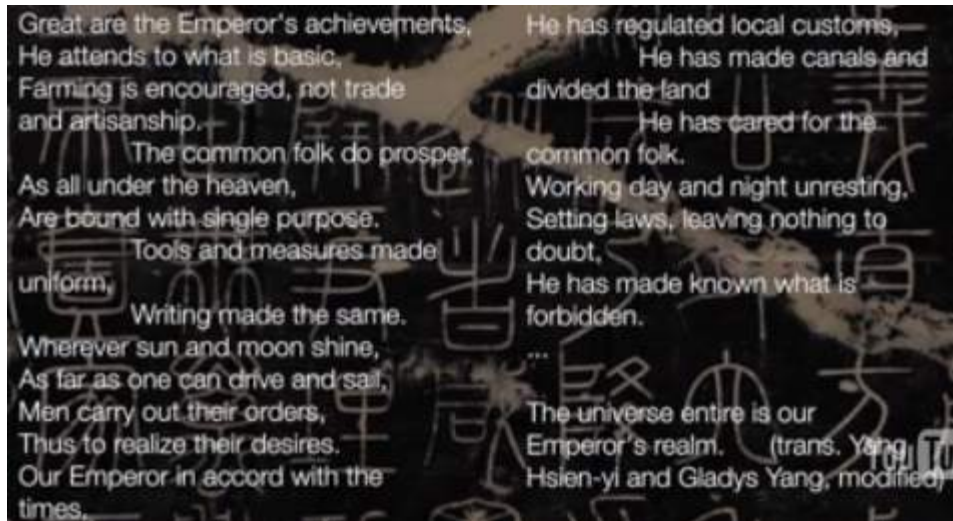
By 221 BCE the Qin has conquered all the other states. All nobles are moved to the capital. Weapons are gathered and forged into statues.

The Qin forms a tripartite government of civil administrators, military administrators, and overseers.

It unifies widths of roads and heights of walls and imposes a common currency, a common written language, a single calendar, and common set of weights and measures.

It is the first Chinese dynasty to burn books and bury scholars (alive!). Not necessarily Confucian scholars, but those who looked to the Zhou rather than Qin.

The lord of Qin, Qin Shi Huang, is now the first emperor, a new title he accords himself. This image is from a monument erected two years after the unification in 219 BCE.



A New Imperial Ideology: Cosmic Resonance

In this section, we'll turn our thoughts from the mobilization of the Qin Empire to its ideology. Cosmic Resonance is based on what passed for science in China at that time.

We first heard mention of Cosmic Resonance as Zou Yan's strategy for gaining control during the Warring States Period, on page 47.



The Huangdi. The emperor began by positioning himself prominently in the firmament by taking a new title, huangdi. Di means high god, huang means august. Huangdi could be translated as august thearch (ruler of a monarchy of gods).



The Pole Star. He named his capital the Pole Star; the Yellow River was the Deshui or Milky Way. He had replicas built of the palaces of the states he'd conquered, all in the Pole Star.

Multiples of Six. When weights and measures were unified, they were all figured in multiples of six. Hats were six inches tall. Axle width, important for ensuring carts could all travel in the same ruts in the road, were six feet or multiples of six feet.

So what is the significance of six? It's one of the numbers of the water element:

Five Phases of Change Correlations

PHASE	wood	fire	earth	metal	water
SEASON	spring	summer	midsummer	fall	winter
DIRECTION	east	south	center	west	north
PLANET	Jupiter	Mars	Saturn	Venus	Mercury
CROP	wheat	rice	"grain"	millet	legumes
IMPLEMENT	compass	balance	cord	square	plumb
EMBLEM	bluegreen dragon	vermillion bird	yellow dragon	white tiger	dark warrior
COLOR	bluegreen	vermillion	yellow	white	black
METAL	lead	copper	gold	mercury	iron
BEAST	scaly	feather	naked	hairy	armored
NUMBER	3, 8	2, 7	5, 10	4, 9	1, 6
FLAVOR	sour	bitter	sweet	pungent	salty
SMELL	musty	burnt	fragrant	rank	putrid



One of the masters from the hundred schools of thought, Zou Yan, believed nature had patterns which, if we could understand them, would help us fit profitably into the pattern. The chart above, the [Wu Xing](#), shows the five phases. Most importantly, it transforms heaven from something run by gods to something run along a predictable set of principles.

Wood, fire, earth, metal, water. Each phase has its own season, color, planet, flavor and scent.

Cosmic Resonance 1



The universe entire is our emperor's realm. In the new ideology, the emperor is the master of the universe.

I've put an annotated copy of Andrew Meyer's paper on Cosmic Resonance in my public Dropbox folder (no longer available). Here are my notes, which don't necessarily express

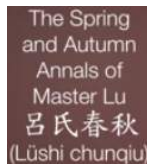
Meyer's opinions:

- Simultaneous non-linear causality, years ahead of Schrödinger. Action at a distance.
- Starting as an interesting idea, cosmic resonance became the central philosophy of the Han dynasty.
- Proofs for the concept are found in magnetism, phototropism, and harmonic resonance. That ain't bad for the 3rd century BCE, from this engineer's point of view.
- The *Vital Essence* or *jing*, is the means of communication at a distance, like the ether in 19th century physics, only more spiritual. It's the refined form of *qi*, the substance of which all things are made. Democritus had atoms; this is the Chinese equivalent of the fundamental substance. There is a sense of a cross-cultural inevitability, of the philosophy in every age reaching for its unified theorem.
- *Spirit* or *shen* is the entity responsible for consciousness, related to *jing*.
- Cosmic Resonance is an emergent phenomenon, like *shen*, arising out of *qi*. It can't be understood or articulated.

Now, onto the characteristics and principles:

- Objects that are mutually resonant have similar shapes and fall into the same category.
- Human relationships create a resonant affinity.
- *Qi* is constantly in flux between *yin* and *yang*. (shades of Zhuangzi's constant flux and transformation, see page 49). The winter solstice is the zenith of yin, the summer solstice for yang, and the equinoxes bring a balance.
- Further, *qi* has the five phases of the *wu xing*, which are the building blocks of the universe: Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water. Two things that share a phase are linked by cosmic resonance. The phases also cycle, with Wood strong in February, followed in 4 months by Fire, by Earth in two more months, then Metal, then Water. Wood is the prime category with the greatest potency.
- The ruler and master of the universe ([Sherman McCoy](#), you ain't got nothing) brings harmony to his realm by following the *wu xing* and carrying out the ordinances of each phase in its period.

Cosmic Resonance 2



The Spring and Autumn Annals, written at the Qin court, brings all the schools of thought under the umbrella of Cosmic Resonance.

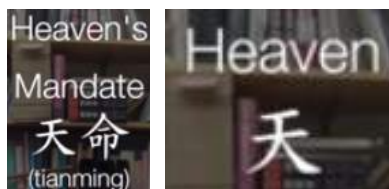
Things that share a likeness stimulate, attract, and respond to each other: magnets, stringed instruments. People mostly die at night because the night-time yin pulls up the sickness yin.

Daily almanacs and the Yin-Yang books gave the hour of the day that's best for each activity. Even today, Chinese almanacs give the days that are most propitious for certain activities.

Things in human life - the colors of clothes, the seasons - resonate. They're in the same categories and thus are linked, even if they're in different parts of our experience.

Cosmic Resonance 3

Tianming of the Zhou vs Tian of the Qin and Han



On the face of it, the Qin lord discarded *tianming* on his way to becoming the *huangdi*, the august thearch. Yet we're still talking about *tian*. Why?

The days of the Zhou heaven, a godlike figure who grants the right to rule -- those days are gone. Heaven is now the universe which obeys the principles of cosmic resonance. Heaven is the *qi*, the yin and the yang, the five phases.

Qi and Yin/Yang and the Five Phases



Qi is the basic substance of the universe³⁵.

Yin and yang are the alternating kinds of *qi*. Sunlight and dark, male and female, heaven and earth, light and heavy.

The five phases of change are annual cycles of *qi* within which yin and yang are also cycling.

Yin/yang and the five phases are both theories of nature which join together. While in one phase, the next phase is nascent within it, becoming more prevalent as the season progresses.

My issue with assessment question #8

8. *The Qin ruler no longer subscribed to Zhou religious beliefs, and sought to legitimize himself through a new ideological system. At the top of the Zhou religious system is Heaven, which gives the Mandate to rule. In the worldview promoted by Qin, is there a god, or gods?*

Following the question, we have several possible answers, one of which is "yes, and the emperor is divinity incarnate." Back in my notes, I have the Qin ruler appointing himself the *huangdi*, the august thearch, the god among gods. So how is he not the divinity incarnate?

And now (weeks later, as I'm re-reading my notes) I'll answer my own issue: we've replaced the gods with the pervasive substance of *qi*, in its many forms and phases.

The Qin-Han Text and the Meaning of Cosmic Resonance Theory

What is the point of Cosmic Resonance Theory? Is this about politics? About the natural world? Is Cosmic Resonance Theory a form of what we today call "science"?

I believe this is a form of what we call science. It's based on observations of magnetism, phototropism, and harmonic resonance. Does it pass the [scientific method](#) of observation, hypothesis, proof, and verification? No. But that wasn't even established until the 17th century, so let's give the early Chinese some latitude.

Is it also about politics? Yes. It's a way to discard many of the Zhou and Shang rituals of ancestor worship and impose the will of the emperor on the people, through his insistence that all follow the rules of Cosmic Resonance and therefore his rules, since he administers the rules with the many hands of his bureaucracy.

³⁵ Discussed in detail on page 87.

Lessons from the Qin Terracotta Warriors



The emperor was buried in a tomb intended as a microcosm of the universe. *The universe entire is our emperor's realm.*

He tried to find the elixir of immortality and sidestep death, but failing that, he created a [tumulus](#), a man-made mountain, containing ranks of life-size terracotta soldiers. The picture here is from a [replica built in Katy, Texas](#) (closed in 2011 due to a highway expansion).

Technological vs Societal Innovation

Historians talk about technological innovation as the basis for historical change. The Qin had iron crossbows to arm their soldiers, but so did the other states. What the Qin had that the others did not was social mobilization.

Social Mobilization

The only way up in Qin society was to fight well and gain merit. This created the mass armies, symbolized so well by the terracotta soldiers, that benefited from the new technologies of crossbows and iron bolts. In this case, however, technology played only a supporting role. The star was the new society, a Spartan meritocracy of soldiers, farmers, and bureaucrats.

Individuals Among the Masses



Westerners often think of the Chinese as a uniform people, their individualism stripped away by a society that encourages ritual sameness. The Qin is an example of the kind of society where everyone must conform and be alike. But to think that conformity necessarily buries the individual (so to speak) would be a profound mistake.

A friend of the Professor once told him that he most admired America's *lack* of individuality -- that the Chinese were *too* individualistic. Ironic, eh?

If we look at the terracotta soldiers, the arms and legs and torsos are identical. But the heads are all different, the faces and the hair, with enormous variation.

The Qin established how to mass produce these manikins while maintaining a high level of individuality. That was a unique accomplishment.

See page 168 for more on the State vs. the Individual.

Epilogue: The Fall of Qin

As suddenly as the Qin arose, unifying all the states in ten years, it [collapsed only ten years later in 206 BCE](#) under the reign of the Second Emperor. The rise and fall of the Qin took only one generation, barely changing hands once, compared to the forty generations of the Zhou dynasty. Why?

There's a story of two soldiers who were late reporting to duty. The punishment for tardiness would be death for them and their families, so with nothing to lose they opted for revolution.³⁶

Was it the harshness of Qin law that doomed the dynasty? Did it expand too quickly, failing to secure its roots in each conquered state before moving to the next? Or was it the poor leadership of the Second Emperor?

You might take from the story of the soldiers that a centralized bureaucratic empire could not last, that China would return to Zhou feudalism.

The next module will explore why that's the wrong lesson.

³⁶ I thought the story was apocryphal, but I later read that, "In 209 BC, a group of conscripted peasants delayed by rain decided to become outlaws rather than face death for arriving late for their frontier service. To their surprise, they soon found thousands of malcontents eager to join them." [[Ebrey, *Illustrated History of China*, p. 63](#)]

Week 8: Making Empire Last: Western Han

Introduction



After the fall of the Qin, many thought the era of the centralized bureaucratic empire, ruled by a single family that dispatched officials to all corners of the land, was gone as quickly as it had arrived. But it was only the Qin that failed.

The Han dynasty showed how such an empire could last.



It built its success on three fronts, each with its own set of issues.

Court Politics

Who makes decisions? What are their rivalries?

Institutional Tensions

Fundamental tensions that have to be resolved for the polity³⁷ to survive.

Ideology

With all the power of the empire in one place, what limits the Huangdi?

Historical Overview

In 202 BC, the rebel lieutenant Liu Bang, later known as Emperor Gaozu, founded the Han.

The Han was a compromise between the Qin centralized bureaucracy and Zhou feudal aristocracy. Half of the empire was divided into kingdoms which the Qin had conquered and dismantled and now under the Han were struggling for power in the central court.

In 154 BCE the princes of those kingdoms revolted and were barely suppressed. In the north, the Xiongnu raided³⁸. To quell the raid, beginning in 201 BCE the Han began sending Liu princesses with lavish dowries to marry Xiongnu leaders, a practice called *heqin*³⁹.

From 141 to 87 BCE, Emperor Wu (aka Wudi), the great grandson of Liu Bang (aka Gaozu), curtailed the territories of the feudal princes, centralized power, campaigned against the Xiongnu, and sent expeditions to Central Asia and Vietnam, bringing the Han to its maximum territorial extent. To avoid raising individual taxes, he minted coin, monopolized industries and taxed private business.

Wudi adopted Confucianism, requiring the Classic of Odes or *Shijing*, and the Classic of Documents or *Shangshu* for education of bureaucrats (page 68).

In 9 CE, Wang Mang took the throne, ending the Western Han and founding the Xin. He failed in his attempt to restore the dynasty to the model of the Zhou as described in the Confucian classics.

³⁷ A country or state or some geographical region with a corresponding government.

³⁸ First mentioned in the Historical Overview of the Qin on page 54, the Xiongnu sprang from the tribes of the northern steppes and were the impetus for the Qin emperor building the Great Wall.

³⁹ I don't have access to Project Muse, but there's a paper on Sima Qian's description of Han-Xiongnu marriage diplomacy by Tamara Chin. See [here](#).

Court Politics

New Dynasty
新朝
(Xinchao)
9-25 CE

The Han begins with a rebellion against the Qin, followed by an interregnum called the New Dynasty, before the Han Dynasty is restored.

The Han Dynasty lasts 400 years, including the former Han with its capital at Chang'an, the interregnum, and the Eastern Han with its capital at Luoyang.

Why does the Qin fall?

Because the emperor spent all his time seeking immortality? Because his son, the second emperor, listened too much to the chief eunuch to avoid public appearances? Or because he was so arrogant and dictatorial as to burn the books of antiquity and bury the scholars alive?

Stories of the Han Court



When Liu Bang asks his chief allies why they were successful, they tell him he's a great commander. He replies that it was them: Han Xin, for leading men in battle; Xiao He for his skill with logistics; Zhang Liang for his strategy. But Liu Bang understood how to manage men.

His deep understanding, however, stopped at the feet of his wife, the Empress Lu, and in frustration with her, he turned to concubines. When the Empress Lu saw that the sons of the concubines threatened the birthright of her own son, the heir apparent, she first maneuvered to stop the concubine and then, after Liu Bang died (in 195 BCE), she killed the concubine and her clan and all other threats to her son's rule.

Until she died in 180 BCE, the Empress Lu ruled the dynasty through her son's hands.

A generation later, a revolt from the Eastern Kingdoms threatened the house of Liu. As a boy, the Emperor Jing had killed an heir of one of the Eastern kings⁴⁰, inciting a grudge that swung back around years later. The revolution was put down and the Han reached a great height of power under Emperor Wu.

The Beheading in the Sutra Hall

Beheading at the
Hall of the Classics
新經堂

Two or three generations later, in 9 AD, the Han falls to Wang Mang, an episode that illustrates the personal animosities of the court and was dramatized in an opera.



Filial and Spousal Devotion at its Finest

Wu Han was a general serving Wang Mang. Wang Mang offered him his daughter to marry. After they were wed, Wu Han's mother revealed to Wu Han the shocking news that his father had been killed by Wang Mang.

To avenge his father's death, Wu Han must now kill his wife, the princess, Wang Mang's daughter. Torn between the love for his wife and the unbreakable duty to his father, he goes before his wife to explain.

She does what any good and loving wife would do and kills herself to relieve him of his terrible decision. Learning of her suicide and knowing Wu Han will never forgive her, his mother kills herself. Wu Han gathers his mother's bones and sets out to avenge his family by joining the Han prince, Liu Xiu, to defeat Wang Mang and restore the Han dynasty. It's a tangled story of love and devotion, showing how loyalties at court are complex and divided between the state, father, mother, and wife.

What Turns of History Can Court Politics Explain?

Not much. Liu Bang is skilled at managing men in a dynasty under threat and in a court filled with tension and somehow the dynasty survived.

My thoughts: perhaps it explains, at least in part, why the Qin failed. If the first emperor had stronger advisors and if the second emperor was stronger than his advisors, perhaps the Qin would have lasted longer.

⁴⁰ From [Wikipedia](#): While Emperor Jing was crown prince, Liu Pi's heir apparent [Lu Xian](#) had been on an official visit to the capital [Chang'an](#), and they competed in a [liubo](#) board game. During arguments over the game, Liu Xian offended then-Crown Prince Qi, and Prince Qi threw the liubo board at Liu Xian, resulting in his death. Liu Pi thus had great hatred for the new emperor.

Centralism vs. Regionalism



The Western Han is composed of regions:

- North China Plain
- Northwest behind the passes, where Chang'an, the capital is located
- Southeast: marshy and wet, good for rice
- Sichuan

Should these regions be centrally administered or should they have their own governments?

Should taxes be the same for rice vs. wheat regions, which have different harvest calendars and different issues with resources? In the north, the fields are flat, but the SE needs investment in rice paddies and irrigation.

Should policies be the same (one kind of fairness) or take into account natural regional differences in wealth and population (another kind of fairness)?

Central power is necessary for defense and for investment in multi-regional projects, like canals. But the Qin suffered from too much central power with no regional variation.

To me, this is not unlike the great debate in the founding of the 13 colonies of the United States, of how much power the federal government should have over the colonies. The dispute almost broke up the union in its infancy, leading to the clumsy electoral college system and rearing up again with the civil war. Even now the inflammatory phrase states' rights⁴¹ remains an issue that needs periodic adjudication in the U.S. Supreme Court, impacting marijuana laws, public school funding, and the incipient question of a federal VAT. It is a particularly thorny issue.

The Han chose to divide the country into those territories ruled directly by the Chang'an capital - the West, Northwest, and Sichuan - and the territory in the East governed by their respective kingdoms. Thus the Han restored some independence to the old Zhou feudal states, which they used to advance their sons into power, which then threatened the Han and eventually became an outright revolt in 154 BCE. And this forced the Han to return to the Qin mode of bureaucratic centralization.

Feudalism vs. Bureaucracy

Feudalism: The ruler delegates territorial authority to an official, who has limited authority over the law, the judiciary and administration, taxation, infrastructure, building and investment. But not military authority, although in the Han the kingdoms took some military power.

For some of my thoughts on the definition of feudalism, see footnote 11.

The great advantage is that of any direct representational government (e.g. congress vs. the senate) where power derives locally. If you make the locals miserable, you won't stay in power - a good thing.

Bureaucracy: The ruler dispatches administrators whose authority is limited to carrying out the laws and policies of the central government. The power and wealth of the administrator derives from the center. His career is focused on the central bureaucracy, since his regional appointment is only a temporary post. His performance is judged by

⁴¹ Under the 10th amendment to the U.S. constitution, any powers not granted to the Federal Government nor prohibited from the States are reserved to the States or the people.

how well he serves the central government. He makes the locals happy only to the extent that their needs align with the wishes of the central government.

Qin vs Han: The Han tried for a balance while the Qin administered all regions centrally. As a result, the Han built a large civil bureaucracy numbering upwards of 120,000 people.⁴²

This confuses me: if the Han is delegating authority to the kingdoms, why does it need a large bureaucracy?

Heredity vs. Merit

How to recruit officials? By lineage or by worthiness?⁴³

Hereditary Right or Protection (Yin Privilege)

Should the right to hold office be inherited? Sometimes, as with nobility, you directly inherit the title from your father or grandfather. In practice, high officials obtain the right to see their sons or grandsons take office or become eligible for official rank.

Merit

Should the right to hold office be awarded for performance? Merit comes from success in battle, educational achievement, or gaining a competence or specialization in a discipline like law.

Qin vs. Han

The Qin had a strict meritocracy.

The Han, with its early balance of feudalism, allows protection privilege for high-ranking officials, giving officials convicted of crimes the opportunity to buy off their punishments. (Unless they're poor historians, like Sima Qian, who can't afford it.)

At the same time, Han recruited new officials chosen for merit in the form of honesty, filial devotion, and high morals. Schools in the capital were another path to the bureaucracy. Obviously enough, people who rose through schooling tended to think merit was good.

The problem is that smart, talented people are not necessarily honest. This leads to the argument, questionable as it may be, that hereditary right is superior because it avoids promoting the crafty and talented yet potentially dishonest people, choosing instead those who have grown up with the system and are loyal to the people within it.

My thought: at least the individual dishonesty of those chosen for merit is less pervasive and corrupt than the institutional dishonesty of the clan when individuals are chosen for their lineage and loyalty.

Civil vs. Military

military 武	civil 文	Han 漢
• investing in army	• investing in roads canals	
• expanding territories	• reducing taxes	

How do we divide resources between civil and military uses, regardless of whether they administered by a regional or central authority,?

Military resources generally go toward territorial expansion. Civil uses include roads, canals, and tax relief.

The Qin always set the military above the civil, but the Han dynasty did not, accumulating resources until, by the time of Emperor Wu, "the grain was turning red with mildew" and the ropes binding the strings of cash were rotting. Wu applied the excess resources to military expansion.

⁴² Compare this to the 40,000 bureaucrats of Later Imperial China, page 172.

⁴³ Meritocracy was first introduced by the Sage King Yao, when he chose a commoner named Shun, over his own son, as the next king. See page 11.

Han Military Expansion



The expansion took Wudi into Korea and Vietnam. He pushed his empire southwest, around the mountains and through the valleys of what we now call the Burma Road. He hammered north against the Xiongnu and far, far northwest into the desert.

At first the empire met with success, but over time the distant garrisons stretched their logistics and drained their resources, demanding greater revenue and shifting the balance of civil and military.

Inner vs. Outer Court

Inner Court: The emperor and his attendants, which include the regents, the empress, the relatives of those and the relatives of the concubines and eunuchs. Since their power derives from the emperor, they want his power to be absolute.

Outer Court: The civil bureaucracy: administrators, tax officials, judiciary, and military officials. All of these may rise to the rank of prime minister or chief counselor. They want rational policy rather than arbitrary diktat. They don't like the eunuchs in the ear of the emperor. They want policy decisions made by their people.

Qin: The first emperor had total control, but his bureaucracy was also effective. With the second emperor, the inner court gained authority. The eunuchs convinced the emperor to restrict his public appearances, giving the inner court power that it handled poorly.

Han: Empress Lu tried to accord herself power, but the bureaucracy generally agreed that the House of Liu should be in control.

Court Women and Consort Families

Consort families often included high officials and daughters of emperors and regents.



Given the role of Empress Lu in subverting the House of Liu, it's been typical of Chinese historiography to blame the conflicts of the dynastic courts on the role of women and the families of women married to emperors.

While we know of the factional fighting in Wu's court, one could argue that the consort families in the Han were successful in bridging the inner and outer courts.

The Balancing Act

The Han began by changing some of the Qin policies:

- Made room for hereditary right.
- Allowed greater regionalism, restoring feudal lords to power.
- Focused on the domestic over the military.

Gradually, however, the Han dynasty moved back toward the Qin policies but less harshly, allowing regional flexibility and accepting input from official families. This flexibility, despite the problems with the inner court and sometimes without great leadership, is why the Han succeeded.

They balanced the tensions between center and region, merit and hereditary right, civil and military.

Discussion

Choose an event from one of these and explain in terms of court politics and institutional conflicts

- The fall of Qin
- The rule of Empress Lu
- The rebellion of 154 BCE

I apologize for giving this short shrift - it's divisional weekend in American football, my family is visiting, and time is short. ☺

I'm choosing the rebellion as it seems to me to represent a turning point in the acceptance of a central authority for Chinese government.

Let's start with the Qin dynasty, which struggled with maintaining its power base through its early imposition of a harsh and heavy-handed central bureaucracy over the feudal lords. An uprising destroyed the dynasty shortly after it had begun.

So the Han tries to balance central and regional power, in much the same way, it seems to me, that the early central (federal) government of the United States tried to balance power with the southern states. The southern states rebelled to maintain their 'way of life' which was counter to federal policy, resulting in the U.S. Civil War. A bit simplistic, but it demonstrates the parallel.

In a similar vein, the feudal lords rebelled to resist the imposition of the emperor's edicts.

Liu Pi, the feudal lord of Wu, already hated Emperor Jing because of the killing of Liu Pi's heir Liu Xian by the Emperor when he was crown prince during their famous game of liubo. A member of the inner court, Chao Cuo, a long advisor to the Emperor, suggested that Liu Pi was destined to rebel someday anyway, so he encouraged inciting the rebellion before the feudal lords gained strength.

When the rebellion began, Jing first tried to appease Liu Pi by executing Chao Cuo, but that accomplished nothing since the personal animosity was between Liu Pi and Emperor Jing. Chao Cuo was merely an instrument. This was a power struggle between an angry feudal lord and the Emperor.

By quelling the rebellion and imposing a central authority over all Chinese lands, Jing established the balance of power as originating from the center and put the feudal aristocracy firmly in the past.

How to Constrain the Emperor



Wudi was the second most powerful emperor after Liu Bang (Gaozu).

Several sources advocate the emperor controlling a dynasty and all the people in the dynasty centrally with absolute power: the [Huainanzi](#) written under the patronage of Liu An, one of the Liu princes.

How do we limit the power the emperor wields? What forces will best restrain him (or her)?

History as an Answer (Sima Qian)⁴⁴



With his father, Sima Qian wrote the *shiji*. It's a classic text worthy of the many thoughtful annotations and interpretations added to the copies scribed during the Ming dynasty.

The *shiji* begins with Basic Annals, going back to mythical emperors like Huangdi. It has treatises - extended discussions of the history of law - of the building of canals and the damming of the Yellow river, of the economy, the tax system, and the calendar. Half the book consists of biographies, which became a standard feature of later historiographies.

Sima Qian tells us that he saw how the patterns of heaven and humankind were parallel. He sought and failed to find universal patterns in history. What he did find, however, was that while lists of facts and events and court records provide the warp and weft of history, it's the motivations of the most powerful individuals, revealed through their biographies, that colors the past and gives us understanding.

Sima Qian is neither a fan of the Qin or of Wudi and his expansionist policies. But he also says that the problems of the Han did not occur overnight, nor could they be changed overnight.

⁴⁴ In a related manner, family genealogy served as a reminder and a constraint on moral values, that descendants should not besmirch the moral legacy of their ancestors. The written genealogy is a history of the family that guards that legacy. See page 175.

Sima Qian's personal history came to a crisis when he defended the honor of an official accused of being a traitor. In punishment for speaking out, Sima Qian was sentenced to castration. Because of his rank, he could buy off the punishment but lacking the money he chose painful humiliation rather than suicide. He wrote a letter explaining that he accepted castration so he could finish his book.

Sima Qian: The Sacred Duty of the Historian



This is an excerpt from Chapter 12 of the [Sources of Chinese Tradition, Vol 1](#). The Chinese historian transmitted his sources as accurately as possible, adding only enough color and conjunctive text as necessary. Han scholars believed that history followed the cycles of yin/yang and the five phases of CRT.

Sima Tan began *The Records of the Grand Historian (Shiji)* and his son, Sima Qian finished them. He divided the work into five sections: Basic Annals, Chronological Tables, Treatises, Hereditary Houses, Memoirs. Subsequent historians followed this pattern.

Confucian Classics as an Answer

Dong Zhongshu was considered the great Confucian of the Western Han. He wrote a book on cosmic resonance. He was interested in governance. He believed the Classics were the model for the Han, that the Zhou provided normative models for governance. In 136 BCE, Wudi abolished all academic chairs other than those focused on the Five Classics.⁴⁵



The Documents records the achievement of agents.

*The Classics of Odes*⁴⁶ describes the unspoiled naturalness of human will.

The Classic of Changes explains heaven and earth.

The Spring and Autumn Annals judges right and wrong.

The Rites regulates distinctions and introduce self-cultivation and his rule in politics.

So what made the Han accept the Classics as an authority? They began with Confucius, cosmic resonance, and Daoism. Because the Classics had become popular with people at all levels of government and because they represented educational achievement that was valuable in a meritocracy.

The Classics said: we need a ruler, but above the ruler are standards of governance.

Wen Yu Explains the Five Classics (Wujing)

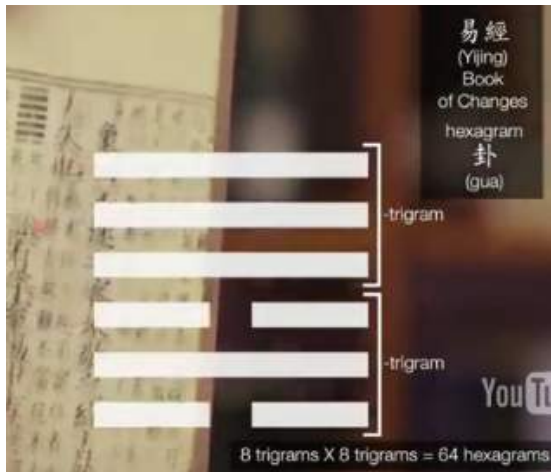
The Classics are living traditions.



The books are read back to front, right to left, but the text is in columns, with pages folded, which traces back to the original bamboo strips on which they wrote.

⁴⁵ In 124 BCE, Wudi established the [Imperial University](#), the “[incipient beginning](#)” of the Civil Service Exam. The Classics would be redefined as the Four Books by Neo-Confucianism in the 11th and 12th centuries. See page 169.

⁴⁶ We reviewed quotes from King Wen on page 24.



1. The **Classic of Odes (Shi Jing)** is an anthology of 305 songs or poems. They contain within them a spontaneous spirit that shines a light on the morality of rule in society.

2. The **Classic of Documents (Shangshu)** is the record of political actions of the Sage kings. They teach the reader the deeper political and moral principles of the sage kings.

3. The **Book of Rites (Liji)** is a collection of essays, believed to be from Confucius and his followers, about self cultivation.

4. The **Book of Changes (Yijing - I Ching)**. Contains 64 hexagrams: stacked lines, some broken and some solid, each of which has a different name. The 64 hexagrams are different combinations of eight trigrams. Scholars believe

each hexagram was originally created by the sage kings, through their ability to see the deeper mechanisms of the cosmos. We might use them today to explain human affairs. When we have questions or troubles, people arrange milfoil stalks to generate certain hexagrams.

The Yijing also has an appended verbalization, the Xici Zhuan, which philosophized how the hexagrams were created by the sage kings and why they link the natural world and human affairs.

5. The **Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu)**, a historical record of the history of the State of Lu, written by Confucius to let people know his political and moral opinions.

Interpreting the Portents from Heaven

We see accounts in the Western Han of officials recording natural events - eclipses, floods - as signs that the cycles of heaven and earth, as described by cosmic resonance, were not in balance. These events were seen as evidence of evil lurking at court. The Han took the events seriously, sometimes making tax remissions to the entire empire, not just the region affected by a flood.

Conclusion

These three forces - the sense of history, the Classics, and the natural portents - all came together in the usurpation of Wang Mang.

Discussion

The discussion of Qin imperial ideology noted the belief in the emperor's power to control the universe. In what ways do the three forms of scholarship discussed in this module challenge or reinforce a conception of imperial power. Write a sentence or two about each:

Following are my thoughts:

History

Perhaps the greatest influence of the historian is to create the fear of legacy. If not for history, if not for a sense of one's position in a stream of events, of being judged in the future, what restraint would emperors feel? We talk about a U.S. President 'burnishing his legacy' in his lame duck years when he no longer strives for reelection.

This is the fear the great leader has of that little man or woman, fifty years hence, writing the definitive history of the emperor's reign.

Sima Qian was that little man. His sacred duty was to do in years hence what he could not do while alive, to wake the emperor at night with the fear of what others might say.

Confucian Classics

What's a legacy without a yardstick for comparison? Confucius presents the highest standard, heaven, with the sage kings as an example of how to meet its standards.

Portents from Heaven

This was a belief in a greater power which exercises its right to discipline the ruler's moral failures.

Confucius showed the past, Sima Qian threatened future judgment, and right this moment the heavens are flooding the rivers and eclipsing the sun. It gave the emperors something to think about.

Week 9: State and Society in Western and Eastern Han

Historical Overview: Wang Mang and Eastern Han

9 CE: Wang Mang overthrew the Han and created the Xin Dynasty. This is the interregnum referenced in Week 8. The Xin was a failed attempt to recreate the ideals of the Zhou.

25-220 Liu Xiu founded the Eastern Han in Luoyang and reigned for 27 years. The Eastern Han would continue, slowly weakening its grip amid the growing influence of Religious Daoism, which inspired a rebellion named the Way of Great Peace (Taiping Dao) in 184 CE. The rebellion continued to burn for 40 more years before the Han ended.

State and Society in Western and Eastern Han

How did the Han State relate to the common people? The last week we focused on the bureaucracy, the centralization of power, the politics of the courts of the empire. This week is about the average Joe paying his taxes and occasionally getting sufficiently fed up with the empire to take part in rebellion. During this period there were more internal rebellions than foreign invasions. So how the government relates to its own people is fundamental to its success.

A. Given the location of county seats, where do you think the bulk of the Han population was located?

the Northern Plains

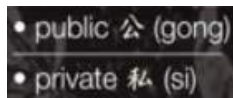
B. Based on the series of maps of Western and Eastern Han territory, what in your view were the most important areas of Han territorial expansion?

They almost always held the SE and always held the north China plain. When possible, they expanded up toward Korea and NW to the silk road.

C. What is the relationship between territorial expansion and population/county administration?

They located county administration sparsely, and with likely logistical issues SW toward Sichuan and NW toward the mountain passes.

What is State? What is Society?



These terms are not well-defined until the 19th century. What meaning do they have in retrospect? Ideally, and **in accordance with Chinese tradition, the political order defines the social and cultural order.**

Places, People, Practices

What are the places, people, and practices that make up state and society?

State: Places, People, and Practices

Places

- Capital city
- Secondary & tertiary (regional?) capitals
- Government centers to administer taxes, adjudicate law
- Military bases and border garrisons

People

- Civil officials
- Military officers and soldiers
- People working in court

These make up a small percent of the population.

Practices

- Tax administration
- Criminal justice
- Defense and territorial expansion (fielding an army)
- Education

The Chinese term for education was not the modern word (jiaoyu) but jiaohua, which means to transform through instruction. Though it's not entirely clear, this may mean the government carrying out rituals, worshipping the gods,

holding proper celebrations. It may mean teaching moral and ethical values. It may mean training civilized, literate members of government.

Society from the State's Perspective

Guan Zhong, from the Warring States period, defines four groups of people:⁴⁷



What criteria define the hierarchy? What alternative hierarchies might there be?

It is often said that in the four-part social order (first mentioned in the writings of Guan Zhong), the merchants are ranked lowest because they do not produce more resources for society, unlike the farmers or the artisans. But when you think about it, the shi, or the officials, don't exactly bring food to the table either. What do you think might be the real logic behind this hierarchy? What alternative hierarchies might there be?

My answers (a little disjoint):

Closeness to Heaven

The officials are closest to heaven, through their relationship with the government, particularly in the Zhou system where the government has Heaven's Mandate. Farmer's are next, as they work the land and are closest to nature (Zhuangzi). Artisans work with nature less directly than farmers, but they have creative aspects to their work, like the Butcher Ding. Merchants do not work with nature.

Mohist Logic

Officials, Artisans/Farmers, Merchants. Officials are highest because the ancients think it's right (heaven's mandate). Artisans serve at the pleasure of the officials, making the bronze vessels and other ritual tools. Farmers supply the goods. You can argue for farmers or artisans, either way.

In retrospect: I got completely lost in the philosophy of the warring states period and forgot that it was all about the state.

The State Hierarchy

The hierarchy is about the value to the state: officials, then revenue-producing farmers, then artisans who work the goods and the merchants at the bottom.

⁴⁷ From the [China Knowledge](#) website: *The population was divided into the four groups of officials (shi 士), peasants (nong 農), craftsmen (gong 工) and merchants (shang 商). This is the origin of the traditional Chinese classification of the population. The Confucians later attributed to those four groups moral values, officials and literati being the highest, merchants the morally lowest group.*

Society: Places, People, and Practices

Based on a kinship system, less hierarchical, more horizontal.

Places

- Villages
- Markets
- Roads

Local, regional, with their own characteristics.

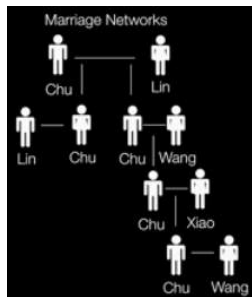
People

- 90% are farmers
- Households and families
- Hierarchy based on wealth, family power, culture

Practices

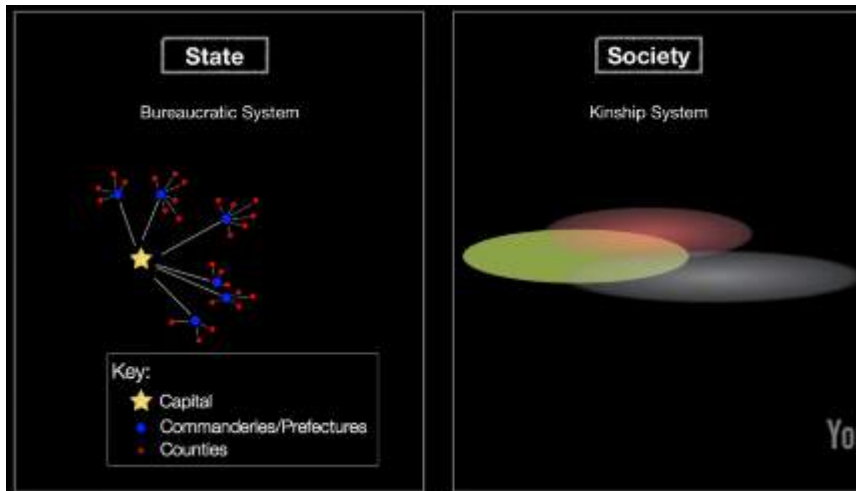
- Farming, food production
- Procreation
- Marriage with kinship ties to other families
- Education in society meant learning how to work: weaving textiles, raising silkworms, farming.
- Religion: how to please the local gods and ask favors of them

Marriage Networks



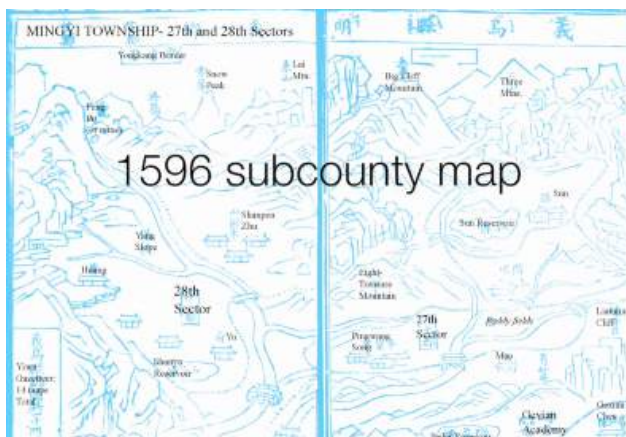
Until the 2nd half of the 20th century, you were not supposed to marry within the same surname. In China, with a limited set of surnames, ten or fewer for most of the population, this practice often forced people to marry outside of their village.

The Different Logics of State and Society



The state follows the abstract hierarchical logic of bureaucracy to command people. Society uses the personal logic of kinship to connect people. Kinship, however, doesn't scale like bureaucracy.

Viewing China from the top down, it makes sense to see the state in terms of the policy decisions at court. But deep inside rural China, far from the center, we think in terms of the families and of farming and trade among a local network of roads and villages.



What's the balance between state and society? Who has the upper hand?

Extracting Resources: The Han Taxation System

What demands did the Han impose on the population after overthrowing the Qin and establishing its empire?

Agricultural Taxes

Agricultural taxes were a percentage of production. The Qin assessed 1/15th of production. The Han reduced that to 1/30th.

Production

4-5 bushels of wheat per acre

5-7 acres in a typical family farm

20-35 bushels per farm

No household could reasonably farm more than 10 acres without oxen. By comparison, a 1935 U.S. wheat farmer produced 12 bushels per acre, barely tripling production in two millennia. Not until Norman Borlaug's [green revolution](#) did agricultural production soar to its current levels, tripling *again* in a few decades to 35 bushels per acre. Borlaug won a Nobel Peace Prize and is known as [The Man Who Saved a Billion Lives](#).

In the late '70s, a group of Chinese agronomists toured the United States and were told about the high levels of production in North and South Dakota. They refused to believe it was possible.

Poll Taxes

Families paid a head tax for each person in Chinese cash.

	Age	Assessment
Adults	15-56	120
Children	7-15	20

How do we measure the value of these amounts? A wealthy Western Han merchant might make 20,000 cash. A typical tax on a three-child family might then be 300 cash, or 1.5% for the wealthy merchant.

Wanting to increase the population, in 189 BCE the Han imposed a tax of 600 cash on unmarried adult women. One can surmise that 600 cash is a large enough amount to change social behavior, so we can assume the poll tax was not insignificant.

Property Taxes

Assessed at a rate of 1.2%, or 120 cash per 10,000 in property on farmers.

Corvée Labor

During the offseason, when not farming, adult males were expected to provide one month of labor to the state, building roads and dikes, digging canals, etc. This practice continued right through the 1960's.

At the age of 23, males received military training and were liable to be called up in a draft to the age of 56.

Overall Impact of Taxes

The average farm in the early Han dynasty would pay:

- 1 bushel of wheat (1/30th of the 30 or so bushels)
- poll tax: 300 cash
- property tax (100 or so cash)
- 1 month of labor per adult male

My thoughts: this is not insignificant, especially considering how remote the government must have seemed to a rural farmer.



Even though the Han rolled back the taxes imposed by the Qin Dynasty, since the government was not active in using its wealth, a great tax surplus accumulated. Perhaps there's truth to the notion that if the government has money, it will find a use. When Wudi took the throne, he used that surplus to fund a huge territorial expansion (see *Han Military Expansion* on page 66) into Korea in the NE, against the Xiongnu in the north, along the Silk route in the NW, and Vietnam in the SE.

The expansion exhausted the surplus, forcing the empire to raise the state's income.

How do you get the state to extract more funds from society?

Four Options for State-Society Relations

1: Emperor Wu's Expansion of State

Wudi's court wanted to increase production rather than raise taxes on farmers. How?

- a. They urged farmers to move to under-populated open land near the borders, to reduce the logistics of getting grain to the garrisons.⁴⁸
- b. They had large land owners expand their estates and use their servants and tenants to farm the land, through the owner's private investment.
- c. They doubled property taxes on merchants and artisans from 3% to 6%. Guan Zhong would approve. Since these folks could easily hide their wealth, they offered a 50% reward for those who would snitch⁴⁹ on their neighbors. This is such a common theme for harsh governments one wonders if this is a marker for autocracy. (How effective would this be in rural society where the dominating force is kinship? Perhaps that's not where the artisans and merchants live.)
- d. Lastly, they took over industries.
 - i) Iron became a state monopoly.
 - ii) Salt became a state monopoly. Salt was the main preservative for food.
 - iii) The state played a role in wholesale trade, moving goods to equalize trade and taking some of the profits.

These policies worked to raise revenue. One could argue that they hurt merchants and harmed the commercial economy, but they also funded the military campaigns that opened the trade routes in the N and NW, connecting SE Asia and the Han dynasty, which helped the market economy.

The policies caused a backlash among those people known as the Confucian officials.

2: Confucian Resistance to State Expansion

The opponents of Wudi's expansionist policies looked to a different society:

- with less need for cash, where taxes were collected in kind.
- with less need for commerce, where state-owned industries like mining and smelting and trading, were returned to private industry and merchants.
- where there was less of a difference in wealth between large landowners and small farmers
- where agrarian society was built upon self-sufficient villages with a simpler and less commercial economy

They got their day in Court and some policies were retrenched, some State intrusion into private wealth was reduced, but they weren't able to limit the size of land holding.

The Salt and Iron debates took place in this year.

3: Wang Mang's Interregnum



Wang Mang was the Confucian-trained bureaucrat who usurped the Han throne to return China to the ideals of the Zhou dynasty, creating the Xin dynasty that lasted from 9 to 23 CE. His goals combined Wudi's statist policies with the demands of the Confucian officials.

One difference, however, was the Confucian scholars wanted to reduce the military expansion, to eliminate the need for raising revenues. Wang Mang wanted a wealthy expansionist state, with state monopolies that brought in revenue.

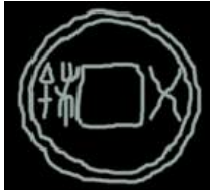
He agreed with the Confucian officials on the control of private wealth, forbidding the private sale of land, returning the land to the state, instead, for redistribution, to limit the size of private estates.

He forbid the slave trade. He forbid private lending for interest.

In a move to absorb the fortunes of the wealthy, he introduced a new currency, turning existing wealth worthless.

⁴⁸ Thaler and Sunstein wrote [Nudge](#) in 2008 on the behavioral economics of paternalistic laws that urge people toward actions that would both favor the individual and society. It's a modern, scientific approach to what the Chinese were doing 2000 years ago.

⁴⁹ Similar to Shang Yang's advice on page 56 and Wang Anshi's advice on page 150, and Zhu Yuanzhang's Village System on page 194. A popular recurrence of an unpopular policy.



Han Coin



Wang Mang Coin



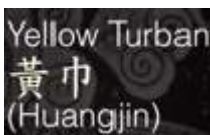
Wang Mang's policies were terminated by a rebellion in 23 CE. In fact, Wang Mang's policies were far more statist than Wudi's. While Emperor Wu increased private wealth and estates, Wang Mang took over the economy and the wealth of private society, creating a more equal society with his dynasty in control of the distribution of wealth.

The word Xin, for new or renewing, was adopted in the 1070's under Wang Anshi, and in the 1950's with the policies of Xin Zhongguo under Mao Zedong, for the same statist approach as Wang Mang.

4: Eastern Han



Above is a mural taken from the Wuliang Shrine of the Wu family, showing the river god Hebo driving a chariot pulled by fish.



On the heels of the proscription came the [Yellow Turban Rebellion](#), led by the faithful of the Way of Great Peace (Taiping Dao). The generals who quelled it gained power in government and began to fight each other.

In 220 CE, the Han is divided into three kingdoms each led by a general.

The rebel movements were often religious. Between 132 and 193 CE, at least 14 rebels proclaimed themselves the Son of Heaven. Each time a rebellion was suppressed, the generals gained in power and the state withdrew further from society.

As the state withdraws from local society, private power rushes in, forcing state monopolies and state factories to shut down. The state buys weapons from contractors instead of its own industries. It stops providing relief from natural disasters, fails to control bandits, fails to limit the great families.

Between 2 CE and 140 CE, the population recorded by the state census diminishes from 60 million to 10 million, a combination of loss of life and a loss of state control over populated areas.

⁵⁰ There's a nice write-up by Dan Reed on the [Rise and Fall of Eunuchs](#).



Confucian Magnates. These are the families of the Confucian officials that had been forced into the countryside. They built walled estates with watchtowers (we know this from the pottery models found in tombs). They had private armies, yet they represented culture and leadership.

Simulation of the Salt and Iron Debate



Prof. Bol plays the role of Huo Guang (presumably the Lord Grand Secretary from the readings), regent of the fourteen-year-old Emperor Zhao, the son of Wudi. Huo Guang is from a consort family, but he has the real power.

Questions for the literati: what kind of society and economy do you want and how would you achieve it?

My discussion post, from the perspective of the Lord Grand Secretary:

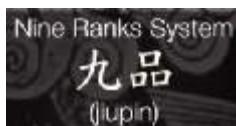
What kind of economy and why must the government intervene? In answer to the Confucians, we have to understand that the people are simple and should pursue simple aims. It's the obligation of the Son of Heaven (and his servant, yours truly) to allow those simple aims to satisfy their needs. Therefore, the state should control the industries they need (iron and salt) so the people have the means for the fundamental pursuit. It's the obligation of the Son of Heaven to *equalize distribution*, so the farmers that produce more in one region can feed those with draught or flooding in another.

Future Development. China must expand to protect its pursuit of the ideal life. Barbarians who would raid from the north must be stopped to protect our simple agrarian needs on the frontiers. Our northern villages should not suffer for the mere fact of their geography. While the villages in the central plains may not feel an urgency, it's the obligation of the Son of Heaven to feel each man's needs. We must expand to protect the north and therefore we must raise revenues to fund the cost of protecting our villages.

As long as the Xiongnu dwell in the north, these policies will be necessary. While Confucius might say that a policy of *wu wei* would eventually conquer the Xiongnu, Mencius would tell us that the barbarians are, indeed, not human. They do not feel the pain of a toddler falling into a well. We will have to conquer the Xiongnu.

The State's Retreat - Harbinger of the Aristocratic Age

When the Han broke into three kingdoms, they were briefly united as one. Then the tribal peoples of the north invaded, driving the leading clans south, and ushering in a new *Aristocratic Age*.



In this new age, the government ceded control over recruitment of its officials to the local elites who made that status hereditary. This began the nine-rank or *jiupin* system that ranks the eligibility of individuals to become officials, giving elite families control over who serves in government.

Reflections On China's First Great Empire

A unified empire is a wobbly pivot. It's institutions change, it's beset by court politics, and it must constantly balance the interests of powerful groups within and without the government. For the dynasty to survive, it must maintain that balance, which the Han did well for 400 years.

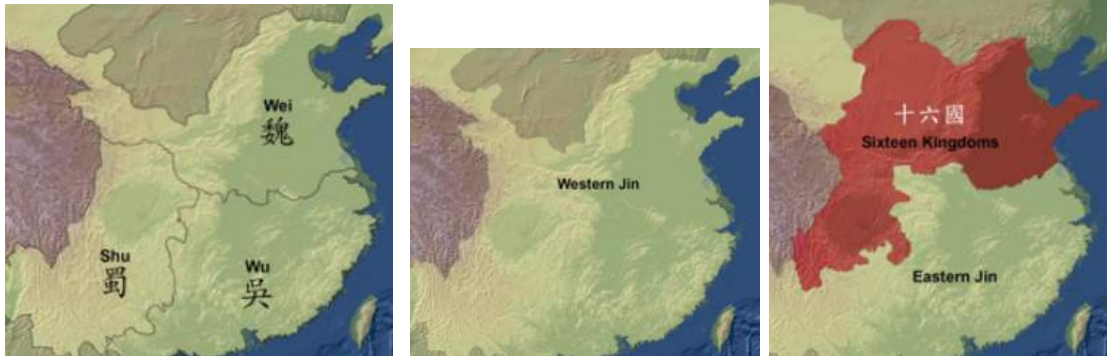
What did the common people think? We don't have records. We do know they staged the Yellow Turban Rebellion and the Five Packs of Rice Rebellion. The religious quality of these rebellions tell us of their desire for spiritual fulfillment, community, mutual aid, and help for the poor.

When and how would they get what they wanted and whose responsibility would it be? We'll answer that next.

Week 10: Self-Realization in the Medieval World

In this course, *medieval* refers to the period after the Han and before the Sui-Tang unification of north and south.

Historical Overview



The medieval period is a complex [history](#) of division between north and south. For roughly 350 years from the fall of the Han to the rise of the Sui, the Chinese territories were contested from within and attacked from the north.

Date (CE)	Event
220	Fall of the Han dynasty. The Yellow Turbans were a religious group that preached the Way of Great Peace and challenged the Han. The Han built an army to suppress them, an army that grew in power, leading to civil war. General Cao Cao joined forces with the Han, becoming dictator of northern China. His son, Cao Pi, forced the last Han emperor to abdicate and created the Wei dynasty.
221	Rise of the Three Kingdoms .
263	Wei defeats Shu.
265	Sima family takes the throne, creating the Jin dynasty.
280	The Jin defeats the Wu and the Western Jin is complete, briefly uniting China.
304	In the capital at Luoyang, tensions grew between cultural Chinese (Hanren) and non-Chinese northern tribes. Liu Yuan , a sinified (assimilated) Xiongnu declared himself King of Han.
311	Liu Yuan's son sacks Luoyang, sending inhabitants fleeing south across the Yangtze.

Northern Dynasties

327	Sixteen Kingdoms . For a century, tribal groups dominate politics, society, and the economy. Though the northern tribes showed some interest in Buddhism and Chinese forms of government, most were better suited to fighting than governing.
386-535	Northern Wei . The most successful of the northern states was ruled by the Xianbei Tuoba clan, originally from southern Manchuria. They adopted a Chinese surname and ordered the use of Chinese language and attire at court in their capital at Luoyang, now a city of a half million with ornate palaces and 1000 Buddhist monasteries. The dynasty ended amid tribal feuds and civil war.
577	Northern Zhou . Restored unity in the north.

Southern Dynasties

316-420	Eastern Jin . After escaping the destruction of northern China, officials installed a Jin prince in the new capital of the south, Jiankang (modern Nanjing). This was followed by the southern dynasties: Song, Qi, Liang, and Chen. The hereditary aristocracy and northern émigrés identified with the Han and sought to maintain the Chinese ideals of the scholar official while developing new forms of individual expression in literature, calligraphy, and painting.
548	Chen Dynasty . The tribal leader Hou Jing laid siege to Jiankang and created the Chen dynasty.

Reunification

589	Sui Dynasty .
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Four Strands of Aristocratic Culture

Like the Mediterranean, China was hit by a barbarian invasion, diluting the ideology of the empire and creating fertile ground for new religious movements. In the West, this led to Christianity. In China, several religions arose, the most important of which was Buddhism.

While the West turned primarily to feudal aristocracy, China differed in its governing philosophies between north and south.

The north was overtaken by tribes that didn't speak, read, or write Chinese, and fought among themselves and within the tribes. The elite Chinese clans that bore the authority and responsibility for governing were driven south to establish themselves in exile. Even as the dynasties rose and fell, these clans maintained a common thread of governance.

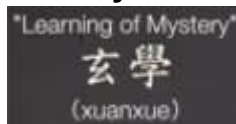
This week, we'll look at the cultural endeavors that had a lasting impact on China and East Asia while at the same time working against the unification of an empire, which wasn't restored until the late sixth century (I presume with the Sui Dynasty). And when a unified empire was restored, it came from the semi-foreign clans of the north rather than the displaced aristocracies rooted in the south.

These aristocracies had turned away from trying to restore empire and looked deeper for a foundation upon which to build their lives. They were discovering themselves, looking to:

- revelations
- heaven and earth
- us
- Buddhism

The Learning of Mystery

Conformity vs. Naturalness

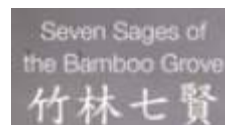


The Learning of Mystery (xuanxue) was also known as neo-Daoism or Confucian-Daoism. It was connected to another trend called pure conversation (qingtan). The premise is Daoistic: that things develop on their own by their own tendencies and we should not interfere.

Guo Xiang says *everything is spontaneous*. (which, to me, sounds a lot like Zhuangzi, page 48)

The learning of mystery may have started as a search for a new political order, seeking that order in nature herself. Since the political reality didn't allow for a new order, the movement shifted to a justification of non-conformity.

The idea of naturalness, of spontaneity, argues for discarding social and political norms.



Ji Kang, one of the [Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove](#), writes to Shan Tao: *one who acts naturally is superior to people who try to get ahead by conforming to society's standards or the demands of government.*

The seven men were devoted to literary creativity, song, music, and drink. And the transcendence of all worldly attachments.



Liu Ling, one of the Seven, was naked in his house when a friend arrived. The friend is offended. Liu Ling smiles and says, *the world is my house. Who invited you into my trousers?*

For people like this, refusing to serve in government was a way to show their uncorrupted purity.

In fact, their refusal to serve made them even more attractive to government, as the presence of the pure blessed the court, the government, and the ruler with their virtue.

Annotation (My Notes)

Each of the myriad things has its own natural capacity. If we include ourselves among the myriad things, then what is Guo Xiang's message:

Do not strive to achieve, let life come to you. Find the natural being that is within you and you will spontaneously reach your greatest potential.

If you strive for your own success, then you're assuming that striving must precede fulfillment, that there is cause and effect. If even the Dao had no antecedent cause, then why would we as creatures of nature be able to drive ourselves logically towards fulfillment? Instead, we must let our natural capacities lead us to the potential that is within ourselves and within nature, spontaneously, without cause. We must not interfere with nature or with our own natural path.

From Non-Conformity to Fatalism



If we each develop to our own biologically endowed inclinations, then some of us will develop as better human beings than others.

Xie An quit government to be pure, retreating to his estate. A courtier suggested to the emperor that Xie An had a singing girl to indulge his desires, that he was a hypocrite. The emperor replied that it was good to know he shared the desires of men as he would also share our worries.

Eventually Xie An returned to court, became a great general, and led the south against a northern invasion in a famous battle.



Pure Conversation (qingtan) captures the essence of a person through anecdote, like the story of Xie An. There was an interest in collecting anecdotes as a means of judging and ranking people. This fits with an aristocratic culture that thrives on ranking and assumes that people of the clan will always be superior and outrank those who are not.

The notion that superior men do not compete is Confucian. Spontaneity and naturalness is Daoist. Paradoxically, a movement that began as a search for a new foundation for imperial unity wound up as a search for self-discovery.

My Short Response

With the repose of that great sage and follower of Sunzi, Bill Belichick, Xie An did not react to the news of a great victory. One assumes he would be equally non-responsive to a stunning defeat. This constancy of emotion shows a man with a strong center, who knows that defeat and victory are driven by forces beyond him and that all he can do is prepare his men without expectation and accept the fate that is theirs.

To show emotion, to run rampant along the sideline like Pete Carroll is to allow the hopes of your troops to rise and fall with the turns of fate. Xie An knows that a commander cannot afford emotion if he is to inspire the true courage and fortitude in his troops that can only come from within. He is true to himself, to his nature and to the people around him.

Daoist Religion

Celestial Master Daoism



This is different from the Daoism of Laozi and Zhuangzi (page 46). It involves revelations from immortals in Heaven.

Tainshi Dao, the Celestial Master cult

This form of Daoism continues into the present. The teachings don't come from antiquity or from the government. Followers of Tainshi Dao believe they can contact the immortals (xian - the perfected) who reveal or release text to the living.

The cult began as an elite group. They believed that by following the released text, they would be freed from sin and when the corrupt world was destroyed, those who followed the cult would be reborn as immortals in this world.

The Teachings



The ideal order, social or political, is organic, where all parts connect. There's a circulation and mingling of *qi*, of matter and energy. In politics, it means those below can rise. It means the spirit moves through the world.

Imagine that as we dream, the spirit departs the body and travels the world, meeting immortals, and gaining knowledge in the revealed texts.



Qi⁵¹ circulates in our bodies, beginning in the scrotum and moving up through the arteries to the mind and to the top of the head. This circulation implies procreation, not celibacy.

This new Daoism brought physical rather than mental cultivation. New diets came about because immortals were supposed to survive only on the qi they breathe.

To improve the flow of qi, men would sit in a specific posture and impel the qi up through their arteries. Since pure qi is semen, these practices are only for men.

Another technique is to have sex where the woman has multiple orgasms and the man exploits her by not ejaculating, absorbing her qi and keeping his own, retaining the vitality of both.

What is the point? Immortality!

The Maoshan Revelations And Supreme Purity Daoism



Elixir Immortality

Coffee, Red Bull, etc. Elixirs give energy and vitality. But in those days, people died who imbibed elixirs of immortality.

Tale of Yang Xi. Some of the northern émigrés that were part of the Celestial Master cult become involved with the drug culture of the South: herbs, psychedelics, medicines. There's a passage from one of the southern clansmen, Ge Hong, who talks about the immortals:



In the 4th century, 364-370, Yang Xi began to receive visits from immortals, who said they were from a new heaven, not the heaven of the Celestial Master cult but the new Supreme Purity (shangqing). They had new revelations, which Yang Xi took down in superb calligraphy, the beauty of which lent authority to his claim of shangqing as the source.



They told Yang to share his revelations with the Xu family who were highly placed in the Southern court. Following that, the Xu family has visitations from the Supreme Purity. The younger Xu was told to join the heavenly bureaucracy in the Supreme Purity heaven.

How to leave this world and join the immortals? The elixirs!

How to Take an Elixir

They had names like Efflorescence of Langan, Jade Essence, Powder of Liquefied Gold, and Dragon Fetus. We have the recipes and an account of what happens:

After taking a spatula of elixir, you feel an intense pain in your heart, after three days you'll want to drink and when you have drunk a container, your breath will be cut off and you'll be dead. Your body will disappear, leaving only your clothing. You'll be an immortal released in broad daylight by means of your waistband. If you know the secret names of the ingredients, you will not feel the pain in your heart, but you'll still die.

The younger Xu took the elixir and died, joining the immortals.

If the adherents died, how could Elixir Daoism flourish?

First, you need training before imbibing. There's a body of authoritative text. People had shared visions, which happens even now. Career opportunities in this world for those who promote the cult. And career opportunities in the great beyond that are so marvelous, people are dying to get in.

Some poisons embalm from within and some, like arsenic, are a great pick-me-up, but they accumulate in the body and eventually kill.

⁵¹ First defined on page 60 and further discussed on page 87.

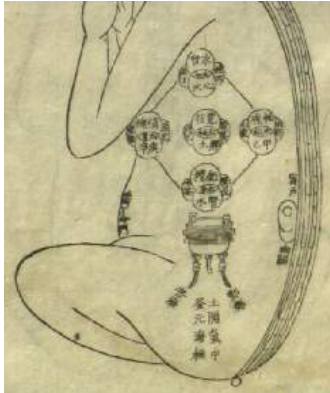
Alchemy

Inner Alchemy. Moving qi through the body. Special diets. That sort of thing.

Outer Alchemy. Change base metals into gold to create an elixir for immortality.

Gold balances yin and yang so perfectly that it's inert, it doesn't oxidize or tarnish in any way.

Theoretical Foundations of Alchemy



Natural things are made up of qi. Qi is changing in cycles and transformations, smaller cycles within larger cycles.

People could see that minerals grow and change. They believed a mineral would ultimately change into gold after 4,320 years⁵².

Since smelting and metallurgy can interfere with the cycles of change in minerals, and since the five phases of change imply that the next phase is inherent in the current phase, it should therefore be possible to speed the transformation. By changing mercury to cinnabar (mercury ore) and back, Chinese alchemists proved the concept was viable.

12 Chinese hours per day x 360 days = 4,320 hours. If you can compress each year's change into an hour, you can transmute a mineral to gold in a year.

If the alchemist can create a mineral with a perfect balance of yin and yang, then he can create an elixir that balances yin and yang in a person. That person would then be immortal.

There's a long tradition of [seeking immortality](#) in China, dating at least to Qin Shi Huang, the Qin emperor, who sent out expeditions and created the tomb with the terracotta warriors (page 61).

The philosophy of alchemy considered the furnace as a womb, where control over heat changes the cycles of yin and yang and the five phases are controlled as well. This appeals to those who want to believe we can see the patterns of change in the natural world.

⁵² See [The Way of the Golden Elixir by Fabrizio Pregadio](#), page 28: *Natural cyclically-transformed elixir (ziran huandan) is formed when flowing mercury (liuhuog), embracing Sir Metal (jingong = lead), becomes pregnant. Wherever there is cinnabar there are also lead and silver. In 4320 years the elixir is finished. Realgar to its left, orpiment to its right, cinnabar above it, malachite below it. It embraces the pneuma of sun and moon, Yin and Yang, for 4320 years; thus, upon repletion of its own pneuma, it becomes a cyclically-transformed elixir for immortals of the highest grade and celestial beings.*

Literature



Third Century Writing: This section focuses on personal, occasional writing - birthday poems, letters, inscriptions - writings that are an authentic response of the author.

The ancient Chinese psychology behind this notion is that we all contain inchoate selves awakened by our perception and unveiled by our writing: selfish and evil or good and humane.

We need to write our responses to ritual to learn how to behave.

Writers respond to rituals according to the rules and norms of expression, but also with individual creativity (my thought: is this like sonnets in iambic pentameter - creativity within the rules?).

Writing, calligraphy, and painting creates immortality that transcends political station.

In medieval culture, we see a concern for the self, for one's own character. **We're seeing a burgeoning concept in third-century China that the individual can be more important than the state or even the family**⁵³. Perhaps not the first time we've seen this concept, but never before so popular.

Annotation

From Cao Pi's (曹丕) "On Literature" (論文, Lun Wen)

Truly, literature is a great accomplishment that brings order to the state; it is a splendor that does not decay. One's years stay for a while but then they expire; one's fame and happiness die with the body. A time for both of these things to end is inevitable. How could they compare with the endlessness of literature! Thus, the writers of antiquity entrusted themselves to their brush and ink and made known their ideas in written documents. Without relying on the words of a good historian, and without depending on a powerful patron, their names have been passed down to posterity. Moreover, King Wen expanded the Book of Changes while he was imprisoned; whereas, the Duke of Zhou fashioned the Rites of Zhou while he enjoyed great renown. The former still focused his effort, though his circumstances were difficult; the latter did not allow himself to be distracted by his fortune. So we see that the ancients spurned large disks of jade, but highly valued the use of their time, lest the years pass them by. However, people often do not exert their potential: if they are poor, then they fear hunger and cold; if they are rich, then they let themselves drift away in pleasure-seeking; their vision is stuck on just what's immediately in front of them, and they abandon the accomplishments of a thousand years. While the sun and moon pass overhead, their bodies languish below, and suddenly they will transform away with the myriad things — this is the greatest pity to a person of intentions!

Thus, the writers of antiquity are examples of what to us?

The writers of antiquity recorded the rituals as their contribution to Chinese culture. They are examples of how we can contribute to the culture and thus enshrine ourselves among the ancients, immortalizing ourselves in text.

What is it that the person of intentions hopes to achieve through writing?

To achieve our potential by adding our contribution to the accomplishments of a thousand years.

⁵³ See page 168 for more on the State vs. the Individual.

Interview With Professor Tian Xiaofei



Professor Xiaofei's work is in medieval literature for the period after the Han collapses and through the reunification and the Sui and Tang dynasties. She published her first book at the age of nine (she blushes when Prof. Bol mentions that).

The statecraft view says the medieval Chinese, in particular the Southern dynasties (Song, Qi, Liang, Chen), shrank from the task of reunification. Prof. Xiaofei feels this appraisal comes from the winners (*the conqueror gets to write the history*). As a literary scholar, she feels this downplays the influence of Southern literature, because pre-modern Chinese state-sponsored historiographies pass judgment on the literature and letters of the Southern dynasties, associating their political failures with moral inferiority and thus with bad literature.

But the Southern dynasties influenced the conquerors and the northern dynasties. The influencers included the poets Tao Yuanming and Xie Lingyun and also court poets, who suffered the brunt of the condemnation.

The South was fascinated by innovation (*xinqi*). In later periods, there was a condemnation of the new and different, so how could this ever be good?

In this period in the South, they emphasized literary excellence:

- **Early Sixth Century (502 CE)** The Liang dynasty was an aristocratic culture based on family lineage. Emperor Wu tried to change the recruitment from hereditary to a meritocracy based on literary excellence.

Some say the Liang dynasty fell because Wudi invested too much in Buddhism. Prof. Xiaofei feels that Buddhism and literature are the two scapegoats.

There's a lot the north and south had in common. Both were passionate about Confucian learning and Confucian classics. They were equally passionate about Buddhism, which you can see from the Buddhist statues at Luoyang.

Professor Tian Xiaofei: A Close Reading Of Two Poems

Liu Xiaowei 劉孝威		Yang Wanli 楊萬里						
"A Candle Within a Curtain" 和簾裡燭		"Passing Danyang in the Morning" 曉過丹陽縣						
Door opens, the curtain casts a shadow	凝	浮	參	A breeze comes out from inside the boat	破	點	漲	風
The flame in the wind flickers back and forth	滴	光	差	It puffs up the curtain purple brushing the sky	窗	檢	起	從
Drifting light illuminates the brocade sash	汗	燭	風	When I examine where the breeze comes from it is no where to be found	一	風	簾	船
A congealed drop of wax stains hanging flowers	垂	綺	焰	A crack in the worn window smaller than a coin	隙	來	帷	裡
	花	帶	斜		小	無	紫	出
	。	，	。		於	處	拂	船
					錢	覓	天	前
					。	，	。	，

物色
(wu se)

Wu Se The sensuous appearance of material things.

In Buddhism, a flame in the wind is symbolic of the fragility of life. The brocade is a belt that can be worn by a man or woman. The focus of the poem is on small details, the *wu se*. The wax tear of the candle on the flowers, probably woven into the sash, and the wax is staining it, destroying it, like the wind flickering the candle threatens the life the flame represents.

物理
(wu li)

Wu Li The nature of things.

The second poem comes 700 years later. High poetic image: purple curtain brushing the sky. A process of discovery: finding the source of the wind, not entirely absorbed in the *wu se*, but seeking the *wu li* as well.

Prof. Xiaofei recently finished an annotated translation of a 19th century memoir about Taiping Tianguo, a terrible rebellion in South China that took place when the man who wrote the memoir was seven years old.

Discussion of A Candle Within a Curtain

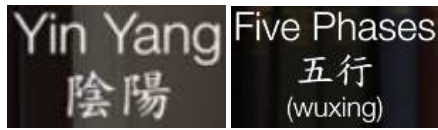
We invite you to comment on the following poem by the court poet Liu Xiaowei, translated by Professor Tian Xiaofei in the interview. What are your impressions? What connections can you make between what you find in the poem and issues discussed in the lecture? In the next module on Buddhism, you will learn more about the importance of "the appearance of things" "物色" and destruction, two themes already seen here.

I see a door to a foyer, opening not on a breezy day, but a day where the movement of air is felt as a coolness rather than a rush. The light outside glows in contrast to the quiet darkness within. The flame flickers without diminishing, casting a brightness at the edge of the shadows where the curtain slides away.

A man was in the room, his ritual robes stretched along the table. He was at the funeral of a friend. The passing of a life leaves a stain on his sash, a sadness in his heart, a memory that lingers as the flame quickens. It serves a reminder that our own lives touch others and we leave behind not ourselves but our impressions. Not only do we live on in our poetry, our revealed text, but we immortalize those we write about.

Interview With Professor Kuriyama

Chairman of the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations. He's an authority in the history of science and medicine in East Asia.



Two two-term sets: Yin Yang and the Five Phases (wuxing), or Wood, Metal, Water, Fire, Earth (mu jin shui huo tu).

Western metaphysics focuses on the underlying composition of structures, whereas in China, the patterns of change were crucial and intrinsic to the world.

The Greeks pondered first what were the elements of a thing and if it changed, what caused the change. The East Asians thought of change as natural, wondering how things changed rather than why. Yin yang and the Five Phases are two different ways of analyzing change.

Zi ran er ran: spontaneous change. Is there an endpoint, a destination? Is it a [teleological change](#)⁵⁴? No, it's a constant process of change without beginning or end.

In fact, a problem with Western metaphysics is with assigning teleology to change, which begs the question of how change begins. If things naturally change, then the focus is no longer on why it's happening, instead on how it's happening.

Why is yin/yang a way of analyzing change?

Although they're opposite extremes, yin and yang are not in tension. Much like night and day, there's a natural rhythm. But what about male and female, the way yin and yang are joined with [qian and kun in the Book of Change](#)? The single versus the double?

Professor Kuriyama answers that these are extremes that are in combination rather than in tension. The male has more yang, the female has more yin and neither is purely one or the other. Thus, male and female are joined in a complementary unity.

⁵⁴ A thing, process, or action is teleological when it is for the sake of an end, i.e., a *telos* or final cause.

Five Phases (wuxing)

Five Phases of Change Correlations

PHASE	wood	fire	earth	metal	water
SEASON	spring	summer	midsummer	fall	winter
DIRECTION	east	south	center	west	north
PLANET	Jupiter	Mars	Saturn	Venus	Mercury
CROP	wheat	rice	"grain"	millet	legumes
IMPLEMENT	compass	balance	cord	square	plumb
EMBLEM	bluegreen dragon	vermillion bird	yellow dragon	white tiger	dark warrior
COLOR	bluegreen	vermillion	yellow	white	black
METAL	lead	copper	gold	mercury	iron
BEAST	scaly	feather	naked	hairy	armored
NUMBER	3, 8	2, 7	5, 10	4, 9	1, 6
FLAVOR	sour	bitter	sweet	pungent	salty
SMELL	musty	burnt	fragrant	rank	putrid

One way to think of the five phases is as a more refined version of yin and yang. But another way is that they **incorporate space in addition to time**. Wood is east, Fire is south, Metal is west, and Water is north, with Earth in the center.

One problem with the early translations is the focus on the composition of things, or that they are actors, whereas [later translations consider that] they are more appropriately propensities and directionalities of change. A food diet affects the direction of your body's physical change. A type of grain with wood properties pushes you in the wood direction. Since your body already has a direction, this changes the vector.

One can think of these vectors of change affecting the body politic.

An interesting contrast between Western and Eastern philosophy is that **Chinese medicine is built around many vectors, a republic of forces, whereas Greek medicine has a single controlling force, the heart or the mind**. Yet Chinese medicine is built during the time of the central authority of the Han dynasty. And, of course, the Greeks had their political republic.

Change is how things work

Change happens regardless. To be moral is to go with the change, but with the possibility of intervening and redirecting the flow. This fits with the Qin/Han cosmic doctrine of empire. By getting the empire in order you can affect the flow of the weather and natural events.

Pulse Taking



How do you analyze the dynamics of change? In the Western view of the human body, actions are born from the body's structure. In the dynamics of yin yang wuxing, different places in the body have different propensities, like a field. The five organs have five fields. There are many different pulses depending on where and how deeply we probe.

Qi, Life, and Medicine

How do we translate qi⁵⁵? It's the stuff that makes up the world and is therefore intrinsically dynamic. Two models for qi: a) yin and yang and (b) a vital resource. We're born with a certain amount of qi and when it's gone, we die. Much is consumed during maturation. Sexual expenditure is the most extravagant use of qi, hastening death. Also, as you pay attention to external matters, qi flows from your body. Curiosity and distraction are expensive.

Chinese medicine preserves the supply of qi as long as possible. In contrast, western medicine is concerned that food in the body becomes poison, which must be expelled, which is why bloodletting, enemas and purgatives are

⁵⁵ First defined on page 60.

important. But in the 19th century, as the theory of energy became important, western medicine moved toward Chinese medicine, focusing on calories, resulting in today's Western fascination with Chinese medicine.

Zhang Zai and Cheng Yi and the source of Qi



Zhang Zai was an 11th century neo-Confucian philosopher with a theory that the universe is a finite container of qi. We come to life with a subset and return it to the universe when we die (ashes to ashes). There is dense qi and light qi. The qi condenses from the air into the dense qi our bodies.



Cheng Yi, another neo-Confucian philosopher, disagrees, stating that we generate yuan qi from our bodies. If we can think in the proper way, we'll generate the good qi and the world will get better.

In Western philosophy, matter is inert and the mind animates it. If you suppose instead that the body and mind are both dynamic, then instead of the mind directing the body, it alters the propensities, leading the qi in a new direction. This is similar to principles of education: rather than inscribing on a blank slate, education leads students in new directions.

Cosmic Resonance and Attractive Forces



Yin attracts yang. Lodestones attract metal filings. From this comes the notion of stimulus and response, of resonance. Things in different realms but in the same phase will be in resonance and attract one another. Things in musical harmony move in concert; things that are not, conflict.

Cosmic Resonance (page 58) holds a place in Chinese history as the argument that events in nature - the unpredictable disharmonious events - come from the behavior of political rulers.

Two concepts apply:

1. That people in critical junctures can influence events, much like chaos theory.
2. That superior people are more receptive to the world of changes that lesser mortals cannot feel.

Cosmic Resonance supposes that we are in a web of human relationships, much like an orchestra where one performer hears the others and responds in a way that contributes to the harmony of the whole.

This brings us back to the Confucian concept that a ritual properly performed can stir people, moving them to behave in predictable ways. (See Part 1, *Confucian Magic*, page 37). In society, ritual is one of the most powerful forces.

In the body, ritual in the form of visualization and breathing techniques can reorient the flow of qi.

Qi and geography

In gardening (*from a 12th century manual from Japan*) the way of putting stones in the garden orients the flow of qi. A stone in the wrong place is uncomfortable.

This underlies the logic of [geomancy](#)⁵⁶, which was important in world history because of the development of the compass. Even in China today, the landscape is a configuration of the flow of qi, which has consequences for how you live. Your position within the landscape is essential to your harmony with the world.

Qi and exercise

Chinese exercise manuals consider your orientation based on the time of year, the flow of the seasons. The Western idea of sharply defined muscularity is in contrast with the rotund flowing harmony of the Chinese athlete.

Professor Kuriyama's philosophical travels

How is it that we have essentially the same human body, yet Western and East Asian conceptions are so different? If we believe muscles are important, then we train them. If we don't, we turn to other techniques, training our arteries, so to speak. Muscles are the agency of action in the West. Vitality and smooth flow is the essence of athleticism in the East.

What is the life cycle of these notions? For many Chinese today, yin and yang are anachronisms, whereas many of the ideas concerning the organs still affect dietary choice and physical exercise.

⁵⁶ [Geomancy](#) is a method of divination that interprets markings on the ground or the patterns formed by tossed handfuls of soil, rocks, or sand.

Week 11: Buddhism

(With a thank you and additional notes from the student who goes by *bricass*)

Historical Overview

Same as Week 10, page 78.

Buddhism in China: Universal Religion and Foreign Teaching



Was it a Buddhist conquest of China or a Chinese conquest of Buddhism?

In many places in China, you might see scenes of people counting through a rosary and pledging allegiance to Amida Buddha.



Traveling Shrine

Unfolded, the shrine has the Buddha on one side and two disciples on the other sides.

Buddhism was introduced by missionaries from Central Asia and India and became the first national religion, popular at all levels, from rulers to peasants. It left a material legacy including cave architecture, the Longmen and Yungang Grottos in Sichuan.

Some of the oldest wooden buildings are Buddhist monasteries dating to the Tang dynasty.



Patronage to Buddhism included the wealthy donating a mansion, the poor making offerings, and the government building extraordinary monuments. And yet the government also tried to suppress Buddhism. Even today, government remains antagonistic, closing monasteries during the Cultural Revolution, limiting ordination of monks.

A recent document dated May 24, 2013, has the title: *Top party official affirms that party members are not allowed to practice religion.*

Introduction to Buddhism: The Three Treasures



The Buddha

The Dharma: The Teachings

The Sangha: The Community of Monks and Nuns

The Buddha

There are lots of Buddhas. A Buddha eventually becomes a transcended being, a god. But there's also an historical Buddha born in the fifth century BCE, somewhere in northern India or southern Nepal, of the Gautama family. He was the son of a king of the Shakya clan. He would eventually be known as Shakyamuni, the sage of the Shakyas.

His name was Siddhartha which means someone who's achieved his goal. When he was born, an astrologer said *when he grows up, he'll be either a great king or a great religious figure.* His father wanted Siddhartha to be a king, so he made sure he was not exposed to suffering. So the young Siddhartha, in his twenties, had a wife and a child

and lived in luxury. At the age of 29, upon seeing an old man, he learns that people age and die. He sees a sick man and learns that people suffer. He sees a rotting corpse. He sees a mendicant monk, an ascetic who has weaned himself from worldly desires to seek salvation.



Zhongdao - The Middle Way. Siddhartha decides he will break with his family and follow the way of the monk. For several years he practices self-discipline, never quite satisfying himself, until one day while meditating under a tree, he has his great epiphany, that there's a middle way between self-indulgence and extreme self-denial. And that's the way he sets out to preach.

The Dharma

Four Noble Truths (shi shengdi)

1. Truth of Suffering. The one word that sums up life is suffering.

2. Suffering Caused by Desire. Why do we suffer? Because we desire and our desires will not be met.⁵⁷ The one thing we desire most, to live our lives, will inevitably be taken.

3. We Must Cease Desiring.

4. There is a Path to Cease Desiring. The path begins by recognizing our ignorance and unless we understand that life is suffering that comes from desire, we will never find the path to salvation. Why? Because we are reincarnated again and again and again, and until we can halt the cycle of rebirth we continue to live a life of suffering.

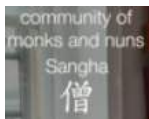
During our lives we build up karmic seeds that carry from one life to the next, influencing how we'll be reborn. Think of a candle which lights another candle and is then blown out.

The reason we desire things is that we give them value. If we take away desire, we're left with the emptiness that is the foundation of existence.

The goal of Dharma is to empty oneself of desire. The moment desire is gone we arrive at emptiness and karma is gone. This is nirvana (*niepan*). The candle blows out without lighting another and there is no rebirth. We can then live in perfect state of reality, the reality of emptiness.

The Buddhist claim is that their teachings are the teachings of reality, passed on through [sutra](#), such as the [Lotus Sutra](#) (Miaofa lianhua jing).

The Community of Monks and Nuns



Chujia: those who have chosen to live apart. They live in monasteries, in their own communities, separate from their kin and outside the government.

Is this also [Sangha](#)? Is a community of *Chujia* a *Sangha*?⁵⁸

Mahayana Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra



Foreign traders are the first exposure to Buddhism, during the Eastern Han, along with some Buddhist communities in South Asia connecting to China by the sea route. The South Asian Buddhism was called Theravada Buddhism. It was a precursor to Mahayana Buddhism and was sometimes referred to as The Lesser Vehicle.

In Mahayana Buddhism, referred to as The Greater Vehicle, Buddha is a transcendent entity who exists to save the world from suffering, a figure in whom you can have faith. So instead of emptying yourself of desires, you can turn to Buddha for salvation. Further, Mahayana Buddhism offers salvation to laypeople as well as to the community of monks and nuns.

⁵⁷ See *Thinking, Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman, page 402. In examining studies measuring life satisfaction, Kahneman notes that "One recipe for a dissatisfied adulthood is setting goals that are especially difficult to attain."

⁵⁸ After some poking around, I don't think they're the same. Perhaps *chujia* means a community of those who live apart. *Sangha* more specifically describes a kind of community of Buddhists.

In addition to the Buddha, there are Bodhisattvas (*Pusa*), who are enlightened and want to save the world, but have stayed behind, not entering nirvana, so they can help us. The most important of them is Guanyin Pusa, who hears the suffering of the world.

The greatest text is the *Miaofa lianhua jing*, the Lotus Sutra. It brings with it the **doctrine of expedient means** (*fangbian*) a.k.a. **skillful means**⁵⁹, which justifies the Buddha preaching at a level people can understand. It consists of poetry restated in prose, along with parables.

The Parable of the Burning House is the most important parable.

Bodhisattva Guanyin Pusa



What about him or her appears compassionate?

The calm repose, the arm raised in welcome. Everything about the pose encourages a follower to relax, to empty oneself, to join the Bodhisattva.

(From the office hours: the hand that's missing would be in the classic upraised, palm-out gesture, symbolizing protection from fear. Had I seen that, I wouldn't have thought it welcoming, but clearly it is.)

⁵⁹ There's a good article [here](#) by Peter Nelson. See the last paragraph:

The foregoing paradigm of 'skillful means' pioneered by the Buddha in the early suttas provided a template for all future developments in Buddhist pedagogy. In later Mahayana Buddhism, in particular, 'skillful means' (Sanskrit: upaya-kaushalya) – along with wisdom (prajna) – was the defining quality of the Bodhisattva, the 'enlightenment being' who postpones final entry into nirvana until all sentient beings have been guided to enlightenment. 'Skillful means' also proved pivotal to Buddhism's successful expansion from India into other Asian countries, which began in the first century B.C.E. By sympathetically integrating foreign beliefs (e.g. Taoism, Shinto, etc.) into their 'gradual instruction,' Buddhist missionaries conferred legitimate status upon these beliefs as 'stepping stones' to nirvana, and thereby easily won new converts.

Parable of the Burning House and Other Readings

Since Wikipedia does not impose copyright restrictions, I've directly copied [their translation of the Burning House parable from the Lotus Sutra](#):

Shariputra, suppose that in a certain town in a certain country there was a very rich man. He was far along in years and his wealth was beyond measure. He had many fields, houses and menservants. His own house was big and rambling, but it had only one gate. A great many people--a hundred, two hundred, perhaps as many as five hundred--lived in the house. The halls and rooms were old and decaying, the walls crumbling, the pillars rotten at their base, and the beams and rafters crooked and aslant. At that time a fire suddenly broke out on all sides, spreading through the rooms of the house. The sons of the rich man, ten, twenty perhaps thirty, were inside the house. When the rich man saw the huge flames leaping up on every side, he was greatly alarmed and fearful and thought to himself, I can escape to safety through the flaming gate, but my sons are inside the burning house enjoying themselves and playing games, unaware, unknowing, without alarm or fear. The fire is closing in on them, suffering and pain threaten them, yet their minds have no sense of loathing or peril and they do not think of trying to escape!

Shariputra, this rich man thought to himself, I have strength in my body and arms. I can wrap them in a robe or place them on a bench and carry them out of the house. And then again he thought, this house has only one gate, and moreover it is narrow and small. My sons are very young, they have no understanding, and they love their games, being so engrossed in them that they are likely to be burned in the fire. I must explain to them why I am fearful and alarmed. The house is already in flames and I must get them out quickly and not let them be burned up in the fire! Having thought in this way, he followed his plan and called to all his sons, saying, 'You must come out at once!' But though the father was moved by pity and gave good words of instruction, the sons were absorbed in their games and unwilling to heed them. They had no alarm, no fright, and in the end no mind to leave the house. Moreover, they did not understand what the fire was, what the house was, what the danger was. They merely raced about this way and that in play and looked at their father without heeding him.

At that time the rich man had this thought: the house is already in flames from this huge fire. If I and my sons do not get out at once, we are certain to be burned. I must now invent some expedient means that will make it possible for the children to escape harm. The father understood his sons and knew what various toys and curious objects each child customarily liked and what would delight them. And so he said to them, 'The kind of playthings you like are rare and hard to find. If you do not take them when you can, you will surely regret it later. For example, things like these goat-carts, deer-carts and ox-carts. They are outside the gate now where you can play with them. So you must come out of this burning house at once. Then whatever ones you want, I will give them all to you!' "At that time, when the sons heard their father telling them about these rare playthings, because such things were just what they had wanted, each felt emboldened in heart and, pushing and shoving one another, they all came wildly dashing out of the burning house.

First, my interpretation:

Truth is not a virtue if it impedes a higher virtue, namely the quest for nirvana. By implication, falsehood is wrong if it has nothing to do with the quest for nirvana (else why tell a parable excusing lies?)

What form are these virtuous lies?

In the *burning house*, it's a virtuous lie to make a false promise of fulfilling greater earthly desires in order to lead the ignorant from their lesser earthly desires to the nirvana, where there are no earthly desires. Indeed, where there's no need for earthly desires.

In the *impoverished son*, the father offers hard, undesirable but well-paid work eventually rewarded with great riches, a metaphor for a life of meditation and commitment to Buddha that is paid with earthly peace and eventual nirvana.

In both parables, the Buddha dissembles, falsely promising rewards to their earthly desire as enticement to his followers, eventually rewarding them with the wealth of nirvana that they cannot understand in their youth and ignorance. In the *burning house*, they are ignorant of true suffering, in the *impoverished son*, they are incapable of recognizing Buddha even when he is right on front of them.

This is the doctrine of expedient means.

Professor Bol's Interpretation

The father is Buddha, the children are us, incapable of hearing the truth when he preaches it. We don't understand what death means. So he offers us more toys.

What did the children learn? To have faith in the father so they can be saved.

As you read to the end of the Lotus Sutra, you find ways to improve karmic merit by copying the text and proselytizing Buddhism. You can give to the [Sangha](#) community of monks and nuns to help build monasteries.

Fotudeng

The transformation of Buddhism in China during the 4th and 5th centuries: [Fotudeng](#).

As we read about three important figures in the history of Buddhism, bear in mind the obstacles in the way of its success:

- The monks bringing Buddhism to China are not Chinese
- They don't even speak or read Chinese
- The conceptual vocabulary of Buddhism is incongruent with Chinese, though at first they'll try to find congruency with the language of Daoism, before realizing there is none.
- The styles of argument used by the monks have no precedent in Chinese history.

And yet, Buddhism took hold more strongly than any prior faith.



Fotu probably meant Buddha, Buddha Dharma might have been his original name. He comes from Kucha in Central Asia, having visited the great Buddhist sites like Kashmir, and in 310 CE establishes a religious center in Luoyang.

The next year, the Jin princes fight among themselves, some bringing in the Xiongnu, who fought against the Jin, forcing them south across the Yangtze. The Xiongnu tribes that stayed in the north were diverse. Fotudeng joins up with a warlord named Shi Hu of the Jie Tribe, associated with the Later Zhao Dynasty in Hebei.

Fotudeng becomes the house chaplain to the Shi, converting them to Buddhism along with other invaders and some Chinese officials. Fotudeng achieved this by playing three roles.

The roles Fotudeng played

- A magician. He puts a spell over a bowl of water and a Blue Lotus flower emerges. Note that the Jesuits were also known for practicing magic when they came to China in the 16th and 17th centuries.
When the ruler's son appears to die, he intones a spell over a toothpick and revives the son. He knows medicine. The ruler sends his sons to live with Fotudeng to ensure their safety.
He can see across time. He can hear the bells tolling in the future and tells the ruler if he will be successful in a military campaign. The ruler follows Fotudeng's prophecy against his generals' advice and succeeds.
He can see across space, rubbing rouge and oil on his palm.
He came to be called the Protector of The State.
- Political advisor to the clan. In a time of harsh justice, he persuades the ruler that killing so many people is a sin, arguing that the ruler shouldn't kill the innocent. This is not unlike the Jesuits convincing the Japanese daimyo, who is a samurai, that the First Commandment forbids killing. The daimyo replies that he's in the business of killing and the Jesuits explain that it really means ***don't kill the innocent***.
- Religious teacher

Who is Buddhism For?

If Fotudeng plays all these roles just for the ruler, then what use is Buddhism for anyone else? Fotudeng not only persuaded Shi Hu that Buddhism was for the masses, but he convinced many others of the ruling clans to pay for the construction of almost a thousand monasteries.

Is Buddhism for all peoples?

Is Buddhism only for men? There's a story of a woman who wants to be a nun. The father objects and Fotudeng tells that she was Fotudeng's daughter in a prior life and if she becomes a nun she will help his entire family attain nirvana⁶⁰.

⁶⁰ I might have gotten that wrong - perhaps to help his entire family gain power and wealth.

Dao'an and Building the Chinese Sangha



By the time of his death in 349, Fotudeng has made Buddhism the religion of the Xiongnu, but a war in the north forces his disciples to flee, including Dao'an.

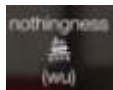
Dao'an eventually relocates south to Xiangyang to create the earliest known community of Chinese Buddhists. He builds a temple for 400 monks, a pagoda, and a 16-foot, 10,000 pound statue of Buddha. Medieval Buddhist monasteries like this were centers of Chinese agrarian life, with markets and flour mills.

Dao'an doesn't know how to build monasteries, so he researches Indian practices on daily life, on burning incense, on the sutra. He declares Shi⁶¹, which is the Chinese equivalent of Shakyamuni, to be the surname for all monks, enlisting them as members of a new family with Buddha as the patriarch. This was not unlike a practice of some Chinese generals who would insist that their soldiers adopt the general's surname, see page 107.

Here's what a Chinese traveler said about Dao'an's monastery:

They do not practice magical arts. They do not try to frighten people. They are a community of teachers and students who share mutual reverence and respect. Dao'an is learned in Buddhist texts, but also in Yin-Yang. Also in arithmetic and even Confucian learning.

Establishing an Intellectual Identity



Dao'an learns that in Mahayana Buddhism salvation can be shared, that all people need not follow ascetic practices.



Matching Concepts means to take a Central Asian term in Sanskrit and map it to a Chinese term. For example, the Sanskrit term for *emptiness* is translated to *wu*, the nothingness in Laozi's Daodejing. But Laozi's *wu* begets *you* (pronounced *yo*), i.e. *wu* is the source from which the phenomenal world arose.

In Buddhism, *wu* is the absolute and true reality and the phenomenal world is an illusion. (Although eventually there's a notion that the phenomenal world and the absolute are the same).

Dao'an's breakthrough was that Buddhist ideas were new and did not map identically to Chinese terms.

Maitreya

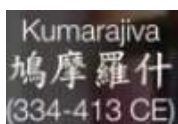


Dao'an needed certainty that his new ideas were a correct interpretation of the original Buddhist texts and commentaries. To break out of this hermeneutic circle⁶², he created a cult to worship Maitreya, the Buddha, who resides in Tushita Heaven (pronounced *toosh-ta*) until he will be reborn as a human and become a Buddha. Maitreya's gift is guiding people to correct understanding.

Dao'an asks his followers to vow to be reborn in Tushita Heaven to gain the correct understanding of Buddhist Dharma. In other words, Dao'an is relying on both the original Sanskrit texts as the foundation of his beliefs and the Maitreya to confirm his translation of them.

The difference with Daoism. Daoism had text that came from revelations. Buddhist texts come from the West, as the teachings from one who has reached enlightenment.

Buddhist Text and Translation



During Dao'an's time, foreign monks were bringing new texts for which the government's court was sponsoring translation. In the beginning of the fifth century, in 402, the great foreign translator Kumarijiva arrives in China. He had adopted the Mahayana view of emptiness and oversaw the translation of a set of Buddhist sutra which is still regarded today as the most readable of translations.

Translation was a complex process requiring the foreign monk to read and explain the text in his own language while another monk translated before a group of scholars, who then transcribed these spoken words as literary Chinese.

⁶¹ Shi also means literatus. See page 142.

⁶² From [Wikipedia](#): The **hermeneutic circle** ([German](#): *hermeneutischer Zirkel*) describes the process of understanding a text [hermeneutically](#). It refers to the idea that one's understanding of the text as a whole is established by reference to the individual parts and one's understanding of each individual part by reference to the whole. Neither the whole text nor any individual part can be understood without reference to one another, and hence, it is a circle. However, this circular character of interpretation does not make it impossible to interpret a text; rather, it stresses that the meaning of a text must be found within its cultural, historical, and literary context.

Intellectual Centrality and Political Independence



[Huiyuan](#) began his studies as a Confucian, believing in ritual as the path out of chaotic times. He turned to Daoism, then to Buddhism, becoming **Dao'an's greatest disciple**. Believing that Buddhism should be studied in the countryside, Huiyuan built the [Donglin Temple](#) at Lushan, a stunningly beautiful intellectual retreat high in the mountains of Jiangxi, reachable by cable car today (#travelNote). Poets, writers, painters, calligraphers and philosophers flocked to his temple.

Huiyuan says, *I am stranger to the world. I will not go down the mountain.* He pushed the notion that Buddhism could have intellectual centrality while maintaining political independence.

The warlords wanted him at court to support them. They didn't appreciate that monks didn't pay taxes, were excused from the military, and had large repositories of bronze and especially copper, which was used in coinage. At various times, pogroms were launched at the Buddhists.

Huiyuan insisted that Buddhism takes no sides, all people can be saved. He wrote a treatise called *Monks Do Not Bow Down Before Kings*.

Monks Do Not Bow Down Before Kings

Buddhist monks traditionally refused any display of reverence to secular rulers. As more Chinese became Buddhist monks during the time of the Eastern Jin, this problem came up for discussion at court. The high minister Huan Xuan asked Huiyuan to render an opinion. The treatise was his response.

Huiyuan stated that those who accept Buddhism but remain in their homes and within the natural kinship of their family benefit from the virtue of the ruler. Having benefited, they must pay their respects in the form of taxes and secular obedience.

He further stated that the spirits of those who have discarded the natural kinship of society continue to serve filial piety and maintain reverence through their faith in Buddhism, if not through secular obedience. Their reverence is to that which is beyond change and are therefore not subject to life driven by change or to the rulers who transform their people.

Though kings and princes have the power to preserve life, they cannot take a spirit to the transcendence beyond life and without suffering. To seek nirvana, monks *must not* obey change, thus they cannot revere the emperor.

My thoughts on the question: As an emperor, would I find this argument convincing?

If I'm Buddhist, I have no choice but to agree. Monks are separating themselves from the earthly plane and must therefore divorce themselves from any object of desire including the emperor. They bring the light and the faith to others. A true Buddhist cannot deny them their path to enlightenment.

If I'm not a Buddhist, I care to the extent that forcing monks against their religion to obey the temporal ruler incites rebellion among the faithful. As a practical matter, it's in my interest to let the monks follow their course. Since it's not an easy life to disavow earthly desire, there's little chance of losing large numbers of obedient subjects. Further, Huiyuan insists that Buddhists who are not monks must serve the ruler. For the ruler who is a non-believer or who only feigns belief, the argument is a practical one.

So in either case, I'm all for it.

Buddhist Religious Experience



In the fifth century during a period known as the Taiwu Suppression of Buddhism, the third emperor of the Wei Dynasty, Tuoba Tao (Taiwu), a Daoist, ordered pogroms against the monks and razed the temples. The Yungang Grottoes (#TravelNote), with enormous Buddhist statuary, were later built by Emperor Wencheng as an apology.⁶³



Huiyuan wanted to bring the Buddhist experience to common people beyond their faith, which is where the Traveling Shrine icon comes into play, to allow you to see the Buddha before your eyes.

If, for three months you should stop thinking about food or clothes or any kind of material comfort and then travel to a secluded spot and concentrate entirely on Amida Buddha for a period of time, a day or a week, then the Buddha will manifest himself before you to preach the dharma.

Reasons for Buddhism's Success

Why is Buddhism ineradicable in Chinese society even today?

- We've seen a monk use magical powers to enlist the support of a foreign conqueror.
- We've seen his disciple build a Buddhist community and translate the concepts of Buddhism to Chinese.
- We've seen a second generation disciple open the intellectual and religious pursuit of Buddhism to all and make the monastery the center of Chinese cultural life, exempt from political demands.

That's one heck of an accomplishment, with deep roots.

Mouzi: Disposing of Error

Disposing of Error (Lihuo lun) appears to be an apology, expressed as an exchange between Mouzi and a questioner who is criticizing Buddhism. Mouzi insists that it's possible to be a good Chinese and a Buddhist and that the truths follow in the course of Confucianism and Daoism.

If the way of the Buddha is worth our reverence, why is there no mention in the classics?

All teachings need not be from the Classics: as Confucius learned from Laozi, so can we learn from Buddha.

If the Classic of Filiality says we must not injure our bodies as they are the gift of our ancestors, why do monks shave their heads?⁶⁴

Taibo cut his hair short and tattooed his body, yet Confucius praised him

If there is no greater unfilial conduct than childlessness, why does a monk forsake wife and children?

Simple living and wu wei are the foundation of self-worth. The monk collects wisdom instead of children.

⁶³ See [here](#) for a description of the grottoes. For a better chronology of the tortuous history of church and state, see page 184.

⁶⁴ And yet, in the Qing dynasty, when the Manchus forced the Han Chinese to wear their hair in a queue, the Han men declared this a violation of Confucianism and (sometimes) chose death over submission. See page 222.

As a Confucian believing in my part of a single ancestral line, how can I accept rebirth in another form?

The body is like the roots and leaves that come forth and then die. The spirit is in the seeds that bring new growth. Only the body of one who achieves the Way perishes.

Admonitions of the Fanwang Sutra

This view of Buddhism contrasts with earlier doctrine of leaving the family (*chujia*), allowing Chinese to fulfill the tradition of filial piety.

*A bodhisattva should always give rise to a heart of compassion, a heart of filial piety, using all expedient means to save all sentient beings.*⁶⁵

These are my own poor attempts at paraphrasing:

1. Thou shalt not intentionally kill
2. Thou shalt not intentionally steal
3. Thou shalt not intentionally fornicate
4. Thou shalt not lie
5. Thou shalt not consume alcohol
6. Thou shalt not criticize a bodhisattva
7. Thou shalt be humble and neither praise oneself nor blame others

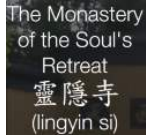
Professor Bol's Reasons for Buddhism Success

- Buddhism brought a deep civilization with tradition, philosophy, medicine, magic, and architecture.
- It offered a refuge of communal life in a time of chaos.
- It offered a model of how to live a frugal life.
- It offered salvation to all.

Lastly, with its ideas of karmic merit, Buddhism makes the act of being good an element of self-interest.

⁶⁵ Thus the doctrine of expedient means provides a path to enlightenment that accommodates filial piety, at least temporarily.

Lingyin Si in Hangzhou⁶⁶



In English, *The Monastery of the Soul's Retreat*, the Lingyin Temple is about 1700 years old, founded by an Indian monk. At one time, 3000 monks were in the temple. During the Cultural Revolution, the monks were sent here and the temple closed to the public.

Is the temple a tourist site or is it also a religious site?

It seems to me that it not only serves as a tourist site, but also as a place of active worship. (#travelNote)

Professor James Robson

of the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations

Lingyin Si is the largest and wealthiest Buddhist monastery in China. Founded in the fourth century by a monk named Huili. We may think of Buddhist monasteries as set apart for quiet meditation. But even from the beginning, they were integral to the Chinese community, even when they were built up in the mountains. The long history of monasteries included tourism as an essential part of monastic life.

There are, however, places within the monastery where tourists don't go, where the ordained monks live and practice their beliefs.



The Peak That Came Flying (Feilai Feng). The vulture peak that Buddha preached upon flew to China and came to this site. The Japanese claim that it flew on to Japan.

Further in the temple is a historian Sutra building where the entire Buddhist canon is kept. This is the collection of all Buddha's teachings and the rules that govern monastics.

The Heart Sutra is a short text, commonly memorized and chanted. Philosophically deep, it tells how our perception of the world and the qualities or ideas we ascribe to it differ from the underlying nothingness that is reality.

Many of the people who visit Linying Si worship Buddhism less as an intellectual tradition than as a source of healing and [apotropaic powers](#)⁶⁷.



The Happy Buddha (Maitreya)

The Laughing Buddha or Happy Buddha. The traditional icon of Maitreya looks quite different but became mixed with the legend of a monk named Cloth Bag (Budai), a popular figure with a sack on his shoulder, who roamed the countryside dispensing wishes or candy to children.

If you rub his belly you would get riches or the birth of a child.

The tactile dimension - touching the smoke of incense, rubbing Maitreya's belly - conjoins with Buddhism.

What is the state of religious practice in China today?

For at least 50 years, religious activity was suppressed. Is it returning? After a period of decline and despite the destruction during the Cultural Revolution, religion returned. Deng Xiaoping said, *let them come but treat them as tourists*.

At the end of the Tang Dynasty, in the Song and in the Qing there were times when Buddhism was suppressed. Some decrees, e.g. in the early 12th century, attempted to convert all Buddhist temples to Daoist temples.

⁶⁶ Read more about Lingyin Si and its role with the Releasing Life Societies on page 208.

⁶⁷ Magical powers that ward off evil spirits.

Chinese Buddhist Art at the Sackler Museum

Ooops. I'd like to finish these notes but I'm running out of time. Just one item from the museum tour:

Buddha vs. Bodhisattva



Bodhisattva means enlightened being, one who has entered into the final nirvana. Buddha means the enlightened one. The Buddha has an ushnisha or cranial protuberance, typically sculpted with hair over the bump.

Final Assessment - Discussion Post

The historical novel, Three Kingdoms, begins, "The empire, long divided, must unite; long united, must divide."

Unity and disunity recurs throughout China's history. In Part 2: The Creation and End of a Centralized Empire, we see both the creation of a united China and its disintegration following the end of Han. Based on what you have learned so far, what are some characteristics of the period of disunity following the end of Han? How is it different than the period united under Han?

My Answer:

The period under Han faced philosophical questions of governance: feudal princes vs. central bureaucracy, hereditary right vs. meritocracy. Rulers questioned how to control the population to suppress grass roots rebellion, insurrection from nobility, and threats from outside. They considered the best uses of a capital surplus moldering in granaries. They wondered how to mobilize the population to further support territorial expansion.

Having unified the states under one government, political intrigue became the jousting between inner and outer court and the role of the consort families. The Han accepted the Classics as their textual authority, elevating Confucians into the role of the Literati, the scholar-officials who advised the hereditary leaders on the proper standards of governance. Despite the constraints upon the emperor, he was the final authority.

After the Han fell and later after Luoyang was sacked, these questions and issues must have seemed like a quaint luxury. Where once the elite Chinese clans fought among themselves for power in the courts and favor with the emperor, they now found themselves on the outside and unable to restore a unified empire, or unwilling even to try.

Forced into exile, **the aristocratic families turned inward to the smaller philosophy of self and away from the larger questions of power.** Ji Kang thought himself superior by refusing the demands of government. Xie An quit government to indulge his desires. Unable to create immortal dynasties, they sought immortality from drugs, from alchemy, and from literature.

There seems to me a parallel between this and the Warring States period, with the chaos of the times helping different philosophies find fertile ground among the privileged. How convenient to build a philosophy around the primacy of the individual when you've been disenfranchised by the state.

But just as the Warring States period had bad government and good philosophy, so was the literature of the Southern dynasties artistic and inspiring. In chaos and depression lie the most fertile seeds of creativity. Professor Xiaofei reminds us that those southern dynasties, particularly the Liang, were fascinated by innovation.

Part 3: Cosmopolitan Tang: Aristocratic Culture

12: The Unified Empire: Cosmopolitan Tang

Historical Overview

Year	Event	
589	Reunification	<p>The Sui defeat of the Southern Dynasties ended the north/south split and the split between the ethnically Han and non-Han dynasties.</p> <p>Like the Qin in its time, this period of reunification, into the first years of the seventh century, sowed the seeds for the cultural and socio-political trends that would come to fruition in the Tang:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthening of central control over civil and military authorities.• Economic links between N and S that led to the building of the canal.• Expansion of the empire into SE and NE Asia• Flourishing of Sinicized state Buddhism
630	Tang begins	<p>Amid the military overextension and environmental pressures that fomented the Sui civil war, the NE military became a dominant force. By 630, if I understood the lecture correctly, this force had achieved hegemony.</p> <p>The first century-and-a-half saw a new centralized aristocratic empire. Taxes were reorganized around the equal-field system, centralizing control over land and taxes. Non-Chinese people were integrated into the empire.</p>
755-763	An Lushan rebellion	<p>Expansion into new areas taxed the Tang militia, requiring professional armies to staff the frontier posts. The An Lushan rebellion of 755-763, a frontier military rebellion, wreaked havoc on the dynasty and ushered in the developments we associate with Later Tang (but <i>not</i> the Later Tang Dynasty of 923).</p>
760-918	Later Tang	<p>In this period, the tax system broke down along with relationships with the frontier kingdoms. The government retreated from commerce, opening the way for private enterprise. Among the aristocracy there was a resurgent search in poetry and philosophy for self, state, society, and universe.</p>
874-884	Huang Chao rebellion	<p>A salt merchant who had failed the civil service exams led a bandit army in revolt, executing aristocratic families and collapsing the dynasty. Society devolved into shifting warlords and domains known as the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms.</p>
907-960	Five Dynasties	<p>China remained fragmented until the Song dynasty reunited the people.</p>

A Great Tang, A Troubled Tang, A Cosmopolitan Tang



Empress Wu
武则天
(Wu Zetian)
624-705 CE

As the Han followed the Qin - a short-lived dynasty that did most of the work of re-unification - so did the Tang follow the Sui to solidify the re-unification of north and south.

Although the Tang is seen as one of the great Chinese dynasties, it was not untroubled. Empress Wu usurped the throne in the late 7th century, the only female ruler in Chinese history⁶⁸. One hundred years later, in 755, the An Lushan rebellion threw the dynasty into chaos.

So why is it considered one of the greatest periods in Chinese history?

- The territorial expansion, making China the hegemon of East Asia?
- The centralized hierarchy?
- The cosmopolitan atmosphere that both gave to and took from the world at large?

What was the Tang system that was so admired?

⁶⁸ Famously compared to Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, of the Gang of Four, see page 317.

The Social-Political Order



Li
李
imperial family
of Tang
唐



Emperor Taizong
唐太宗
Li Shimin
李世民

The Turks

The imperial family was one of the great clans of the northwest, having set themselves apart through intermarriage with tribal peoples. The Li family, the imperial family of Tang, had intermarried with the Turks.



Yurt: a circular tent of felt or skins on a collapsible framework

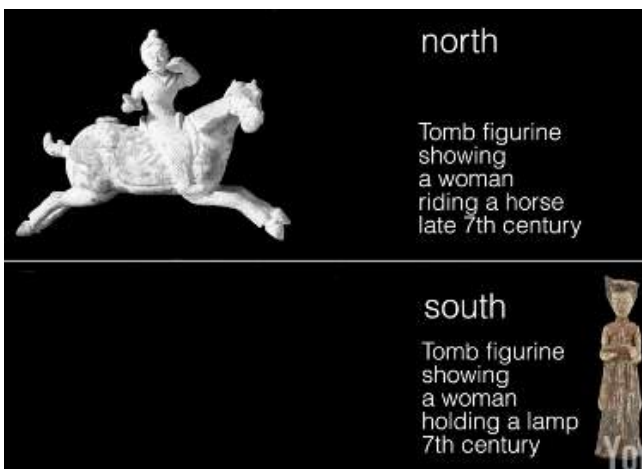


Sui Dynasty
隋
581-618 CE

Emperor Wen of Sui
隋文帝

The son of the founder of the dynasty, Li Shimin, lived in the palace grounds in a yurt, trying to speak Turkish. The wife of the Sui founder had the Turkish surname Dugu. There was no sense of xenophobia. What was foreign was simply that which was outside the boundaries, without stigma. Many foreign peoples served within the Tang administration.

The role of women, North vs. South



north

Tomb figurine showing a woman riding a horse late 7th century

south

Tomb figurine showing a woman holding a lamp 7th century

Further, women played a larger role in the north and northwest. This was not the case in the south where they were expected to stay at home.



The wife of the Sui founder (she of the Turkish surname Dugu) insisted that the Emperor not have children with any other woman and that she rule alongside him.

Later, Empress Wu, wife of the Tang Emperor Gaozong, held the throne successfully for many years, temporarily renaming the dynasty to the Zhou, harking back to Confucian times (shown in the timeline above).

Reducing the role of the great clans

The Tang deliberately brought the great clans into government, buying their loyalty by giving them hereditary rights and letting them keep their descendants in power as well. To cut the tie between the clans and their geographical homes, places where whole counties were dominated by a single clan, they changed the administrative rules:

- Reorganized prefectures and counties to divide the lands of the great clans.
- Created the **Rule of Avoidance**, which remains in place today: you may not administer a place where you have relatives. This gave local government independence from the great clans.
- Placed the government in charge of appointment and promotions. The male children of great clans were merely eligible. They couldn't choose their role, nor could they pass office between generations.
- Created a path to office through education.

Still, the prestige of the great clans threatened the prestige of the Emperor's house. In answer, the government ranked the clans by what they done for the dynasty. The higher you served, the higher your ranking, which made the clans dependent upon the dynasty for social prestige.

Lastly, they tried to forbid the top-ranked clans from marrying each other and thus combining their power. Not clear if they succeeded.

The effect was to make the Emperor a *primus inter pares*, a first among equals.

Discussion: Great Clans of the Modern World

North Thread.

Kudos to RogerJames, NinKenDo, imelve, Keth, Dougma, IgorSv, Mila1969, KipFlur and others. Thank you for generating a lively discussion.

The Cultural Order

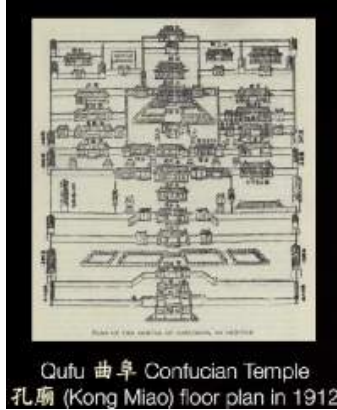
The Three Teachings

Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism

Think of each one in terms of:

- People and their institutions
- Textual traditions
- Emperor's patronage

Confucians



These were the scholar-officials with temples in all the counties and prefectures. Some of the temples had schools. They had an imperial academy in the capital. They had religious duties: sacrifices and prayers.

They served in the political, cultural and religious domains.

Buddhists

Buddhists were not converts from another religion in the Christian sense, where people born into Christian families were baptized and treated as fellow Christians from birth.

Although you could patronize Buddhist temples or monasteries and make donations, the real Buddhists were the monks and nuns, two million of whom were registered according to a government estimate in 589, when the Sui unified the north and south. Most of them lived in the north, in monasteries and nunneries.

They owned land given by the government and local families. Households that belonged to monasteries paid rent to the monasteries but did not pay taxes. There were more Buddhist clergy than there were government officials.

Daoists



By the sixth century, Daoism had fashioned itself as a religion, with temples and with officiants who could perform ceremonies like Buddhist priests.

Though only one-tenth the numbers of the Buddhists, they laid claim to the surname Li, of the imperial house, as descending from Laozi, the progenitor of Daoism.

Difference in the Texts

Confucians had the Five Classics with commentaries, books of ritual, legal codes. They wrote literary works.

Buddhists had scriptures like the Sutra that were translated from Sanskrit⁶⁹ to Chinese. They also had Apocrypha, texts purporting to be sutras that had originated in China.

Daoists had immortals rather than a founding figure (like Confucius or Buddha). The immortals had given revelations to Daoist masters. These revelations were their text.

⁶⁹ The Sanskrit term *sutra* means a line of thread and is related to the English word *suture*.

Patronage

The Sui had ended pogroms against the Buddhists, allowing them to go their own way. This was balanced with support for the Daoists and with great support for the Confucians.

Confucian scholars wrote histories of previous dynasties, worked on ritual codes, collected literary writings of the past, and wrote commentaries on the classics.

The Tang were patrons to all and beholden to none.

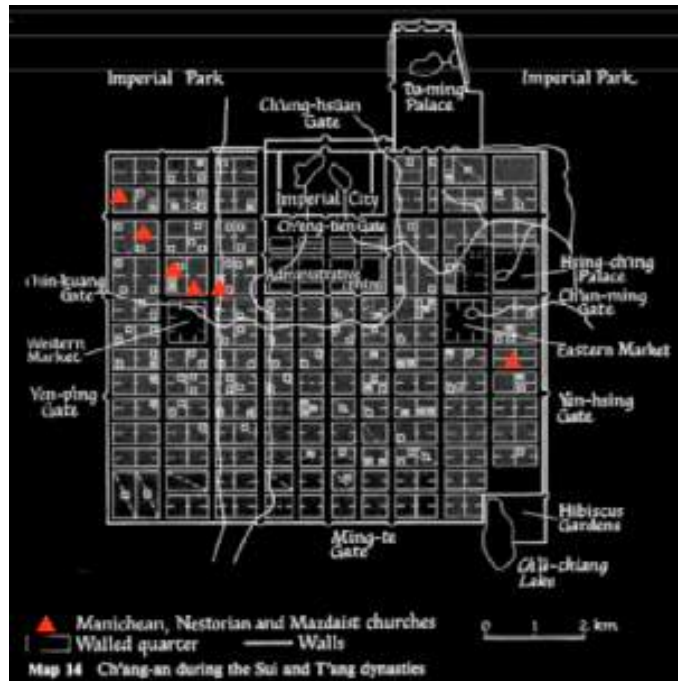
- They set limits on the number of ordained Buddhist monks.
- They urged centralizing temple networks.
- They regulated entrance of Confucian scholars into government.

The emperor presented himself as a Daoist master, Confucian sage, and Buddhist (Chakravartin) King. The three teachings debated in the palace, with the Daoists as the official winners.

They sought unification:

- Confucians unified the commentary of the classics from the north and south.
- Tiantai Buddhism grouped and ranked and unified the different Buddhist sects.
- The Daoist canon collected all the Daoist texts.

Chang'an, the cosmopolitan capital



In addition to the Confucians, Buddhists and Daoists, the capital city of Chang'an had Manicheans, Nestorian Christians, and Mazdaists (aka Zoroastrians), all shown by the red triangles.

Within its walls, six kilometers to a side, the city held a million people. It was the greatest city in the world and truly cosmopolitan.

The Economic Order

During the period of division, the economy had become one of barter. Except for the elite, people were barely subsisting. Many farmers were tied to the great estates and monasteries.

Equitable Field System (Juntianfa)⁷⁰

For the Common Man

At the age of 18 medieval Chinese years (17 Gregorian years), the government granted about 23 acres of land to a man, half of which was to be returned at age 60, the rest at death.

The man, who was now essentially the holder of a lifetime, non-transferrable lease, had to pay annual taxes of three bushels of grain and twenty feet of textile, preferably silk, plus 30 days of Corvee labor. Since twenty feet is a lot of silk, the villages would band together to produce large rolls.

For the Great Clans

The government granted large pieces of land to the clans as part of their salary while serving in office. But they also gave large estates of as much as 1500 acres to very high officials, estates that included the farmers who tended the land. Since this land could be passed on, a family with a high official was well-off for years.

Religious Institutions

Institutions were tax exempt like the lands of the great clans.

Linking the Southeast Breadbasket with the Northwest Capital



The Sui Dynasty built a canal from Yangzhou to the northwest.⁷¹ (#TravelNote)

A famous scroll, Prosperous Suzhou, ordered by Emperor Qianlong in the Qing dynasty, depicted the path of the Grand Canal through Suzhou. See page 235. To learn how the canal benefitted the South, see page 138.

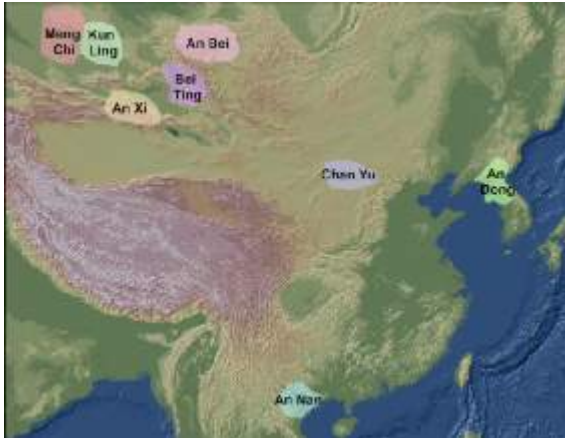
The Tang Vision

The Tang vision of empire was a unified hierarchy from the top down, of social, political, cultural, and economic power, with the surplus wealth accruing to the government.

⁷⁰ Also known as the Equal Field System, it began in the Northern Wei dynasty in 485 CE and enforced country-wide by the Tang.

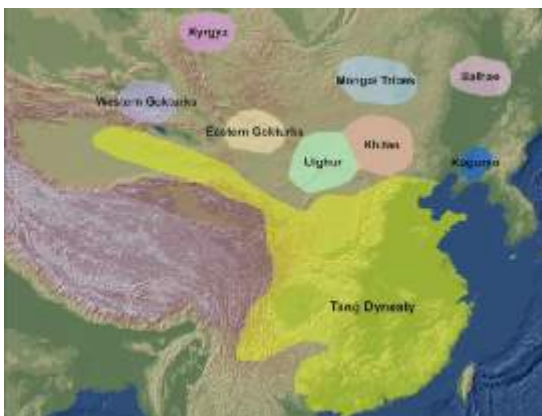
⁷¹ From [Wikipedia](#): The Grand Canal (also known as the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal), a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the longest canal or artificial river in the world and a famous tourist destination. Starting at Beijing, it passes through Tianjin and the provinces of Hebei, Shandong, Jiangsu and Zhejiang to the city of Hangzhou, linking the Yellow River and Yangtze River. The oldest parts of the canal date back to the 5th century BC, although the various sections were finally combined during the Sui dynasty (581–618 AD).

The Military Order



During the Period of Division, military power had become decentralized, falling under the control of the commander, to the extent that in some northern armies **soldiers were expected to take the commander's surname**, becoming in effect part of his family.⁷² These armies did not readily yield to civil authority.

The Tang responded by creating a militia system in the strategically important frontier areas, shown at left. A percentage of farmers were relieved of taxes so they could receive military training and then be held in reserve.



As revenue came in, the Tang expanded to the northwest along the Silk Route, establishing hegemony in new territories. To defend its borders it **scrapped the militia system in favor of a standing army**.

The Tang appointed military governors for the frontier armies. Over time as the Empire weakened at its center, these military governors gained independence and increased their power, which would come back to haunt the central beaurocracy.

Tang as a Luxury Market



Tang was a market for luxury goods to serve the interests of the aristocrats. To dye clothes, they imported indigo from Central Asia, yellow from the Cambodian gamboge tree, red from sappan wood in Java. They chewed cloves from Java, cleaned silks with sandalwood incense from SE Asia, ate pistachios from Iran. They styled their hair in the Persian posi. Dancers from Indochina and Tashkent entertained them.

Though all came to Chang'an, some also came to Canton, a seaport in the south, in Yangzhou at the terminus of the Grand Canal.

Tang was a market that attracted ambassadors and merchants from around the world.

⁷² Not unlike how the Buddhists used Shi as the surname for monks, page 94.

Tang as a World Power



The 3,250 miles between Baghdad and Chang'an was contested territory, with Tang the most successful power until the middle of the eighth century.

North: Turkic tribes, led by Khan, broken into Eastern and Western Turks. (yellow oval)

West: The Sassanid Empire of the Persians. (present day Iran, south and east of Baghdad) Worshippers of Ahura Mazda, beginning to adopt Nestorian Christianity.

Also West: Arabs and Islam spreading out of Baghdad, ruled by a Caliph who was supposed to be the successor to the Prophet Muhammad.

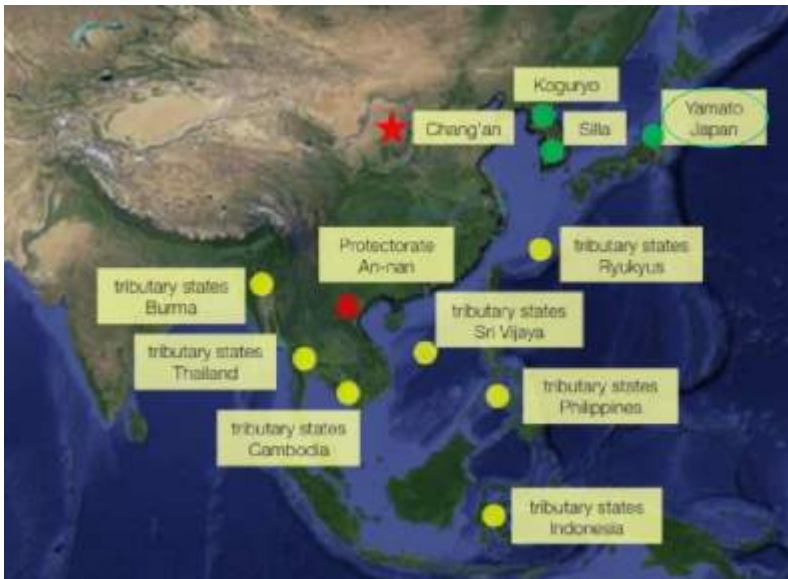
All of these competing for space and control of the trade routes. The Tang was the most successful, its armies establishing garrisons to control large segments of the trade routes.



The Tang forced local rulers to accept their hegemony, establishing protectorates on the eastern end of the Tarim Basin: Anxi, Sogdiana, Turkestan.



In 753, the Tang and Arab armies meet at the Talas River and the Tang was defeated. Though it was more of a symbolic defeat, the armies were pulled back because of domestic issues and the northern peoples increased power at Tang's expense.



Tang was in East Asia as well:

- The Philippines
- Indonesia
- Ryukyu Islands⁷³
- Sri Vijaya (now Singapore)
- An-nan (now northern Vietnam)

The Sui had tried three times to conquer Koguryo in Korea. They succeeded once they allied with Shilla, helping Shilla establish a unified kingdom in Korea.

Tang did not invade Japan, where the Yamato State was ruled by an emperor who traced his lineage to the sun god (a practice that continues today).

Tang brought order to the world it knew.

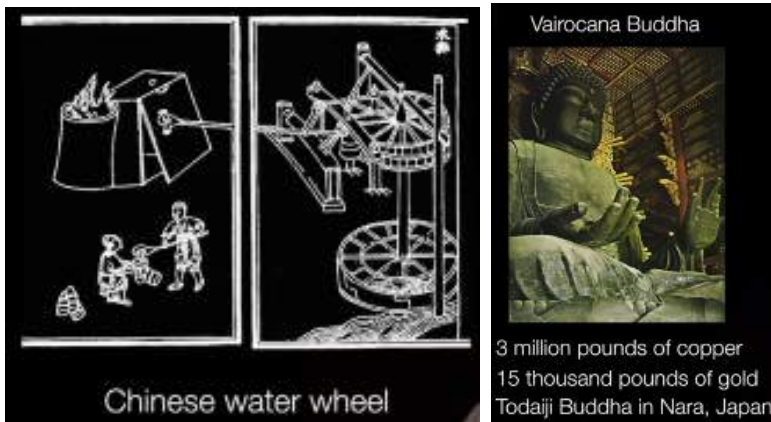
⁷³ The Ryukyu Islands include Okinawa and are part of modern day Japan. Like the Senkaku Islands, modern day China has been [disputing Japanese sovereignty](#).

Tang as a Model



People from Korea, Japan, and Vietnam traveled to Tang to find out what modern civilization meant. In contrast, the people of Central and Inner Asia considered Tang a model of power and state-building.

Japan and Korea sent embassies of students, monks, and officials to learn the government and the language, to read the classics and histories, and to learn the technology.



Tang became the foundations of East Asian civilization, crossing the barrier of spoken language. Mahayana Buddhism became the Buddhism of Korea and Japan.

Between 747 and 752 (the mid-eighth century) Japan built the Vairocana Buddha, the largest ever built, of three million pounds of copper and 15,000 pounds of gold.

Government by Law

Some of the travelers to Tang stayed. Others returned, bringing back the concept of government by law.

The legal system had two parts.

Tang code A criminal code defining the crimes and punishments applied everywhere equally.

Tang statutes The rules by which government functioned: taxes, rights and responsibilities of the people and the governments.

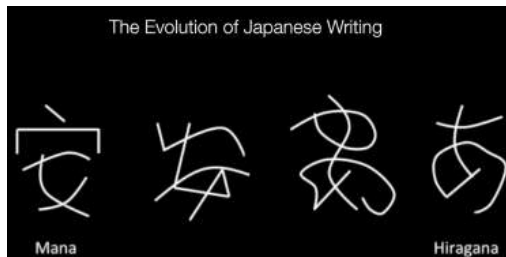
Government Bureaucracy

The bureaucracy defined:

- the functional divisions of government for revenue, military, public works.
- the meritocracy, of promotion for accomplishment.
- the delegation of power from the top down to the localities
- the hierarchy of prefectures and counties.
- the relationship between state and society, where the aristocracy depended upon the government for land and status.
- the relationship between church and state, where Buddhism was subordinate to the state, even as it was independent, falling outside of taxes.

This tension between subordination and independence came to the fore in the 830's, when the government in its need for revenue demanded that monks and nuns return to lay life and dismantled their temples and melted their statues. Ten years later, the government rebuilt the temples and allowed the monks to return to them.⁷⁴

Common Written Language



The travelers from Japan and Korea also learned Chinese writing, using it to sound out their own languages. Eventually, they'd create their own syllabaries: the Kana system in Japan and the Hangul system in Korea.⁷⁵ But to this day, Chinese characters remain part of written Japanese and Korean.

Cultural Influence of Tang

Examples of cultural influence:

- Planned cities with streets in a square grid
- Eating with chopsticks
- Drinking tea
- Dressing in silk
- Writing with a brush with ink made of ground pigment
- Paying with coins
- Reading and writing poetry

Tibet



In the eighth century, Tibet chose to identify with the Buddhism based on the Sanskrit cultural order, separating itself from the Mahayana Buddhism now accepted by China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.

⁷⁴ For a chronology of the tortuous relationship between church and state, see page 184.

⁷⁵ From [Wikipedia](#): A syllabary is a set of written symbols that represent the syllables or (more frequently) moras which make up words. A symbol in a syllabary, called a syllabogram, typically represents an (optional) consonant sound (simple onset) followed by a vowel sound (nucleus)—that is, a CV or V syllable—but other phonographic mappings such as CVC and CV-tone are also found in syllabaries.

Tang Artifacts

Lute Player



Why this subject? To me (and I'm usually wrong) this seems like an artistic choice, a figure symbolizing music, which has been important and in itself symbolic throughout Chinese history. Confucius makes constant mention of music in the Analects as I believe do many of the Warring States philosophers.

What is the symbolism of the lute player? Here's an essay on the [Lute of the Chinese Lute](#) that I think concerns the Qin dynasty.

Why this pose? She looks relaxed, calm and welcoming. An informal pose.

There's a few [other sculptures](#) from the 7th century, also in the Sackler Museum, of female lute players, groups of four, as funerary sculptures (*mingqi*). They're recorded as court musicians.

Court Lady



Standing, plump court lady with elaborate coiffure, upturned pointed shoes, hands clasped at waist and concealed in long sleeves.

Why this subject? As a symbol of the Tang court like the male court attendant below?

Why this pose? She looks haughty and formal.

Great post from [jerryed](#):

I have loved the Tang court ladies since first seeing them in the National Palace Museum (#TravelNote) in Taiwan. These well fed ladies represent the wealth of the empire and appear self satisfied standing up so tall in flowing robes and pointed shoes.

I particularly love the figures of horses which is appropriate since this is the year of the horse in China. Each figure seems life-like and of individuals. The coloring on the earliest viewed figures is mostly lost, but the later ones show reds and greens that we are told are colors produced by pigments brought from afar through trade.

The foreign figures indeed seem foreign in their dress, but the colors with stripes and bright reds and greens are preserved wonderfully. We are told that these people came from foreign lands to learn, to entertain, and perhaps to stay.

I have been back to the National Palace Museum again and each time viewing the Tang ladies is a treat. These days a crush of mainland Chinese visitors surrounds the display cases viewing their national treasure, now housed in Taiwan.

The technique of producing the Figurines appears to be amazing, and I wonder how they did it. The figurines are hollow for the most part which must have been produced by an elaborate process (see below). Each figurine is beautifully done, demonstrating an artistic ability in 3D that is amazing. As said earlier individuals appear to be depicted suggesting that they posed for the artist and perhaps a system of producing such images that involved the court as well as the artist and craftsmen who made the figurines. I found a reference

for the production of Tomb figures.

[Discussion of Tang Camel and Rider from the Art Institute of Chicago](#) indicates that the figures are made by pressing thin sheets of clay to the inside of a mold, and then when the figure is dry enough to stand on their own removed and details such as facial details and a base added. Further details of glazing and firing are in the reference.

Equestrian Female



From the tomb sculpture set: two equestrian figures, one male with a tall elaborately embellished hat, one female with her hair in a topknot, both with pointed boots and hands positioned to hold the reins of their standing, saddled horses. From the first half of the 8th century (~750).

My thoughts: note the white coloring that remains of the base pigments. These figures were brightly painted. Can still see the red of the lips. The pointed shoes and hairstyle indicate an aristocrat.

Construction looks hollow, from separate castings, assembled. Or hammered. I don't know enough about bronze casting, but I think the expensive techniques of the Shang dynasty are no longer in use.

Why this subject? Perhaps she was a special personage, or wife of a high-ranking aristocrat. In ancient China, she might have been killed and buried with her husband. In modern Tang, perhaps the figurine suffices.

Court Attendant



Standing, plump male court attendant with pointed shoes and informal headgear, his clenched left hand raised to his chest, his clenched right hand at his side, mid 8th century (~750).

Why the clenched hands? Is the left hand merely holding the robe?

Groom



Standing, bearded, foreign groom wearing boots, pointed hat, tiger-skin trousers. 7th Century.

Why this subject? As a symbol of foreign embassies in the Tang capital? Fancy clothing symbolic of the importance of the foreign visitor, of the styles of the country of origin.

Why this pose? His hand is poised as if to hold the reins of a horse and lead it. Perhaps this figure was paired with a horse at one time.

The figure is bearded with bushy eyebrows.

I copied this from a post by [CTaylorPdx](#):

The vivacity of this clay figure caught my eye. I learned that this "Bearded Foreign Groom", about 17" high, is an example of a Mingqi, a ceramic figurine intended for use in the tomb, one of several kinds of tools and objects meant to provide comfort for the deceased.

The use of Mingqi became popular during the Han Dynasty. During the Sui and Tang dynasties, the figurines became more elaborate, and incorporated influences from outside of China. This Sackler Museum figure has sancai, a three color glaze applied before firing - a technology that was transmitted along the Silk Road. The glaze was hard to control, so some portions of the figure were left unglazed, and were then painted after firing - particularly the lively tiger striped trousers and the top of the hat.

Tang Mingqi often depicted foreigners, hence our exotic foreign groom. I learned that this reflects a cosmopolitan society that embraced exchanges with other groups and cultures.

BaiFeng says the prominent nose is much admired by younger Chinese even today.

Standing Male Foreigner



Tomb figurine in the form of a standing male foreigner with a falcon perched atop his wrist, first half 8th century (700-750).

This might have been artwork owned by the deceased, symbolic of his role as ambassador or of the fealty of foreign nations during a time of Tang dominance.

What's the symbolism of the falcon? Perhaps a symbol of foreign aristocrats, of wealth?

13: Poetry

Structure

The Structure of Regulated Verse, Looking at "A Guest Arrives"



This section will discuss the structure of *A Guest Comes* by Du Fu.

Two questions arise:

1. How many characters comprise a line?
2. How are the lines organized?

The second question is quite a bit tougher than the first.

A Guest Comes

*North of my cottage, south of my cottage, spring waters everywhere,
and all that I see are the flocks of gulls coming here day after day.
The path through the flowers has never been swept for a visitor;
the wicker gate today for the first time stands open just for you.
The market is far, so for dinner there'll be no wide range of tastes.
Our home is poor, and for wine we have only an older vintage.
Are you willing to sit here and drink with the old man living next door?
I'll call to him over the hedge, and we'll finish the last of the cups.*

Structure of Regulated Verse

There are either five or seven Chinese characters to a line in **regulated verse**. Seven, in this case, as can be seen by counting in the image above. The lines are organized two-by-two, in couplets. Eight lines, four couplets.

Sound Effects⁷⁶



In Chinese, there are four tones, classed into four groups.

Deflected Tone (ze) Tones which rise and fall (ma, ma, ma)

Level Tone (ping) Doesn't rise and fall?

Every character is either level or deflected and the second line in a couplet should be exactly opposite as shown in the diagram.

Tones and poems can rhyme, but what constitutes a rhyme? To find out, examine the phonetic spelling of the character to discover the rhyme scheme.

Transliteration of *A Guest Comes*

客至 — 杜甫
Kè zhì dǔfū

舍南舍北皆春水
shè nán shè běi jiē chūn shuǐ

但見群鷗日日來
dàn jiàn qún ōu rì rì lái

花徑不曾緣客掃
huā jìng bù céng yuán kè sǎo

蓬門今始為君開
péng mén jīn shǐ wéi jūn kāi

盤飧市遠無兼味
pán sūn shì yuǎn wú jiān wèi

樽酒家貧只舊醅
zūn jiǔ jiā pín zhǐ jiù pēi

肯與鄰翁相對飲
kěn yǔ lín wēng xiāng duì yǐn

隔籬呼取盡餘杯
gé lí hū qǔ jìn yú bēi

This is what I hear when analyzing the sounds:

Last character of every couplet? Yes.

Pronunciation is different today, but Cantonese still maintains the final sounds of final consonants, called *glottal stops*.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ This will be a tad difficult to translate into written form. You have to hear the lecture.

⁷⁷ As a friend pointed out, this is not an accurate definition of a glottal stop. See [Wikipedia](#):

The glottal stop is a type of consonantal sound used in many spoken languages, produced by obstructing airflow in the vocal tract or, more precisely, the glottis. The symbol in the International Phonetic Alphabet that represents this sound is ⟨ʔ⟩.

In English, the glottal stop is represented, for example, by the hyphen in uh-oh!. For most United States English speakers, a glottal stop is used as an allophone of /t/ between a vowel and a syllabic "n", as in button or mountain, except when talking slowly.

The Structure of Language and Parallelism

One rule gives that words should not be repeated in a poem, a rule that's almost impossible to satisfy in English, but much easier in Chinese.

A more important rule is parallelism. Yin and yang. Different words that are semantically parallel.

The mountain is high, the valley is low.

Mountain parallels valley. High parallels low.⁷⁸ The notion that everything divides into parallel pairs runs through painting, poetry, and literature, that everything has a yin and a yang. In reading a poem, look immediately for the yin and yang within each couplet.

*North of my cottage, south of my cottage, spring waters everywhere,
and all that I see are the flocks of gulls coming here day after day.*

*The path through the flowers has never been swept for a visitor;
the wicker gate today for the first time stands open just for you.*

The market is far, so for dinner there'll be no wide range of tastes.

Our home is poor, and for wine we have only an older vintage.

Are you willing to sit here and drink with the old man living next door?

I'll call to him over the hedge, and we'll finish the last of the cups.

I got the question wrong, but here's my take on why:

I had felt that north/south and waters (below) and flocks (above) were parallel.

Given the answer, it's clear that "never been swept" and "first time stands open" are parallels. Never been swept is discouraging to visitors, like a yard with knee-high grass. Gate stands open is welcoming. Yin and yang.

In the second parallelism, "wide range of tastes" is the yang to the narrowness of only having an older vintage

The rule is that middle couplets, 2 and 3, are parallel, while the first and last are free.

蓬 (wicker)	花 (flower)
門 (gate)	徑 (path)
今 (today)	不 (not)
始 (first)	曾 (ever)
為 (on behalf)	緣 (due to)
君 (you)	客 (guest)
開 (open)	掃 (swept)

Parallel means that words are in the same position in the two halves of the couplet and must be syntactically or semantically parallel. Sometimes similar - birds and beasts - and sometimes opposite - mountains and valleys. Or mountains and rivers.

⁷⁸ My thought: This example is too simple to be profound, but subtle yet significant metaphors that are semantically parallel, yielding insight or evoking emotion, would be poetic.

Progression of Couplets

From the first word, the poet constrains and focuses our attention.

North of my cottage, south of my cottage, spring waters everywhere

This locates us in space and time.

Flocks of gulls coming here day after day.

The gulls are migrating. We're in his cottage. Now we're focused on time, space, movement, season. Once the poet has set up the scene, he responds to the scene, giving the couplet a sense of containment as an independent entity, the scene and the response. My thought: in music this might be the dominant and the tonic within the couplet.

Discussion of Progression of Couplets in *A Guest Arrives*

*North of my cottage, south of my cottage, spring waters everywhere,
and all that I see are the flocks of gulls coming here day after day.*

It's spring, I'm in my cottage. The gulls are moving, the season is blooming.

*The path through the flowers has never been swept for a visitor;
the wicker gate today for the first time stands open just for you.*

Yet here I stay immobile. Along my path, the flowers are in bloom, yet the path is awry and unready for visitors. I've opened the gate. I'm readying myself for change, for the world to come to me and not to pass me by.

The market is far, so for dinner there'll be no wide range of tastes.

Our home is poor, and for wine we have only an older vintage.

But I haven't much to offer a visitor. So much in the world. So little here.

Are you willing to sit here and drink with the old man living next door?

I'll call to him over the hedge, and we'll finish the last of the cups.

Will you help this old man and his friend finish the last of what I have? Bring something of this wide world with all its change to the unswept confines of my cottage. Before my days are over.

Professor Bol's Analysis of Progression

By Couplets

1 introduces images and themes 起
2 elaborates 承
3 the "turn" 轉 (zhuan)
4 a response, solution, or answer 合

1. Introduces Themes and Images. The first couplet introduces what we can see, where we are, the theme of isolation.

2. Elaborates.

3. The Turn (zhuan). Change in the direction. Perhaps it muddies the waters.

4. The response or answer. There's a man next door. I'm not so lonely after all.

By Lines

First couplet: line 1 is one theme, line 2 is another.

Second couplet: elaborates on theme 1

Third couplet: elaborates on theme 2

Fourth couplet: ties it all together

Moonlit Night by Du Fu

*Tonight this same moon rises on Fuzhou,
where she, alone, will watch it with me gone.东
While far away, I think lovingly on daughters and sons,
too young to know about Chang'an
In scented fog, her cloudlike hairdo moist,
In its beams, her jade-white arms are cold.
When shall we lean in the empty window,
together in moonlight drying traces of tears.*

Parallelism in middle couplets:

- He remembers a sweet thing; his children don't know how to remember an ugly thing. Parallels the thoughts while contrasting their content.
- She's in fog, her hair in a damp cloud; the moon is clear, her arms sharply white. Parallels the sharpness of the images, contrasting the present is clear, the future is murky?

Professor Stephen Owen

Professor Bol reiterates several notions concerning Chinese culture:

- *wen*, patterns in the world that translate into human affairs.
- *classics*, a series of texts that accumulate over time.
- *scholar-officials*, people schooled in culture who can write, who know the texts, who can be entrusted with government.

This is the historian's view of why literature is important. But why is poetry important?

Professor Owen replies:



It's one thing to know history, it's another to hear it in the moment and make that moment last. Cao Pi says that:

Literary works are the greatest accomplishment in the workings of the state, a splendor that never decays. Glory and pleasure go no further than the body. To extend both of these to all time - nothing can compare with the unending permanence of a work of literature. It was for this reason that writers of ancient time gave their lives to the ink and brush.

They spent their lives on it, time on it. And reveal what they thought in their writings. Without recourse to a good historian or dependence on a powerful patron, their reputations have been passed on to posterity on their own force.

The first paragraph makes a political claim and the second paragraph says it doesn't depend on politics.

The Book of Odes says that poetry articulates what's on the mind (*shi yan zhi*), that you hear the moment in the poem. Prof. Owen distinguishes between interpreting the world and responding to it, and that you can't do the first without the second.

Tao Yuanming (Tao Qian), Drinking Wine #5



Tao Qian, one of the great early poets:

*I built a cottage right in the realm of men.
Yet there was no noise from wagon and horse.
I ask you - how can this be so?
The mind far away, its place becomes remote.
I picked a chrysanthemum under the eastern hedge
And off in the distance gazed on South Mountain.
Mountain vapors glow lovely in twilight,
Where birds in flight come together and return.
I have a sense of some truth in this -*

I want to expound it, but have lost the words.

Tao Yuanming served in the government and wasn't happy, so he turned to farming. Much of his poetry is about justifying this hard choice. He built a cottage in the realm of man and turned his mind away from the noise and his eyes toward the mountains and the birds, sensing the truth of them, a truth he cannot put in words.

My thought: this is lovely, to hear something said so many hundreds of years ago that is still a poignant truth today and will probably be true for as long as people build their lives between their own world and the bustling world of humanity.

Wang Wei, Sending Mr. Yuan On His Way on a Mission to Anxi

Anxi is way beyond Xinjiang, on the edge of Afghanistan. This poem became like Auld Lang Syne, a popular farewell song.



By the walls of Wei City the rain at dawn dampens the light dust,
All green around the guest lodge the colors of willows revive.
I urge you now to finish just one more cup of wine.
Once you go west out Yang Pass, there will be no more old friends.

The poem creates the welcoming space of Wei City, the rain at dawn, the willows, the cup of wine, against the backdrop of the harsh Yang Pass.

Poetry in the Court

The Tang was a cosmopolitan moment with an aristocratic court. They established the civil service exam⁷⁹ as a way for the literate to thrive in government. Poetry was tested in the exam in the last part of the seventh century under Empress Wu. This created a community of people writing poetry, which was different than the poetry of the court, making the court irrelevant in the world of poetry by the eighth and ninth centuries.

The exam was testing talent through poetry. The community was about poetry as a way of unveiling the individual.

Du Fu - Standing Alone

Du Fu documented his life. He lived through the An Lushan rebellion and joined a faction that was not favored by the new emperor. He took his family to a poor outback place called Qinzhou, near Tibet. His poetry style changed.

If you think of the Book of Odes in its normative voice telling you how to live, of Tao Qian retreating into his own reality, and of Wang Wei representing the large body of self-revealing Tang poetry, now you have Du Fu with his own voice even more private and darker than Tao Qian. (I couldn't find the translation that Prof. Owen was reading, this translation was the [most common on the internet](#)):

A falcon hovers at the edge of the sky.
Two gulls drift slowly up the river.
Vulnerable while they ride the wind,
they coast and glide with ease.
Dew is heavy on the grass below,
the spider's web is ready.
Heaven's ways include the human:
among a thousand sorrows, I stand alone

Du Fu sees a bird of prey looking down at two gulls while the gulls look down at the fish, while the spider lurks in his web. Each line creates a scene that builds on the previous scene. For each couplet, a line high is matched by a line low. Looking up and looking down.

⁷⁹ For more on the civil service exam, see page 147. For more on the State vs. the Individual, see page 168.

Li Bai - Bring in the Ale

Li Bai might have been Central Asian Turkish.



Haven't you seen how the waters of the Yellow River
come down from Heaven, rushing in their flow to the sea,
never turning back again?

Haven't you seen how in bright mirrors of mighty halls they grieve over
whitened hair?

At dawn, like strands of blue black silk, by twilight turned to snow.



For satisfaction in this life, taste pleasure
to the limit and never let a Goblet of gold face the bright moon empty.
Heaven bred in me talents-- they must be put to use.
I toss away a thousand gold, it comes right back to me.
So boil a sheep, butcher an ox, make merry for the while.
In one sitting, you must down three hundred cups.
Hey, Master Cen, ho, Danqiu.
Bring in the ale and do not stop and I'll sing you a song.
I pray you, bend your ears and heed.
Bells and cauldrons, fine foods and jade, it's not these that I prize.

All I want is to stay dead drunk-- no use to sober up.

The sages and worthies of ancient days now all lie silent,
and only the greatest drinkers have a fame that lingers on.

Once, long ago, the Prince of Chen held a party in Pingle Lodge.

A gallon of ale cost ten thousand cash, all the joy and laughter they please.

So you, my host, how can you tell me you're short on cash?

Go right out, buy us some ale, and I'll do the pouring for you.

Then take the dappled horse, take the furs

worth a fortune, just call for the boy to take them,

and trade them for fine ale.

And here, together, we'll melt the sorrows of all eternity

Li Bai, an eccentric figure, brings the promise of freedom in poetic expression, telling us not to worry about dead philosophers or culture or history, just buy me a beer and drink.

14: Calligraphy

Introduction - Professor Bai Qianshen



Every literate person wrote every day. That meant grinding ink with water on an ink stone and writing with a brush. So the act of writing engaged literate people in art every day.

The way a person writes, the shape of their brush strokes reveals something of their character. And you can only write in calligraphy after you've studied other people's styles, which means you're studying their character.

In Chinese calligraphy there are different scripts and some calligraphers write in more than one script at a time.

Before the Yuan Dynasty, a calligrapher would master one style in one script, e.g. Su Shi wrote in running script. After the Yuan Dynasty, calligraphers mastered several styles learned from other masters.

Tools for Writing

Brush Strokes and Tip Work

When the brush is dry, the hairs are separate and soft. Once dipped, the brush becomes conical. More pressure thickens the stroke. As the brush moves, the tip, or tuft, can become twisted, ruining the stroke. Good calligraphers are constantly adjusting the brush to keep the hairs from twisting.

Four Treasures of the Study



Brush

Stiff tuft made of weasel or rabbit hair and soft tuft of sheep's hair. Smaller characters are written with stiff tufts.

Paper

Treated paper is glossy and less absorbent, for writing quickly. Before the Ming dynasty, most papers were treated. After the Ming, untreated papers were used with different results. Papers are made of rattan, bamboo, and straw. The best is sandalwood from Anhui Province.

Ink Cake

In ancient times, the literati used ink cake. Grinding ink takes much time. By the 19th century, ready-made ink was available. Ink is made from pine tree soot, placed in a mold, and pounded thousands of times. This creates a dense, hard ink that dissolves without bubbles or noticeable particles.

Ink Stone

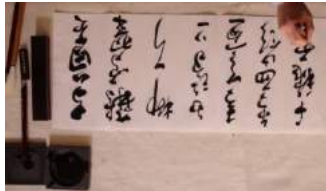
These come from two places: Guangdong and Shexian in Anhui Province.

Different Scripts



Small Regular Script

Used for writing government documents, diaries, letters, and sometimes exams. Formal and careful. Slow and painstaking.



Tang Poem in Cursive Script

Shorthanded, simplified character structure, with many strokes joined together. Smooth, quick, and gracefully artistic, but you can see Professor Bai's precise control of the brush.

The Character *Heaven* and *Wood* in Different Scripts



The professor wrote these from right to left.

- Seal Script
- Clerical Script
- Regular Script
- Running Script
- Cursive Script

Creating a Cultural and Political Model Through Calligraphy

The Legend of Wang Xizhi - Lecture given by Ren Wei



In 353, a group of friends held a poetry contest at the Orchid Pavilion. Cups of wine were floated on leaves downstream, and when a cup passed by a reveler, he had to finish the wine and write a poem. If he failed to write, he would drink three more cups.

The Ming dynasty painting by Qian Gu, from 1560, depicts the famous contest.



Wang Xizhi wrote the preface for the 37 poems written that day, displaying spontaneity and expressiveness in the composition and brushwork of what is now known as the **Preface of the Orchid Pavilion**, and which children today are still required to memorize.

The calligraphy became so famous that it was covered by seals of emperors and well-known connoisseurs throughout subsequent dynasties. **It is the most famous artwork in Chinese history.**

What makes this work so memorable?

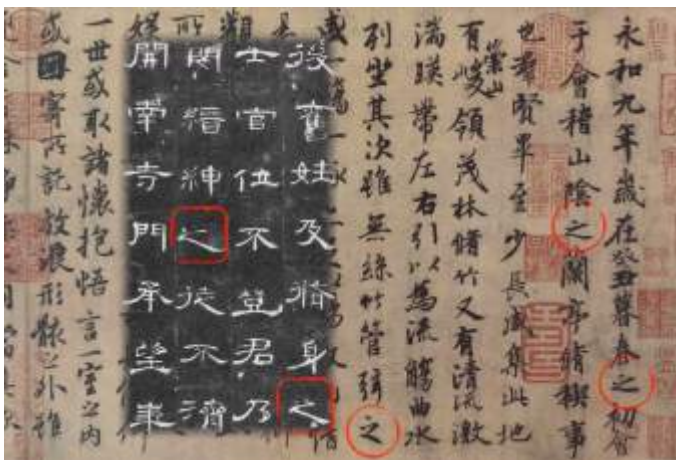
The Preface Compared to Earlier Writing



The Preface is written in xingshu, the running script, also known as semi-cursive, which became popular in the mid-fourth century. Prior to Wang Xizhi's time, calligraphy still bore the forms imposed by earlier writing on bamboo strips: the compressed harshness of brushstrokes and unsystematic tilting of the characters. Wang Xizhi displayed an expansive style, with systematic mild tilting to the left.

Note that the writing is written and read from top to bottom, right to left.

The Preface Compared to Clerical Script



Clerical script was the most popular before Wang's time. It was rigid with exaggerated proportions.

The zhi character in clerical script (dark overlay) has the last stroke elongated consistently.

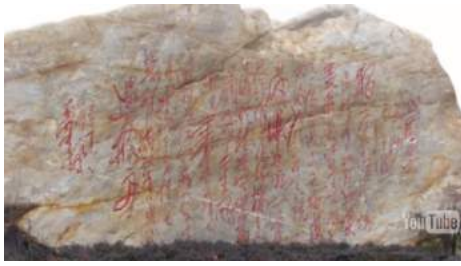
In Wang's *Preface*, the last stroke of the zhi varies with artistic freedom.

Cultural Divergence - North and South



Although the Tang (and the Sui) unified China, cultural divergence lingered between north and south. In the north, the militant rulers portrayed themselves formally with male attendants at either side. In a painting of the southern Emperor Taizong (bottom), he's shown in public with female attendants. The south was the land of the great clans, with strong cultural ties within a civil government.

The calligraphy reflects these differences as well. Stele was used in northern calligraphy; paper and silk was used in the south, as exemplified by Wang Xizhi (bottom). Wang shows more fluid, graceful and artistic brushstrokes than the formal regularity of the northern rubbing.



To show his southern allegiance, Emperor Taizong collected over 2000 pieces of Wang's calligraphy and personally composed his biographical entry in the official history of the Jin Dynasty.

Throughout Chinese history, there's a strong relationship between leadership and cultural authority. One of Chairman Mao's poems, in his own calligraphy, is engraved in rock in Hunan.

Xu Bing and Tradition in a Global World



To reach a worldwide audience, Chinese artists have transformed calligraphy. In *Landscape*, Xu Bing uses Chinese characters as pictorial elements.



His signature is in English, written to look like Chinese characters.

There was a discussion after this, in which I wrote my opinion that *Landscape* is art and not calligraphy. In my opinion, calligraphy has been used as a means of discourse as well as a display of art; it is one of the finest combinations of form and function. Art devoid of literate meaning, however beautiful or clever, does not fit this well-wrought definition.

15: Yingying's Story



An Introduction to Yingying's Story



This is the autobiography of Yingying Zhuan, which takes place during the Tang Dynasty. It's a love story.



The previous module on poetry is important to understanding this story because the love affair is entangled with the way people write to one another. These are members of the highest elite in Tang.

Yingying's family, the Cui family, is one of the great aristocratic clans, the bolding Cuis. They had to flee because of rebellion. Zhang Sheng is an official.

The story becomes famous in Chinese history, attributed to Yuan Zhen, one of the great poets and writers of the 8th century. It's adopted into a play, the Xixiang Ji, *The Romance of the Western Chamber*.

Xixiang Ji is a classic love story: boy meets girl, boy and girl fall in love, they part, they rejoin, they're married, and it ends happily.

The original Tang story is quite different, but may have had a happy ending from a Tang point of view.

Questions to consider:

- Was Yingying wronged?
- Was Zhang made to suffer? Was he seduced?

Or:

- Did he take advantage of her and dump her in the end?

The fact that its ending unsettled people 100 or 200 years later tells us that it's also a story of an age that was changing.

First, a synopsis

Zhang was restrained, both with women, as he was a virgin, and with men, as he was composed and temperate. He explained that he felt passion but hadn't met his object of desire. Those who knew him, knew the former to be true. He took a room at the Temple of Universal Salvation in Pu-zhou and met a widow, Madam Cui. She was a Zheng as was Zhang's mother. They were distantly related.

In the year 800 the troops around the monastery pillaged Pu-zhou, but Zhang arranged for guards to protect Madam Cui. To thank him, she prepared a feast in his honor and ordered her son, Huang-lang, and her daughter, Yingying, to pay their respects. Yingying, a beautiful 17-year-old woman, did so reluctantly and disrespectfully.

Zhang fell in love and told one of the Cui maids, Hong-niang. Later, Hong-niang suggested Zhang ask to marry Yingying. Zhang knew a formal matchmaking would take months which he could not abide. The maid allowed that Yingying loved poetry and could be seduced with well-wrought phrases.

Zhang wrote her a poem, to which she replied with this piece, *The Bright Moon of the Fifteenth*:

*I await the moon on the western porch,
my door half ajar, facing the breeze.
Flower shadows stir, brushing the wall-
I wonder if this is my lover coming.*

Zhang understood the message and on the full moon of April 15th climbed into her quarter and awoke Hong-niang, who brought Yingying. Yingying was stern and reproachful, explaining that she was using their rendezvous to dissuade him from further advances and chided him for misusing her mother's gratitude, even saying that he was as bad as the pillaging troops of Pu-zhou. Zhang left chastened and miserable.

A few nights later, Hong-niang woke him in his room, placed bedding on the floor beside him and left him with Yingying. Yingying was shy but amorous. At daybreak she wept and clung to him until she was finally dragged off by Hong-niang, having not uttered a word all night. After that night, Yingying allowed Zhang to come to her secretly at her "western porch." (hence the title of the play by Xixiang Ji)

Zhang had to leave for Chang-an, visiting Pu-zhou a few months later. Yingying was a skilled writer and stylist, but would not show him her writing, despite Zhang's prompting and his own writing which he freely gave to her. She was as coy with her music. He sneaked in to listen to her playing the harp at night in beautiful melancholy tones, which he knew would stop if she found him listening.

Zhang departed again for Chang-an for the literary exam. She protested primly that he'd seduced her and was now abandoning her. She played the harp for him, but was so distraught that she left abruptly for her mother's house.

Zhang failed the literary exam, but stayed in the capital. A year went by. He wrote to Yingying and sent gifts. She replied that she'd been used and left forlorn while he pursued his studies. She implied that his interest in her is of the moment, amid a life full with the enchantments of the city, while she was abandoned in a tiny village. Having given herself as a maiden, she was no longer fit to marry, but pleaded with him to take her hand.

She sent a jade ring for him to wear as a token of her unending love and begged that he not pine for her. Zhang showed her letter to his friends, callously publicizing their love. A friend, Yang Ju-yuan, wrote a poem, *Miss Cui*.

Yuan Zhen of He-nan, the author of the biography, took up the story with a sixty-line poem, to complete Zhang's *Meeting the Holy One*. He said that Zhang had decided to ignore Yingying's plea, that beauties like her were an irresistible curse and a destroyer of men through history.

A year later, after she and Zhang had both married others, he stopped in her village and asked to see her. She refused, writing instead a poem of her shame to show herself, that her beauty had faded because of her lost love for Zhang. Later she wrote again that she was rejected by him despite her love.

Yuan Zhen ended with a note that Zhang was one to amend his errors, that he knew better but was wrongly carried away by his love.

What's this story about?

[*much of the following are my own thoughts which were posted to the discussion forum.*]

I chose *morality*. The story is about normatives, about what Zhang should have done, about how Yingying should have presented herself. About whether they should have shown restraint, whether Yingying should have responded to Zhang's approach and whether he should have approached her at all, through the maid, instead of approaching her mother. It's about patience on behalf of virtue. It's about how Zhang went away and didn't marry Yingying. All of this spells a series of moral choices.

How is Zhang different from his friends?

Zhang was restrained, both with women, as he was a virgin, and with men, as he was composed and temperate. He explained that he felt passion but hadn't met his object of desire. Those who knew him, knew the former to be true.

As someone said in the discussion, he's always in control.

What kind of girl is Yingying?

She's unrestrained and disrespectful, alternately coy and resentful; one moment she's direct, the next demur, neither prim nor proper.

Why does she refuse to talk to Zhang?

She refused to be drawn into conversation specifically because her mother had requested it. She disliked the social debt to her 'elder brother' Zhang, and that this debt had been used to demand her courtesy.

She's disrespectful of authority, particularly of parental authority, which in Chinese society is the height of poor behavior.

Class Discussion

Prof. Bol says: we need to have the opposite point of view, not that she's resisting her mother. Confucius talks about ritual and ren.

What is the role of Hong-niang?



She's a facilitator and in a way, Yingying's proxy for impropriety. She's experiencing the romance vicariously, thrilling to the scandal, to her mistress' desire and to the pursuit of Yingying. First she suggests a proper proposal but when that doesn't work for Zhang, which is the first and most important sign of Zhang's immoral behavior, Hong-niang returns with a suggestion that Zhang use poetry to communicate.

She says "you should try to seduce her" and we wonder who is really saying those words. Remember that this is a biography written by a friend of Zhang.

Later, when Yingying refuses to speak except to chide, Hong-niang speaks to encourage, presumably at Yingying's request, something Yingying cannot herself do.

Did Yingying only write to draw Zhang in to scold him?

Of course not. If you want to properly scold, you do it in daylight without leaving written evidence of improper enticement. The child in Yingying is deliberately shaming Zhang. She accuses her maid of wickedness and Zhang of verbal molestation. Zhang will eventually become angry over this.



But again, we must remember that it's a story told by a friend of Zhang, so we have an inherently unreliable narrator.

Class Discussion

Niang means girl, but *hong* means people who specialize in bringing people together. The meaning of *hong* likely originated from this story.

Why did she cry that night that she came to him? Because of what she had done, that now, irrevocably, her life as a maiden seeking proper marriage with Zhang was over.

Why does Yingying's attitude towards Zhang change?

The story tells us that Yingying implores him to "conduct yourself properly and not ... molest people." Some days later she appears in her bedroom "charming in her shyness and melting with desire" with none of the "prim severity she had shown previously."

What are we to take from this? Simply that she wanted Zhang to propose. He would not. So she had no choice but to cease communication or to give herself to him.

Once she had done so, he wrote poetry for her, sixty lines extolling her as the Holy One., a month of their youthful tryst. She wanted to make an honest man of him, but he refused. Fluent with her others, she was stilted in her communication with Zhang.

She fell in love and didn't have the maturity to refuse her feelings to protect herself.

Class Discussion: the role of poetry

- A way to be truthful
- A way to deceive
- Communication of the elite

Writing as mediation. Poetry is regulated verse. A lens by which others can see the world through the eyes of the author.

My thoughts: By withholding her own poetry and music, she withheld the one thing she had not yet given.

What kind of person is Zhang now?

Do you think his views of propriety and passionate desire have changed?

He shows the letter to his friends to boost their opinion of him, that he has tamed the siren.

though I receive such exceptional fondness from you, for whom will I now make myself beautiful?

She is saying they are distant lovers, he will not marry her and has left her behind, so what is the point of all these gifts? She is distraught with love for him a vow she will not relinquish. She admits her youthful error in giving herself to him too soon and begs him to marry her.

My own virtue is inadequate to triumph over such cursed wickedness, and for this reason I hardened my heart against her."

Zhang harbors resentment over her ability to entrance him when he wants to retain control over himself. She has the unique ability to steal his self-control, so he steels himself against her. That is his statement.

In truth, perhaps, he cannot marry a sullied woman so he casts her aside and accuses her of wicked sexuality to assuage his conscience and excuse himself in the eyes of others.

He now sees passionate desire as a weapon used against him, a weapon he must fight to keep his propriety.

Class Discussion

Passion is the enemy of ritual. Zhang must abandon his passion in order to serve his country.

A scholar is the first to suffer the sufferings of the world and the last to take pleasure in its pleasures.

Which ending do you prefer? Why?

I like the original Tang ending because of Prof. Kirby's quote at the end of the class discussion, that:

A scholar is the first to suffer the sufferings of the world and the last to take pleasure in its pleasures.

I'm not sure where the quote originates, but it's emblematic of Confucian restraint and adherence to ritual, a restraint that Zhang and Yingying abandoned in their youth and regained as they grew older.

Whether we think Zhang was self-centered in his pursuit of study, immoral in his abandonment of a woman who loved him and had given herself to him, is irrelevant to the conclusions drawn by Zhang's contemporaries. Even as we might prefer Zhang to pursue romance and 'make an honest woman' of Yingying, that is not how it was seen at the time, and the story is of *that* time and not *our* time.

As much as any part of the story, the justification of the ending as morally correct tells the character of the aristocrats. That's why we must keep it.

Who seduced whom?

Zhang was initially attracted to Yingying. He liked the way she looked and he may have liked her resistance to authority, her flouting of ritual as an antidote to his chaste propriety. He scandalously offered a tryst. She properly refused but at the advice of her maid he pursued her until she gave in to a night of passion. He wrote a poem and pursued her again until she was back in his arms for a month of passion.

And then he left for Chang-an. She may have played coy and enticed him, but ultimately she didn't get what she wanted, which was marriage. If she seduced him, how come he got pleasure without consequence and she ended up alone in Pu-Zhou?

How did Tang culture, art and literature influence society at the time?

My thoughts: I'm going to infer how the premium that Tang society placed on culture and beauty affected the lower classes.

The requirement that officials be literate and well-read in the classics forces them to learn the ethics of the masters. This has a restraining effect on the emperor, as we've seen in prior modules, which benefits the peasant classes.

Tolerance of religion affects the masses, allowing them to practice the religion of their choice.

The equitable field system affected those without the resources to buy land and diminished the power of those who didn't rise in government, despite their aristocratic heritage. Diminishing the power of the clans increased the (however limited) power of the peasants.

The cosmopolitan nature of the Tang encouraged military strength and expansion along the trade routes, which likely contributed to some extent to the standard of living of the peasants.

In the north, women took stronger roles in the aristocracy. We have the statue of the equestrian woman as evidence. While we don't know for a fact how this may have trickled down, a greater tolerance for aristocratic women in more powerful roles will inevitably affect the treatment of peasant women in the villages.

It's all speculation, so I'm interested in what others think.

Part 4: A New National Culture

16: From Early to Later Imperial China

Introduction

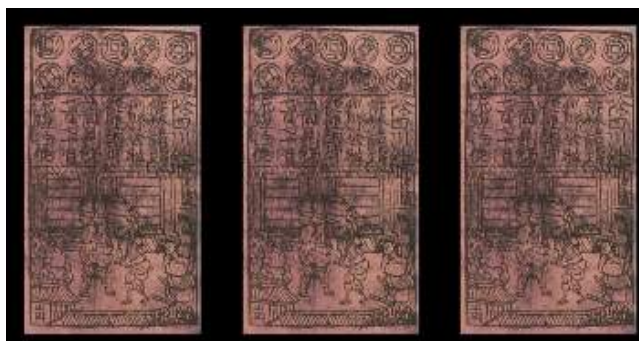
This is one of those great discussions between Profs. Bol & Kirby. Prof. Bol has written extensively about this period of Chinese history, whereas Prof. Kirby's expertise is in modern history.



When does modern China begin? The Song Dynasty, running from the 10th to the 13th centuries, influenced economic, commercial, and political life in China well into the 19th and 20th centuries. The Southern Song was more cosmopolitan than the Tang and its economy rested more on private enterprise. Farmers owned their land and prospered in ways not possible under the Tang. The Song created the foundation for a millennium of civil service exams that ended only in 1905: an exemplar of civil meritocracy - what the Japanese scholar Miyazaki called 'China's examination hell.'⁸⁰

The Song was also a time of division, of foreign invasion.

With the increasingly private economy and a new Confucianism, the Song relocated moral authority from the state to the individual, in contrast with the perception of China as an unbroken lineage of centralized authoritarian regimes.⁸¹



It was also a time of great invention: gunpowder, the mariner's compass, paper currency. Commercial printing meant knowledge could be spread less expensively than ever. The compass permitted blue water navigation.

⁸⁰ See page 147 for an overview of the Civil Service Exam.

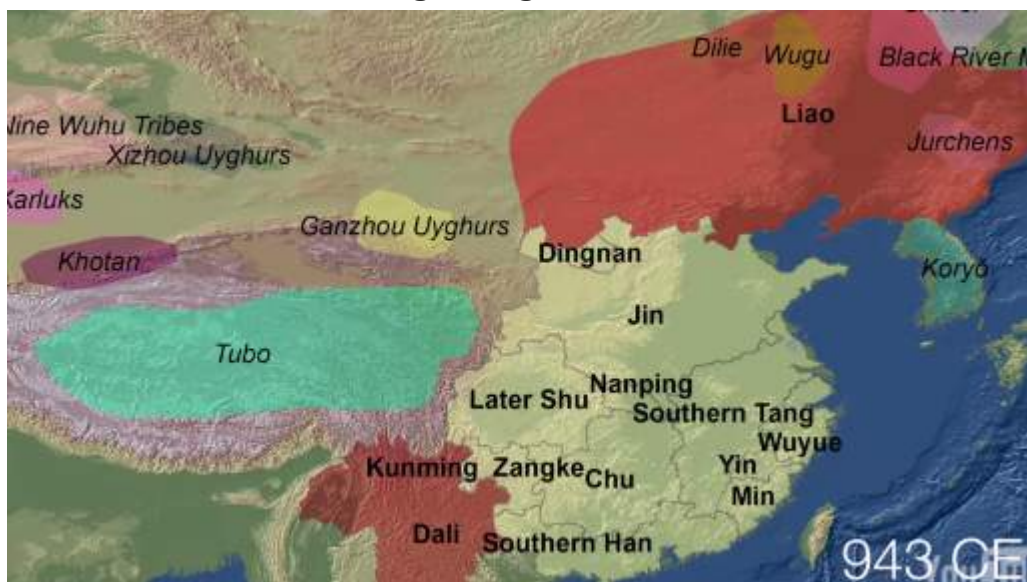
⁸¹ See page 168 for a look at the State vs. the Individual through Chinese history.

Historical Overview



Tang (618-907)		
Year	Event	
755-763 and beyond	An Lushan Rebellion	The rebellion changed the course of the Tang Dynasty, forcing retreat from the North and from Central Asia and shifting the economic base to the Southeast. The tax system was restructured to recognize private land ownership.
884	Huang Chao rebellion	Political fragmentation within and incursions from without pushed local regimes to recruit and rule separately.
907-960 (53 years)	Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms	The short-lived Five Dynasties of the North - Later Liang, Tang, Jin, Han, Zhou - fought to conquer the South and control its resources. They faced the Liao state of the Khitans to the northeast. The Tangut people in the northwest created their own state, the Xixia. Meanwhile, the South organized into a number of regional states, the Ten Kingdoms, which grew with northern immigrants and policies permitting the accumulation of private wealth.
960-1276 (316 years)	Song Dynasty	The Song, founded by a military commander named Zhao Kuangyin, conquered the south but failed to control the foreign states of the north. A new civil elite, the scholar officials (<i>shidafu</i>), tried to create a new order based on ancient ideals.

Periodization and the Tang-Song Transition



The end of the Tang in 907 CE was followed by a period of division called the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms, from 907-960 CE. In 960, the Song begins in the north and proceeds over the next 20 years to conquer the remaining states in the south.

How should we divide historic time?

Prof. Bol proposes a distinction between an **Early Imperial Order**, characterized by the Tang, and a **Later Imperial Order** that germinates with the Song and blossoms in the late Ming and the Qing dynasties.

First, let's ask how we divide history into periods. There are times when changes take place in many dimensions: foreign and domestic relations, the economy, culture, and so forth. There are other times when few changes occur.

The rapidly changing times set the stage for the stable times that are the 'periods' in history. In China, the typical period is the dynasty during which one family controls the imperial throne and its territory.

Identifying a Moment in History



China counted time in three weeks of 10 days each, where each day had 12 *hours* where a Chinese *hour* was 2 modern hours. The counting of years did not begin, however, at a single origin across all calendars, like the birth of Christ. It began with the first year of each emperor's reign, so we might define a moment as, say, the fourth year of the Yongle emperor.

On the one hand, two dynasties can exist at the same time, creating conflicting measures. On the other hand, dynastic time helps identify the state of mind at the time, for example, the legal codes and institutions in effect during the 18th year of the Zhongxi Reign.

Dynastic Events vs. Long-Term Trends

telling time in terms of dynasties:	
advantages	disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> conscious of the place/time and its legal codes, contracts, rituals, etc. conscious of major events (i.e. "post 9/11 era") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> obscures long term historical change led people to think in a dynastic cycle of birth, maturity, and old age this obscures the fact that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dynasties fall for different reasons - dynasties are founded in different contexts

Focusing too much on dynastic time distracts from underlying trends, much as a sea breeze driving a surface chop masks the rolling swells beneath.

What is the Life Cycle of a Dynasty?

Rather than thinking of a dynasty as the origin of the changes in a period, think of it as the product of those changes.

We tend to think of each dynasty as repeating a cycle of birth, maturation, old age and death. In fact, each dynasty begins for different reasons that reflect its own singular circumstances, which may be driven by the underlying trends that cross dynastic periods.

Many of the most important historic changes are driven by these underlying changes rather than by the rulers or by the institutions in power. To identify these underlying changes, we'll need to think about periods in history that span events outside the dynastic cycles.

Progressive Stages of History vs. Relative Unity

Karl Marx identified stages of history, from primitive communism through slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism and finally to stateless communism. These stages were defined by the classes controlling the means of production, the control of which rippled through all other institutions: legal, bureaucratic, religions, and so forth, what Marx called the superstructure of a period.

Even though Marxism hasn't survived in the West as a theory of history, its assumption about progressive stages is well accepted in the Christian interpretation of history, that each stage builds and improves upon the previous.

The Chinese writing of history doesn't accept the theory of progressive stages, instead emphasizing periods of unity and disunity.

Technology

Some have used technology as a divisor - bronze age, iron age, industrial age - though technology does not seem sufficiently explanatory of the underlying or cumulative trends in history to be the one characteristic factor. The Song did, however, bring about three great inventions - the compass, printing, and gunpowder - that migrated to the West and helped define Western history.

Invasions

Foreign invasions are also seen as historic markers.

No single overriding principle

750 CE 1050 CE

Tang Song

唐 宋

—|—————|

- What kind of changes were there between these two moments in time?
- Were there connections between these changes?
- How do we account for these changes?

Prof. Bol does not see technology or invasions or any other single dimension as the way to periodize history because none of these provide an overriding principle on which all changes in history pivot.

To change metaphors, we shouldn't be looking through a single lens at all of history. **Instead, we should ask these questions about the period between any two moments in history:**

- What were the most significant changes?
- What connected those changes?
- What were the underlying causes?

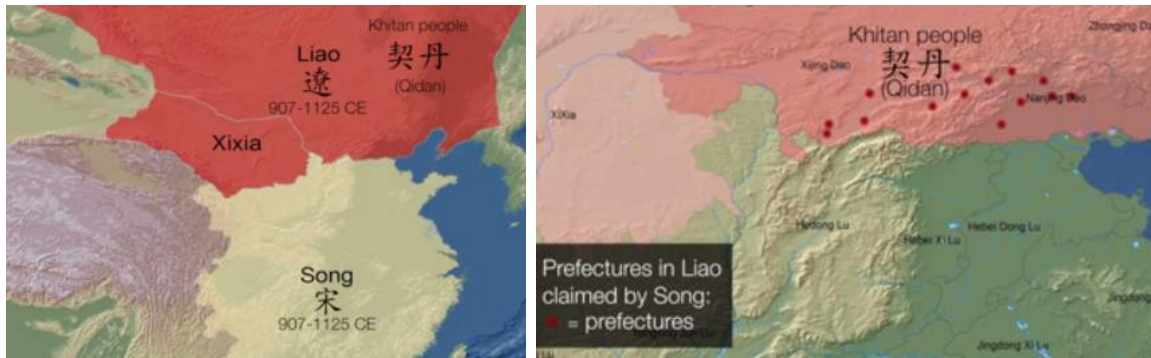
Changed Foreign Relations, Changed China: 750 and 1050

Tang



In 750 CE, the Tang was supreme, controlling territory through the West, past Kashgar and into Sogdia. It had stopped trying to invade Korea, but had successfully extended power to the north and northeast, and the south.

Liao



In 1050, the Song is far smaller than the Tang at its peak.

In the northeast, the Liao Dynasty of the Khitan people, 907-1125, had as much territory as the Song. In the 1120's the Liao was overthrown by other pastoral peoples coming from the northeast. The Khitans had taken control of sixteen prefectures of Chinese-speaking peoples located around modern-day Beijing and the Song wanted those territories. So they fought the Khitans and eventually established a peace treaty requiring the Song to pay indemnities.

Tanguts

In 1038, the Tanguts established the state of Xia in the northwest, known in Chinese as the Xixia. The Song fought them as well and had to sign a peace treaty.

Keeping the Peace with Brother States

The Song had peace treaties which required them to pay reparations every year to the Khitans:

- 200,000 rolls of silk
- 100,000 ounces of silver

After 1038, the Song agreed to pay a lesser amount to the Xixia.

Plus, the Song maintained a standing army on its northern border, employing gunpowder, rockets, and bombs.

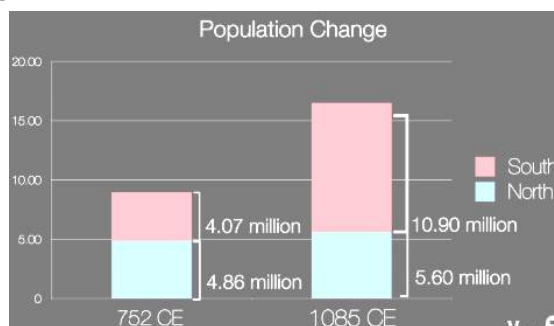
Most important, the Song recognized the Liao emperor as one of the Sons of Heaven, despite having a smaller economy and population. The Liao and the Xia understood how to build states and how to maintain them in the face of an attacking force.

Is China weak? The Song is clearly smaller than the Tang and unable to dominate its neighbors in the manner of the Tang. Though the Song had a larger army than the Tang, with better technology and a stronger economy than either of its neighbors, those neighbors had learned how to build states and had their own strong economies with powerful cavalries to defend their borders.

So what changed from 750 through 1050? As the Tang had faced with Korea, so did the Song face in its northern brothers: a strong organized state that could demand independence and peace from the reigning Chinese dynasty.

Changes at Home: Reconfiguration of Domestic Power and Wealth

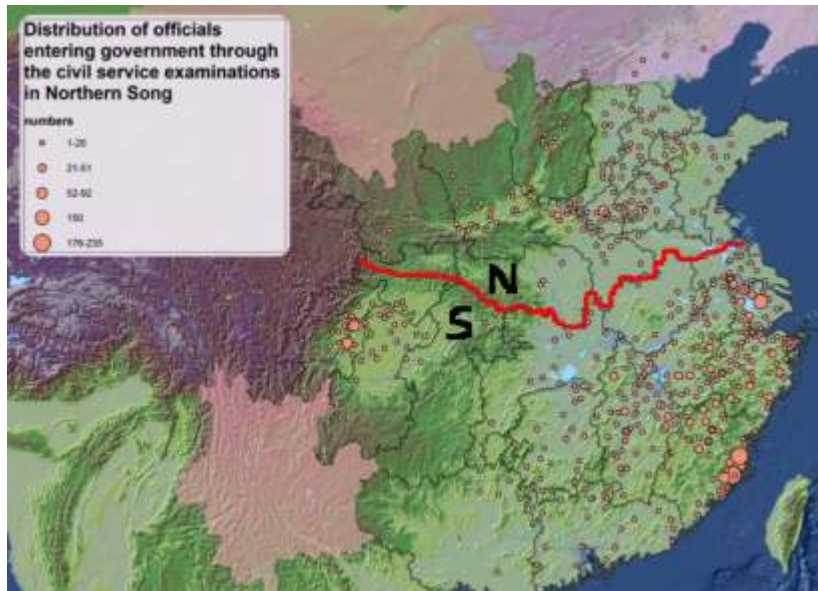
Population, North and South



The tallies above are for households. The head count was more like 50 million at the height of the Tang and 100 million by the 11th century.

In the Tang, the population was greater in the North than in all the rest of China. But by 1085, the South in Sichuan had doubled while the North remained stagnant and had decreased at the northern border. Some areas in Sichuan had grown tenfold.

Centers of Wealth Expanding in the South



In the Tang of 750 CE, Chang'an was the great center and Luoyang to the east the second center, with the heart of the Tang in the corridor between them.

By the 11th century, multiple regional centers in the south, the home of the Ten Kingdoms, had developed and prospered, building armies, drawing trade, attracting culture and demanding representation in the bureaucracy.

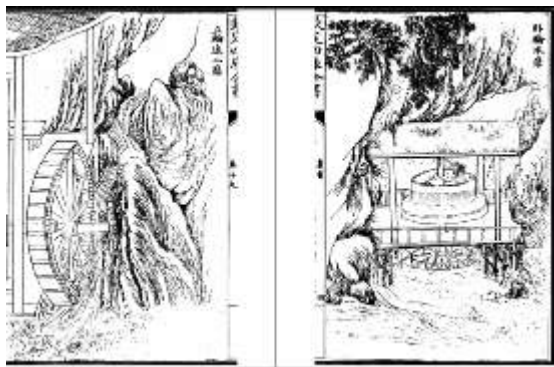
Southern climate advantage

In contrast to the northern weight of the Tang, China in 1070 had the majority of bureaucratic policy controlled by Southerners. The climate favored the south, with warm and wet lands that didn't freeze in the winter. New strains of rice ripened early, allowing for a second crop of either rice or beans and vegetables, sustaining a greater population.

Southern water transit advantage

Transit on the southern waterways was as much as 90% cheaper than land. In contrast, northern boat-building was less advanced and the boats were slower and less capacious, which meant the savings were not as great (only two-thirds the cost of land transit). At the beginning of the 11th century, southern boats traversing the Grand Canal carried 18 tons and made three trips a year. By 1050, due to improvements in the boats and the locks, their cargoes grew to 25 tons and the boats made four to five trips per year.⁸²

Southern priorities differed



Water Mill in Nong Shu

⁸² For more information on the building of the Grand Canal, see page 106.

In the north, the borders were defended with expensive armies, requiring taxes that dragged down the economy. Goods to support the borders had to travel overland and uphill, adding to the cost.

In the south, without the burden of defense, people focused on trade and investment. The southern ports of Fujian, Zhejiang, and Ningbo bustled with trade to SE Asia and Japan. Seventy-five percent of Chinese investment in irrigation (aka water conservancy) was in the south.

Differing styles of governance

The Northern style, continued from the Tang, was to tax heavily to pay for defense, distributing the surplus to its own officials. The South was more commercial, benefitting petty capitalists rather than state enterprise and placing families and private interests in featured roles in the bureaucracy.

Commerce and Urbanization

A Tale of Two Cities



Chang'an was planned at the outset as a capital, with streets laid out in a grid, a walled palace to the north, markets to the east and west and walled wards distributed through the city.



Kaifeng, the capital of the Song, had been a commercial city during the Five Dynasties period, located where a canal from the South entered the Yellow River. Even today, it's a city of commerce.



Location: Chang'an was behind the pass in the Wei River Valley outside the North China Plain. Kaifeng was right in the heart of the North China Plain.

Role: Chang'an and Luoyang were the two great cities of the Tang - the greatest cities of the world in their time. Dependent as they were on taxes, their economies were weak and there were times when the city suffered for lack of resources.

Though none were as large as Chang'an, there were many great southern cities: Kaifeng, Suzhou, Yangzhou, Hangzhou, along with Chengdu in the Western Plain of Sichuan.

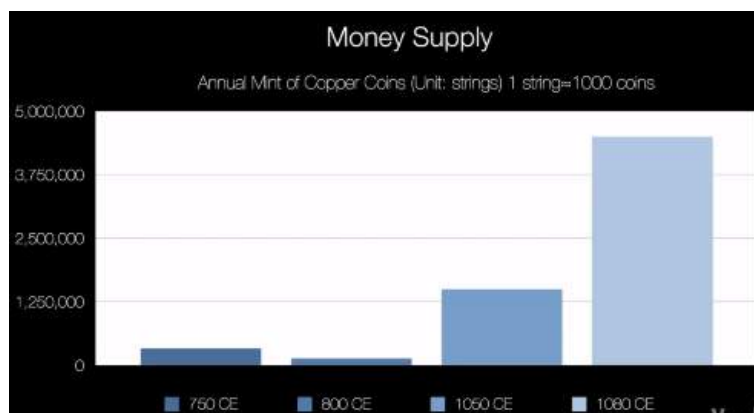
Commerce

The state controlled commerce in the Tang in 750, placing markets in administrative towns where they could be regulated by local government.

By 1050, the Song has learned to encourage and to tax commerce, for the first time in Chinese history deriving half its revenue from non-land sources. Much of this taxable revenue came from non-administrative towns where the government has stationed tax collectors, separating the administrative and economic hierarchies.

The state involved itself in commerce by holding monopolies on salt and iron⁸³ and by auctioning off wineries and ferries to private citizens.

Money Supply



The money supply grew from 327,000 strings of cash⁸⁴ in 750 to 1.5 million in 1050 and 4.5 million in the 1080's. Further, the silver in the economy grew from the equivalent of 360,000 strings of cash to 9 million strings of cash from 750 CE to 1080. A 25-fold increase in the money supply. And yet it wasn't enough. The Song is the first dynasty to successfully use paper money as currency.

⁸³ Recall the Salt and Iron debates of the Han dynasty, page 77.

⁸⁴ A string of copper cash has nominally 1000 coins.

Taxes

Tang Equitable Field System

The Tang in 750 granted land to every household, along with a tax obligation, under the Equitable Field System⁸⁵. The Tang assumed the tax burden would be distributed by the grantee of the land, with the state ensuring each household had enough land to afford the tax.

Song Dual Tax System (Twice a Year Tax)

The Song taxed the property, not the individual, with the tax rate based on the productivity of each parcel of land. Households were assigned one of five grades based on their resources, with the wealthier households expected to pay more. Thus, tax was based on wealth.

Why Taxation Changed

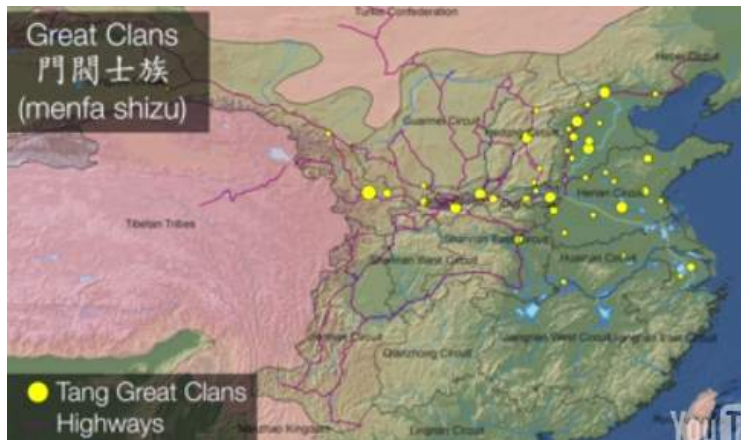
In 750, land was granted and held for life (or close to it) and returned to the pool of available land at the end of the grant. In 1050, land could be sold and the taxes would follow the land.

Tang directed the economy through its administration, whereas the Song separated its administration from the market economy without losing its tax revenue.

⁸⁵ See Part 3, the Equitable Field System (Juntianfa), on page 106.

A Shifting Social and Political Elite

Who are the elite?



In 750, the elite were found in Luoyang and Chang'an and the corridor between, among the members of the great aristocratic clans whose history stretched across dynasties. They gained positions of power through family connections and by rising in the meritocracy, and through *yin privilege*⁸⁶, which guaranteed their progeny a place in the bureaucracy.

By 1050 the great clans had disappeared, entirely replaced by a new elite of scholar officials from educated families who had risen through an exam-based meritocracy. Song officials could still use *yin privilege* but the granting of power was clearly transitioning from aristocracy to meritocracy, where recruitment of new officials was primarily through the exams.

Transition from Yin Privilege to Earned Status

In 750, the great clans understood that their role, their family occupation, was to serve the government. As the size of the families outstripped the number of official positions, the Tang created honorary positions so each son of a great clan could be employed.

literatus
士
(shi)

In 1050, families of officials knew that government positions would not automatically flow to their sons. Even among the *shi* there was no guarantee of a role in the government. The elite would have to find occupation in some other way.

Confucian
儒家
(rujia)

We translate *shi* (pronounced *shur*) as literati: the cultural, social, and political elite.⁸⁷ What makes a *shi* is not family but learning, especially learning demonstrated on the civil service exam. This is one of the great changes between Tang and Song.

Elite culture has become ideological

To read in 750, you would unroll a scroll as you read it. In 1050, with the advent of printing, you would pick up a book.

Printing, by government and private printers, expanded the pool of people who wrote. The number of poets increased from 2,200 in the Tang to 9,000 in the Song, twice as many per capita.

In 750, prose was elegant and refined, and poetry adhered to demanding styles. By 1050, the most popular writing was either more lyrical or more argumentative. By 1050, they were writing about ideas.

⁸⁶ The practice of granting office to sons and grandsons of high officials. See page 65.

⁸⁷ Note that *Shi* was also the surname for Buddhist monks, an approximate translation of Shakyamuni (see page 94).

Tang - Song Transition - The An Lushan Rebellion

An Lushan Rebellion
安史之亂
755-763 CE

Bai Juyi
白居易
(772-846 CE)

An Lushan
安祿山
703-757 CE
Sogd
粟特
(Sute)

Song of
Everlasting
Sorrow
長恨歌
(Chang hen ge)

Many of the trends that led to the Song of 1050 began two hundred years earlier when General An Lushan⁸⁸ rebelled. The rebellion became famous from the literature written about it but also because of the depth of the shock to the Tang Dynasty.

In 756, An Lushan led the rebels on a march to Chang'an⁸⁹, forcing the emperor to flee to Sichuan. Popular opinion blamed the Emperor's concubine, Yang Guifei, whose brother was a prime minister, for beguiling the emperor on behalf of An Lushan. Her execution was the subject of a famous poem from Bai Juyi, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, the *Chang Hen Ge*, which became popular in Japan.

The *Chang hen ge* became the inspiration for the great 11th century Japanese novel, *The Tale of Genji*.

⁸⁸ An Lushan was a Sogd from the West and a member of a family that had served in the Tang military for generations. An is a commonly used Sogdian name. Lushan is likely a sinified version of Roxanne (pronounced luxan).

⁸⁹ There's a good description in totallyHistory.com.

Late Tang - Changes at Home and Abroad

Shrinking Borders and a Shifting Economic Base

The rebellion by the northern border militia took out the border defense, forcing the Tang court to seek alliances with other Northern peoples, who then responded by joining in the pillaging of Chang'an. The north frontier became a war zone with families fleeing and the population shrinking.

With the Tang thus occupied, the Western regions gained their independence. The northeastern provinces on the North China Plain ceased paying taxes to Chang'an, making the Tang court dependent on rice shipments from the Southeast. Since rice paddies require considerable investment, the government could no longer force redistribution of land according to the Equitable Field System (page 106), as that would negate the investment with every generation.

The government supplanted the Equitable Field System with taxes on the land rather than the person, and with the land available for market sale rather than a profitless redistribution. This led to greater inequality and to large private estates held by non-government officials. As a result there were more wealthy families in the Southeast gaining education and wanting a role in government.

To further preserve its dwindling revenue, the government monopolized the coastal salt industry, using private merchants who paid into the government. This, in turn, legitimized private commerce and opened new trade routes, leading to the changes in commerce discussed earlier.

Regional Development

With the northeast out of control and with refugees fleeing south, stability depended on the willingness of military governors to pay tax to the Tang, governors who had their own armies and could feel their power growing in a weakened empire. They refused to pay.

Ancient Style Movement



In the generation after the An Lushan rebellion, people seeking change looked to antiquity for a model of government that served the common welfare, where people earned official positions through their knowledge of the classics.

This was the *Ancient Style Movement*, guided by the writings of Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan.

If antiquity was the 'new' model then why should they be loyal to the early Tang or to the Han, the two great unified empires? But the great clans were still in power and their numbers increased in government after the rebellion, out of concern for losing control during the upheaval. They hoarded the few remaining appointments and intermarried to solidify their claim.

Huang Chao Rebellion



In 880, Huang Chao led a rebellion that started in Shandong and swept south and back north, crossing the Yangtze to sack Luoyang before traversing the corridor to Chang'an and pillaging that as well. When the great clans tried to collaborate with Huang Chao, he massacred them instead.

And suddenly the great clans were gone.

The Tang dynasty continued for a few more years before falling in 907. The south splintered into military states while the north shifted through a series of short-lived dynasties.

There was a need for order in this new world, but the old order of the Han and the Tang would not suffice. By 1050, the people of the Song were looking for the shape of their new society.

Discussion

Going back to Prof. Bol's discussion of periodization, how can we understand the shift between the early imperial order discussed here, and the later imperial order to come, in terms of continuity? How can we understand the shift in terms of great change? How do you characterize this change, and what challenge does your characterization pose to dynastic time telling, if any?

Note that these are my discussion notes - they're not lecture notes.

What were the most significant changes?

- The loss of control of the northern borders precipitated the loss of Chinese hegemony.
- The resulting peace with the north was offered as one of many powers, instead of as a single empire controlling large swaths of territory which could be monetized through taxes and trade.
- Reparations demanded by Liao/Khitans and by the Xixia drained the Chang'an coffers and increased its dependence on the South.
- Defense of these porous northern borders further weakened the northern economies that funded Chang'an and both protected and lent power to the great clans.
- Population and economic strength shifted to the South, along with recognition of Southern trading cities as centers of culture and political influence.
- Private enterprise increased in the South.
- Political influence extended to Southern families outside the aristocracy, with the elimination of the Equitable Field System, the shift in economic power, the further rise of the meritocracy, and the destruction of the great clans.

What connected these changes?

- Loss of power in the north. Throughout Chinese history there seemed to be a trend that protection of the northern and western borders (or the lack thereof) precipitated political change. The need to protect the borders led to the empowerment of General An Lushan. When he abandoned his post, he left the border unprotected, further weakening the north.
- Growth in the south. Power abhors a vacuum. The south grew in population and in influence, sucking power from the north, from the great clans, and forcing political change.
- Destruction of the old guard - the great clans. Any great power shift is destined to shake up the class structure. This moved power from old money to new money.

Underlying Trends

- China as a nation within a region sharing power with other nations - not as the dominant empire. This trend began with the Korean peace and was furthered by the loss of strength along the northern borders brought about by the An Lushan and Huang Chao rebellions. In other words, rebellions and military defeats shrank the aspirations of the dynasties and forced people to look within. When they look within, they find their roots in antiquity.
- Diminishing power of the aristocracy - rise in power of the scholar officials and the system of government that promotes them (the civil service exams).
- A more literate population able to compete in the meritocracy. A more productive economy (double crops) giving people leisure time to gain literacy and advance their status.

All of these underlying trends crossed dynasties.

17: Transforming Society Through Government

Introduction

Great changes in politics sometimes change how we think about the past.



Having once been forced out by Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping returned to power in 1978 following Mao's death. He proceeded to change the course of China. Something else happened in 1978: historians changed the way they looked at two people far in China's past.

Wang Anshi, a political reformer of the 11th century, was considered the best politician of his time. Sima Guang, his leading opponent and a conservative historian, was regarded as being wrong.

In 1978, historians reversed their opinions of these two figures.

This module will discuss those two as well as a third figure, Su Shi, a politician and a poet.

The debate that focuses these opinions is on the role of government in society, a debate that's central throughout Chinese history and no less central today.

A Changing China, A Changing World: Song in 1050 CE



Here's a quick summary of some of the changes we saw in the previous section, covering the Tang Dynasty, the An Lushan rebellion, and the Song.

- The Song had made peace as a brother state with the Liao and the XiXia.
- Half the population lived in the South and most of the policy-makers came from there.
- The South had a booming commercial and agrarian economy with cheap water transport.
- Taxes on commerce had grown to exceed taxes on land
- The great clans had disappeared
- Scholar-officials were selected into government primarily for their literary skill

The Civil Service Exam⁹⁰

With the disappearance of the aristocrats, the government decides in the late 10th century to recruit officials through the civil service exam, which tested literary ability. The first test was of the ability to compose poetry.

A literati joke from the late 11th century

The story is about a prefect⁹¹ who has just arrived at his post. He goes to a major Buddhist temple and is received by the abbot, who is sitting on a chair upon the dais in the temple courtyard. The prefect arrives with his fancy entourage and the abbot rather casually invites him up to chat with no apparent formality. They're chatting away when some military guy from the local garrison comes in. The abbot hops up from his chair, and bows and scrapes before this military guy. This annoys the prefect, who confronts the abbot when he returns to the dais, asking why he was polite to this low-level officer and rude to *him* the *prefect*! The abbot replies, rudeness is true politeness, and politeness is rudeness. Very much a Zen answer. So the prefect smacks the abbot in the head. You know, hitting is non-hitting. Non-hitting is hitting. Right?

So what's the point? First, the tension between military and civil power. Civil figures have the cultural prestige but the military has the power. The prefect is making it clear that civil officials have precedence over the military.

Secondly, the monk is being dismissed for talking religious nonsense. The prefect is a Confucian scholar-official while the monk is a Chan (Zen) Buddhist. **In the 11th century, the leading voices are Confucians.**

⁹⁰ See page 173 for the exam as a force for unity between families and page 238 for a discussion of the exam as part of the novel, *The Scholars*. See page 121 for the introduction of the exam in the Tang dynasty, with its emphasis on poetry.

⁹¹ Land was divided into provinces, prefectures, and counties. A prefecture contained an area the size of Rhode Island and was administered by a prefect - equivalent to, say, the governor of Rhode Island.

How Can Government Serve the Common Good?



Han Yu, the founder of the Ancient Style Movement, looked to antiquity for ways to communicate one's own ideas. He became in the 11th century an important figure. Ouyang Xiu turned to Han Yu for a model. Liu Zongyuan, a contemporary of Han Yu, was also influential in the 11th century. Wang Anshi and Su Shi were both recommended by Ouyang Xiu.

On the other side of the coin, Sima Guang was deeply suspicious of those who wanted to transform government with literary models drawn from antiquity.

Readings

Han Yu: Essentials of the Moral Way (Yuandao)

The following paragraphs precede the reading and are copied from the course materials:

The first two sections are prologue: Han Yu defines terms and explains the historical trends that have led to the demise of Confucian teachings in his day. The third and fourth sections present the economic argument against Buddhist and Daoist monasticism: monks (the new fifth and sixth classes of society) are nonproductive and exist on the labor of others, thus creating economic and social dislocation.

The fifth section, with its opening quotation from the Great Learning (see chapter 10), is the crux of the text. Confucian spirituality, unlike that of the Buddhists and Daoists, links the private, moral life of the individual with the public welfare of the state.⁹²

These are my own thoughts that summarize the reading.

1. Han Yu states that *ren* is to love largely, rightness (*yi*) is to act according to moral imperative, moral way (*dao*) is to incorporate *ren* and *yi* into your daily life, and inner power (*de*) means relying upon oneself for morality and sufficiency. Superior men have *dao* and petty men do not. Either can have *de*.
2. Laozi didn't see *ren* and *de* as fully guiding every man in every moment and through them all of civilization, so it's natural that he would think little of these moral guideposts. Laozi has his own view (like a man looking up from the bottom of a well thinking the sky is small). Han Yu says his view is the common understanding.
3. The Sages taught the people how to rise from desperate savagery. The Daoists insist that the benevolent despotism of the Sages should be discarded in favor of anarchy.
4. Buddhists cleave father from son when they insist that nirvana is a personal quest. Had Buddhism been around in the time of the Sages, it would have been quashed.
5. Government devolves from the moral virtues of the leader. By achieving virtue it is natural that good government will follow. When virtue is lost, government falls.
6. The Classics and the rituals will lead you to the Way.
7. Not the Way of the Buddhists or Daoists, but the Way of the Sages. It ended with Mencius. We must revive it by throwing off the beliefs of the Buddhists and the Daoists and returning to the Classics and the rituals.

Liu Zongyuan: "Essay On Enfeoffment"

Enfeoffment⁹³ came from historical necessity and gave feudal lords too much power, which ultimately led to the defeat of the Zhou and later, to rebellion in the Han. The Han survived because it defeated these enfeoffed lords.

The prefectural system (centralized bureaucracy) is far superior because it gives the Emperor the power to appoint wise prefects. When the system fails, it fails because of bad appointments. Since the Emperor is the Son of Heaven, this should never happen, which is why the prefectural system is superior to feudalism⁹⁴. In the Qin, the Emperor didn't delegate his authority properly to his wisely chosen prefects. Apparently, this is an easily solved problem:

If the army is firmly controlled and local officials carefully selected, there will be peaceful rule.

No question about it. What could possibly go wrong with a dictatorship?

Enfeoffment is hereditary rule by feudal lords. The Sages encouraged a meritocracy.

⁹² See page 168 for more on the State vs. the Individual.

⁹³ Enfeoffment (n.) the grant in which property is given in exchange for pledging to serve the king. In China relatives or descendants of the ruling family were given land in exchange for protecting the king in times of war.

⁹⁴ This was a quote from Zongyuan. It doesn't have to make sense.

Ouyang Xiu: Essay On Fundamentals (*Benlun*)



To cure China of Buddhism, Ouyang argued for a restoration of Confucian ritual. Keep men busy in the fields and when they're not, keep them busy with ritual. Make what little happiness they have derive entirely from ritual and they won't have time for alternate beliefs.

Let the wise who are schooled in Confucianism lead the ordinary men who would otherwise waste their lives on ridiculous religions. A single frail scholar hewing to his values is a stiffer reed than the stoutest soldier against the winds of Buddhism.

Mencius said that men are basically good and those who abandon their families for Buddhism are going against their nature.

Wang Anshi



He came from Linchuan in the Jiangxi Province, south of the Yangtze River. He had few connections in government, but he passed the highest level exam, the Jinshi. He became famous for his writings in the ancient style of Han Yu and Ouyang Xiu. In this case, the ancient style means turning to antiquity to guide us in the present.

In 1058, he wrote a long memorial to Emperor Renzong, setting out his view of how government can transform society, not by recreating the institutions of antiquity, but by reexamining the intentions of the Sages.

Wang Anshi's Precepts

- Government should be central to everyone's lives, especially those of the elite.
- Education should be the foundation of government.
- Government should ensure employment for the literati.
- Recruit the best for the central government in the capital, give them further training, and send them back to the provinces to teach and make policy.
- The new blood coming in through this process of education should help government evolve.



In 1067, Emperor Shenzong had risen to the throne at the age of 17. He was well-read and anxious to make his mark.

He brought in both Sima Guang and Wang Anshi to be his chief counselors. They insist that a joint advisory is impossible, their points of view are diametrically opposed and that Shenzong should choose one or the other.

The emperor chose Wang Anshi, who warned him that the policies he was about to recommend would draw strong opposition. Would the Emperor stay the course? Shenzong affirmed he would.

Wang Anshi's Policies

The word *fa* can be translated as either law or policy. In the readings, the English words law and policy are interchangeable.

Fiscal Policy. Wang created a Finance *Planning* Commission to create plans which would be implemented by the existing Finance Commission. The latter was staffed by existing senior officials. The former was staffed by Wang's young protégés.

Crop Loans Policy. Farmers traditionally borrowed money in the spring for seed and other planting needs and paid back the loans after the harvest. They borrowed at high rates from money lenders. The new policy would provide government loans, financed by the granary reserves, at low interest rates of 20% (this is low?).

Marketing Controls. Private wholesalers had been transporting goods to the cities, which caused prices to fluctuate. The new policy had the government handle the wholesaling of goods, which it sold to retailers.

Service Exemption. Traditionally the central government would provide 3 or 4 officials to serve at the county level. The richest taxpayers would then provide people to fill the administrative positions: collecting taxes, clerking, scribing, etc. The new policy taxed many families to fund the administrative personnel.

Militia Policy (*baojia*). Households are organized in hierarchies: groups of 10 households, five groups of 10, 10 groups of 50, etc. The richest households would lead each group. These groups would provide males for military training. This cuts government expenses, gets the farmers involved in the militia, and Wang Anshi felt he could use the groups to collect taxes and provide mutual liability and surveillance.

In other words, if a household in a group doesn't pay taxes, the other households have to make up the difference. If someone in your group breaks the law, you have to snitch on them, similar to Shang Yang's advice to the Lord of Qin.⁹⁵ Not a popular law!

Impact of the Policies

The government takes the place of the wealthy families: lending money, wholesaling goods, hiring administrators, and organizing the local households. Wang Anshi is taking on the wealthiest and most powerful members of society.

These new policies doubled the centrally appointed bureaucrats from 20,000 to 40,000.

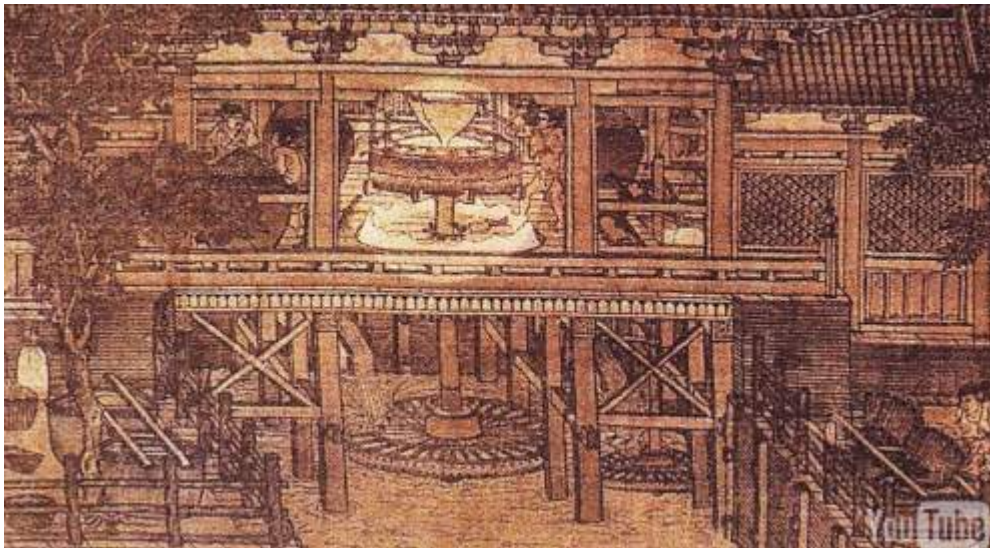
National School System Policy. Wang Anshi instituted schools to teach the classics with commentaries written by Wang and his protégés. To pass the civil service exams, you must first pass through the school system.

What is Wang Anshi Trying to Accomplish?

- Creating a universal, inclusive system that reaches down to the less wealthy households.
- Create an activist government that manages wealth, replacing private institutions.

⁹⁵ In the third century BCE, Shang Yang's advised the Lord of Qin to organize households in groups responsible for each other's taxes, see page 56. And to Zhu Yuanzhang's Village System, page 194. Also see Emperor Wu's Expansion of State, page 75.

Waterwheel Painting



What do we see in this painting (top image)?

- An inn on the right with a wooden structure in front.
- A waterwheel in the center left (expanded in the bottom image) that drives a mill on the second floor.
- A pavilion in the upper left with people sitting around a table, like officials, so this is a government mill on the edge of the city.

This is a painting of the government as the driving force in the local economy.

Assessment Question:

In your view who were Wang Anshi's policies intended to benefit: bureaucrats, farmer, merchants, or literati? In two or three sentences, explain why.

My thoughts: Ultimately, Wang's policies would benefit middle-class farmers and small merchants. Infrastructure projects would help farmers and small merchants, crop loans help small farmers, marketing controls help small merchants by stabilizing prices (it hurts the large merchants by competing with them), and service exemptions help the small folk by keeping the wealthy families out of local government.

Reviewing this after the completion of Part 6, I believe a better answer would be that it helps the bureaucrats, as it puts them in the driver's seat, and the literati, as they inherit the bureaucracy. It kills the merchants. It might hurt the farmers ultimately by hurting the economy, but the intent was to help the farmers, as they are second only to the bureaucrats in Wang Anshi's ideal Confucian world.

Sima Guang



Wang Anshi and his supporters were in power for 50 years, even after he died in 1086. But opposition to his policies began within a year of the announcement of his policies.

Sima Guang, the leading opponent, would eventually come into office and try to undo Wang's policies. He was born in the northwest in Xia County, two years before Wang Anshi, to a wealthy family that had served the Song since its founding. Like Wang, he earned a Jinshi degree, but his family had already procured an official position for him⁹⁶ by the time he was 15.

He spent most of his career at Court and when he did go to the provinces, he went to the northern ones. Thus, his entire career was spent in the north. Sima Guang's opposition to Wang Anshi's policies led to him retiring from government and settling in Luoyang, then a haven for the conservative elite. He spent his time constructing a monumental history of China.

After the emperor died in 1085, the empress dowager, also an opponent of Wang Anshi, summoned Sima Guang to form a new government. Once in power, Sima Guang abolished all of Wang's policies. Though he died a year later, Sima Guang's policies lived on. In 1093, the Empress Dowager was no longer the regent and the new emperor restored Wang Anshi's

policies.

Sima Guang was long suspicious of ideologues who romanticized antiquity and forced changes without sufficient understanding, as he saw it, of reality. So what was Sima Guang's notion of reality? History. He noted that for the prior 1400 years there were only 500 years of unity. Based on his own research and writings, he inferred a set of rules.

He believed that unity and disunity were not cyclical and that a Mandate of Heaven did not delegate the right to unify the empire. He believed the divisive forces were military conquest and usurpation. But there were rules that could ensure the longevity of a dynasty. He used a house as a metaphor.

- The common people were the foundation.
- The army formed the walls.
- The laws were pillars
- The officials were beams

And the emperor owned the house. The house would stand forever if each component fulfilled its role.

This was very different from Wang Anshi's view of the world as a dynamic system where common people could study to become officials and be grouped to form a militia, and where policy-making was delegated to well-chosen local officials schooled in Confucianism.

⁹⁶ Not sure if this was *yin privilege* or they simply purchased the official position at the going rate.

Discussion Forum (YvaWong and Dougma)

This section is a departure from my more-or-less slavish reporting of the lectures and is instead a more-or-less slavish reporting of a discussion that I found so fascinating that I didn't want it to languish forgotten in some dusty forum.

These posts were wonderfully written and extraordinarily helpful to this beginning student of Chinese history. I found YvaWong's posts a terrific help in detailing and explaining the historical trends that I was struggling to understand.

Thank you, YvaWong and DougMa. I have left your posts mostly unedited.

YvaWong

First, as for the continuity. I am afraid I have to write a little bit long. I think, in a very long historical period, China had to struggle to find an effective system to administrate a big territory and population with scant transportation and communication conditions. Just as Professor Bol said, the Chinese view of history emphasizes union and disunion, rather than see it as a progressive path. There is a very popular quote from the famous novel 'Three Kingdoms' (三国演义) - 'The rule of the world is that a union will follow a long period of disunion, and then a disunion will follow a long period of union' (天下大势，分久必合，合久必分). Now almost all Chinese, even uneducated, knows this quote. Although I do not think it a scientific opinion, I do believe there is somewhat truth in it.

If we look back to Zhou Dynasty, its territory is quite big, around 1500km from west to east, and around 800km from north to south. Providing the transporting condition at that time, it is difficult for the central government to deliver its orders to every part of the country in time in order to administrate it effectively. So Zhou adopted a government system somewhat like federalism (I am surely not using this word as its exact meaning, sorry that I could not find a proper word) - sovereignty is divided between a central governing authority, the monarch of Zhou (the Son of Heaven, 周天子) and constituent political units (the vassal states). The monarch administrates the vassals, and the vassals administrate the people in their own territories. There is no direct administrative contact between the monarch and the people in vassals and vassals administrate their people quite independently. This system runs for more than 400 years before meeting gradually increasing challenge.

In spite of big territory and widely distributed population, the natural resources in China are distributed not evenly. Some crucial resources are naturally distributed very unevenly and are concentrated in relatively small areas. For example, in Zhou, the drainage basin in middle course of Yellow river is the main crop area, salt mainly come from east coast, iron ore mainly from two mines in current Shandong and Hebei province, and copper from current Hubei province. When one vassals tries to control the precious resources in his own territory to get economic or political advantage, the other vassals more and more tend to grasp the resources they do not have by war. The nominal central government - the monarch of Zhou has not power to stop the wars, and China is in chaos for around 400 years. During this period, many great political or military leaders try to solve these problems within this system, for example, Duke of Qi, Huan-gong (齐桓公) used his supreme military power to force these vassals into peace treaties for nine times (齐桓公九合诸侯), but after his death, war starts again.

Obviously problems cannot be solved within this system, so Qin, after united China into an empire, starts a totally new system - centralization. The central government directly administrates people through appointing officials basic political units - Li (about 100 household), and these officials must obey orders from central government. Although Qin invested huge to improve roads and water transportation, its territory is still too big for the central government to raise in-time and proper feedback to every sub-unit. So when hundreds of soldiers raised a riot, chaos spread rapidly statewide, Qin was thrown down within one year.

After seeing the failure of Qin's centralization system, the winner, Xiang Yu (项羽) wanted to go back to Zhou's federalism system, with himself as the highest monarch. It proved a quick failure too, vassals came into war again and chaos continued for 4 years.

The new winner, Han Dynasty, after seeing the failure of two extreme opposite systems, tried something in between. It kept much power in central government, such as a strong standing army, appointing officials to basic political unit (still Li), tax collecting, etc., but still leave considerable power to local great clans, as keeping their own small armed force, recommending local officials (central government usually accept such recommendation), keeping big fiefs with tax exemption, etc. In spite of continuous small rebellions by strong great clans, this system proved itself quite effective and supported Han Dynasty for more than 400 years, with only a 4-year-interruption by statewide rebellion.

This way in between was followed from Han to Tang for more than 1100 years, during which period the balance of power kept swing between central government and local great clans, until Huang Chao Rebellion in which, as Professor Bol said, most great clans were massacred. This may be the reason why, after Han, the state of disunion

and war lasted for near 400 years with only a short union and peaceful time in West Jin for 50 years, while after Tang, the similar state only lasted for only 72 years before China re-united by Song Dynasty. Without the great clans after Huang Chao rebellion, the local small regimes lacked organized economic support and experienced elites for government administration.

So after Song got its throne and quickly united all small kingdoms in the south, it was the first dynasty without the threat from local great clans. This permitted it to administrate the country more effectively - to get more tax because of the disappearance of fiefs with tax exemptions, to recruit more officials through fair examination system, and to plan road and river transportation without considering the separation of fiefs. All of this contributed to a richer and efficient state.

However, some problems also rose due to the disappearance of great clans. (to be continued)

Dougma

Thanks. Your ideas about the problems caused by the sheer size of the territory and the uneven distribution of resources are interesting and important. Though China fragmented frequently there seems always to have been a centralising cultural force around which people sought to reconstitute the unity of the territory which they perceived as their homeland. If we compare it to Europe (is the word you mean in your second paragraph 'feudalism' rather than 'federalism'?) there were large political groupings and empires, for example the Holy Roman Empire, or later the Hapsburgs, but linguistic and cultural nationalism has always tended to work against such major units. In China this hasn't seemed to have worked in the same way. It is interesting for example to speculate why the Cantonese who have distinctive cultural traditions and a language far removed from standard spoken Chinese, never seemed to have sought independence.

You say that Song didn't face a threat from Great Clans because they had been wiped out, but surely local families would have been attempting to consolidate regional power. It would be interesting to know more about how Song averted this possibility.

YvaWong's Reply to Dougma

Dear Dougma, Thank you for your enlightening comments. I fully agree with you that local families would have been attempting to consolidate regional power in Song. It was a real challenge for Song to avert this possibility. How did they response?

First, just as Professor Bol said, the recruiting system by the government changed. In Tang, the recruiting system is largely family connected. There were totally 375 prime ministers in Tang, among whom, 150 got government service position through protection privilege, 140 through examination (most after An Lushan rebellion), 85 had no records in history. In Song, totally 137 prime ministers, 103 through examination, 22 had no records, only 12 of them entered government without examination. Even in these 12, some of them were at the beginning of Song and had great contribution to the establishment of Song, so did not depend on protection privilege. Song did not cancel protection privilege, but it was carried out by providing monetary bonus, not by offering government positions.

Secondly, Professor Bol also mentioned it, the exam system in Song is more fair. In Tang, the name of the exam participants were open, high rank officials and celebrities could recommend certain participants, so in most times, a participant from great clans or high official family was more likely to pass the exam. Sometimes, the passer, score and rank has been decided even before the exam is run. So we can find, even in the prime ministers who passed the exam, many of them are from great clans or high official families. But in Song, the exam is blind, and the handwriting is strictly restrained to regular script, so that the graders can not distinguish the name by handwriting. And the graders are chosen carefully, for an exam, the graders should have different political opinions, literature standards, birthplaces, and family connection, they will cross-check the exam papers, so that the exam result will not show partiality for any certain person or persons. The result of this improved exam system blocked the route for Lord So&So's idiot nephew (just as Professor Owen said in Part 3) to get government position. In fact, the prime ministers in Song had little family connection with each other, while in Tang, such connection is quite usual.

Thirdly, except for the beginning tens of years, in most time of Song, members from royal families were blocked from political or military activities and government service. This policy was new in Chinese history. Before Song, family members and relatives of Emperor and Empress always had such privileges, and they always took such advantage to form powerful great clans, and often threaten the crown finally. We can see, in Tang, many PM were from Emperor's or Empress' clans, and some princes became prime ministers or regents before they got throne. It is impossible in Song. Even Crown prince could not take part in political activities before he become emperor. And royal family members were strongly not encouraged (although not forbidden) to take exam. Only one PM were from emperor's clan, and kept that position for only one year. This explained why many emperors and royal family members in Song were excellent artists - they did need something to kill time.

Fourthly, the highest military commanders are all civilian officers from central government, the generals with good military experiences were kept in lower rank and must obey civilian officers, and the civilian officers must obey central government. No discretion was permitted. Military and logistic were managed separately, and the garrisons of these generals were changed very often, so that no general could develop his power in a place.

These policies were carried out so well, and were so effective, that no significant internal rebellion happened in Song. But the disadvantages of the policies are also obvious.

1) The territory became much smaller. Even with improved road and river transportation system in Song, it is still impossible for the central government to feedback quickly enough to emergency happening in too far territory. One of the reason for Song's continuous military failures to Liao is Song's commanders had to wait for orders from central government for any action, but the fastest message delivery from capital Kaifeng to the north border took 2 days and a round trip took 4 days. 4 days in war field is enough for everything. Such a commanding system may be still OK for passive defense, but surely not good for active attack. So, it is not strange the territory expansion in Han and Tang is not seen again in Song. But it seems that Song prefer losing military efficiency to losing internal stability. And we cannot just simply say this is right or wrong.

2) Except for the two emperors in the beginning of Song, Song Tai-zu and Song Tai-zong, and the one who established South Song, Song Gao-zong, all of the other emperors in Song did not have any political experience when they are crowned. This left large power space to civilian bureaucrats. In a period which democratic election did not exist, what the ambitious bureaucrats tried to do was to get authorization from inexperienced emperor to apply their policies by developing private relationship with emperor. This caused indulgence to emperor's unreasonable desire, a wide range of corruption, and capricious policies, which were blamed for the failure of North Song.

3) Literati became less independent in career and personality. In Tang, when a literati is not accepted by central government, it is not difficult for him to find a job in local authorities. Tang permitted local officers and military leader to keep their private advisers and clerical staff, who were recruited by the officers or leaders themselves, not through central recruiting system. And local officials and great clans also liked to provide jobs, protections, or financial aids to excellent literati, in order to strengthen their power, And the literati from great clans had enough economic support from their family, losing a position in government is not a disaster for them. All of these provided diversified options for literati in Tang. So we can see many officers with much integrity and independence in Tang. They did not hesitate to point out the mistakes and problems in government policies, even if these policies were from or supported by emperors. When we read poems in Tang, we can also feel such integrity, independence and optimism. But in Song, all of these has gone. To be recruited by government almost became the sole honorable future for a literati (of course, he can also be a businessman, a private teacher, etc., but all of these were regarded as inferior at that time). To be rejected by government did not only mean losing a respected social position, but also mean losing source of income for living. So in Song, we can see more obedience, ingratiating, shirker, selfishness, betray and lies in officials, and more sorrow, helplessness, pressure, and fear in poems.

My own question to YvaWong

YvaVong, that's a great summary of a long period, in terms of what threatens any central authority.

May I ask: What about the balance between battling and conquering foreign invaders versus peace with foreign nations allowing the demilitarization of the borders?

Will a central government in the future realize that it can better defeat internal rebellion, which has been far more devastating than invasion, by agreeing to peace with its neighbors, accepting less territory, and not having to exert control over the armies stationed at the border? (all I know of Chinese history is what we've covered so far, so I don't know if that happens).

Yes, that happened with the Song, but will this now be a trend going forward?

YvaWong's Reply to Me

Dear DavePomerantz, thank you for your comments and your sensible question. I do believe that, in most time, ancient China was in a security dilemma and to keep balance between offense and defense has been a prior policy target for every dynasty, they have tried various alternatives, but none of them proved to be an once-for-all solution.

The early stage of Han dynasty saw a policy of appeasement. In about 70 years, Han sent more than 10 princess to tribal leaders as their concubines (most of them to Huns - the strongest opponent of Han in north). Han presented silk, wine and grain to Huns every year as tribute, and opened border trade with Huns. But, just as Dougma wrote above, the nomadic pastoral communities did not have sufficient resources to establish productive economies, Han always had far more of what the nomads wanted than could sensibly be traded. So nomads invaded Han's northern border for plunder in almost every Autumn after harvest.

The ongoing conflicts pushed Han turning to an offensive strategy. In more than 40 years, Han initiated tens of scaled battles against Huns, and most of them ended with Han's victory. But a question rose - what to do after these victories? To conquer the vast but desolate Gobi is neither cost-effective nor practical provided logistic condition at that time. And huge consumption of wars made it an unsustainable policy. In fact, after continuous wars in 40 year, Han was at the edge of bankruptcy and starvation became so serious that we could find historic record of cannibals.

So, in the circle of offensive and appeasement, we saw a new policy was gradually developed - to turn nomads into Chinese. or we may say, to internalize them, Han immigrated nomads into Chinese border, and left reservations for them. Most reservations are fertile pasture and farmland along northern border, nomads kept their tribal organization and tradition, Han sent officials to supervise them and to teach them farming. When northern tribes invaded, these reservations became fronts and buffer zones, these settled nomads become Han's soldiers.

This policy saw its positive effect from early East Han (东汉) to early West Jin (西晋), during which around 300 years, northern tribes did not have significant threat to China. No one at that time expected this 300 years will be followed by another nearly 300 years of chaos, wars and massacre.

The stable life contributed the population increase of nomads in reservation and beyond northern border. When the resources there were not enough to support the population, they turned southwards for more. This was just the time when China has been weekend by a long term civil wars, nomads swept across the north part of China, and forced Chinese retreat to south of Yangzi River. A wide range of massacre happened. Population of Chinese decreased from 40 million to 12 million.

So it is understandable that, when Tang came into power, they tried an opposite policy - to drain the pressure of nomads outwards. Tang employed nomads in its army for territory expansion, so guided them to develop and look for resources to middle and north-east Asia. Although we are lack of historic data about how much percentage of Tang army is nomads, we do know many important military leaders are from nomads, and most of them can not read and write in Chinese languages and some of them can not speak Chinese fluently, so we can assume most of their soldiers should be from the same ethnic groups, otherwise the language would be a critical obstacle for commanding. In fact, when An Lu-shan rebelled, his army had 180,000 soldiers and most of them are nomads.

We can find, in Tang history, most civilian officials (most of them are Han Chinese) were opposed to territory expansion, because its costs were more than its profits. But Tang emperors, from a family with half nomad lineage, understood very well the danger of nomads turning inwards (southwards). So it is not strange that most emperors supported expansion, and generals got promotion when they won, but got big bonus when they lost. Obviously when they won, they can get resources from the new lands but when they lost, the emperors needed to placate them to prevent them from coveting resources southward.

However, the more territories were got, the more nomads were included by Tang, the more hunger for resources rose, so further expansion was needed. This formed a self-strengthening circle. Following continuous victories, the front was farther and farther from agriculture area, the costs for keeping the new territories and logistic were going up. It finally reached a critical point at which such expansion could not go further. At that point, it is inevitable for this strong, well-trained nomad army to turn inwards. In fact, An Lu-shan Rebellion happened after An Lu-shan lost three big battles, and his expansion outwards were completely halted. Although the emperors provided huge bonus to him, that was far less enough to appease his 180000 soldiers.

After the failures of the above two opposite policies, and after its own unsuccessful military efforts against Liao, Song abandoned the ambition to keep a diversified country. It retreated to traditional agricultural area where is also traditional Han Chinese settlements, and recognized equal diplomatic relations with Liao. It was the first time in China history that China addressed a regime established by northern nomads as a 'brother dynasty'. Song even aided Liao with gains when Liao met serious drought. The improved technology and economy in Liao also permitted Liao to trade with Song in a much larger scale than before. This is a rare period of complete peace between Chinese and northern nomads, which lasted more than 100 years, when the civilization of Song reached its peak.

But by retreating from northern grassland, Song lost one of the crucial strategic resources in cold weapon era - horses. This puts Song at the mercy of northern regimes in the terms of military. When Jin's and Yuan's cavalry invaded Song, Song's infantry was at a big disadvantage. This might stimulate the invention of firearms. But due to the lack of natural Saltpeter, one of the three raw materials of gunpowder, firearms never played a big role in wars in ancient China. In 1279, Mongolian cavalry reached the southernmost border of Song. At the first time of Chinese history, China was conquered by nomads completely.

When Ming restored China after 97 years, it seems having no innovation in foreign policy any more. Its policy is a chowder of polices from previous dynasties, without stable strategy. Appeasement and offensive in turn, some immigration here, some territory expansion there, border trading now and then. There is conjecture that the main purpose of the famous 7 expeditionary voyages of Zheng He from 1405 to 1433 was to look for a route to attack Mongolian from flank or back. It was not found.

As Dougma wrote, Qing finally removed the threat of Mongolian, but with a dishonorable way. Through massacre and restriction of marriage and population, Qing decreased the population of Mongolian from around 10 million to less than 1 million in 250 years. Even now, many Chinese people do not regard Qing as a Chinese dynasty, but as a colonial period as Yuan. This is not because its royal families are nomads. The royal family of Tang has a lineage of Turks, and the first three emperors of Tang are all semi-blood Turks, but Chinese people still list them in the best emperors of China and regard Tang as the best Chinese dynasty. In Chinese tradition, culture, ethics and civilization play far more important roles in identifying Chinese than ethnicity. The savage policy of Qing is so conflicting with Chinese tradition, concept and beliefs in politics, government and state, that Qing were thought as barbarian even after they controlled China for more than 200 years.

My Reply to YvaWong

Dear YvaWong & Dougma, I can't thank you enough for your detailed and extraordinarily instructive comments. This is one of the best discussion threads I've seen and adds immeasurably to the course. With your permission, I'd like to copy your comments into my course notes.

When Prof. Bol talks about periodization and historic trends that cross dynastic boundaries, I have to believe that your analyses of the northern border wars is exactly what he has in mind. I didn't understand why the Chinese emperors wouldn't always choose peace with the nomadic tribes and the answer is, if I read you correctly and to vastly oversimplify, that you can't make peace with an armed and starving neighbor when you are rich, well-fed, and demilitarized. You can have a watchful peace, but then you must equip your border provinces with the strongest armies in your empire and thus create an environment ripe for rebellion. Or you can conquer the vast desert and pay the price in logistics and taxes for an overextended and heavily armed empire that will ultimately be drained of resources or defeated.

YvaWong, I especially appreciate your comments about the Ming, that China embraces its history in terms of the moral fiber of the dynasties and not their bloodlines.

Great stuff. Thank you again.

18: The Neo-Confucianism Movement

道學
(Daoxue)
The Learning of the Way
Neo-Confucianism

their work would be interpreted and revised by:
Zhu Xi
朱熹
(1130-1200 CE)

- rejected Wang Anshi's new laws
- questioned Sima Guang's statist model
- rejected Su Shi's literary relativism

Introduction - Context and Claims

The last module dealt with Wang Angshi looking to antiquity and the classics for guidance on governmental reform and at Sima Guang who took a conservative view of limited government.

The Neo-Confucians

Cheng Yi
程頤
(1033-1107 CE)
Cheng Hao
程顥
(1032-1085 CE)
Zhou Dunyi
周敦頤
(1017-1073 CE)
Zhang Zai
張載
(1020-1077 CE)

their work would be interpreted and revised by:
Zhu Xi
朱熹
(1130-1200 CE)

Cheng Yi was a contemporary of Su Shi, and though not influential in that period would gain repute as a great philosophical thinker. His work and the work of his brother, his teacher, and his cousin would be packaged by Zhu Xi (1130-1200 CE) and the movement would be called **Daoxue, the learning of the way**, which Prof. Bol refers to as Neo-Confucianism.

Daoxue made a claim to be the correct and universal interpretation of the teachings of Confucius and Mencius. They tell the literati that they must hold themselves responsible for:

- government
- culture
- ethics and morality!

Fan Zhongyan
范仲淹
(989-1052 CE)

先天下之憂而憂，
後天下之樂而樂。
以天下為己任。

The importance of Neo-Confucianism:

- Reinterprets Confucianism
- Becomes part of the examination system
- Becomes a philosophy that every literate person will know from the 13th to the 20th centuries.

Today's Chinese philosophers pay particular attention to Neo-Confucianism.

The statement of Neo-Confucianism:

- Anti-Buddhist
- The world is real, not illusion
- Share with Buddhism a concern for the internal processes of the mind and for enlightenment.
- **Epistemological optimism**: ordinary men can become sages, even if they don't pass the civil service examinations and serve in government. See page 41.

Neo-Confucianism was a serious business. Fan Zhongyan stated that literati should be *the last to enjoy the world's pleasures and the first to worry about the world's worries*.

Core Neo-Confucian Ideas



Since the Classic texts don't contain an explicit manual for institutional design, many philosophers, such as Wang Angshi, wrote commentaries inferring institutional design. These commentaries lacked a description of individual moral behavior.

Neo-Confucians found morality in the natural order of things, the *tiandi wanwu*: heaven and earth and the ten thousand things. We as human beings are as much a part of the natural world as the sun and the moon and the planets.

Uniquely, humans can translate this natural order into social life. That's what the Sages did.

The Classics were created by people who realized their own internal nature as part of an integrated universe.

Li – Pattern, Principle, Coherence



Li is variously translated as pattern, principle, or coherence.

Qi is the fundamental constituent of everything in the world, and is always in flux. Air is rarefied qi, where stones are dense qi. All things have structure, process, and function.

- Everything has a structure
- Everything has a process of change (a tree changing from summer through fall, and winter).

Lastly, *everything has a function*. But the nature of this proposition can be disputed. Is the egg the embryo of a chicken or part of an omelet?

So what gives something its structure, process, and function?

Cheng Yi answers that *li*, the coherence of a thing is its integration of structure, process, and function.

***Human nature is the coherence of the self, of the body, of the mind.
The Way is the coherence of the universe.
To learn is to learn the coherence of things.***

Filial Piety. Here we have an essential concept in Confucianism. So where does it come from? The parent-child relationship has a structure, it has a process of how it develops over time, and it has a function, of holding the family and society together. This is filial piety.

Discussion

Why was it important that the Neo-Confucians based their interpretations of the classics on principles evident in nature?

My answer: Because the Classics were written by people who interpreted their existence and the moral fabric of their society as originating and evolving within the natural world. Consider that the Classics are deductions from the axiomatic nature of the world. To understand these deductions, you must first understand the axioms.

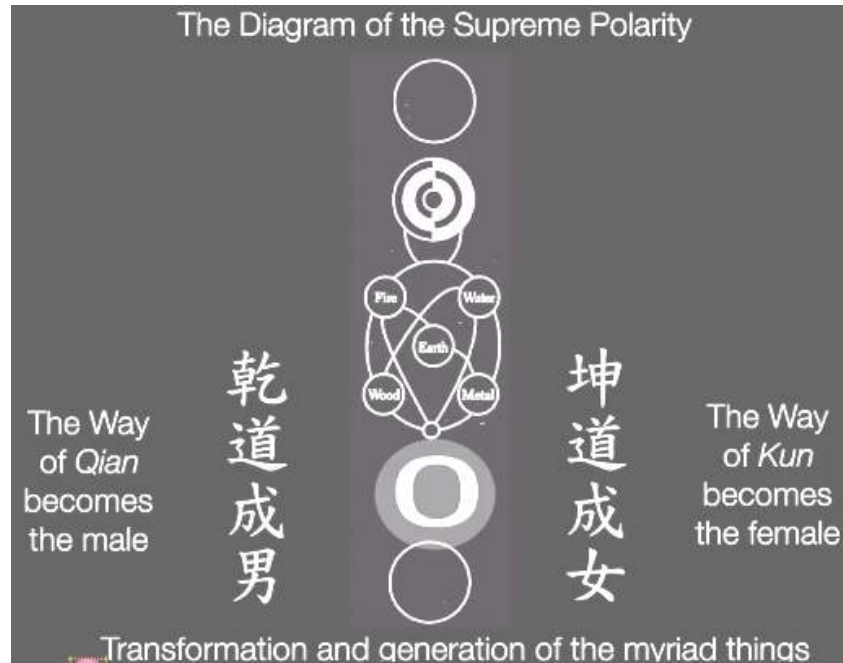
Implications

A moral world derives from individuals who understand first their own coherence within the natural rather than looking to others to define that coherence.

An acorn contains all the *li* of an oak tree. Our human nature is an acorn that has to grow into an awareness of our function in the world at every point in our own maturation. The [hermeneutic circle](#)⁹⁷ is a good thing for reading the classics. We already have our *li* within us to help us understand it.

⁹⁷ See footnote 62 on page 94.

Zhou Dunyi



Zhou Dunyi⁹⁸ lived in the 11th century and taught the Cheng brothers Yi and Hao. Neo-Confucians wanted to connect the natural world and human morality.

The Great Ultimate. Something beyond which we cannot go. This is what generates yin/yang, which generates the five phases. The Great Ultimate is the Ultimate of Non-Being which gives rise to yin/yang and thus to wuxing.

The five phases leads to Qian (Heaven) and Kun (earth) which creates the myriad (ten thousand) things.

Man is the pinnacle of these material forces and is most intelligent. Man alone distinguishes good and evil through his interaction with nature.

The best man of all is the sage. The way of the sage is through these four moral qualities:

- principle of the Mean
- correctness
- humanity
- righteousness

Zhou Dunyi traces this back to the Book of Change (*Yijing* – see page 68).

Chapter 20 of the Tong Shu

Comprehending the Book of Change - How to be a Sage

One can become a sage through learning!

The essential way is to [concentrate on] one thing. By [concentrating on] one thing is meant having no desire. Having no desire, one is vacuous (xu, being absolutely pure and peaceful) while tranquil, and straightforward while in action. Being vacuous while tranquil, one becomes intelligent and hence penetrating. Being straightforward while active, one becomes impartial and hence all-embracing. Being intelligent, penetrating, impartial, and all-embracing, one is almost a sage.

My thought: emptying oneself of desire to reach the highest spiritual summit sounds a lot like Buddhism.

⁹⁸ From [Wikipedia](#): His father died when he was fourteen and he was taken in by his uncle Zheng Xiang. He received his first posting in government through his uncle. Although very active in his civil service career, he never did achieve a high position or get the "Presented Scholar" degree (*jinshi*)....

He fused Confucian ethics and concepts from the Book of Changes (I Ching) with Daoist naturalism. He developed a metaphysics based on the idea that "the many are ultimately one and the one is ultimate." This was the first 11th-century Chinese text to argue for the inseparability of metaphysics or cosmology and ethics, as well as the first major Chinese text to explore the concept of the taijitu or "yin-yang symbol".

From the reading:

He was co-opting Daoist terminology to show that the Confucian worldview was actually more inclusive than the Daoist: it could accept a primordial chaos while still affirming the reality of the differentiated, phenomenal world.

Zhang Zai's Western Inscription

From the reading:

Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst.

Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. **All people are my brothers and sisters and all things are my companions.**

The great ruler is the eldest son of my parents, and the great ministers are his stewards. Respect the aged -> this is the way to treat them as elders should be treated. The sage identifies his character with that of Heaven and Earth, and the worthy is the most outstanding man. Even those who have no brothers or children, wives or husbands, are all my brothers who are in distress and have no one to turn to.

...

In life I follow and serve [Heaven and Earth]. In death I will be at peace.

My interpretation: The same kind of relationships hold for all things: the ancestral bindings are what tie heaven and earth and all mankind, these relationships give government its authority and give me place in the realm of the empire as well as heaven and earth. If I understand and obey these relationships, I will be at peace.

Cheng Hao, Letter to Zhang Zai on Settling One's Nature

From the reading:

By settling the nature we mean that one's nature is settled whether it is in a state of activity or in a state of tranquility. One does not lean forward or backward to accommodate external things, nor does one make any distinction between the internal and external. To regard things outside the self as external, and force oneself to conform to them, is to regard one's nature as divided into the internal and external. Furthermore, if one's nature is conceived to be following external things, then, while it is outside what is it that is within the self?

My interpretation: Cheng Hao is looking for a state of calm, but he cannot because of external things. The Buddhist position would be to cut oneself from the external world. Somehow, one must interact with the external world and yet retain the calmness of the gentleman. The answer is to ensure one's emotional response follows that of nature (the myriad things). Heaven and Earth have no biases - one must be like that and so to respond spontaneously (whatever *that* means, I'm still struggling with the concept of responding spontaneously) to the external world.

The question the Cheng brothers and their teacher are pondering is how the external world should influence the world of the heart and mind. Can one keep a settled mind while the world is in chaos? Do we react to external events (conform to them) and thus divide one's nature? If we are patterned after Heaven and Earth, then the internal and external both constitute the nature, but the mind must not have its own emotional response to external influences if it is to be constant.

The Book of Change states: "Firm correctness brings good fortune and prevents all occasions for repentance. If he is hesitant in his movements, only his friends will follow his purpose."

Cheng Yi: On Cheng Hao

From the reading: Cheng Hao's eulogy as written by his younger brother.

In "Tracing the Origin of the Way" Han Yu had contended that the institutions of the sages had survived but the values that had guided their use of institutions had not been transmitted. Cheng Yi adopted this distinction in his grave declaration for Cheng Hao, replacing Han's Way of the Sages with "the learning of the sages," but set aside the view that the values that truly mattered (This Way of Ours) had to do with government. Cheng writes:

When the Duke of Zhou died, the Way of the sages was no longer practiced. When Mencius died the learning of the sages was no longer transmitted. When the Way was no longer practiced there was no good government for a hundred generations. When the learning was no longer transmitted there were no true Confucians for a thousand years. When there was no good government, literati were still able to illuminate the way of good government by learning indirectly from others and transmitting it to later times. But when there were no true Confucians everyone was lost and did not know where to go. Human desire went free and heaven's principle was destroyed. The gentleman⁹⁹ was born 1400 years later. He apprehended the learning that has not been transmitted in the surviving Classics; his will was to use This Way of Ours to enlighten this people of ours. (trans. Peter Bol)

These two brothers along with their teacher Zhou Dunyi and their cousin Zhang Zhai, who all lived in Luoyang, set the foundation for the Neo-Confucians that survived to the early 20th century.

The eulogy says that:

- After the Duke of Zhou died, people stopped practicing *what?* The rituals? The ancient institutions of government?
- When Mencius died, the learning of the sages (something that true Confucians do) was no longer passed on. People were lost until Cheng Hao came along.

Thus is there a distinction between the government institutions and individual Confucian learning, which is not dependent upon government. He claims that his brother is the first person in 1400 years to truly understand Confucian learning and that none of the philosophies or writings of the past 1400 years matters.

See page 168 for more on the State vs. the Individual.

[#travelNote: Cheng Yi's hometown is in a beautiful part of Song County, Henan. See [Tianchi](#) and Biayun mountains.]

⁹⁹ Cheng Hao

Cheng Yi on Principle 理(li)

From the reading:

Master Cheng said: For the ancients learning was easy. In their eighth year they entered the minor school and in their fifteenth the greater school. There were decorations to nurture their sight, sounds to nurture their hearing, majestic ceremonies to nurture their four limbs, song and dance to nurture their circulation.... Today these are all lost, there is only moral principles to nurture the mind. Must we not make an effort?

When the sages and worthies spoke it was because they had to. It must have been that these sayings were necessary for the principles to be clear, without these sayings the principles for the world under heaven would be incomplete. It is like the tools for cultivation, ceramics, and metallurgy: were one not constructed the way for mankind would be inadequate. Though the sages wished to stop speaking could they? But while what was contained [in what they said] fully expressed the principle for the world under heaven, it was still very concise. **Later men, when they first held a writing scroll, thought literary composition was the priority, and what they wrote in their lifetimes was far more than the sages.** Yet having [their compositions] remedies nothing; being without them would not mean a lack of anything. They are useless, excess speech. They are not merely excess, since they do not get the essentials; they depart from the true and lose the correct. That they instead harm way is inevitable.

Question: Does the mind have good and bad?

Answer: In heaven it is decree, in things it is principle, in man it is the nature, and the ruler in the body is mind. In fact these are one. **The mind is originally good; in the process of thinking there is good and not good.** If it has found expression then we may call it the emotional responses, we cannot call it mind. As with water, we call it water, but when it flows and branches, some going west and some east, we call it streams.

Men fear that they will become entangled by affairs and that their cogitation will be hindered, simply because they have not apprehended the essentials [of affairs]. The essentials lie in clarifying the good. **Clarifying the good lies in fully realizing the principles of things. When you have fully realized the principle of a thing, then, gradually, it will be possible to fully reach all things under heaven; they are a single principle.**

"All things under heaven can be illuminated with principle. [As Mencius said:] 'If there is a thing there must be a norm.' For one thing there must be one principle."

"One phrase covers it all: **the myriad principles revert to a single principle**". "[One who,] being great, transforms himself [is called a sage]' simply means **principle and self become one**. For those who are not yet transformed it is like using a measuring stick to measure things. When you use it you still cannot avoid being off. For those who are transformed, the self is the measuring stick; the measuring stick is the self. Yanzi [Confucius' foremost disciple] was exactly at this point, if he had transformed then he would have been Confucius."

Arriving at things and fully realizing the principle: **It is not so that one must fully realize [the principles of] all things under heaven. Just fully realize one principle, the rest can be [realized by] extending by categorical similarity.** For example, what is that by which one is filially pious. If you can't fully realize [the principle] for one thing then fully realize it with another...just as there are a multitude of roads that all lead to the capital, just find one road that leads in and it will do. The reason that one is able to fully realize [principle] is that all things are one principle, so that every single thing and affair, however minor, each has this principle.

"For every thing there is a principle, you must fully realize its principle. **There are many methods for fully realizing principle. One may read books and elucidate moral principles. One may discuss past and present figures and distinguish right and wrong. One may respond to affairs and things and arrange them as they should be.** All are fully realizing principle."

Question: "In realizing [the principle in] things, is it necessary to realize it thing by thing, or do you just realize one thing and then the myriad principles are known."

Answer: How can you then inclusively comprehend? **Even Yan Hui would not have dared say that if you only arrived at one thing you would comprehend the multitudinous principles. You must arrive at one item today and another tomorrow, once cumulative practice is much then, as if released, there will be a point where all is coherently connected.**

Question: Are we only to fully realize a single thing and, seeing this one thing, then see the many principles.

Answer: You must seek everywhere. Even Yan Hui was only able to know ten on hearing one. If later you catch on to principle, then even a million can be comprehended [as one].

Cheng, Yi, trans. Peter Bol. *On Principle (li)*. (unpublished translation, original work published in the 12th cent.).

Commentary from the lecture, with my notes:

For the ancients learning was easy. The ancients were being formed by their culture. We don't have that marvelous ancient culture to aid our learning in these days. We only have moral principles.

When the sages and worthies spoke it was because they had to... Later men, when they first held a writing scroll, thought literary composition was the priority, and what they wrote in their lifetimes was far more than the sages. The outpourings of the literati since Mencius was simply a waste of ink.

Question: Does the mind have good and bad?... The mind is originally good; in the process of thinking there is good and not good.

Question: What is the concept of a single principle for myriad things? What does that mean? How does one attain that single principle?

This question is the gist of the latter passages. To me, this leads to the fundamental question of inductive versus deductive reasoning. Can you induce from a small set of events the underlying axioms, the basic nature of all events? Can you extend an understanding of ten things to an understanding of a thousand?

Prof. Bol said there are two ways to look at it:

- There's a web of interconnection that ties all things together
- This is a description of how the mind works in seeing how the parts fit into a whole. The quality of fitting together is *coherence*, the nature of principle itself. In solving a math problem or understanding of poem, there's a moment of understanding, an epiphany that is the moment of seeing the coherence or *li*.

Zhu Xi's Views Of The Mind, The Individual, Politics And The Way



The mind has two types of consciousness:

- one's physical body, sensory impressions, self-oriented.
- moral principles in the mind, a unity of principles (*heavenly principle*).

The heavenly principle must be comprehended if we are to overcome the constant pressure to satisfy the desires of the physical body.

Preface of the Doctrine of the Mean¹⁰⁰

The reading:

Why was the Mean written? [Confucius' grandson] Master Zisi¹⁰¹ wrote it because he was worried lest the transmission of the learning of the Way (Daoxue) be lost. The transmission of the Tradition of the Way (Daotong) should have had its beginning when the divine sages of antiquity continued the work of Heaven and established the ultimate standard. As for this appearing in the Classics – there is [the phrase]

*Hold fast the mean.
which is what Yao gave to Shun. And*

*The human mind is precarious.
The moral mind is subtle.
Have refined discrimination and singleness.
Thus to hold fast the mean.*

which is what Shun gave to Yu. Yao's one utterance is complete and all--inclusive, but Shun added three more in order to show that Yao's words can only be fulfilled in this way.

As I have maintained, the mind as the pure intelligence and consciousness is one and only one. But that I think there is a difference between the human mind (renxin) and the moral mind (daoxin) is because the human mind comes into being from the personal particularity of physical form and qi and the moral mind has its source in the correctness of the nature and destiny [endowed in all humans], and it is on this account that as consciousnesses they are different.¹⁰² Consequently, the human mind is in a precarious position (liable to evil) and is not secure, while the moral mind is subtle and not easily seen. However, all humans have this physical form and therefore even the most ignorant necessarily possesses the moral mind. And they all have this nature and therefore even the most ignorant necessarily possess the moral mind. The two minds are mixed in the space of a square inch [in the heart]. If we do not know how to manage them, what is precarious will become even more precarious and what is subtle will become even more subtle, and the impartiality of Heaven's Principle cannot in the end overcome the selfishness of human desires. Refined discrimination means to discriminate between the two so that they do not get mixed up, and singleness means to hold to the correctness of the original mind and not depart from it. If one devotes himself to this task without the slightest interruption, making sure that the moral mind is always the master of one's person and the human mind will obey it every time, then what is precarious will become secure and what is subtle will become manifest and in tranquility and in action, in speech and in deed, one will be free of the error of going too far or not far enough.

Yao, Shun, and Yu were great sages of the world, and to hand down the empire was a great event of the world. If when the great sages of the world undertook the great task of the world, their repeated admonitions consisted of only so many words, then how could there be a principle of the world that improved on them?

¹⁰⁰ From [Wikipedia](#): The phrase Doctrine of the Mean (*zhōng yōng*) first occurs in 6.29 of the Analects: *The Master said, The virtue embodied in the doctrine of the Mean is of the highest order. But it has been rare among the people.*

Note that there are lot of different translations of 6.29, but it was James Legge who first translated *zhongyong* as Doctrine of the Mean.

¹⁰¹ From [Wikipedia](#): Zisi was the son of Boyu and the only grandson of Confucius. He is traditionally accredited with transmitting Confucian teaching to Mencius and writing the [Doctrine of the Mean](#).

¹⁰² In his rather strange and frequently discredited thesis, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, Julian Jaynes writes that “Chinese literature jumps into subjectivity in the teaching of Confucius with little before it.” Jaynes, if I remember correctly, believed that the corpus collossum functioned differently in ancient minds causing the ancients to hear voices, as if one half of the brain spoke to the other. They interpreted those voices as the word of god. While I personally don't find Jaynes' thesis compelling, it is interesting that Zisi writes about a human mind and a moral mind as separate entities living within the same space.

From this point on one sage passed it on to another. King Tang (r. 1751--1739 B.C.), King Wen (r. 1171--1122 B.C.), and King Wu (r. 1121--1116 B.C.) as sovereigns, and Gao Yao, Yi Yin, Fu Yue, the Duke of Zhou (d. 1094) and Duke Shao (d. 1056 B.C.) as ministers all thanks to this continued the transmission of the tradition of Way. As to our Master (Confucius), although he did not gain the official position he deserved, in the way he continued the past sages and enlightened future generations, his accomplishment was superior to that of Yao and Shun. However, few understood him in his time. Only what was handed down by Yan Hui and Zeng Can apprehended the main line. But when it went to the Confucius' grandson Zisi, he was already at a distance from the sage past and heterodoxical doctrines had arisen.

Zisi feared that the further away from Confucius, the more the true account would be lost. So he found a basis in the ideas that had been passed down since Yao and Shun, verified them with what he had heard from his father and teacher, deducing one from the other, and wrote this book to instruct those who learn in future generations. He feared for it deeply so he spoke about it pointedly; he thought about it far reachingly so he explained it in detail. When he said [in the opening lines], "What Heaven endow" and "Following our nature," he was talking about the moral mind. When he said, "Choose the good and hold fast to it," he was talking about refined discernment and singleness [of mind]. And when he said, "The superior man hits the mean at all times," he was talking about holding fast the mean. He lived in an age more than a thousand years later, but what he said did not differ from the original in any way but tallied with them perfectly. He made selections from various works of past sages. In bringing out the main principles and revealing the subtle points, no other work is as clear and as thorough as his.

After this it was further transmitted and reached Mencius. He was able to elaborate on and clarify this book and to continue the tradition of past sages, but with his death, its transmission was lost. Consequently, our Way was consigned merely to words and writings. Heterodoxical doctrines arose with increasing novelty and strength to the point that when people like the Buddhists and Daoists emerged, the more their doctrines seemed to conform to principle, the more they violated its authentic form.

Fortunately, this book had not been lost. When the Masters Cheng, the two brothers, appeared they had something to look into in order to continue the thread that had not been transmitted for a thousand years, and had something to rely on in order to reproach the wrong that seemed to be right of the two schools. The contribution of Zisi was great, but were it not for the Cheng brothers, it would be impossible to understand his mind from his words. Unfortunately the Cheng brothers' explanations were lost. What Shi [Dun] compiled came just from the sayings recorded by pupils. Thus, although the fundamental ideas were clear, the subtle words were not well explained.

As to the explanations their pupils did themselves, although they were detailed and comprehensive and offered many new interpretations, in some cases they violated their teachers' tenets and fell into the fallacies of Daoism and Buddhism. I read them at an early age and was skeptical. After some years of repeated pondering, one day I seemed suddenly to be able to understand its essential points. Thereupon I put the various interpretations together and arrived at a common ground. Thereupon I finished the Mean in Chapters and Verses in one chapter as the final version to offer to later scholars for their appraisal. Later, with one or two like-minded friends, I edited Shi Dun's compilation, deleting the overlapping and confused material, and entitled it Abbreviated Collection. I further wrote down my discussions and my arguments for accepting or rejecting various interpretations to constitute my Questions and Answers on the Mean as an appendix. As a result, how the fundamental ideas of the Mean in their outline and details formed a coordinated system are expressed briefly or fully as the case calls for, and are presented in their major and minor aspects; in addition, the agreements and disagreements of the several interpretations, and their merits and demerits can now be clarified and elucidated and their meanings may now be fully understood. Although I dare not foolishly make any proposals about [who has shared in] the Tradition of the Way, perhaps the beginning scholar may find something in this work. If so, it can be a help to those who want to travel far and scale the heights. (trans. Bol)

Zhu, Xi. *Preface to the Doctrine of the Mean by Chapters and Verses*. Irene Bloom and Peter Bol, eds. *The Sources of Neo-Confucian Tradition*. (forthcoming).

Learning of the Way (daoxue). Zhu Xi's Commentary was his contribution to the continued transmission of the Learning of the Way. Even after the Cheng brothers have died, Zhu Xi is concerned that their interpretation of Confucius is being mangled.

Tradition of the Way (daotong). Began when the Sages continued the work of Heaven - nature's work taken over by humans.

To hold fast the mean. This is the fundamental meaning of Confucianism. To balance the human and moral minds so the needs of the being avoid the tendency toward evil and so the subtle wisdom of nature is manifest.

The two minds are mixed in the 'square inch of the heart' to balance desire and wisdom. We must allow Heaven's Principle to overcome desire.

The human mind is precarious.

The moral mind is subtle.

Have refined discrimination and singleness.

Thus to hold fast the mean.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Ming historians demonstrated that these four lines originated in books much later than antiquity.

The Individual and Politics



Analects §14.24 Learning To Please Oneself

If knowing what is right depends on me, then I cannot rely on law and government for moral leadership. Think, therefore, of people who say they're Confucians or Neo-Confucians and join government as scholar officials to tell people how they should act. Are they true Confucians? Government is important, but individuals must themselves learn how to behave. See page 35.

People who understand Confucius and moral consciousness and the Way of the ancients have a moral standing that allows them to pronounce upon the Way. This is Daotong and it's given not to rulers, but to scholars. Not that a ruler couldn't have this moral authority, but Zhu Xi doesn't think any ruler since the Zhou Dynasty has had true understanding of morality.

Confucius, Mencius, Cheng Yi, Cheng Hao, Zhou Dunyi, Zhu Xi had that understanding. They can continue the Daotong, the Learning of the Way.

This is a revolutionary notion, that Daotong is more important than the continuity of government. That the authority of how government should act and what it should do should reside with people who have true understanding of the Way.

An Aside: The State vs. The Individual

David N. Keightley said that virtue accrued to the individual in ancient Western civilizations, but that in ancient China, virtue accrued to the individual through his service to the state. See page 31.

But there's a long tradition of Chinese philosophy, especially Confucian philosophy, asserting the primacy of the individual.

Yang Zhu, a Warring States philosopher, believed people should do good for themselves alone. *If I could save the world by pulling a hair out of my head, I would not do it.* See page 43. Mencius replied to the Yangists by saying that government is not going away. The market of negotiation between individuals needs a government to limit excess.

The Qin emperor, Qin Shi Huang, buried himself with hundreds of terracotta soldiers built of identical bodies, but unique faces and hair. A friend of Professor Bol said that he most admired America's *lack* of individuality -- that the Chinese were *too* individualistic. See page 61.

In third century literature, a burgeoning concept arose that the individual could be more important than the state or even the family. See page 83.

Even the civil service exam, when it was first instituted in the Tang dynasty, tested poetry as a way of unveiling the talent of the individual. See page 121.

Han Yu, the founder of the Ancient Style Movement, asserted that Confucian spirituality, unlike that of the Buddhists and Daoists, links the private, moral life of the individual with the public welfare of the state. See page 148.

Among the Neo-Confucians, Cheng Yi claimed a distinction between the government institutions and individual Confucian learning, which is not dependent upon government. See page 162.

Neo-Confucianism as a Social Movement



Besides its position as a philosophy, Neo-Confucianism was also an identity. Because of Zhu Xi, Neo-Confucianism becomes a social movement within the literati of the 12th century. It provided a social context for promoting Neo-Confucianism as a means of doing good for others.

In the Northern Song during the 11th century, schools were run by the state. In the Southern Song of the 12th century private academies began to appear. The Neo-Confucians adopted these private academies to promote their philosophy through *jiangxue*, discoursing on learning.

They built shrines to the early Neo-Confucians, worshipping them and offering sacrifices. They created community covenants, making agreements to monitor one another as *people of a common will*, to promote a better society. These covenants crossed family boundaries.

They built charitable granaries¹⁰⁴ so local families don't have to borrow from the government to seed their farms in the spring.

In effect, they're offering a Confucian alternative to the religious institutions, particularly the Buddhist temples.

They have a new shared philosophical vocabulary, the collected texts of the Neo-Confucian masters.

Above all, they define the goal of learning as sagehood.

Redefining the Classics

The Neo-Confucians redefine the significance of the classics¹⁰⁵. Traditionally, *the classics* meant the five classic texts of antiquity. Neo-Confucians created a set of text known as the Four Books:

- The Great Learning
- The Doctrine of the Mean
- Mencius
- Analects

They are distinguished because they talk about the actions and morality of the individual rather than the state.

¹⁰⁴ This is a private extension of the concept of an Ever Normal Granary, which first appeared in the Han. See page 247.

¹⁰⁵ The Classic Texts were originally defined by Dong Zhongshu, who was considered the great Confucian of the Western Han. See page 68.

Transformation Of Neo-Confucianism In The Ming: Wang Yangming¹⁰⁶

Reading: The Colloquy At The Tianquan Bridge

Two points of view:

- Moral cultivation.
- Intuitive spontaneity. Like Chan Buddhism, this is a belief that the inner mind transcends good and evil and natural spontaneity is characteristic of a sage.

I've copied selections from the reading:

In the original substance of the mind there is no distinction of good and evil,

When the intentions become active, however, such a distinction exists.

The function of innate knowing is to know good and evil.

The investigation [rectification] of things is to do good and remove evil.

Here I deal with two types of people. The man of sharp intelligence apprehends straight from the source.

The original substance of the human mind is in fact crystal-clear without any impediment and is the equilibrium before the feelings are aroused. The man of sharp intelligence has already accomplished his task as soon as he apprehends the original substance, penetrating the self, other people, and things internal and things external all at the same time. On the other hand, there are inevitably those whose minds are dominated by habits so that the original substance of the mind is obstructed. I therefore teach them definitely and sincerely to do good and remove evil in their intention and thoughts. When they become expert at the task and the impurities of the mind are completely eliminated, the original substance of the mind will become wholly clear. I adopt Ruzhong's view in dealing with the man of sharp intelligence, and that of Dehong for the second type.

For the intelligent person...

For Wang this is a unity one starts with and expands upon, in contrast to Zhu Xi, who in his note on the investigation of things in the Great Learning, speaks of the gradual penetration of principles until finally one achieves a breakthrough to integral comprehension and coalescence.

Wang placed a prime value on the feeling of love for, or oneness with, all creation and on the natural integrity of the mind, as opposed to a mind divided against itself by the counterposing of the human mind to the mind of the Way (i.e., the nature)

People fail to realize that the highest good is in their minds and seek it outside.

Now the original substance of the mind is human nature. Human nature being universally good, the original substance of the mind is correct.

The extension of knowledge is not what later scholars understand as enriching and widening knowledge. It is simply extending one's innate knowing to the utmost. This innate knowing is what Mencius meant when he said, "The sense of right and wrong is common to all human beings."

Whenever a thought or a wish arises, my mind's faculty of innate knowing itself is always conscious of it. ...although an inferior person may have done all manner of evil, when he sees a superior man he will surely try to disguise this fact, concealing what is evil and displaying what is good in himself. This shows that innate knowing does not permit any self-deception. Now the only way to distinguish good and evil in order to make the intention sincere is to extend to the utmost this innate knowing faculty.

Wang identified the original pure mind with the "utmost good" of the Great Learning, regarding it not as a perfection beyond one, to be reached or achieved, but as an inherent perfection within, to be uncovered, released, and extended to others.

Later generations fail to realize that the utmost good is inherent in their own minds, but exercise their selfish ideas and cunning and grope for it outside their minds, believing that every event and every object has its own peculiar and definite principle.

In the above, Wang incorporates into his doctrine of the mind the language of the Cheng-Zhu method of the mind -- the method of refined discrimination and oneness and holding fast to the Mean -- and focuses it on the unity of principle rather than on the diversity of principles in events and things. Wang places a prime

¹⁰⁶ There's a superb write-up of Wang's ideas in the [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#). Also, see page 207 for a comparison of Zhu Xi and Wang Yanming and the rise of Wang Yanming's philosophies in the Late Ming.

emphasis on the substantial unity of innate knowing, rather than on the different steps in the Great Learning's method of self-cultivation.

Lecture Notes

the investigation
of things
格物
(gewu)

Zhu Xi, in his commentaries on the Four Books, focuses on the Great Learning which he takes as a great fathoming, interpreting it to be an absorption into the consciousness of *li*, the principal coherence. This fathoming being *gewu*, the investigation of things. It spans all investigation from the individual attainment of knowledge to the bringing of peace to the world.

In *gewu*, there is no single epiphany but rather a series of quiet sittings that result in a cumulative learning.

By the 13th century, after Zhu Xi's death, the government began to accept the authority of his followers, and in 1315, 40 years after the Mongols conquered the Song, the examinations were restored. The first part of the exam tested the Four Books with Zhu Xi's commentaries, cementing Zhu Xi's ideas as a substantial element of the education of the literati from that point forward.

Wang Yangming
王陽明
(1472-1529 CE)

In the late 15th and early 16th centuries of the Ming Dynasty, some Neo-Confucians wanted to re-emphasize the individual experience of grasping coherence, *li*, to reach moral conclusions. This was Wang Yangming's movement.

His notion was to rectify one's internal thoughts in order to learn how to respond to external events, to find one's innate ability to recognize good, by keeping one's selfish desires at bay.

He asserted that you can't know what's right and not act, it's simply not possible. And you can't act without knowing, that is, you can't know what's moral until you're doing it. This is the unity of knowledge and action.

Good and Evil are Not Real

The later Wang Yangming school included people who concluded from his Four Axioms that good and evil are not real, but are relative judgments.

Neo-Confucianism is sometimes considered an orthodoxy, and since it was part of the examination system, a state orthodoxy. In fact, the exam included quotes from Wang Yangming that contradicted the writings of Zhu Xi. Thus, the practice of Neo-Confucianism allowed for considerable disagreement.

Wang Yangming's Four Axioms

Wang Yangming stopped at the Tianquan Bridge to talk with his two leading disciples, Wang Ji and Qian Dehong, and gave four statements, which were interpreted quite differently by them.

The Four Axioms

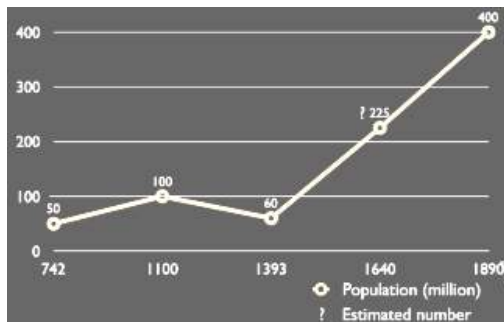
1. **Having no good and no evil is mind-in-itself.** Alternatively, *in the original substance of the mind there is no distinction between good and evil.* When freed of selfish desire, the mind knows innately what is good.
2. **Having good and having evil is the activity of the will.** Alternatively, *when the will becomes active, however, such a distinction exists.* It is only when you make a choice that the possibility for good and evil emerges. It's not inherent in the mind-in-itself.
3. **Innate knowing is knowing the good and evil [in the activity of the will.]** Alternatively, *the faculty of innate knowledge is to know good and remove evil.* Innately knowing the good, or *liangzhi*, is the notion that there's no distinction between *li* and mind. In other words: *what other people mean is hard to know, but whether my own actions are good or evil are always known to me.*
4. **Performing good and getting rid of evil is the rectification of actions.** Alternatively, *the investigation of things is to do good and remove evil.* The *investigation of things* is what the Cheng brothers mean by fully realizing the principles, all of which is focused on the self. Omphaloskepsis. ☺

Wang Ji reads the first axiom and says *there's no good and evil, it's an irrelevant concept.* Dehong disagrees, saying there has to be a gradual movement of the mind toward its innate selfless state.

19: Exams and Elites: China's Unity

On The Unity Of Later Imperial China

Since the 1270's, the Yuan dynasty, China remained a single political entity, despite rebellion and invasion and conquest.



After the survey of 1393, when the population was down to 65 million, it exploded straight through the 19th century to 400 million, quintupling since 1393. Despite the rise in population, the size of the civil administration did not rise above 40,000. Compare this to the 120,000 bureaucrats employed by the Han (page 65).

After Wang Anshi's new policies in the 11th century, the political elite turned against activist government choosing a minimal bureaucracy instead. How do we account for the small size of the bureaucracy maintaining a single entity without splintering into several states?

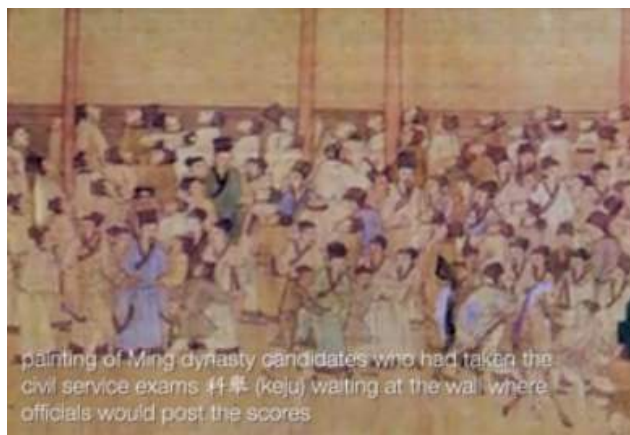
Discussion

My Thoughts. After reading several posts, I'm agreeing with these concepts:

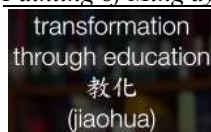
- A culture that values elders and leaders - the Confucian philosophy - enable strong central government.
- The government has learned from past mistakes. Learning from history is a large part of Chinese culture. From the Qin onward, Chinese government has adapted to the needs of a unified bureaucracy.
- Chinese government has always put a strong emphasis on a unified ethnic China, sometimes inclusive of other ethnic groups, but always wanting to unify China proper.

Intellectual-Institutional Perspective

Discussion with Professor Michael Szonyi



Painting of Ming dynasty candidates waiting to read their exam scores.



Looking forward from the Tang-Song transition, Chinese leaders discovered that the exam system attracted tens of thousands of people to compete and established the kinds of learning that were most valuable. It therefore created a system of shared values, of *jiaohua*, *transformation through education*. Even though most people failed, the candidates learned a shared national culture.

One factor that encouraged candidates was the fairness of the test. It was blind - your name was removed from the exam and the exam was recopied by clerks, hiding your calligraphy.

The exam began at the local level, proceeded to the province and then the capital.

By the middle of the 13th century, in southern Song with a population of 60 million, there were almost a half-million involved in the examination system, roughly 1% of the population. These were the elite.

Chances of passing the exam were only 1 in 3,300. Yet the system controlled the values learned by the 3,299 who failed.

This changed our thinking of China from a feudal society led by clans to a civilization state where education rather than wealth and heredity was the path to power.

Social Mobility

Discussion with Professor Michael Szonyi



1148 Examination Roster

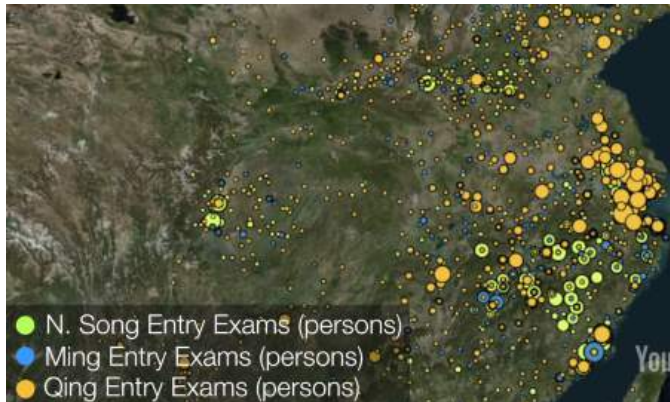
New Men

We have two lists from the Southern Song, from 1148 and 1256, showing how many people in a particular patrilineage have passed the exam. It appears that 40% of those who passed were the first men in the patriline to pass.¹⁰⁷

Reverence for the Exam

In China today, the *gaokao*, or national college entrance exam, takes two days during which the students are not to be disturbed and all traffic is stopped near the schools. The streets fall silent. The offices where graders are marking the exams are protected by guards. Fairness is a national issue.

If we look at the subjects taught in Chinese higher education today, we see the same influence on culture that the exam had centuries ago.



Distribution of Successful Exam Candidates

The distribution of successful candidates is not evenly distributed either by region or by population. Prof. Bol isn't sure why - it seems to be anomalous.

Alternative Explanation

Concerns about exams as driving force for unity

See page 147 for the initial discussion on the exam.

In the first segment, Prof. Szonyi argues (from my own discussion post) the implausibility that the actions of a very, very few (those who set the curriculum) then leveraged the actions of a small minority (those who took the exams) who were then capable of locking the vast majority into a stable empire free of successful rebellion for hundreds of years. That even without evidence to the contrary (the lack of evidence being neither proof nor disproof) it seems unlikely to be a strong enough stabilizing force.

¹⁰⁷ Although the numbers of **new men** are as high as 40%, it may be a disproportionate number of those have uncles or cousins who passed the exam. It may be that social mobility is not as high as that 40% figure would imply. In other words, the effort to pass the exam is so great that being in a family with the wealth to properly educate a student was important in passing. That comparative advantage may have been stronger than simple statistics would indicate.

In fact, the vast majority of successful candidates were from a few very large extended families.

Local Elites

General assumptions about human society:

- How we behave is shaped by our perceived interests which are shaped by society.
- Any society is going to be stratified. People at the top will oppose social mobility.

People at the top had resources that kept them there:

- Money
- Culture (education)
- Political connections to the state
- Military
- Land

In most of China including the hinterlands where most of the people lived, land was the key resource.

A common theme in the arts featured farmers or merchants rising from poverty to gain wealth and trade their wealth for education for their kids, so they could pass the exams and join the elite. This was the destination.

My Discussion Post

Socialization and acculturation begin at an early age, from the way a language is constructed, to how family members relate to one another, to the subtle rewards and punishments granted by parents to children, to education, to livelihood, and finally to the laws and other forms of justice that are in fact a thin layer above the rich moral depth of a society.

We become inculcated in our cultures to the point that we cannot distinguish our own thoughts from those of our parents, friends, elders, and leaders. Their thoughts have come from their own societal positions, and so on, in a deeply intertwined web. A lifetime in this web of shared values and emotions leads us to a sense of ease in our own culture and unease in different cultures.

To understand another culture is to find the point of separation between ourselves and society. To understand many cultures is to find the shared humanity that is in all of us and is independent of culture.

Marriage Alliances

Local elites use their resources to build social power by marrying into other local families. Another theme in the arts is the young scholar without influence who falls in love with an elite daughter, and the marriage is opposed by the father.

A taboo in traditional Chinese society prevents marriage to a person of the same surname, and where there are only a few surnames in villages, it forces young people to leave the village. Today, the taboo is ignored which changes the nature of marriages.

Lineage



A lineage is a social group whose members share a common ancestor or have married someone who shared a common ancestor. Patrilineal kinship was a structuring principle through Chinese history.

Going back to our quest for an alternative explanation for unity when governed by a small elite, is the emergence of patrilineal kinship as an institution. Some of their practices included:

- building large ancestral halls
- carefully compiled and printed genealogies
- portraits - large graphic representations of family - which were concealed during the cultural revolution.
- ritual (including sacrifice). Before the Song, at a gravesite. After the Song, in the ancestral hall.
- schools

Where do the institutions come from? A creative re-reading of Neo-Confucian scholars. Building ancestral halls and compiling genealogies tells society that you are a good Confucian. And they prove to be an effective way to handle tax obligations.

Limitations of the Lineage: Temple

How do you build relationships between different communities with different lineages? The temple is where people of different lineages worship together, with the temple serving as a form of local government. Disputes are resolved, projects are organized.

One way that local elites exercise power is by mediating disputes within the community, and mediating the relationship with the next level of government.

Resolving the Contradiction

Shared National Culture

Both mechanisms, the exams and the lineage, move China toward a shared national culture, which is instrumental in holding the country together as a single entity. The shared national culture includes:

- The Four Books of the Neo Confucians
- The stories of Emperor Guan and the Guandi temples

The political unity may be a byproduct of the local elites gaining power by establishing themselves as the kind of people who read the Four Books and are thus adherents to the orthodoxy.

Close Reading

The Third Preface

Lue Rui, a new metropolitan graduate and trainee of the Directorate of Astronomy asked Zheng Heling, a fellow graduate, to write a biography. Right away this shows the shared camaraderie of fellow graduates. One can only imagine the bond between two young men: carefully schooled members of a tiny minority of the half-million scholars, those who passed the exam. One in thirty-six hundred scholars! Zheng cannot refuse.

Zheng appends a postscript to the Lu Genealogy.

The Fourth Preface

A family may reach tens of thousands and the genealogy tells them who are their clan members. This genealogy traces back at least 15 generations (15x20=300 years, roughly). Unfortunately the records before that were lost in a fire in 1487. It was reconstructed painstakingly into six volumes and took 11 years to complete.

The preface points out that some family historians fake their genealogical records in order to compete for power and prestige.

The Sixth Preface

A genealogy is important to deepen ties within the family and warn where ancestors strayed from the values of the family culture. It is group cohesion, in psych-speak¹⁰⁸. The reference to Sima Qian reminds me of an earlier question: what keeps an emperor's unlimited power in check? One answer: the historian's record of an emperor's indiscretion, preserved for all time. In other words, the fear of immortal shame.¹⁰⁹

The family genealogy uses its importance as the family historical record, the carrot and stick to enforce values.

*The Lu lineage originated from Gaosun Xi, **the descendant of the Duke Tai of Qi and the son of Duke Wen** (lived between the 9th and 8th centuries BC). **He was enfeoffed in Lu**, therefore he took Lu as his surname.*

That's some legacy!

*They then immersed themselves in the Classics and histories and there were many famous and worthy figures in each generation. Outstanding ones, who spoke frankly about politics and **involved themselves in worldly affairs**, became eminent at court. Worthy ones, who maintained their purity and integrity, **exerted themselves at home in the countryside**.*

Influence through public service. Influence through local ties. The two sides to the argument.

*Their **seriousness and consonance** (Suyong) leads to harmony*

There's that phrase: seriousness and consonance.

¹⁰⁸ From [Wikipedia](#): When discussing social groups, a group is said to be in a state of cohesion when its members possess bonds linking them to one another and to the group as a whole. Although cohesion is a multi-faceted process, it can be broken down into four main components: social relations, task relations, perceived unity, and emotions. Members of strongly cohesive groups are more inclined to participate readily and to stay with the group.

¹⁰⁹ See page 67: Sima Qian's sacred duty to use history as a force to constrain the power of the emperor.

*My home is in Yuchen, but I have gotten to know Lu Honggui, known by the style-name Chubai. When I served in the Ministry of Rites I had the same position as Chubai. **Our friendship is greater because we passed the civil service examination in the same year** and there is a long-standing friendship between our two families.*

The civil service exam promotes ties between families across China, perhaps in the manner that the temple brings together different families in the same locale. Thus the two methods of bonding the Chinese and creating unity.

Old Preface XII

*The genealogy of the Lu family began in the jiazi year in the Zhiyuan reign period of the Yuan Dynasty (1264). Since then **it has been recompiled every thirty years or so. What was doubtful was left out and what was certain was transmitted.***

...

The difficulty of genealogical studies has long been lamented. The vulgar either attach themselves to the prestigious and forget their true origin or intentionally omit some branches of the lineage and deny their kinship. Neither phenomenon is even worth mentioning. If even later men criticized [the influential models of genealogy by] Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072) and Su Xun (1009-1066) as great Confucian scholars it is easy to imagine the other difficulties of genealogical studies. The genealogy of the Lu comes close enough that it will likely be spared the criticism of gentlemen.

The New Preface

This preface was ordered by the Committee for the Recompilation of the Genealogy of the Lu Residential Compound, a National Level Unit for the Preservation of Cultural Relics. In other words, the preservation of genealogies is ordered by the government at the highest levels, intertwining government, culture, and local families.

The family tradition of learning was thus long established and men of talent came forth in droves.

In Eastern Han there was the great Confucian scholar Lu Zhi, who gained a great reputation. Cao Cao once said in admiration: "Secretary Lu is the hope of the world, the bulwark of the state" and warned his troops not to trespass on his village, such was his respect for Lu Zhi.

Above we can see the reverence for learning and how it reverberates through politics.

Spirit of Integrity

After a battle with the Yuan in which hundreds of clan members were killed, the Lu family refused to serve the Yuan dynasty.

In the ancestral hall a descendant wrote the couplet: "Their bodies reverted to purity: they could serve the Song government but withdrew in the Yuan. They bring glory to their descendants: though they have vanished their virtue is not forgotten." From this we can see how greatly the Lu descendants honored the two words, "Spirit [of] Integrity (氣節)."

Unity

Here's the reverence for passing the exams, showing how family and government and examinations and culture bond to create unity.

Beginning with Lu Rui's (盧睿, 13th gen., 1390-1462) success in passing the metropolitan examination in the xinchou year of the Yongle reign period (1421), [the Lus] produced [in total] eight metropolitan graduates, twenty nine provincial graduates, and one hundred and fifty odd officials in the Ming and Qing. How they flourished!

...

Today government policy works and people are in harmony.

The Arts

*Even though the ***Seriousness and Consonance Hall*** has a reputation comparable to the Imperial Palace, it lacks of writings and paintings so that visitors have no means to know its accumulated history. Now that the problem has been solved celebration and congratulations are in order.*

The Biography of Master Pine Studio - Lu Daoqing

This is the biography of an unusually well-read and moral man, preserved to show future generations a model of how to behave. Lu Daoqing combined all the virtues of a Neo-Confucian scholar: filial piety, public service, humaneness, great literacy.

The Biography of Lady Jia

Her allegiance was to the family and the lineage. She is held up as a model of how women should behave in Chinese society.

She was able to learn by heart all the classics, histories, and the affairs of the past and present that her father and brothers studied and recited. When she became old, she was able to educate sons and daughters-in-law by drawing on [the knowledge she had acquired]. As to childhood learning and woman's work, she was able to do these without having been [formally] taught.

When she administered the lineage matters, she was diligent and hard-working; she completed the unfulfilled tasks of the generation. By taking from the better-off to support the worse-off, [she made sure that] the lineage never suffered insufficiencies.

Here's an example of Confucian values - of leading others through one's own ritual and *ren*.

Even when drinking [a cup of water] or eating [a spoonful of rice], she did not act improperly. In his early years, grandfather went out and drank with his friends, and brought back home some leftover food.

Grandmother said: "those who are wholesome do not accept the food thrown at them impolitely (嗟來之食)." Grandfather was so ashamed that he finally quit drinking.

Here, she shows the acceptance of the low value the Chinese culture of the 15th century places on a woman, that it's not seemly for her portrait to be drawn:

*When her sons asked to draw her portrait for later generations to look up to her, grandmother said in anxiety: "**Unfortunately I was born a woman. I regret I have not left the world earlier; I would have erased my worldly traces more quickly. Why would I want to pass down my ugly face to posterity?** Even if a wife is old, it is hardly legitimate to have a painter to embellish her façade."*

Discussion

The two arguments are intertwined. The exams and the reverence for study are referenced in all the prefaces to the Lu genealogies. Even Lady Jia, a woman who had no prospect for advancing through examinations, was heralded for her own study and for pushing other family members to study.

The Seriousness and Consonance Hall and the memorials throughout the Lu compound are a physical reminder that the goal of every young man is to someday have a memorial arch of his own, to be a part of this 3000-year legacy dating back to the Duke of Wen. How to achieve that legacy? Through study, through passing the exams and serving the public good. The lineage encourages public service as a moral value.

At the same time, we see the cross-pollination of graduates of the exams. It's an old-boy system at the very highest level, where two graduates of the Metropolitan Exam, members of a small and elite fraternity, are bound beyond their family ties. They write prefaces to each other's genealogies. This powerful fraternity will act to resolve inter-family conflict and bind China as one.

You can think of it as binding across space through the exam and binding across time through lineage.

Literati and the Spread of Neo-Confucianism



In 1241, the court removed Wang Anshi from the Confucian temple at the capital and replaced him with Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi, as the Neo-Confucian leaders.

When Neo-Confucianism spread in the 12th century, it was not through the exam system, but through private education. Zhu Xi had at least 500 of his own students, most of whom were not officials.

In a world where most literati were failed aspirants to officialdom, Neo-Confucianism gave them a new aspiration, to cultivate their moral potential. They put it into practice in their own families and communities, joining up with those who shared those moral values, building unity, family by family, village by village, throughout China.

The court recognized Zhu Xi and Cheng Yi so they could appeal to opinion leaders among the local elites who had influence throughout China. In 1315, 40 years after the conquest of the South, when the examinations were restored by the Mongols, the first part of the new exam included the Four Books with Zhu Xi's commentaries. From that point forward, 1315 to 1905, nearly six hundred years, all Chinese students participating in the exams, that is, all of the literati, studied Zhu Xi's moral philosophy.

Final Discussion Topic

Throughout Chinese history, politics and the purpose of government are constant matters of debate. How did views of the role of government change in the transition from early to late imperial China? What was the relationship between the government and the elite? Consider both the function of political institutions and the ideas about the role of government in Chinese intellectual history.

My response follows:

It seems to me that the relationship between the central government and local elites gained nuance over time. The methods of taxing adapted to the needs of a merchant commerce and higher agrarian investment. The methods of building the military and negotiating peace adapted to the strengths of the neighboring states and the dangers of delegating power to provincial generals. The methods of schooling adapted to a changing intellectual culture that yearned for the moral values of antiquity, combining the exemplars of the Sages with the ideology of modern scholars. The method of appointing bureaucrats adapted from pure heredity to *yin privilege* to class-blind exams that tested those same broadly accepted moral teachings.

In antiquity, kings anointed themselves with Heaven's Mandate with the elite comprised of members of the royal family and their close advisors, and in the provinces, the feudal lords. The kings taxed the common people to build armies and civil projects and to properly practice the rituals and to administer justice.

Later, in the times of the early emperors, the elite were those close to the emperor - concubines and the inner court, and the outer court of bureaucrats who ran the capital and were appointed to run the provinces. The role of government was similar: taxes for military expansion, border protection, judicial administration, and corvee labor for civil projects. Further, the goal of government was increasingly to obtain unity for all of ethnic China.

Later still, the elite included the great clans of the aristocracy in conjunction with those who passed the civil service exam and migrated upward through the bureaucracy on the basis of their education and their administrative skill. In the era of the Cosmopolitan Tang, the role of government expanded to developing a merchant class through the protection of an expanded trade route and by bringing order to the world around it. The government also began playing a role in supporting the religions: Confucians, Buddhists, and Daoists, with the emperor the face of all three.

Throughout the early imperial age, central control was achieved through delegation to the provinces, where the local elites had a large hand in both administering the edicts of the central government and supporting local commerce.

Wang Anshi envisioned an expanded role for the central government to include centrally administered loans to farmers, wholesaling of goods, taxing of small families to administer local government, and nationally administered schools to funnel classically trained students into the central bureaucracy. These changes bypassed the network of wealthy elites that for hundreds of years had formed the local base of social and financial power for much of China.

Sima Guang, having descended from the wealthy elites, took umbrage to Wang Anshi's policies and successfully dismantled them, returning to a less activist and smaller central government, with power delegated to the local elites.

China was learning how to administer a stable, efficient, and fair government.

Part 5: From Global Empire to Global Economy

20: The World Empire of the Mongols



The Mongols built their empire in stages, conquering inner Asia, spreading through the North, then along the Silk Route before conquering the Jin Dynasty (which had taken the N. China Plain) and finally invading the Southern Song. North China was hit hardest with considerable death and destruction.

The Mongols remained in China only 100 years, failing to govern it properly, while lasting far longer elsewhere in the world. Unlike the Huns invading the Roman Empire and plunging Europe into the Dark Ages, China's civilization survived.

One of the reasons was that the Mongols accepted China's elite as necessary to make the bureaucracy work, particularly the local literati of the South. This reliance led to the Ming Dynasty, the first to arise from the South.



The Ming Dynasty originated from a Neo-Confucian vision, with their first mission to drive the Mongols from China and to build the Great Wall as a statement that China was separate, insular, and not a part of someone else's global empire.

And yet, while declaring its insularity, China partook in the world economy through money from Latin America, where a third of the world's silver was mined. Silver became a common currency through Spanish conquest and European exploration.

In this period of the 15th and 16th centuries, maritime navigation began a new way of linking the world. Although Admiral Zheng He gave the Ming a head start in maritime navigation, they failed to hold onto it.

Historical Overview

The Song rose to power in a multi-state world where the Khitans of the Liao Dynasty and Tanguts of the Western Xia were both accorded rights as brother states, with their own Sons of Heaven atop them. These northern powers would persist and expand, but the actors would change.



Early in the 12th century, the nomadic Jurchens of the far Northeast established the Jin Dynasty, conquered the Liao, and in 1126, the Jin attacked the Song, taking Kaifeng and most of the North, dividing China into the Northern and Southern Song. The Song moved its capital to Hangzhou and in 1142, signed a peace treaty with the Jin.



At the end of the 12th century, in a world of continental trade and stemming from a resource crisis, Chinggis Khan unified the tribes of the steppe and built an army. After conquering central Asia, Khan turned back to take the Western Xia and the Jin and forty years later took the Southern Song, creating a world empire spanning all of Europe and Asia.

Introduction to the Northern Border



Of all the nomadic and pastoral peoples of the North, the most successful were the Mongols. They are now part of the People's Republic of China.

The Roles of the Northern Border

A Strategic Border, marking a military zone of fighting whose delineation changed with the period.

A Political Border, between the Song and the Jin of the Jurchens and the Xia of the Tanguts. The cost of its defense drained the North. Though we sometimes think of the Great Wall as a border, it rarely was.

A Cultural and Economic Border, between the steppe and the sown, that is, between the arid grasslands of the north and the agricultural farmland of the south.

Differences Between Steppe and Sown

The contrast *between the steppe and the sown* can be seen in these ways:

Steppe	Sown
Desert and grasslands, with forest to the north	Agrarian with dry land to the north and wetlands and rice paddies to the south.
Nomads on horses, who ate cheaply	Sedentary farmers with investments in plows and farm animals
Portable housing: yurts	Houses
Tribal society	Villages
Confederations of clans	Administrative hierarchy of counties and prefectures
No permanent government	Permanent bureaucracy
Khans	Emperors

This northern border therefore separated two fundamentally different ways of life.

Who are the Northern Peoples?

They lived with their flocks and moved with the seasons. In hard times, they retreated to the forests. We think of the nomads and the hunter-gatherers of the forests as different people, but they were somewhat interchangeable, moving fluidly between these locales as the climate changed.

Configuration of Power in the 12th Century



The Song had lost control of the North China Plain in 1120 to the Jin, leaving the Jurchens of the Jin and the Tanguts of the Xi Xia to defend their own northern borders from the tribes of the north.

Those northern tribes included the Tatars and Mongols and other nomadic tribes as well: the Onggirats, Merkits, Kerait, Naimans. Today we call all those people the Mongols, one tribe, but in the 12th century the Mongols were but one tribe among many, and a marginal one at that.

The Saga of Temüjin (1162-1227 CE)

Stolen Beginnings and Early Setbacks

Yesüge
也速該
(1133-1170 CE)

- Kiyad Subtribe
乞牙惕副氏族
- Ally of Toghrul
脫斡鄰 (d.1203 CE)
→ Anda
(blood brother)

Genghis Khan was given the name Temujin at his birth around 1162, a time when the area that today is called Mongolia was fractured into separate warring tribes. He was the third son of a Khamag Mongol, who was the chief of a Kiyad sub-tribe.

This minor chief, Temujin's father Yesüge, had an important claim, that he was an *Anda* of Toghrul - the khan of the powerful Kerait tribe in central Mongolia. *Anda* means *as if born from the same womb* - an honorific earned in battle.

Although Temujin was Yesüge's third son, he was the first son of Hoelun, Yesüge's second wife, an Onggirat Mongol who was taken by force. In the world of nomads, kidnapping was common and often created enduring hostilities.

Temüjin
鐵木真
(1162-1227 CE)

When Temujin was nine, Yesüge took him to Hoelun's tribe, the Onggirats, to find him a wife. Temujin would marry the daughter of one of the chiefs, and would live with the chief until he was of age, around 13. The father left and on his way back was killed by Tatars. With his dying breath, Yesüge told a companion to warn his son that he must quietly leave the Onggirats and return to his home. Why? Because his father would no longer be around to enforce the marriage arrangement, and Temujin would be enslaved.

Temujin escaped home to join his family as one of several children of a widowed mother. They were a family alone, left behind when their nomadic tribe departed. They moved north to hunt and fish in the forests, no longer with any power or connections.

The Makings of a Leader

Jamukha
札木合
(d.1204 CE)

According to legend, one of Temujin's half-brothers, stronger by far, would take Temujin's catch when they fished and his game when they hunted. Temujin complained to his mother, Hoelun, who ignored him. So Temujin arranged with his four brothers to sneak up on his half-brother and kill him. Thus did Temujin become the leader of his family.

Jadaran
札答蘭

Now with four brothers and their horses, Temujin was a threat to the sub-tribe that deserted his family. They captured him and while he was captured, raiding tribesmen took all but one horse from his family. Temujin escapes from capture and chases the raiders with the remaining horse. On the way, he joins with a young Jadaran tribesman, *Jamukha*, and together they succeed in recovering the stolen horses.

The point is that Temujin's success is due to his willingness to fight for his dependents.



The years went by, Temujin gained adherents, and when he came of age he successfully reclaimed the rights to his promised wife and his legitimacy with the Onggirats. They awarded him a black sable coat to give to his mother, but he gave it instead to Toghrul, the khan of the Keraiats and asked for recognition as his father's son, an anda of Toghrul.

My thoughts: It's a wonderful story since it ties all up the loose ends so very, very neatly, which makes one wonder how much is true.

Becoming Chinggis Khan



Meanwhile, the Merkits, from whom Yesüge had stolen Temujin's mother, were waiting. They attacked Temujin's camp and stole his wife, Börte, forcing Temujin to flee. Of course, this meant war! He convinced Toghrul to attack the Merkits with 20,000 cavalry. His old ally Jamukha joined the fight with another 20,000 men and horses.

In 1186, they defeated the Merkits. Börte, now pregnant, was returned.

Temujin, at the age of 25, was recognized as the khan.

But as happened with nomadic tribes, after the battle the horsemen melted into the countryside and Temujin was left a leader with no army. To make matters worse his own anda, Jamukha, turned against him with 30,000 men. Temujin fled to find refuge with the Jurchens' Jin dynasty in Beijing.

The Jurchen's decided they wanted Temujin to help defend their territory against the Tatars. Aligned with Toghrul of the Keraiats, Temujin organized a force to vanquish the Tatars, this time fighting Jamukha. Determined to have total victory, he executed every male above the height of a wagon's axle and distributed the women and children as slaves to his Mongols.

In reward, the Jurchens named Toghrul the Ong Khan, the King of Khan. Toghrul refused Temujin's subsequent proposal to ally through marriage, as the Mongols were widely considered the scum of the steppes. With his followers leaving in droves, Temujin led a surprise attack against the Keraiats with his 2,600 remaining men and destroyed the main force, enslaving them to his Mongols.

He then turned to the western steppe and uses the same ruse that had been successful against the Keraiats, of setting large numbers of unmanned campfires at night to lead them into thinking they were surrounded by a large force. In a final attempt to block Temujin, Jamukha joined the Naimans to fight him, but was defeated. When he arrived in Temujin's camp, Jamukha was torn limb from limb.



In 1206 at a meeting of the tribes of the North, Temujin is declared Chinggis Khan, the khan of the North¹¹⁰.

The Church-State Problem

The Mongols believed heaven could bestow irrevocable gifts on people, regardless of virtue. Once a shaman¹¹¹ had confirmed your gift, it was yours to have. A family of shamans who had been close to Chinggis Khan during his rise, who had confirmed his gift in 1186 and had confirmed it again in 1206, finally began to cause trouble. They beat up Chinggis' brother Hasar and warned Chinggis that one of his other brothers had heaven's gift as well. Chinggis was about to execute his brother when his mother intervened, using a quiver of arrows to explain the meaning of a [fascis](#), saying that Chinggis must not divide his family.

When the shaman family came for a meeting at Chinggis' yurt, his brothers took the oldest son of the shaman and killed him. Henceforth, Chinggis never let a religious force interfere with his claim to authority.

Church and State in earlier periods

- David Keightley notes that in ancient China, the state was the church, page 31.
- In the fifth century during the Wei Dynasty, Emperor Taiwu attempted to suppress Buddhism with six years of pogroms, page 96.
- In the 830's, during the Tang Dynasty, the government demanded that monks and nuns return to lay life and dismantled their temples and melted their statues page 111.

Discussion

What was the outcome of Temujin's conflict with the shaman and his family and why did it matter?

My post:

After years of supporting Temujin in his ascendancy, the shamans tried to sow discord with Temujin's brothers, physically attacking one of them. This forced Temujin to choose between the religious influence of the shaman and his allegiance to his family. Throughout his rise, Temujin had always shown allegiance to those who were closest and those who consistently stayed by his side. Temujin chose family over religion, personal allegiance over imputed authority.

Frankly, I'm not sure yet why this matters to Temujin's future as a ruler, as I don't know the history, but I can imagine there'll be a conflict in the future with a tribe backed by religion and Temujin will remember the shaman family and I'm sure it won't go well for the faithful.

¹¹⁰ Robb Stark, King of the North?

¹¹¹ Shamans were people who communicated with heaven to find the evil spirits in a body that caused sickness and other troubles.

From Tribe to Government

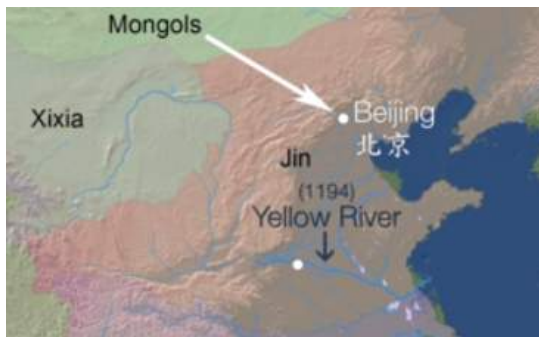


The Mongols were illiterate, which made it difficult to run a bureaucracy. Their first contact with a literate people was the Jurchens. As they moved toward Central Asia, they met the Uighurs, who became a source of literacy for them, leading to the creation of the written Mongolian script.

Chenggis ordered his sons to learn to read and had his rules transcribed into laws and eventually into a legal code. He regrouped the Mongols from shifting nomadic confederations into fixed military units with an officer corps based on a meritocracy. His army numbered 100,000 in 1200 CE, 130,000 at its height.

As a result of this reorganization, the multiple tribes of Mongolia united within a century, with all the nomads thinking of themselves as Mongols.

The Campaigns of Chinggis Khan



From 1211 through 1214, Chinggis turned south to attack the Jurchens' Jin dynasty. With their mobile cavalry, the Mongols were skilled at conquering open land but they didn't know the siege tactics necessary to take a walled city like Beijing. Further, they couldn't cross the Yellow River, limiting their territory.

The Jurchens deceived the Mongols by asking for peace and then retreating south, moving their capital to Kaifeng and leaving the Jurchens in possession of the North China Plain.¹¹² Chinggis would not forgive them for claiming obeisance before sneaking south of the Yellow River beyond their reach.

Khwarazm Empire
花剌子模
(1077-1231 CE)

The Mongols turned next to Central Asia where the Tang had once established its Silk Road protectorates. At the time, this area was under Khwarazm Shah, Mohammed II, who had established an empire after winning a series of wars. It was a wealthy area, with the Valley of Fergana and the great cities of Samarquand, Herat, and Bukhara. These walled cities were the centers of the eastern Islamic world, with universities, mosques, and paved streets.

Chinggis sent a caravan of 450 merchants to Central Asia to trade, but the Khwarazm Empire, thinking little of the Mongols, killed them and stole the trade goods. To defend against the warring Mongols, they stood as many as 50,000 troops to guard the cities.

Having learned from Beijing how to besiege cities, Chinggis armed his hundred thousand warriors with catapults and threatened to annihilate the inhabitants if they didn't accept defeat.

¹¹² Kaifeng had been the capital of the Northern Song before the Song had been driven south by the Jurchens.



The Mongols moved so quickly over the steppes that scouts could not return a warning before being overtaken by the advancing army. They drove the captives from one city to the next to lay siege, pillaging as they went.

There's some debate among historians whether Central Asia fell to military defeat or succumbed to a new era of peace under the Mongols. Regardless, Central Asia changed from a prosperous region of literacy and learning to a devastated area. What motivated Chinggis to pillage such a place?

Chinggis died in 1227 in a battle with the Tanguts. As his coffin was brought to the place of rest, all those encountered were killed, so no one knows today where he was buried.

Rashid al-Din, a Persian historian of the era, told how Chinggis asked one of his generals what he wanted most out of life. The general replied that he most loved hunting in the spring with a falcon on his arm, to watch it bring down prey. Chinggis said that wasn't for him. He wanted most to defeat his enemies and crush them under the hooves of his horses and watch them die while holding their wives and daughters.

Professor Bol disagrees with Rashid al-Din, saying that Chinggis had to keep fighting, to pillage the defeated, to support his army, in order to remain the Khan. His was not a sedentary agrarian society that could thrive in stasis. Like a shark, the moment Chinggis stopped moving, he would die.

The Mongol Empire

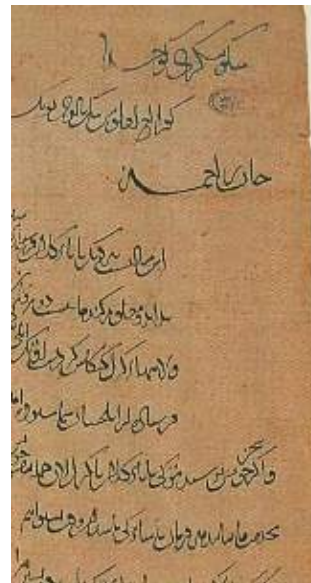
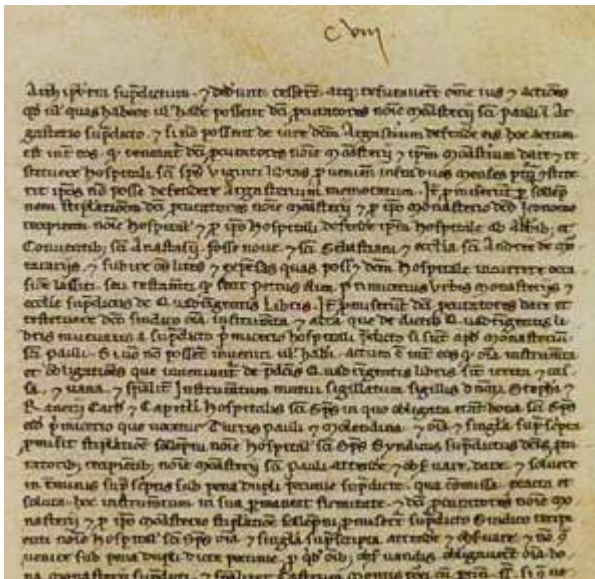
After Chinggis Khan: The Khanship

Though the empire was founded by Chinggis, it was his heirs who extended its reach. In 1229, two years after Chinggis death, a [kurultai](#)¹¹³ elected his second son Ogedei, who defeated the Jin five years later, in 1234. Not until 1294, under the reign of Khubilai Khan (r. 1260-1294), were the Southern Song defeated, the last of the Mongol's enemies.

The Campaign Against the West

From 1237-1242, [the Mongols invaded Rus](#), what would now be western Russia. In 1238, they invaded the North Caucasus and were in Poland and Bohemia by 1241. Henry II, aka Henry the Pious, of Silesia lost to the Mongols at the [Battle of Legnica](#) and was decapitated. Hungary fell in 1241, then Austria and northeast Italy, then Croatia and Serbia and Bulgaria.

¹¹³ Among the Mongols, the leaders of the tribes would gather in council to elect a ruler.



In 1241, when the Mongols arrived at Budapest (or perhaps Vienna), at the Gates of Europe, the Pope called on all Christians to stop the barbarian hordes. In a letter to the Khan, the Pope demanded he desist and the Khan replied that:

*Heaven gave the world as its gift.
It's not for you to tell me to stop.
You should submit.*

On the morning of the battle, when the Christians looked out over the gates, the Mongols were gone, leading them to think God had saved them. As it happened, Ogotai Khan died in 1241¹¹⁴ and couriers rode to recall the generals to a kurultai. The general who was poised to invade decided that the choice of Khan was more important than Europe's plenty, and took his army back to Karakorum.

After the Khan was chosen, the Mongols resumed, destroying Baghdad¹¹⁵ in 1258 and Korea in 1259. In 1271 and 1284, they sent fleets to Japan and were turned back, according to Japanese history by a divine wind, the Kamikaze, that sank the Mongol fleet.

They took Vietnam in the 1280's and Java in the 1290's.



¹¹⁴ During the spring of 1242, [Ögedei Khan](#) died at the age of fifty-six after a binge of drinking during a hunting trip. Batu Khan, who was one of the contenders to the imperial throne, returned at once with his armies to Asia, leaving the whole of Eastern Europe depopulated and in ruins (before withdrawal, Batu Khan ordered wholesale execution of prisoners). But because of his withdrawal, Western Europe escaped unscathed. See Wikipedia [here](#).

¹¹⁵ The [sacking of Baghdad](#) was one of the great historical atrocities. It was said that the rivers ran red with blood (okay, perhaps that's commonplace of a Mongol sacking) but beyond that, they ran black with ink from all the books thrown in the rivers from the [House of Wisdom](#), destroying centuries of some of the world's finest historical, medical, mathematical and scientific writings. Estimates of deaths run from several hundred thousand to a million. A marvelous canal system for irrigating the fields was destroyed and Baghdad ruined for centuries.

In the 1320's, they invaded India.



The Mongols had created the greatest empire the world had ever seen. Difficult as it was to control such a vast empire, they divided it into four Khanates:

Empire of the Golden Horde The Altan Gorda, or central palace was in Russia east of Kiev and lasted until 1502.

Empire of the Il Khan Included Iran, Iraq, Georgia, and Syria, which lasted until 1411.

Empire of the Chagatai Khanate Central Asia.

Empire of the Grand Khan Including Mongolia, Yuan China, Korea, and what is now called Manchuria. This lasted only until 1368.

Most of the world known to the Mongols was in their empire. Japan, SE Asia, N Africa, and Egypt remained outside, along with Western Europe. In the east, in the Yuan Dynasty, China was the richest prize, much greater than Mongolia, leading the Khan to move his headquarters from Karakorum to Dadu, the Great Capital, where Beijing is today.

Reading: The Journey of Friar John of Pian de Carpine

The Journey of Friar John of Pian de Carpine to the Court of Kuyuk Khan, 1245-1247.

This was a rather intense travelogue, difficult to read with the antiquated rhythm, diction, and place names.

In a rather understated fashion, Friar John tells of an extraordinarily difficult journey where two monks traveled for two years, mostly on horseback, in severe weather across forbidding terrain, through lands ruled by dangerous, thieving men. On several occasions, to no surprise, they were close to death: from illness, from starvation, from armed men.

He told of the devastation wreaked by the Mongols, of the ease with which one could make a fatal mistake. For example, stepping knowingly on the threshold of a chief's orda (tent) was cause for execution. Demonstrating fealty to the emperor or to any high chieftain was rigidly ordained, with great tents arranged with complex seating where the heights and positions of the seats was determined by rank. Great wealth was accumulated for the chiefs.

He reported that the emperor was good to his people but vicious and cunning in battle.

The Mongols in China

The Mongols did not accept that they should rule all peoples consistently, but rather that theirs was a multi-ethnic empire that should accord privileges and laws to different peoples as they chose. Given the vast population, they distrusted the Chinese, relying instead on bringing people from Central Asia to help them rule.

Co-administration. The Dynasty appointed both a Chinese and a Mongolian official to co-administer major offices.

Tax farming: tax collectors bought rights to the taxes and kept a proportion of them.

Muslim Financiers were brought in to act as the CFO's of the Yuan.

Tibetan Buddhists took control of the Chinese Buddhist establishment.

Ethnic Hierarchy

To defend their interests, the Mongols instituted a hierarchy of four groups, which became apparent when they restored the civil exam system in 1315.

- Mongols
- **Many categories:** people from Central Asia
- **Han:** Khitans of the Liao, Jurchens of the Jin, Tanguts of the Xi Xia
- Southern Barbarians: the Chinese

The Weight of Empire: Diverging Mongol Visions and Identities



Mongols living in China faced an identity crisis. They couldn't roam and hunt on fields planted with grain, they lived in palaces rather than their familiar yurts, they didn't travel from place to place with herds of livestock. Some advocated eradicating the population (which, according to Friar John, would not have been out of the question) and turning North China into a hunting ground. This was voted down in favor of continuing to tax the Chinese, a concept new to the Mongols.

Thus was there a division between, one might say, those of the Steppe party and those of the Civil party.

sinification
漢化
(hanhua)

The Civil party included those from Central Asia who learned Chinese and became literati themselves, who then supported the inclusion of Chinese literati into government and ruled through the bureaucracy rather than through armed force. One might wonder to what extent those Mongols of the Civil Party were becoming sinified.

Prof. Bol feels they were not. Many Mongols were prepared to return to the steppe and when, in the 1360's, they were forced out of China, they did return. Those of the Civil Party were not so much becoming Chinese as simply accepting the literati philosophies of government.

It seems to me that this course has made the point that Neo-Confucian philosophies are about *all* peoples, not just the Chinese.

Conclusion: Encountering The Mongol Empire, Then And Now



We can see it as an empire that provided safe travel from East to West, across the Khanates, from Beijing to Baghdad (although Friar John might disagree with what it means to travel safely).

We might see it from Marco Polo's point of view. As a young man, he traveled with his father and uncle. He traveled to Cathay, which referred to the Khitans, which is how they thought of North China. He returned through Fujian (Fuzhou), through Southeast Asia and Arabia.

He never had to learn Chinese and he had a safe and profitable journey. He saw rich markets, writing on paper with brush and ink, burning of coal.

His book, told to a cellmate in prison, was regarded as lies and his story wasn't confirmed until Jesuit missionaries of the 16th century confirmed that the Cathay of Marco Polo was indeed, Ming China. Marco Polo said about the Great Khan that he was the greatest, most powerful and richest ruler since Adam.

And so he was.

Discussion

What in your view motivated the Mongols' continued expansion?

(Terra Cotta group, my response)

From one of the lectures:

Rashid al-Din, a Persian historian of the era, told how Chinggis asked one of his generals what he wanted most out of life. The general replied that he most loved hunting in the spring with a falcon on his arm, to watch it bring down prey. Chinggis said that wasn't for him. He wanted most to defeat his enemies and crush them under the hooves of his horses while they held their wives and daughters, and he felt all men were that way. So Chinggis' motive was the human desire for brutal dominance.

Professor Bol disagrees with Rashid al-Din, saying that Chinggis had to keep fighting, to pillage the defeated, to support his army, in order to remain the Khan. His was not a sedentary agrarian society that could thrive in stasis. Like a shark, the moment Chinggis stopped moving, he would die.

In other words, nomadic societies cannot support their armies by building and taxing an agrarian society, they support their armies through continued conquest.

Pax Mongolica

(Terra Cotta group, my response)

Briefly evaluate the argument that the time of the Mongol Empire was that of a "Pax Mongolica." What are the conditions and requirements of "peace"? Were they met during this time?

Peace, in my opinion, in a medieval context, was the absence or suppression of both external and internal armed conflict. From Wikipedia, we have that

It was commonly said that "a maiden bearing a nugget of gold on her head could wander safely throughout the realm."

The Mongols instituted the Yassa or Great Law, granting among other things, complete religious freedom.

So yes, there's a strong argument that the Pax Mongolica was real.

21: Social Policy and the Founding of the Ming

A Comparison Between the Ming and the 20th Century China



In the 1350's and 60's, Zhu Yuanzhang led one of the only two unifications in Chinese history that came from the south. The Ming Dynasty was declared in 1368 and lasted almost 300 years, until 1644.

Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) led the only other unification from the south, when he took the Guomin Dang against the northern warlords in 1927.

Similarly, there were only two dynastic foundings built on social policy, the Ming and the Mao Zedong's People's Republic of China.

Scholars have pointed to common characteristics, some negative, between Yuanzhang, the Hongwu Emperor (aka Ming Taizu), and Mao. Both came from agricultural beginnings and rose via conquest, both had Utopian visions and believed they knew best and were suspicious of others to the point of purging their own ranks.

Were they autocrats? Were they despots?

Discussion of Emotionally-Charged Political Words

(unless otherwise noted, these definitions are from Google and do not bear a copyright notice)

Democracy a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives.

Despotism the exercise of absolute power, especially in a cruel and oppressive way

Benevolent Despot (from [Wikipedia](#)) However, in enlightened absolutism (also known as **benevolent** despotism), which came to prominence in 18th century Europe, absolute monarchs used their authority to institute a number of reforms in the political systems and societies of their countries

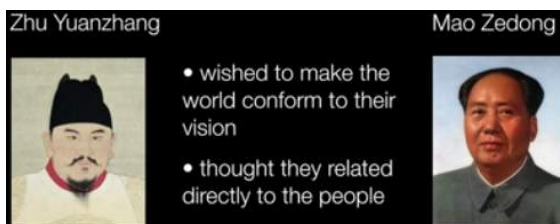
Autocracy a system of government by one person with absolute power

Monarch a sovereign head of state, especially a king, queen, or emperor

Meritocracy government or the holding of power by people selected on the basis of their ability

Oligarchy a small group of people having control of a country, organization, or institution bureaucracy

The Dynastic Founder



Among those who envision themselves as changing history, there are those who believe they alone speak directly for the people and bypass bureaucracy to do so. To compare two outsized figures like these, we must put their thoughts and decisions in the context of their time, to examine:

- The problems of their time
- The forces imposed on them

Three Views of the Ming Founding

Summary of the Three Views of Zhu Yuangzhang

- He restored Chinese traditions of governance and culture
- He continued the Mongol's practices in the Yuan Dynasty
- He was a terrible despot who made decisions based on paranoia

The Restoration Story

Zhu Yuangzhang comes from the southeast which had been under Song control 100 years before the Mongol invasion, the first foreign conquest of all of China.

As we saw in the previous lecture, there were two groups among the occupying Mongols, the steppe Mongols, who saw themselves as nomadic warriors who belonged on horseback, and others who wanted to adopt the civil bureaucracy of the Chinese because it paid the bills and led to a good life. The civil party eventually lost in the internal struggles of the Mongols.

Zhu Yuangzhang conquered an area in Central Zhejiang where officials had a close relation with the Yuan court. They became part of his early brain trust. He emphasized that he was bringing China back to the civil culture of the past. Not as a racist or nationalist policy, but as a moral and civil policy.

The Mongols had composed the Yuan government of a mix of Mongols, central Asians, Khitans, Jurchens, and Han Chinese, creating a system with power dispersed to the provinces. Zhu Yuangzhang wanted to centralize government.

Of the three arms of government:

- civil administration
- military administration
- censorate

The civil administration was paramount. He abolished the prime minister, the chief military commission and the Censorate Tribunal, so all arms reported to the emperor. He mitigated the centralization somewhat by strengthening the provinces.

He limited the military so it could no longer draw upon the civil administration for resources. He created a new system, the Weisuo System, in which border garrisons (wei) were expected to be self-sufficient, farming to create their own resources.¹¹⁶

He centralized the Censorate, so it reported directly to him. The Censorate monitored and assessed officials in the bureaucracy for the quality of their work and their adherence to central policy - an arm of government that began in the Yuan and continued through the Ming and Qing.

The Continuity Story

Zhu Yuangzhang was born under the Yuan and raised as a military man, becoming a rebel commander and vanquishing his rivals. He adopted the Yuan notion that people had rights and obligations based on their hereditary castes, for example that military households provided sons for the military.

He created a military nobility that continued through the 15th century.

He forced large numbers of people to migrate. Leading families like the Suzhou were forced to move to poor areas.

He continued the use of cruel punishments.

He continued the use of Yuan currency.

¹¹⁶ From [Wikipedia](#): Ming military institutions were largely responsible for the success of Ming's armies. The early Ming's military was organized by the Wei-suo system, which split the army up into numerous "Wei" or commands throughout the Ming frontiers. Each wei was to be self-sufficient in agriculture, with the troops stationed there farming as well as training. This system also forced soldiers to serve hereditarily in the army; although effective in initially taking control of the empire, this military system proved unviable in the long run and collapsed in the 1430s, with Ming reverted to a professional volunteer army similar to Tang, Song and Later Han.

The Autocracy Story



Autocracy: one person rules without any legal authority constraining his actions, limited only by rebellion, invasion, or coup d'etat.

When we think about Zhu Yuanzhang as an autocrat, does this mean the Chinese government had always been an autocracy? In the Tang, the chief counselors would sit with the emperor over tea to discuss matters of state. In the Song, they would stand before the emperor. By the Ming, the counselors are prostrate, knocking their heads on the floor before his majesty.¹¹⁷

So the question of autocracy concerns the relationship between the emperor and his officials. From there, what is the relationship between government and its institutions, and then one step further, between the institutions and the population? Is it autocracy all the way down?¹¹⁸

The question, was China an autocracy, deserves a more nuanced answer than a simple yes or no.

Population and Economy, Decimation and Stagnation

The wars on the northern frontier and the civil wars during the Yuan, combined with plague and disease, brought the population during the Jin and the Yuan from 100 million at the end of the 11th century to 65 million at the end of the 14th.

Beginning with Zhu Yuanzhang in the 14th century, China's economy stagnated, not reviving until late in the 15th.

Who was Zhu Yuanzhang?



He was one of the few cases in Chinese history where a poor peasant farmer becomes a monk, then a rebel, then an emperor¹¹⁹. He was the youngest of seven, born in a poor region of today's Anhui Province, with most of his family dead from the plague. He joined a monastery, which ran out of money, forcing him onto the streets as a beggar. In a few years he returned to the monastery, learned to read and write, but the monastery was destroyed by a government army suppressing a local rebellion.

Zhu Yuanzhang joined the rebels, rose to commander and joined a larger force known as the Red Turbans, or Red Army, a religious and military sect. In that time of great disease and suffering, and of starvation to the point of cannibalism, the Red Army offered hope through a belief in the salvation of its members.



¹¹⁷ From Wikipedia: [Kowtow](#), which is borrowed from kau tau in Cantonese, or koutou in Mandarin Chinese, is the act of deep respect shown by prostration, that is, kneeling and bowing so low as to have one's head touching the ground. An alternative Chinese term is ketou, however the meaning is somewhat altered: kou has the general meaning of knock, whereas ke has the general meaning of "touch upon (a surface)", tou meaning head.

In east asian culture, the kowtow is the highest sign of reverence. It was widely used to show reverence for one's elders, superiors, and especially the Emperor, as well as for religious and cultural objects of worship. In modern times, usage of the kowtow has become reduced

¹¹⁸ It's [turtles](#), Mr. Hawking, *all the way down*.

¹¹⁹ This is an odd statement. It's hard to imagine that more than one emperor had that personal history: from poor peasant farmer to monk, then rebel, then emperor. I must have quoted the lecture incorrectly.

Zhu Yuanzhang emerged from those times a man of unusual character: disciplined and principled but deeply suspicious to the point of paranoia. The portrait at left shows a gentle avuncular man, but other portraits show him with a jutting chin and pock-marked face, a man who was unusually ugly.

Zhu Yuanzhang's relationship with officials

He suspected his Chief Counselor, Hu Weiyong, of conspiring against him, which may have been true. The result, however, was Hu Weiyong's execution along with 30,000 others. In 1380, Zhu Yuanzhang abolished the post of prime minister, that no one else could wield power against him.

In a similar vein, Zhu Yuanzhang executed Chief General Lan Yu, a long-time compatriot, along with 15,000 others and abolished the Joint Chiefs of Staff and his military commissioners, all because of suspicions of a plot.

It was said that Zhu Yuanzhang took it personally if a law was broken and used extra-legal punishments against the culprits, punishments that dated back into Chinese history but were not part of the Ming legal code:

- The lingering death: death by a thousand knife strokes
- The boil and scrub: death by boiling and scrubbing off the skin

He extended his despotism to religion, creating a new religious order with a hierarchy that paralleled the administrative autocracy, with Zhu Yuanzhang at the top.

He issued a series of ad hoc Grand Pronouncements, compiled into three large volumes that told the citizenry what was right, what was wrong, and why each person was punished. People who had a copy of these volumes in their house would have the punishment for any crime they committed reduced by one degree. He held contests for the memorization of the grand pronouncements.

He saw himself as the teacher, the sage, and the only power in the world.

Social Policy

The following anecdote, which occurred before the founding of the Ming in 1368, illustrates how historians interpreted Zhu Yuanzhang's actions differently depending on their point of view.

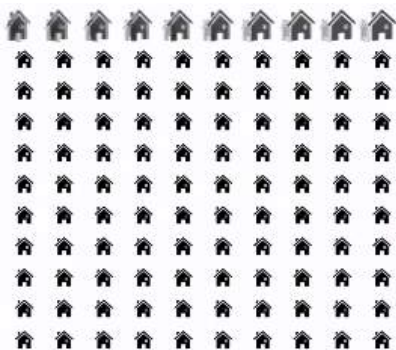
The son of a general was executed for brewing grain to make wine, a practice prohibited by Zhu Yuanzhang's laws.

- Was he acting as the autocrat, executing those who disobeyed his laws?
- Was he continuing the military policies of the Yuan, saying those in the military hierarchy must obey the rules as given?
- Was he trying to restore civil society, conserving grain for food instead of wasting it on alcohol?

None of these explanations tells the full story. Instead, the Ming established a new social policy that sharply diverged from the past.

The Village System

Village Tithing



This is the *Lijia* system, where Li means village and jia means group of ten. The ten wealthiest families are appointed leaders, with groups of ten families assigned to each leader, and with overall responsibility for the village rotating among the ten leaders. This worked for a typical rural village of five hundred people.

The Lijia ensured that

- taxes were paid on time
- order was kept
- liability for the laws and for taxes were shared in a group¹²⁰

¹²⁰ This is similar to Wang Anshi's advice to Emperor Shenzong of the Song, to organize households in hierarchies, in part to collect taxes and tattle on tax evaders, page 150. Also see Wu's Expansion of State, page 75, and Shang Yang's advice to the Lord of Qin to organize households in groups responsible for each other's taxes, page 56. My opinion: from Shang Yang to Wang Anshi to Zhu Yuanzhang to McCarthyism, institutionalized informants are a signature element of despotism.

Village Schools

Zhu Yuanzhang also instituted the **Village School System** where all young males would be taught. It was too expensive and too easily corrupted to last long. While it lasted, however, it taught:

- the rules of mourning, which, as we've seen from antiquity and through Confucius, were an important part of the Chinese death ritual.
- the obligations to kin and [partible inheritance](#)¹²¹.
- taking care of widows
- Zhu Yuanzhang's own sacred edicts on behavior

Village Elders

Zhu Yuanzhang vacillated on this one until finally deciding that the village elders, typically two or three seniors, could decide low-level cases, with punishments for the convicted. Most important, the elders reported to the capital on the behavior of local officials, with the power to condemn and impeach local officials who outranked them otherwise.

Communal Shrines

Every village participated in the national hierarchy of shrines.

Annual Wine Ceremony

In this ritual, all the villagers review the moral failings of those in the community, with announcements of same.

Ideology

Zhu Yuanzhang believed in inculcating the people with an ideology of social stability, family values, mutual assistance, self discipline - all targeted at an agricultural society.

- The three volumes of Grand Pronouncements
- A placard of instructions for the populace, the Jiamon bangwen:
- responsibilities of elders
- wine-drinking ceremony
- and so forth

Merchants were negatively affected by these new rules and values. They could not travel without an official passport.¹²²

We have to look beyond the values and edicts of the Yuan Dynasty, the Song Dynasty, and Wang Anshi and look instead to the Neo-Confucians' voluntary institutions for the basis of Zhu Yuanzhang's ideology. For example:

- A community compact, where families agreed on common rules of behavior, report on each other, and have regular meetings.
- Labor service obligations were pooled and then handled by a group of families rather than directly assigned to one family.
- Community schools in addition to government schools.
- Charitable estates that endow fields to provide local welfare.

Where Neo-Confucians volunteered efforts to improve neighborhoods, Zhu Yuanzhang legislated it.

What happened to the literati?

Some felt that Zhu Yuanzhang opposed the literati, since he didn't rise from that background and because the literati took a backseat in the early Ming. Nevertheless, the literati were well-represented in his inner circle. Further, he moved literati families to poor communities in part to bootstrap the village tithing (*Lijia*) system.

What happened to the merchants?

The Southern Song and the Yuan didn't fit the model of a self-sufficient, stationary society that traded through barter and paid taxes in kind. These were commercial societies with complex trading that required traveling merchants and a strong currency.

¹²¹ From Wikipedia: [Partible inheritance](#) is a general term applied to systems of inheritance in which property is apportioned among heirs. It contrasts in particular with primogeniture, which requires that the whole or most of the inheritance passes to the eldest son, and with agnatic seniority where the succession passes to next senior male.

¹²² Perhaps in a similar vein, Shang Yang instructed the Lord of Qin to institute tolls which restricted the travel of Merchants in the Qin. See page 56.

What happened to the Ming Dynasty?

At the beginning, less wealth implied greater stability. But as the peace of the Ming Dynasty continued and as prosperity came to the people, would society stay the same?

Discussion

(Terra Cotta)

After learning more about Zhu Yuanzhang and given the [definition of despotism](#), do you believe Zhu Yuanzhang is a despot? Why or why not?

My post follows:

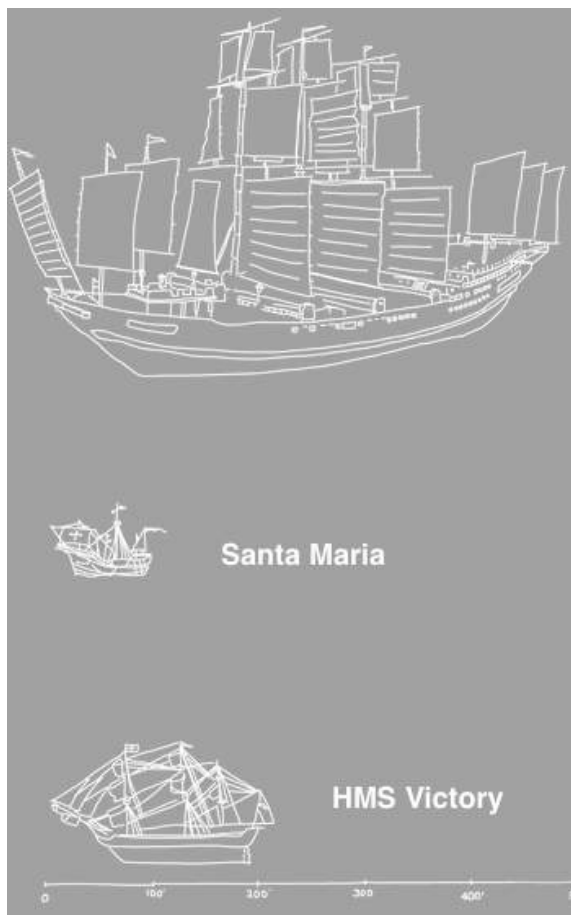
If a despot is a capricious ruler without law to guide him, then Zhu Yuanzhang was not a despot. Placards of instructions and volumes of grand pronouncements were his law.

If despotism is power as an end in itself, then Zhu Yuanzhang was not a despot, as his power was used to promote and enforce his ideology.

If despotism is simply absolute power, unbridled by counsel of any sort, then Zhu Yuanshang *is* a despot, as he disposed of counsel when they failed to suit his means or failed the test of his paranoia. But mostly he purged his ranks out of paranoia rather than caprice.

While Zhu Yuanshang ruled with elements of despotism, he was not sufficiently capricious to clearly mark him a despot.

Admiral Zheng He Sails the Seas



Sometime between 1431 and 1433, a Ming fleet sailed to Africa, the last of seven fleets sent out from Nanjing. The first fleet, which sailed in 1405, had 317 ships, with 27,000 men. Four treasure ships, the largest wooden ships ever built in all of history, were 400 feet LOA and 4000 nautical tons empty, with a speed of 6 knots. Of triple-planked construction with watertight compartments, they had 9 masts, as tall as 300 feet, with 12,000 square feet of sail weighing 20 tons.

These treasure ships were many times the size of Lord Nelson's flagship, the HMS Victory, and 400 times the size of Columbus' Santa Maria.

Admiral Zheng He was a Chinese Muslim eunuch.

In the same period that Zheng He sailed, Prince Henry the Navigator was sailing from Portugal to the west coast of Africa. Prince Henry was going to places they might have heard of but didn't know about, and were trying to discover.

Zheng He was going to places he knew about, to show the flag along well-established routes. There is a stele in Sri Lanka erected by one of the fleets: the Chinese text praises Buddha, the Tamil text praises Shiva, the Persian text praises Allah.

The Ming stopped the expeditions because of their expense. After the expeditions halted, the Great Wall was refurbished.



Why did they go to Africa? When the 6th fleet arrived in Sri Lanka they came upon an ambassador from an African state bearing two strange animals. Zheng He's men assumed the animals to be unicorns, which Confucius said would only appear in the time of a Sage. Since the emperor maintained his own zoo, they took these animals as a sign their emperor was a Sage and took the ambassador back with them to China.

They knew they'd found a unicorn because unicorns are benevolent and these animals were herbivores (really? so sheep, cattle, and horses are also unicorns?)

The animal was apparently a giraffe. They sailed the fleet to Africa simply to bring the ambassador home.

22a: Silver and Social Change

Chinese Piracy



In 1542, three ships were confiscated for smuggling 3000 kg of silver into a harbor along the SE coast of the Ming Dynasty. This is a story of the beginning of a new world in which all nations are connected by trade.

Bringing silver into the Ming was illegal because the Ming had forbidden foreign trade by sea, even though the Zheng He expeditions in the 1420s showed the power of the Ming navy to defend trade routes.



In normal circumstances, when governments effectively enforce laws against smuggling, illegal trade stops because the costs are too high. In this case, (my thought) trade was sufficiently lucrative that traders became pirates, invading towns, raping and kidnapping. They began as armed seafarers from Japanese states, which at the time was decentralized, attacking Korea and then China, and by the 1530's-1550's, establishing bases on Chinese coastal islands (shown in right-hand image).

They have become Chinese pirates.

Silver

Measuring silver

Silver was measured in *liang* or [taels](#)¹²³, where 1 tael \approx 1.3 ounces or about 38 grams. 3000 kg \approx 80,000 tael. That much silver was worth the equivalent annual income from 40,000 acres or 63 square miles, larger than the land owned by any single individual.

Arbitrage and exchange rates

Why was that much silver taken to China? In exchange for what goods? Here are the markups for selling Chinese goods in Japan:

Chinese cotton thread - 100%

Chinese silk - 150%

Chinese porcelain - 100%

The Japanese had silver mines that were productive when the Chinese had little. On the other hand, the Chinese had manufactured goods that were valuable in Japan. The Chinese also paid for Japanese silver with copper coin. Why? What was so special about silver?

Ming money system

From [here](#). The Ming had little control over the Chinese money supply, which traded in two metals: copper coin and unminted silver.

Zhu Yuanzhang outlawed the exchange of unminted, aka unofficial, metal, issuing paper money as a [fiat currency](#)¹²⁴. In the early Ming, the Hongwu emperor devalued the paper currency by two thirds, by printing in excess of tax receipts to finance the repair of public works destroyed by the Yuan civil wars.

The Yongle emperor continued the monetary inflation when he repaired the Grand Canal and financed the Zheng He expeditions, until paper money was 10% of its face value.

Inflation raised the expense of doing business with the government, which paid in low-value paper, it cramped savings and investments through uncertainty, and caused hoarding of copper coin.

The long-term impact was economic depression through most of the 15th century and suppression of trade both by edict and by lack of fungible currency. The government reacted by allowing trade in silver and calculating taxes in both copper coin and silver. As the economy recovered toward the end of the 15th century, demand for silver rose as the demand for trade increased. By the 16th century, the government had given up trying to control money.

Ming tax system

The two Ming taxes were (1) on land requiring payments of grain and cloth and (2) corvée labor. Officials and their families were exempt. Taxes helped create self-contained communities according to the wishes of Zhu Yuanzhang.

Three trends burdened the tax system:

- Barter became an awkward complication as the economy recovered and the market expanded.
- The government was inconsistent and therefore unfair in its cadastral surveys¹²⁵.
- Officials took advantage of tax exemptions to accumulate land farmed by others.

In 1581, Zhang Juzhen reformed taxes nationally to allow payment in currency and ordered another cadastral survey to control the accumulation of land by officials, but this reform was not enough to reduce the bureaucracy or curb the growing power of local officials.

¹²³ From Wikipedia: The English word *tael* comes through Portuguese from the Malay word *tahil*, meaning "weight". Early English forms of the name such as "tay" or "taes" derive from the Portuguese plural of tael, *taeis*.

¹²⁴ From Wikipedia: **Fiat money** is money which derives its value from government regulation or law. It differs from commodity money, which is based on a good, often a precious metal such gold or silver, which has uses other than as a medium of exchange.

¹²⁵ Surveys of landholding and population, recorded in "[fish-scale registers](#)"

The Portuguese



The Portuguese arrived in 1513 and by 1542 had obtained permission to trade at Macao (modern day Hong Kong). They discovered they could make more money shipping Chinese goods to Japan in exchange for Japanese silver. By the early 17th century, fifty tons of silver were flowing into China annually.

The Spanish

In 1571, the Spanish arrived in Manila with silver from Mexico and Peru. Chinese merchants sailed to Manila for the Spanish silver, paying twice what Europeans would pay, with payment in everything but copper coin.

Globalization

By the beginning of the 17th century, the Spanish were sending 40 tons of silver to the Ming. By 1630, roughly 100 tons of silver was coming into the Ming, the equivalent of 2.6 million taels or 1.3 million acres of annual land income.

Europe and China were now connected by sea instead of by arduous land route, with trade including the Americas. Chinese goods included:

- textiles
- ceramics and porcelain
- furniture
- tea

Tea

The Chinese national drink became the British national drink in the 18th century, paid with silver, so much that the English treasury began to run out. In response, the British taxed tea, which helped foment the American Revolution of 1776. So the Chinese habit of drinking tea helped found a new nation ten thousand miles away - the world was now connected by a butterfly's wing.¹²⁶

New World crops

China adopted crops from the New World that thrived in what had been marginally arable land: sweet potatoes, maize, peanuts, pumpkins. And the chili pepper. All supporting greater population growth.

Commercialization

No closed-captioning on this lecture means notes are rougher and accuracy will suffer. Bear with me.

How did silver affect the Ming economy? As trade flourished, domestic wealth increased, especially on the SE coast, but without causing massive urbanization. Rather than moving to the city, rural labor was more valuable producing goods *in situ* with the rivers and canals as the conveyor belt of SE China.

The putting-out system: farmers with mulberry orchards sold the leaves to silkworm farmers to feed the worms, who then sold the cocoons to spinners who spun the silk, who sold silk to weavers who made cloth. This allowed families to remain on the farm yet profit from the burgeoning trade economy.

¹²⁶ From [Wikipedia](#): In chaos theory, the butterfly effect is the sensitive dependency on initial conditions in which a small change at one place in a deterministic nonlinear system can result in large differences in a later state.

My opinion: if chaos theory is true in this regard, then the greater interdependence of an increasing population should reduce the political stability of the world exponentially. And yet, I'm not sure we see that happening, so there may be mitigating influences - constraints or damping effects - which we might expect as societies are inherently conservative (i.e. they will attempt to preserve their system of values and resist upheaval).

The elaborate system of water transport that was unique to the south facilitated the putting-out system, tying the different corners of the workforce together at 1/10th the cost of land transport in the north.¹²⁷

Cash crops. Farmers discovered they could make more money selling crops grown for trade, like tobacco, rather than crops grown for local consumption, like rice. This improved the economies of other regions of China that exported their rice to the now-wealthy SE coast.

Consumerism. People spent their money on fine gardens, as this is the first period when books were written on landscape design.

Investments. ROI on foreign trade was 200%, with very high risk. Domestic trade ROI was 50-100%. Money lending was 20-40%.

Tenant farmers. Land, the most conservative and honorable investment, returned only 10%, but because of the honor and tradition of owning land, this is where most people put their money, pricing farmers out of land-ownership and forcing them into tenancy.

Three Lords of the Field

- One person owned the land, the subsoil rights...
- He rented it to another, who owned the topsoil rights...
- And he rented it to a third party, who farmed the land.

Social Changes

Merchants

This was a great era for merchants. By the end of the 16th century, the government was no longer restricting merchant trade and travel. Control of the money supply had shifted from the government to private merchants.

The government was still minting copper coin but no longer printing paper money - it was silver that kept the Ming economy humming.

Merchants used their new-found wealth to buy influence and become patrons of culture, rivaling the literati for status. Literati, that is, those who passed the exams, were prohibited from becoming merchants, but their families could still invest and trade.

A famous novel was written during this time, *The Plum Flowers in a Golden Vase*¹²⁸ (aka *The Golden Lotus*) about the corrupt Ximen Qing and his concubines. There's more on this in the section on novels, on page 236.

Literati

In early Ming, the government had tried to force villages to be self-sufficient and self-supervising, primarily by leaning on the local literati to play leading roles. With their new wealth, people move to towns and cities, becoming absentee landlords, leading to the collapse of the village tithing system, village worship, and so forth. The new wealth led to greater education as people could now afford to send their sons and also their daughters to school. By one estimate, in 1644 the Ming had as many as 800,000 students.

¹²⁷ If this sounds familiar, we covered it in Part 4 page 9, *Southern water transit advantage*. Apparently, this advantage has persisted from 1050 CE.

¹²⁸ From Wikipedia: *Jin Ping Mei* (Chinese: 金瓶梅; pinyin: *Jīn Píng Méi*), translated as *The Plum in the Golden Vase* or *The Golden Lotus*, is a Chinese naturalistic novel composed in vernacular Chinese during the late Ming Dynasty. The anonymous author took the pseudonym Lanling Xiaoxiao Sheng (蘭陵笑笑生), "The Scoffing Scholar of Lanling," and his identity is otherwise unknown (the only clue is that he hailed from Lanling in present-day Shandong). The earliest known versions of the novel exist only in handwritten scripts; the first block-printed book was released only in 1610. The more complete version available today comprises one hundred chapters, amounting to over a thousand pages.

Its graphically explicit depiction of sexuality has garnered the novel a level of notoriety in China akin to *Fanny Hill* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in English literature, but critics such as the translator David Tod Roy see a firm moral structure which exacts retribution for the sexual libertinism of the central characters.

Political Changes

Single Whip System
一條鞭法
(yī tiāo biān fǎ)

The changes in the sources of income forced the government to alter the tax structure to reach into the flow of silver. In the mid-16th century a collection of policies known as the Single Whip System¹²⁹ emerged from several different regions, rather than as a nationally administered system.

Silver cost more for farmers who were outside the merchant networks and who normally dealt with copper currency, forcing them to convert copper to silver. This created hardships along the northern border, as northern farmers took on debt to convert their currency to pay taxes, or fell behind in taxes, weakening the tax base that paid for government clerks and the soldiers in the northern garrisons.

In the 1620's, these farmers, clerks, and soldiers banded together into rebel groups.

To suppress the rebellions, the Ming court sent eunuchs to collect taxes. In Suzhou in the southeast, a silk city, the government taxed all the looms. The weavers revolted, riots broke out, and fires swept through the dense city with their wooden buildings. This kind of tax rebellion repeated in many cities (I think).

At the same time, in 1630, Japan closed its door to all European traders except the Dutch, shutting off the silver that would have been carried from Japan by, among others, the Portuguese. Later in the 1630's, the Spanish reduced the silver going to Manila. The Ming responded to the shortage by deflating its copper currency, minting the coins more thinly, which made silver even more valuable.

The Emperor, a weak and petulant man, refused to work. Factions emerged among officials and with the eunuchs.

To make matters worse, the former Jurchens, now known as the Manchus, had grown in power. In 1630, at the same time that the rebellion of Li Zicheng swept the northeast and reached the capital, the Manchus came to the Shanhai Pass and the Chinese general guarding it let them through on the premise that the disciplined Manchu army was better than the pillaging rebel army.

¹²⁹ Whip means rules.

Discussion

This module argues that social and political change in late Ming stemmed from the economic change brought about by the adoption and use of silver as a currency. Are you persuaded by this economic argument? What other ways might we account for the changes that we discussed as taking place in late Ming?

These were my thoughts posted on the Terra Cotta thread:

I'm going out on a limb with a couple of concepts that seem to make sense, and a question I can't answer. That the two drivers of change were (1) oceanic navigation and (2) free trade. But the massive inflow of silver leaves me with the question of what happened to it, as much as 100 tons a year? How much was used to pay for imports, that is, to balance current accounts? What happened to the rest?

It all started with arbitrage, with China as a high hill of crafts and crops waiting to flow downstream to the Europeans, held back by cumbersome and dangerous overland routes. Compare the Ming with the Song in 1050, when water transit (canals, locks and boat building) allowed the south of China to trade its climate advantage (double crops) with the north, in part for border protection.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, oceanic transit (the astrolabe, bigger ships, better charts) and product advantages (silk, porcelain, tea) were the true enablers of the blooming of the southeast.

Was it necessary for China to convert its domestic currency from paper and copper to silver in order to join the world of international commerce? Couldn't the merchants have traded in silver and then converted to paper or copper in a domestic exchange. Yes, but that would require a government that understood economics and didn't meddle with exchange rates and didn't devalue its currency to pay for public works. Silver developed as a black-market currency with so much commercial value the government was forced to accept it as the coin of the realm.

Bearing in mind that foreign exchange is a two-way street, and not just of current accounts, if

goods exported from China - goods imported to China = 100 tons of silver

then the current account surplus was 100 tons. But what was the total? What was the value of the goods that China received? In part, that would be biotechnology (corn and pumpkins). We weren't told what else, and I couldn't find out on the web (sorry, I only spent a few minutes looking).

So what happened to the current account surplus, which we were told so many times had such enormous value? It seems it was used as the initial electric charge for the battery of domestic exchange - to fill everyone's pockets with silver, replacing their increasingly worthless paper and copper.

Now back to the original question. Was the silver influx a one-time event necessary to convert China to an international currency? And was the price of that conversion a disruption of the tax system, decades of exports, a shift of the balance of power from north to south, and finally, rebellion, invasion and the fall of the Ming?

I believe so. But only because silver was the fee for trading with Europe.

22b: Cultural Change in the Late Ming

The Late Ming, between the 16th and early 17th centuries was one of the most fascinating periods in Chinese history, a cultural springtime for literature and art, philosophy and religion, and relations between the sexes. This was also when Catholic missionaries made their appearance, spreading European culture.

A New Literature

New ideals, forms, subjects, and writers

In the late 16th and early 17th centuries, a storm of new ideals, forms, and subjects of literature emerged, even a new language.



Two traditional views of literature:

The moralistic view: Traditionally, the literati, the Neo-Confucians, valued literature as a tool for teaching morality, that is, *literature is to be a vehicle for the way* (*wen yi zai dao*).¹³⁰

The craft view: The best writers looked to antiquity, to Han and Tang writers to shape their craft, with literature as a means of self-cultivation.

In the Late Ming, writers strove for greater self-expression, to give impressions and ideas, to tell jokes, to speak in their own voices. Plays, dramas, and operas began to appear. Although the opera had appeared in the Jin dynasty and had become popular in the Yuan, during the late Ming opera became a literati form.

From dramas came novels, some with as many as a hundred chapters. After the novel, the short story appeared in the form of fiction and dramatized true life, though fiction eventually dominated. The purpose of the dramatic form was no longer for moral education or to invoke antiquity but for entertaining the reader and for satirizing the literati.

The new dramas covered new subjects – merchants, women, wives, concubines – telling life as it was lived not as it was idealized.

Lastly, women emerged as writers, chiefly in poetry.

New language

Up to the Late Ming, writing was in *wen yan*, the literary language, which differed from spoken Chinese. *Wen yan* was summary, hard to understand when read aloud. It was written by literati who drew upon and wore on their sleeves their knowledge of past literature.

By the Late Ming, novels were written in the vernacular with dialogue written as it would have been spoken. This became important to 20th century China when it was trying to re-discover a vernacular that could serve as a written language. Conversational writing was, of course, more lively, personal and involving than the effete and self-congratulatory *wen yan*.¹³¹

Short Response

The beginning of writing in vernacular language as opposed to classical Chinese marks an important development in Chinese literary history, much like the beginning of vernacular literature with writers like Dante Alighieri in western Europe. Why do you think these vernacular shifts take place when they do? And what is their importance?

My post:

Art as entertainment demands dialogue, whereas art as moral teaching does not. One of the most dominant forms of entertainment is fictional storytelling, which can be done without dialogue, but is more involving with dialogue. Plays and dramas, of course, demand dialogue.

If you have dialogue, you must write the vernacular or your characters can't speak as real people do.

I think it's part of an evolution of the arts, that may coincide with the [development of perspective in painting](#).

¹³⁰ See page 291 for Mao's view that literature was a means of promoting the cultural revolution, that it exists primarily for "the artistic crystallization of the political aspirations of the Communist party."

¹³¹ See page 291 again, this time for a discussion of the movement toward *bai hua*, or plain speech, during the cultural revolution.

The Lady Who Was A Beggar - Feng Menglong

It starts with a poem, *Lyrics on Abandoning My Wife*, admonishing wives to stay with their husbands or be lost like a flower detached from its branch. The branch can always grow another flower.

The story, set in the time of the Han, tells of a servant, Maichen, and "his wife, whose eyes would fail to recognize [Mount Tai](#)". The quote has historical significance that I don't fully gather - but may represent worship of the ancients, invoking Confucian morality. She abandons her husband because he's poor. We are never told her name.

Maichen was a reader who worshipped books, reading aloud. He aspired to become a scholar-official. He did not haggle (none of the vices of a merchant). He was patient. He invokes the story of Jiang Taigong, a fisherman who waited until he was eighty years old to be venerated by King Wen of the Zhou. Maichen is 43 and announces that when his is fifty, his horoscope says he'll succeed.

His wife was impatient, imploring him to stop talking about the past. Maichen grants his wife a divorce and composes a poem in her dishonor.

As foretold, when Maichen reaches fifty, Emperor Wu appointed him the governor of Kuaiji. He entered the county and happened upon his wife barefoot and disheveled alongside her laborer husband. Maichen granted his wife and new husband land to grow crops. She was mocked, and unlike her husband who had ignored a lifetime of insults with the strength of the faithful, she killed herself.

Discussion

- Why do you think Zhu Maichen's wife objects to him reading books? My thoughts: *Because her eyes failed to recognize Mount Tai - she doesn't respect the ways of antiquity. Confucius 14.24, she doesn't respect the ancient pursuit of knowledge for oneself. To trust that good things will come.*
- Who do you think is the intended audience of this story? My thoughts: *It's for young married couples but particularly wives, who want to read allegories about Neo-Confucian morality. (in retrospect, I disagree with my earlier thoughts – it seems to target either young men who want to feel righteous or at young women to teach them morality and subservience).*
- Thinking back to Yingying's Story, stylistically, what differences do you see in this form of vernacular writing and the Tang story, Yingying's Story? My thoughts: *First, it's fiction. It's told as allegory. It's first person from the point of view of the storyteller. It's conversational rather than narrative. In the language of writing, it shows the story rather than telling the story, which is more involving and entertaining.*

Expansion of Education

What does literacy mean? Perhaps 10-15% of the population of 200 million could read well enough to be patrons of the new literature. Some titles were specifically targeted at merchants, some were travel guides.

Merchants needed a level of literacy to do their work, to write letters and gain access to people in power. Some officials wanted to educate the general population, including women, giving rise to schools funded by the local community rather than the government.

In the 11th-13th centuries, in the Song dynasty, printing of books increased dramatically then fell during the Yuan, but in the Late Ming it exploded once again. Part of the reason was the new wealth, but the new kinds of literature was another reason.

Wood-block printing was still in use, but printers were creating more illustrated books on all sorts of topics: moral stories, illustrated poems, multi-colored graphics, annotated novels even in the first edition.

Publishers could survive solely on private printing without government subsidy, printing dramas, anthologies, self-help and how-to books.



An example was a scene from [The Peony Pavilion](#), where bridal Du (Du Liniang?) paints a self-portrait and dies. A young scholar sees the portrait and falls in love with it. His love revives her from the dead. (*Note that the plot described in Wikipedia differs from what I've transcribed – I may have gotten it wrong*).

Philosophy and Ethics

Wang Yangming

After [Wang Yangming](#)¹³² died in 1528, his followers went off in different directions. Some pursued moral relativism, where good and bad are not real. Some saw no distinction between Buddhism and Daoism.

These two principles affected the cultural shifts and new ideas of the Late Ming:

- Sagehood is available to all. You could become a sage simply through an act of will, without learning. *The man on the street can be a sage.*

Neo-Confucian preachers used *hollerers* to lecture to audiences numbering tens of thousands, preaching their interpretation of Wang Yangming. *Hollerers* would stand on platforms and repeat whatever the main speaker said.

- Human desire does not impede morality. Song Neo-Confucians distinguished between selfish desire and human emotion, arguing that human emotion was fine but selfish desire was the enemy of morality.

Particularly with regard to sex, Late Ming philosophers argued that the distinction between human emotion and desire is more relative than absolute.

Yuan Huang



A new movement stated that anyone could practice morality in their daily life. This fit well with the merchant culture. Ledgers have been recovered from the Late Ming with accounts of merit and demerit, self-scoring individuals on the morality of the actions. People from all walks of life, from literati to craftsmen, to women.

Suppose you saw a sick individual on the roadside. If you gave them a cup of tea, score 10 points for yourself. 50 points if you took them to an inn. Debit 20 points for walking by.

Yuan Huang popularized this system. Supposedly, a fortune teller told him that he'd never have a son or pass the exams. He vowed to perform ten thousand good deeds (*ten thousand is a popular number in Chinese philosophy, see page 49.*) After completing his goal, he passed the exams. He performed another ten thousand good deeds and had a son.

It's a utilitarian philosophy - doing well by doing good. Nonetheless, the act of keeping a journal or a ledger from the perspective of one's own morality forces a daily examination of behavior that can't help but improve one's moral actions, regardless of the utilitarianism that might be behind it.

¹³² See [here](#) for a comparison of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming.

Although Zhu Xi did not rule out introspection as a means to illumination, the emphasis of his programme was clearly on scholarly learning.
The most eminent of the thinkers representing an emphasis upon internal cultivation was [Wang Yangming](#). He rejected the intellectualization of personal realization by identifying the heart-and-mind (see [Xin \(heart-and-mind\)](#)) with li, or pattern. For Wang, the human mind is both the locus and the standard of sagehood. Perhaps the most celebrated theme in Wang is his belief in the continuity and inseparability of knowledge and practice.

See page 159 for the definition of li, page 158 for Zhu Xi and page 170 for Wang Yangming.

New Religion

Buddhist Revival

In the Late Ming, a new group of Buddhist monks appeared who wrote for a literati audience, creating their own versions of the Confucian texts, for example, a Buddhist interpretation of the Four Books of Neo-Confucianism.

Bearing in mind that Neo-Confucians were traditionally anti-Buddhist, with the rise of Wang Yangming's philosophy people wondered if Confucian and Buddhist ideas were that far apart.



Yes, that's our very own Professor Bol at Lingyin si¹³³

Releasing Life Societies



Buddhism also experienced a lay movement, where people of all walks of life did good deeds in the hopes of reforming society. One such movement was led by Zhu Hong: the releasing life societies. Buddhist monasteries have ponds for releasing life. Buddhists regard all sentient beings (animals) as having value, which is why they're in principle vegetarians. Saving an animal brings karmic merit.

Zhu Hong encouraged people to take positive action to improve their karma, for rebirth in a better life. They would buy fish in a market where they're sold fresh (still alive) and release them in the pond at the monastery.

¹³³ For more on Lingyin Si, go to page 98.

Three Teachings Are One



Although the strict practitioners of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism never believed the three religions could be brought together, some claimed that the goals were the same, and that Buddha, Confucius, and Laozi were the three sages, all on equal terms.

A new movement arose promoting the three as one, and this became a new religion of itself, led by Lin Zhao'en. They built temples with three rooms, they created a uniform symbolizing the unification, and published at least one novel about the movement.

Christianity

Christianity, brought by Jesuit and Catholic missionaries in the 16th century, was thought to be new, although there were Catholic priests in the Yuan dynasty under the Mongols, perhaps to serve the community of Catholic traders like Marco Polo. But in the Late Ming, they thought it was new and weren't sure that the Cathay in Marco Polo's writers was the same place they were in.

Buddhists and Literati opposed the missionaries and the missionaries were critical of Chinese philosophies. Not until the Qing did the two sides reconcile enough for the mission to proceed.

Catholicism came into the Ming with two claims:

- They were teaching the learning of the lord in heaven, tian zhu jiao. This was religion, based on the bible and the notion of the trinity, involving the worship of Jesus and Mary.
- They were teaching the learning of heaven. This included the Western calendar and Western science and mathematics. As Galileo said, *Mathematics is the language with which god wrote the Universe*.

These two modes, the scientific and the religious, appealed to the public. The Jesuits convert the highest members of the literati and official elite that they can reach, including a number of high court officials.

Mateo Ricci, who led that part of the mission was the most successful father, known in China today as Li Madou, the patron saint of clock makers¹³⁴. He offered a vision of European arts and scholarship and brought back to Europe a positive impression of China. He first used the term *literati* as the translation of the Chinese term *shi*, saying these educated elite were like the Italian literati. And he tells his compatriots in Italy that in China, philosophers are kings, invoking Plato's idealized world.

While Ricci was in the capital, other missionaries were rallying the countryside with self-help and study with a Catholic flavor.

Charity

Traditionally, charity was the province of the individual and relief was the province of the state. In Late Ming, local communities were organizing charitable societies, led and funded by the local wealthy, including literati, merchants, and monks. Taking on responsibility for the welfare of the distressed, they built orphanages, hospitals, and so on. The Late Ming flowered with religion, ethics, literature, and education.

¹³⁴ See [here](#) for more on Mateo Ricci, one of the most successful of the Jesuits:

He opened a residence in Nanking for himself, his fellow Jesuits and his scientific instruments. Later he became the court mathematician in Peking. His books *Geometrica Practica* and *Trigonometrica* were translations of Christopher Clavius' works into Chinese. He made Western developments in mathematics available to the Chinese and in 1584 and 1600 he published the first maps of China ever available to the West. For the first time the Chinese had an idea of the distribution of oceans and land masses. He introduced trigonometric and astronomical instruments, and translated the first six books of Euclid into Chinese. The Chinese geometrical works for which he is remembered were books on the astrolabe, the sphere, measures and isoperimetrics. But especially important was his Chinese version of the first six books of Euclid's *Elements*, which was written in collaboration with one of his pupils. Entitled *A first textbook of geometry*, this work assures Ricci an important place in the history of mathematics

Women



The Protestant missionaries remarked upon and abhorred foot binding, but failed to notice the expansion of women's writing and publishing taking place in the Late Ming. More women were published in China than all the rest of the world combined, right through the 18th century.

The [Ming Qing Women's Writers](#) website gives access to 90 titles published during the Ming and Qing dynasties, including some published during the early Republican period.

Foot Binding

Foot binding began at least as early as the Song and spread rapidly in the 18th century, across all classes. The government tried to wipe it out from the late 19th through the mid 20th centuries. Many in the literati opposed it. There were many reasons given for its oppressiveness, not all of which are valid.

- That men bound women's feet to keep them from running away, which isn't true since women were doing the binding.
- That it was a manifestation of the general oppression of women.
- That women did not feel attractive otherwise.
- That it was a mark of the elite.

If we compare foot binding to body piercing and tattoos prevalent among women in America today, from a relativist point of view, it's hard to argue that foot binding by its nature implies oppression.

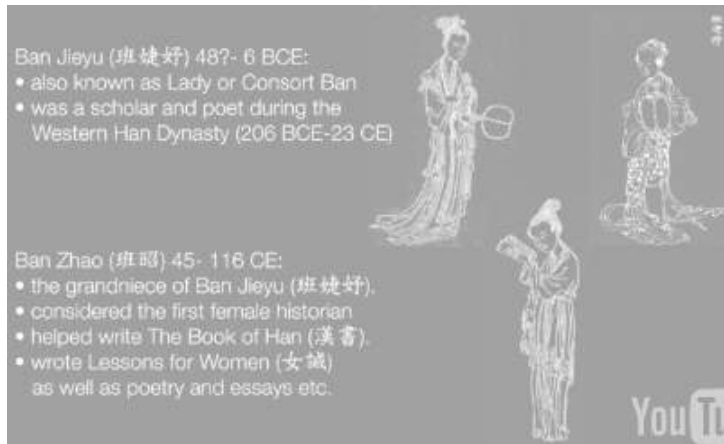
Nonetheless, why does it spread and why does it stop?

It's a sign of women willing to take on hard challenges. It's painful. Young girls don't like it. Women often stop once they're married. It doesn't break the bones, but it deforms the tendons.

It may have stopped because of its spread to common people and therefore no longer differentiated the elite.

But we don't know.

Women as Writers



The publishing of women was controversial as it allowed women to parade their thoughts before the masses when they were supposed to contain their lives within the family. Worse, they were taking their innermost thoughts of their families public.

Yet this practice was defended and became a source of pride when families published the collected writings of wives and daughters. More than any other time in Chinese history, women's writing was active and talked about in the Ming and Qing. Over 3500 known works by women were published in the Qing.

Women became role models in their writings, with strong women contrasted to weak men, with smart women contrasted to ignorant husbands, and so forth. We don't know why this dramatic uptick in women's publishing took place.

Discussion

Our section on women in Ming begins with a contradiction. On the one hand, foot binding was practiced in Ming society; however, women had a greater role in writing and publishing literature than any other part of the world at the time. How do we explain this contradiction? How do you account for the expansion of women's roles in the Ming society?

My thoughts:

I don't think there's a contradiction. I know the course led my opinion with comparisons to high-heeled shoes, tattoos, body-piercing and the like, but nonetheless it's a valid comparison. It's entirely possible that foot binding was a fashion, a painful one, an execrable one, but a fashion and not an oppression. It's hard to believe that men found it attractive, but as an older man who finds tattoos and body piercing unattractive to say the least, I cease to be amazed.

As for the greater role of women in writing, it goes hand-in-glove with the changes in writing style, one impacting the other. As styles shifted from moral treatises and parables to fiction and self-expression, from the stilted language of scholars to a common vernacular, it invites broader participation. Women who were denied a formal education could now find an outlet in writing. Their participation accelerated the change as women would read their works, providing a greater market, well beyond the narrow market for scholarly writing.

Final Discussion

The importation of foreign silver and the adoption of American crops in the 17th century changed China at the time. Thinking now about the world since then the late Ming, what do you see as the most important changes that have affected your country as the result of international trade?

My thoughts:

In modern history, trade was almost exclusively in physical goods in exchange for currency, where goods progressed through various stages of manufacturing, from raw materials to finished product. With the advent of global communications, especially the internet, trade began to include services at increasingly levels, even as the trade in services was under-measured by the typical metrics. As developed nations shifted to labor-intensive service economies and as developing nations sought to improve their economies, trade in intellectual labor intensified. This shift is helping to spread wealth and technology to developing countries like India and to bind nations together through increasing interdependence and cultural exchange.

Part 6: The Manchus and the Qing

23: The Qing Vision of Empire

Professor Mark Elliot taught most of this section, allowing us to benefit from his personal focus on the Qing and the Manchus. Professor Bol stepped in for one week to teach *The Scholars and Prosperous Suzhou*, which must have been his special interest. It was one of the most fascinating weeks of the course¹³⁵ and by far the toughest.

Historical Overview



Li Zicheng
李自成
1606–1645

The origins of the Qing dynasty date back to the 1630s with a peasant rebellion led by Li Zicheng, a former postal official. Indeed, this may be the first recorded instance of an individual 'going postal.'¹³⁶

Li's rebellion spread through central China, drawing upon the anger of farmers, clerks, and soldiers who were devastated by, among other things, the inflation of copper currency against the silver required for tax payments.¹³⁷ By the 1640s, the rebel army was moving toward Beijing.



Hong Taiji
洪太極
r. 1626 – 1643

Meanwhile, the Manchus, descendents of the Jurchens of the Jin dynasty, were uniting tribal groups northeast of China, forging alliances with the eastern Mongols and raiding the Ming, all under the leadership of Nurhaci. By the late 1620s, the Ming had lost control of the northeast.

Hong Taiji, Nurhaci's son and successor, re-organized and strengthened the Jin state, and in the 1630s conquered Korea, bolstering Manchu security and prestige. In 1636, Hong renamed his dynasty the Great Qing (*da qing*).

In 1644, Li's rebels captured Beijing, leading the Ming emperor to hang himself. Shortly after that, the Ming general Wu Sangui, who was guarding the Great Wall at the Shanhai Pass, allied with the Manchus against Li Zicheng, deciding that he preferred the organized armies of the Manchus to the pillaging forces of the rebellion. He let the Manchus through the gates whereupon they defeated Li in a battle east of Beijing.

On June 4th, having conquered Beijing, the Manchus declared themselves the new masters of the empire, though the fighting continued for many years with the Manchus slaughtering the populations of cities that chose to resist, like Yangzhou and Jiading.

¹³⁵ It's hard to beat the early weeks discussing ancient China and philosophy, and especially the week on the Keightley article, but the week on *The Scholars* came close.

¹³⁶ Yes, that was a bad joke and I apologize to postal workers everywhere.

¹³⁷ I'm ad-libbing a bit from information given earlier on the Late Ming. See pg 202, *Political Changes*.

Patterns of Alien Rule



Professor Mark Elliot's main interest is China and inner Asia, particularly the Qing, which was the last imperial dynasty before the modern Republic of China.

In this module we probe the Manchus for their vision of an empire, but before answering that question, we'll examine the type of imperial rule known as a Conquest dynasty.

Refer back to the Salt and Iron debates of the Han¹³⁸. The Lord Grand Secretary asserted that state monopolies were necessary to fund the defense of the northern or Inner Asian borders. This challenge of the northern borders is similar to challenges faced by the Roman and Persian empires.

Liao dynasty
遼朝
907-1125
Jin dynasty
金朝
1115-1234
Yuan dynasty
元朝
1271 - 1368

Inner Asia refers to the lands that linked China to the rest of Eurasia, including:

- Manchuria (what is, today, NE China)
- Mongolia to the north and NW of the Great Wall
- Eastern Turkistan (modern Xinjiang)
- the Tibetan regions in Amdo (modern Qinghai), Kham (western Sichuan), and central Tibet (the Tibetan autonomous region).

The peoples, religions, languages, politics and cultures in these regions were all different from each other and from China. The Han Chinese saw these differences as threatening when juxtaposed with the powerful raiding cavalry of the nomadic peoples.

During the 10th through 13th centuries, the successive emergence of the Liao, the Jin, and the Yuan deeply impacted Chinese history. These were all multi-ethnic states founded by non-Chinese people that ruled Chinese territory while trying to maintain their own ethnic identities. These states are referred to as the *Conquest dynasties*.

The Qing, the Manchu dynasty, extends the context of Conquest dynasties, of alien rule, to a dominion over China held for 800 of the 1100 years of that period.

What do these non-Han regimes have in common? **Minority rule.**

The Khitans of the Liao, the Jurchen of the Jin, the Mongols of the Yuan, and the Manchus of the Qing all ruled China from the position of a small ethnic minority. To do so without the expense of a military occupation, they recruited the literati to administer a civilian government.

Not all Chinese were willing to accord a non-Han ruler the Mandate of Heaven. To gain legitimacy the minority rulers shared power with the Han elite. But to a militant cavalry, this loosening of the reins to increase control was counter-intuitive. The need to share rule with the Han elite created tension within the Conquest dynasties, highlighting structural similarities between them. These four similarities helped them all gain a necessary tolerance for heterogeneity.

Martiality

All of the Conquest dynasties began as war machines: societies that valued the martial virtues and maintained a constant military readiness.

Polyethnicity

The population included ethnic groups besides the Han Chinese.

Multilinguality

A number of different languages were in common use among the people and among the officials. The government kept interpreters on hand. Non-Chinese script was used in official capacity, carved on stele and on currency, to remind the populace of the ruling minority. These Conquest dynasties were sometimes referred to as the Translation dynasties.

Administrative promiscuity

The regimes did not impose a single set of laws over all peoples, but willingly applied different laws to different regions, maintained several capitals, and rotated the courts seasonally between the capitals. This was a legacy of their nomadic heritage.

¹³⁸ This class had a simulation of the Salt and Iron debates. See page 77 in Part 2.

Rise of the Manchus

Ruling Lineage

Yuan dynasty 元朝	89 years
Liao dynasty 遼朝	218 years
Jin dynasty 金朝	119 years
Qing dynasty 清朝	276 years

The Manchus were the last in a long line of Inner Asian peoples who conquered and then ruled China. They thought of themselves as the direct successors in this line and were likely descendants of the Jurchens.

They ruled longer and more successfully than any of their predecessors; the empire they created led to the birth of modern China.

Nature of the Manchus

The Manchus came from the region that is today northeast China. They came from the Jurchens who had returned to their homeland after the fall of the Jin. They were not Han, but Tungusic¹³⁹. The Manchu language is related to Turkish and Mongolian, rather than Chinese. They practiced a Shamanic religion¹⁴⁰. They were not nomads, living instead in agrarian villages with a lifestyle quite different from the nomadic lives of the Mongols and Khitans.

Ming Administration of Jurchen Land

The Jurchens came under the rule of the Ming in the late 14th century and for most of that rule, were administered by the Ming military. The Ming maintained control by offering titles of nobility in exchange for tribute to the Emperor. The few supervisory military officials gently stoked rivalries between tribes to ensure the Jurchens couldn't unite in rebellion.

After about 200 years, in the late 1500s, Ming control broke down and the Jurchens began to reunite.

The Manchus Own Tale of Their Origin



The ruling family of the Qing traced their origins to Bukuri Yongson¹⁴¹, born in the Changbai Mountains that separate China today from Korea. His mother, Fekulen, came from heaven to bathe in a lake in the Chambai and when she retrieved her clothes, she found a small red fruit. She placed the fruit in her mouth whereupon it leaped down her throat and made her pregnant. She gave birth to Yongson, a boy of supernatural powers who could speak upon birth.

¹³⁹ From the [Tungusic Research Group at Dartmouth College](#):

The term "Tungusic" refers to a group of twelve or so closely related languages spoken in Russia, China and Mongolia. These languages are relatively little studied, and for that reason they remain peripheral to western linguistics, and almost unheard of to the lay person. The obscurity of Tungusic languages is largely an accident of the location of their speakers and their social patterns. Most Tungusic languages were spoken by nomadic peoples who inhabited regions of the world which were poorly suited for the development of settlements in pre-industrial times; the harsh climate of Siberia and northeastern China and the remoteness of these areas from established cities served to protect their nomadism from external pressure. This same nomadism required relatively small clans, which were organized in terms of familial relations more than any sort of ethnic or political identity. The blend of such characteristics ensured that there was little internal pressure for Tungusic clans to grow, expand, settle, or conquer.

There's a lot more to this article (a preface to their language studies) and it's well worth reading.

¹⁴⁰ Perhaps of the sort we saw discussed in Part 5, under the discussion of Temujin, Church and State, pg 184.

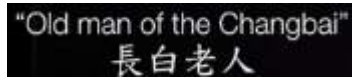
¹⁴¹ The video notes that he's the 'mythical father of the Manchu people.'

She told him he was born to bring peace to the world. She put him aboard a small boat to drift downstream to the village Odoli, which was struggling with internal discord. He brought peace to the village and they made him their prince.

The village continued to live in peace through several generations before falling once again into discord which led to a rebellion. The rebellion was suppressed with all members of the rebellious clan slaughtered except for one boy. This boy, Fanca, fled to a field where the soldiers had cornered him. He froze in place while a magpie, the totem bird of the Manchus, alighted on his shoulder. The soldiers couldn't see him, mistaking his head for a tree.

Fanca was the ancestor of the Manchus who founded the Qing.

What We Learn from the Origin Tale



The Manchus gave their ancestor supernatural powers and an ability to bring peace to a troubled people. They had a geographical point of origin: the [Changbai Mountains](#), now a UNESCO reserve. The Manchu emperor sent men to map the region. He wrote poems about it. Sacrifices were performed. Manchus would compliment themselves as 'old men of the Changbai.' The Changbai myth became an important element of Manchu identity.

As much as it is a myth, there are historical records for a factual basis. Those records indicate that around 1412, a Jurchen tribesman named Fanca led his people from the Changbai to settle in Hetu Ala (*flat hill*), where eventually the Qing began its development. Nurhaci was a descendant of Fanca.



Fanca eventually settled within the lands governed by the Ming military, a place called Jianzhou¹⁴², peopled by the Jianzhou Jurchens. Fanca pledged his loyalty to the Ming emperor and was confirmed as the leader of one of the three branches (the Left Branch) of the Jianzhou Jurchens. His family held this position for over a century.

In 1574, Ming forces intervened in the violence between the branches of the Jianzhou Jurchens, supporting the claims of Giocangga and his son Taksi, two of Fanca's descendents, who brought peace and were confirmed as the preeminent Jurchen leaders.

Nurhaci's Origins



In 1582, Giocangga and Taksi were killed by the Ming, putting Taksi's son, Nurhaci, in a weakened position, but he eventually emerged as the strongest figure in the region, uniting all the Jurchens and some of the Mongols.

In 1583, Nurhaci succeeded to the head of the Jianzhou Left Branch. He was 24 years old. His charisma allowed him to overcome the loss of his father and grandfather, who would have otherwise accorded him considerable prestige. Within five years, he built his own walled city of wood and rammed earth.

¹⁴² I believe, but I'm not sure, that Jianzhou is also Hetu Ala, or that Hetu Ala is within the Jianzhou region. See [here](#).

For twenty years he dealt with tribal warfare, winning battles on the field and making alliances through the marriage of his daughters and through the trade of ginseng, a famous local product. By the 1590s he commanded 15,000 men, enough power to challenge tribes outside the Jianzhou. By 1600, he'd created a script for the Manchu language. Finally, having won allies among the eastern Mongols, he was declared Khan in 1607 and eventually combined all the Jurchens into one confederation.

The Eight Banners



Nurhaci created a powerful military, the [Eight Banners](#), which was central to the success of the Qing. The banners were distinguished by color (yellow, white, red, blue) and ethnicity (Manchu, Mongol, eventually Han Chinese). They began as hunting companies (called *arrows*) which were organized into larger units (called *banners*) with each banner under the control of the Khan or a Noble. Like a feudal army.

After the Qing conquered China in 1644, the Eight Banners functioned as a military caste with families built around the warriors. The Eight Banner Institution survived to 1924.

Nurhaci and Political Ambition

Up to the 1610s, Nurhaci remained a loyal subject of the Ming, making at least three visits to Beijing. In 1616, he rejected his allegiance and declared the founding of the Later Jin state. In 1618, he issued seven grievances against the Ming, including the death of his father and grandfather, and took up arms against them. At that time he commanded 100,000 men.

At Sarhu, in 1619, he defeated the Ming army. By 1626, when Nurhaci died, the Jin state controlled the entire eastern portion of the NE region formerly under Ming military administration.

Creation of the Manchu State



Hong Taiji inherited the Jin state in 1626. He was the eighth son, and the only literate son, of Nurhaci, which may have been why he was selected. The Inner Asian peoples differed from the Chinese in that they did not practice [primogeniture](#)¹⁴³, elevating instead the most qualified son or nephew in the descendant generation, or even a brother of the current Khan. The choice was made in council after the ruler's death¹⁴⁴. This difference from the Han Chinese led to a succession of capable leadership from the 15th through the 18th centuries.

As he now had over one million Han Chinese in his territory, Hong faced different challenges than his father, having to administer a civilian state. For the first ten years after assuming the mantle in 1626, Hong scaled back military confrontation with the Ming, for several reasons:

- He lacked artillery to breach Ming fortresses.
- He needed to consolidate eastern and western frontiers.
- He needed to build his ruling institutions.

¹⁴³ **Primogeniture** is the right, by law or custom, of the firstborn male child to inherit the family estate, in preference to siblings (compare to ultimogeniture).

¹⁴⁴ Not sure, but this may have been the same kind of kurultai used to select a Mongol Khan. Page 186.

These ten years were for building the underpinnings of Hong's plan to take the rest of China.



Under Hong, the state became less like the warlike feudal tribes of the Manchus and more like the bureaucracy of a civilian Chinese state:

- The power of the Khan grew considerably.
- He ruthlessly eliminated his Manchu rivals.
- With the help of Chinese advisors, he created an administration that mimicked the Ming government.
- He began systematic recordkeeping
- He built a Chinese-style palace with a Manchu flair

In 1629, Hong created three institutions that were not of Chinese origin:

- A secretariat
- An historical office
- A literary office

The literary office had the role of translating the large volumes of philosophical, historical, and strategic works from Chinese to Manchu, an undertaking that required the addition of many Chinese words to the Manchu language.



In 1635, the Manchus created the Mongol Office to handle relations with Mongolian and Tibetan visitors to the capital city of Mukden (formerly Shenyang). Mukden was Manchu for *arising*, symbolic of the goals of the Manchu emperor. Again, taking the Chinese model, Hong established the Six Boards¹⁴⁵ and a Censorate.¹⁴⁶

In 1635, Hong renamed his people from the Jurchens to the Manchus and in 1636 renamed his state from the Later Jin to the Great Qing (*da Qing*). These two changes consolidated the many rival tribes as one, similar to Temujin proclaiming his tribes as the Mongols. In this way Hong declared that his dynasty was not simply another Jin.



There is no known historical record of the meaning of *Manchu* (or *Manju* in the Manchu language). On the other hand, we know that Qing means pure. The water radical was chosen to extinguish the fire element associated with the Ming, which means *bright*.

¹⁴⁵ I think we're supposed to know about the Six Boards or Ministries from previous lectures, but I scanned my notes and didn't find a reference to it. Wikipedia defines it [here](#) as first appearing in the Sui. Note that the number 6 has particular meaning from Cosmic Resonance Theory (pg 58, *Multiples of Six*). The ministries were: Personnel, Revenue, Rites, Defense, Justice, and Works.

¹⁴⁶ From Part 5, pg 192: The Censorate monitored and assessed officials in the bureaucracy for the quality of their work and their adherence to central policy - an arm of government that began in the Yuan and continued through the Ming and Qing.



Another meaning of Great Qing in Manchu was *daicing gurun*, which means *warrior country*, a clear signal of where Hong was eventually headed.

The Creation of the Manchu State

As we saw above, Hong rebuilt his government in the Chinese model of civil administration, with some Manchu differences. He also expanded his territory in the east against Korea, in the west against the Mongols, and in the north against the few remaining Jurchen tribes that were not yet in the fold. By the 1640s, these tasks had been accomplished.

Just as important to Hong's goals, the Qing had recruited Han Chinese with the artillery skills to breach the walled cities of the Ming. By the early 1640s the *daicing gurun* was ready to attack a Ming state weakened by internal rebellion.



After Hong Taiji died in 1643, the Qing council chose his five-year-old son Fulin, once again *not* the eldest son, to be the next Khan. Fulin's uncle, Dorgon, the fourteenth son of Nurhaci, was named regent.

It was Dorgon, in 1644, who persuaded the Ming general Wu Sangui to grant passage to the Qing troops through the Shanhai gate of the Great Wall.

Dorgon, the Manchu Regent

Discussion

The idea of the "conquest dynasty" -- a polyethnic state established by a non-Han minority elite maintaining political authority over a majority Han population and ruling over territories spanning both Inner Asia and lands considered part of China -- is controversial in some quarters, partly because it raises questions about how we go about defining "China" and "Chineseness" in history. Yet when we look at the institutions put in place by the rulers of the Liao, Jin, Yuan, and Qing, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that there was something different about these regimes as compared to, say, the Song and Ming regimes.

Consider the differences between the conquest dynasties and those of the Song and Ming. What features do the conquest dynasties share? In building their state, why would the Manchu founders of the Qing have chosen to identify with the Khitans, Jurchens, and Mongols? What potential problems or challenges can you predict might arise with such an identification?

My thoughts:

Origin story: the Han Chinese took their origin story from the Sages, with the values that come from ancestor worship, the Sages, and Neo-Confucianism. The Manchus and other tribes that conquered China had origin stories related to a nomadic warrior lifestyle that did not place the same moral value on agrarian life and the peasant farmer.

Mandate of Heaven: the Han Chinese dynasties took their mandate to mean some level of identification with the Sages of Chinese antiquity, which in the Confucian heritage necessarily elevated the literati. The Conquest dynasties took China by force and legitimized their rule through inclusion of the literati rather than through any philosophical belief in their intrinsic value. The result may have been similar, but the motivation was different and the Conquest governments didn't spend as much time in philosophical introspection.

Primogeniture. The Han Chinese practiced primogeniture while valuing meritocracy (what the Sages of antiquity declared as the correct way to pass the *tianming*). The Conquest dynasties had a cultural history of choosing by merit within the family in a tribal council.

Military. I'll borrow a page from pczhang. The Conquest dynasties put the military above the civilian, with the civilian administration an unfamiliar and necessary mechanism for organizing and taxing the vast millions of Chinese. From the time of the Qin, each Han Chinese empire seemed to be part of a progression of experiments in the integration of the military, either for conquest or for border protection, within the overarching civilian bureaucracy.

Multi-ethnic State. The Han Chinese were a single ethnic group that extended Chinese into other cultures and absorbed their cultures (e.g. in the Tang) into China. The Conquest dynasties maintained a multi-ethnic approach with language translation.

Conquest vs. Treaty. I'll borrow a page from dougma: the Conquest dynasties did not negotiate peace with the northern border - they *were* the northern border. A large factor in nearly every Han Chinese dynasty was managing the need for a strong military garrison to the north and in later dynasties, to negotiating peace with 'brother states' to the north.

Ostriches and Penguins in a Republic of Birds

This was posted as a discussion selection, from djeatonlisbon. I can't judge the validity of the allegory, but it's wonderfully creative and may, as Prof. Elliot noted, capture an essential point of [the yi vs. the hua](#) that dates back to antiquity.

If all the birds of the world came together and created their own republic – their own cultural and economic bird world – how would ostriches and penguins fare?

My guess is that they would soon become marginalized, socially and politically. This would result from their lack of a basic prototypical characteristic of birds – the ability to fly. A world created by the majority of birds would probably foster a collective self-image of birds as creatures of flight.

I imagine that, sooner or later, ostriches and penguins would not be content to be treated as second-class birds. They might develop a pride in their own distinctive characteristics while, at the same time, asserting their right to full membership in the bird community. They might, soon or later, succeed in moving themselves from the periphery to the center of the bird world. Then, the community's notion of birdness would have to altered to be accepting of flightless birds and the community, as a whole, would be more diverse and stronger.

Manchus saw themselves as marginal members of a large multilingual community of ethnic groups which had been closely interacting with each other for a long time. Furthermore, the Manchus saw themselves as descendents of people who had once been at the center of this community. It is to be expected, I think, that the Manchus would want to move from the margins to the center of this community and, doing so, give the community a more inclusive self-image.

24: Hearts and Minds

Conquest and Consolidation

A period of consolidation and upheaval persisted for roughly 40 years after the Qing invasion of China in the spring of 1644. It began with the battle of Beijing.

On April 24th, 1644, Li Zicheng led the rebel forces into Beijing, whereupon the Ming emperor committed suicide along with his concubines (did they do so willingly?). The rest of the emperor's court fled south.

Li failed to ally with the Ming general Wu Sangui, who chose instead to open the gates of the Shanhaiguan Pass allowing Dorgon, the Manchu regent, to bring his army through. On May 27th in the [Battle of Shanhai Pass](#)¹⁴⁷ at the eastern end of the Great Wall, north of Beijing, Wu's army engaged Li's rebel forces. Wu did most of the fighting and took the brunt of the losses, with the Manchu cavalry waiting until Wu was on the brink of defeat before sweeping around Li's right flank under the cover of a dust storm, surprising Li's forces and driving him from the field.

Li retreated to Beijing and on June 3rd, took the throne only long enough to declare himself emperor before setting fire to the palace on June 4th and fleeing with his remaining men to the west.

On June 5th, Qing troops entered Beijing. Standing on the steps of one of the remaining palaces, Dorgon announced that:

The empire is not an individual's private empire.

Whosoever possesses virtue holds it.

The army and people are not an individual's private army and people.

Whosoever possesses virtue commands them.

My thought: In this speech, he arrogated Heaven's Mandate (*tianming*).



A year passed before the Qing, allied with Wu's army yet still outnumbered four-to-one, defeated Li's forces and killed Li. In 1645, the Qing crossed the Yellow River and then took Jiangnan. Most cities conceded defeat but some did not and their populations were slaughtered. Yangzhou was one of those, where 800,000 residents were reportedly killed in a [ten-day massacre](#)¹⁴⁸ in May of 1645.

All of South China eventually fell to the Qing over the next five years.

Meanwhile, the refugees of the Ming court created the Southern Ming Dynasty in Burma, which lasted until 1661 when the last pretender to the throne was executed by General Wu.

¹⁴⁷ [Wikipedia](#) has an excellent article describing the battle and the events leading up to it.

¹⁴⁸ As an interesting side note to the relevance of Chinese history to modern events, the books written at the time to report on these massacres were used to win support for the 1911 [Xinhai Revolution](#) against the Qing.

Founding of Tungning



In 1662, Zheng Chenggong (aka Koxinga) led a separate group of Ming loyalists to Taiwan where they expelled the Dutch colonists and founded the [Kingdom of Tungning](#). Supported by maritime trade with Japan and Southeast Asia, Zheng survived independently until the Qing assembled a navy to blockade Taiwan, forcing his defeat in 1683.

This was the first time in history that Taiwan was integrated into Chinese territory. I don't have to emphasize the importance of *this* event. See the discussion of China and Taiwan on page 345.

Resistance and Withdrawal

The Qing conquest shocked the Chinese and forced them to choose sides: to support the Qing, to resist, or to stand quietly aside. To those facing violence, the choice to stand aside was easy.

The Most Unkindest Cut of All



Queue (or "pigtail")
辮子



In 1644, the Qing rulers ordered all adult males to wear their hair in the Manchu fashion, with the front of their scalp shaved and their hair grown long in the back and gathered in a tight braid called a [queue](#) (image on right).

With a glance, the Manchus knew who had submitted and who had not. But the order violated the ancient Confucian custom of [filial piety](#)¹⁴⁹, deeply offending the Han men¹⁵⁰. The traditional Chinese style was to gather the hair in a bun, or *ji*, atop the head (image on left).

The price of resistance was decapitation: *lose your hair and keep your head or keep your hair and lose your head*.

Thus, the queue became the hairstyle for all Han men through the late imperial period and became the source of a derogatory Western nickname for the Chinese.

¹⁴⁹ From [Confucius](#): "We are given our body, skin and hair from our parents; which we ought not to damage. This idea is the quintessence of filial duty." For its importance, see page 159.

¹⁵⁰ And yet Mouzi excused the Buddhist monks who shaved their heads by saying, *Taibo cut his hair short and tattooed his body, yet Confucius praised him*. See page 96.

Dissidents in Exile



On the left, [Seascape with tree and boat](#), on the right, [Ducks and Lotuses](#), by Zhu Da (aka Bada shanren) 1626-1706

What choice did the dissidents have? Some committed suicide.

Others retired to monasteries to express their anguish in poetry and drama and especially art, where depictions of lone trees or desolation indicate the artist's mood. Bada shanren was famous for his fish and birds, the fish literally out of water, the word 'fish' a poignant homonym for 'leftover' or 'remnant.'

The Problem of Legitimacy



*The kingdom can be won on horseback, but cannot be ruled on horseback*¹⁵¹.

The Qing rulers knew from the Yuan that they needed the literati and the gentry to rule China, to administer the provinces and cities and villages, and to collect taxes. Convincing the literati that the Manchus had the right to rule may have been the biggest challenge they faced. To the end of the dynasty, their Barbarian origins remained an issue.

To convince the literati that they had *tianming*, Heaven's Mandate, they need to assume the Confucian traditions of Chinese imperial orthodoxy (*my thought: a tad difficult after you stomped on the filial piety of every adult male*). But the early Qing emperors (Yongzheng, Qianlong and especially the Kangxi emperor) understood proper reverence to Confucius.

The Sacred Edict



Immediately after assuming power in 1670, Kangxi issued the proclamation of the Sacred Edict, sixteen maxims read twice a month to villagers by the gentry to instill Confucian values.

Complete Library of the Four Treasuries

Similarly, the Qing sponsored a major scholarly project to write The History of the Ming Dynasty, following tradition that a succeeding dynasty should compose the history of its predecessor. Some scholars refused to take part, but enough did to help convince the literati that the Manchu were serious in their commitment to Chinese values and at the same time recognizing in the History itself, the contribution of the Ming loyalists.

Under Qianlong, the Qing composed the Complete Library of the Four Treasuries ([Siku quanshu](#))¹⁵².

Rather than transforming Chinese culture, the Qing reinforced traditional Confucian values.

¹⁵¹ According to legend, an advisor said this to Kublai Khan. See [here](#) under the Yuan dynasty.

¹⁵² See [Wikipedia](#). 361 scholars compiled 10,000 manuscripts for inclusion in the library. The largest collection of Chinese works in history. Note however that they also destroyed 3,000 works considered to be anti-Manchu.

The Limits of Success



Among the Han Chinese and particularly the elite, a profound ambivalence over whether they should resist the Manchus lasted through the early Qing period. This was at the heart of the refusal of Jiading to accept Qing rule, resulting in a seige lasting 80 days and costing a hundred thousand lives. And more famously, at Yangzhou, where the Ming loyalist [Shi Kefa](#)¹⁵³ led the [resistance](#)¹⁵⁴.

There's a [memorial to Shi Kefa](#) in modern day Yangzhou (#travelNote)

Cultural Ambivalence

The Exclusive View

Mencius said: *I have heard of men using the doctrines of our great land to change barbarians, but I have never yet heard of any being changed by barbarians.*

Non-Chinese could never rule the Middle Kingdom¹⁵⁵.

The Inclusive View

If barbarians could be changed by Chinese doctrines and thus became like the Chinese, then China is without borders and China counts among her sons all those who pursue Confucian virtue.

Political Ambivalence

Neo-Confucianism

The tie to a ruler is filial in nature, absolute and unmitigated by virtue. The idea of abandoning fealty to the Ming was unthinkable and cutting one's hair in the form of a queue only salted the Neo-Confucian wound.

Traditional Confucianism

Pre-Song Confucian tradition ascribed loyalty to a ruler in proportion to their virtue. The Ming ruler, with his destructive economic policies, lacked virtue so he deserved no loyalty. If the Qing ruler proved virtuous, there was no reason to deny him *tianming* any more than the Duke of Zhou.

Of course, those who found an argument that rationalized their support of the Qing could be accused of opportunism.

¹⁵³ From Wikipedia: *I fall together with the city. My decision will not change. Even if I'm torn to pieces, my feelings will be as sweet as [maltose](#). But do not harm the thousands of lives in Yangzhou!*

¹⁵⁴ From Wikipedia: Prince Dodo was infuriated by the heavy casualties sustained by his army in conquering Yangzhou, so after the city fell, he ordered a mass killing of the city's residents (the event is known as the [Yangzhou massacre](#)).

¹⁵⁵ The most common name for China is [Zhongguo](#), which literally translated means "central nation." See page 27.

Reclusion, Rebellion and Restoration



Not until 1681, 40 years after the fall of Beijing, did Han Chinese loyalty shift from the Ming to the Manchus of the Qing. Before that time, the Manchus almost lost control of China.

Following the Beijing conquest, the Manchus tolerated some of the cultural rebellion, like the paintings of Bada Shanren or plays like the [Peach Blossom Fan](#)¹⁵⁶. But they violently suppressed any outright challenges.

The Rebellion of the Three Feudatories (*San-Fan*)

Lasting from 1673 to 1681, the rebellion conquered the southern half of China and nearly undid the Qing dynasty. But the suppression of the rebellion stabilized Qing rule for the two centuries that followed.¹⁵⁷

At the time of the rebellion, large parts of the Qing were under surrogate rule, that is, not directly under the control of the Manchu armies but under the control of Chinese forces. These were divided into three groups called feudatories:

Wu Sangui (he of the Shanhai Pass) in Yunnan and Guizhou

Shang Kexi in Guangdong

Geng Jingzhong in Fujian Province

These territories were run as fiefs, collecting 10 million taels of silver annually, a third of the Qing revenue. They had their own bureaucracy staffed with their own people. Their armies outnumbered the Qing, particularly Wu's.

To ensure Wu hewed the party line, the Manchus kept his eldest son hostage in Beijing.

In 1673, Shang Kexi asked to step down to allow his son to take his place. Wu and Geng similarly offered to resign. The Qing court accepted their resignations, at which point Wu announced he was in rebellion. The three feudatories declared their own dynasty, brought back Ming customs and hairstyles, and demanded the Manchus leave.

The Qing sent a combined Manchu-Chinese army against the three. They failed to turn the tide of the rebellion until 1676, when Geng surrendered, followed by Shang. Wu Sangui died in 1678, but his son held out until 1681.

In a sense, this was the true beginning of Qing rule.

¹⁵⁶ From Wikipedia: The play depicts the drama that resulted in the 1644 collapse of the [Ming Dynasty](#).^[3] The play recounts the death of the Ming Dynasty through the love story of its two main characters, young scholar Hou Fangyu ([侯方域](#)) and courtesan Li Xiangjun ([李香君](#)), the Fragrant Princess.^[4] The *Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* has called it "China's greatest historical drama."

¹⁵⁷ Not until the [Taiping Rebellion](#) in 1850 was there another major threat to Qing rule. That rebellion cost 20 million lives and is (obviously) considered one of the deadliest conflicts in history.

Discussion

Consider these two paintings. The one on page 223, titled [Seascape with Tree and Boat](#), was painted by Zhu Da (1606-1705, also known as Bada shanren), who responded to the Qing conquest by withdrawing from society into a Buddhist monastery before he began painting years later.

The other, shown below, was painted by Qing court artist Wang Hui (1632-1717). Describe the images and what you find in them. What kind of aesthetic strategies has each artist employed? What kind of atmosphere does each image evoke, and what might that say about the artist's feelings about the new dynasty? Does viewing these images next to each other make their respective political messages clearer?



My thoughts:

The seascape is abstract, spare and stark burdened with a deep sense of loneliness: a single tree on a rugged coast with a mountain rising far in the background. Too far to reach. There are no people. No signs of life. The tree itself is only trunk and branch bare of foliage.

In contrast, Wang Hui shows two thriving communities, crowded and alive. There's a busy village to the left and throngs along the road traveling to and from another village with fine buildings on the right. Beautiful, forested craggy hills surround the villages, with farms and houses in the valleys alongside. It is life, it is full. The people, their lives and their structures blend in color and form with the land.

25: Manchu Identity and the Meanings of Minority Rule

The Problem of Manchu Identity



The Manchus were *yi*, barbarians from beyond the Great Wall. Who they were did not change despite the actions they took to rule in the Chinese way:

- proclaiming they had *tianming*
- adopting Neo-Confucian ideology and continuing Confucian ritual sacrifices
- retaining the exam system and the existing bureaucracy and taxation
- issuing the Sacred Edict to be read twice a month
- creating the Complete Library of the Four Treasuries

Manchu Nativism vs. Confucian Cosmopolitanism

The challenge lies with maintaining the unity of the ruling minority while operating within the indigenous culture of the majority. This is what Prof. Elliot refers to as Nativism vs. Cosmopolitanism.

This is not unlike the Normans under [William the Conqueror](#) who took England in the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Or the Turks ruling over [Constantinople in 1453](#). Both had to compromise to stay atop the political order.

Learning from the Past



The Khitans of the Liao, the Jurchens of the Jin, and the Mongols of the Yuan had the same problem of minority rule.

Among the earliest books translated into Manchu were the histories of the three preceding minority-ruled dynasties: the Liao, the Jin, and the Yuan. The prefaces clearly indicate that the translations were intended to help the Manchus learn from their predecessors how to maintain the proper balance.

One Jin ruler ordered all his Jurchen subjects to adopt Chinese names and styles of clothing. The Qing regarded this as a step too far and one of the reasons for the fall of the Jin. The second ruler of the Qing, Hong Taiji, made a point of this to his ministers.

The Yuan, on the other hand, were seen as having made too little accommodation to the Chinese culture - a reason *their* dynasty was short-lived. The Manchus struck a different balance, between the disregard of the Yuan and the appeasement of the Jin.

Identity Mattered

Manchu identity mattered both to the Manchus and to the Han Chinese, both of whom discussed it, though the Han Chinese had to be careful in their public discussions lest they lose something other than their hair.

As much as the Manchus needed to preserve their origins they could not be perceived as inferior, as barbarians, by the Han Chinese. Especially considering they were outnumbered 250 to 1.

The Manchu Way



Retaining Nativism was more difficult than pursuing Cosmopolitanism. Members of the Eight Banners enthusiastically adopted Chinese and enjoyed the arts: painting, poetry, philosophy. This attraction went beyond the elite Manchus: ordinary Banner men enjoyed tea houses and theatre in the city. In the 1700s and 1800s, historical records show concern about preserving Manchu ways, particularly among the elite.

A True Manchu, a Manchu in Body:

- A true Manchu had martial skills, especially archery. Pulling a bow was a measure of a man's strength. The Manchu language has separate verbs for shooting from a stance and from horseback. A man could become an official *after* he proved his worth as a soldier.
- Manchus lived a simple, frugal life.
- A Manchu spoke the Manchu language, which is unrelated to Chinese, having its origins in the central Asian steppes, perhaps related to the other Altaic languages, including Mongolic and Turkic. The script is alphabetic with origins in the Middle East. Documents written as late as the 1920s were in Manchu.
- Manchus were brave.

The feeling of needing to preserve Manchu ways was strong among the elite. Knowing Manchu gave people a leg up in the bureaucracy.

See [here](#) for how Qianlong hewed to the Manchu Way.

The Old Boys Network - A Common Language



Roughly 2 million of the 10 million Qing documents archived in Beijing were written in Manchu. The Manchu documents have a different perspective on Qing rule than those written in Chinese. There's a sense of pride and of devotion to the imperial project begun by their literal ancestors. Manchus retained a disproportionate share of power in the Qing and were feared by Chinese locals.

German map of Beijing (1903)

Manchu (or "Tartar")
section

Chinese section



In the records of the 1793 English mission to the Qianlong court, Lord Macartney notes that Han Chinese were comfortable talking among themselves but stiffened perceptibly when a Manchu entered the room.

- Many government posts were reserved for Manchus or at least those in the Banners
- Manchus did not need examination degrees to rise in the bureaucracy. They could rise through the military or through the language translation exams.
- Bannermen received regular stipends of grain and silver.
- Bannermen were subject to lighter penalties under the law. For offenses committed in non-Chinese areas, they were not subject to Chinese law at all.
- Bannermen lived in garrisons in a part of central Beijing known as Tartar city, separate from the Chinese.

Many cities around the provinces were sequestered into garrisons for the Eight Banners and their families, servants, and horses.

Cultural Differences



Manchu women wore their hair in a distinctive style, with a large headdress, they wore earrings with three piercings, and they did not bind their feet. They had more freedom to move about the city.

Manchu names were different. A Chinese name was typically a surname and a given name. Xi Jinping has a surname of Xi. Manchus had names like Mujangga or Fashan, two or three syllables, and no surname.

The Manchu religion was Shamanic, a practice that continued into the 20th century. They kept genealogies to maintain ancestral ties which often determined the succession of posts in the bureaucracy.

Discussion

Write a paragraph describing why a historian of the Qing might find it valuable to learn the Manchu language.

My thoughts:

Because 1/5 of recovered documents were in Manchu and the Manchu were the ruling elite. Because the Manchu would express themselves differently in their own tongue than in Chinese so the feelings of the Manchu rulers are best known by reading those documents. Because the contrast between statements made in Chinese and in Manchu by the same writer may reveal more accurately what the ruling elite thought of the Han Chinese.

Manchu Insecurity

In this section, Prof Elliot talks about an "abiding insecurity," the result of the tension between nativism and cosmopolitanism, between assimilating and standing apart, between one's own culture and the attractive culture of the majority.

- They worried if they measured up to the expectations of the Han elite
- They worried if they were inferior, with their ancestral barbarian origins

Toward the end of the 1600s, the Kangxi emperor once wrote to an official, urging him to make sure the Han Chinese did not poke fun at him and take advantage of his lack of learning. He said, the Han do not want us to last very long.



Around 1730, the Yongzheng emperor issued a defense of Manchu rule, the Record of Great Righteousness to Enlighten the Confused. It was written in response to disparaging comments from a Han Chinese, asserting the Manchus were illegitimate usurpers of the Mandate of Heaven. The *defense* argued the Manchus had absorbed enough Confucian learning that they were now legitimate rulers.

Yongzheng's son Qianlong withdrew the document upon reaching the throne, but its content reveals the extent of Manchu insecurity. For his part, Qianlong confiscated books that he felt were disrespectful of Manchu rule.

The reasons for the insecurity were real. There was an unavoidable resentment due to the advantages the Manchus had in the bureaucracy in particular and China in general, as detailed in the previous section.

The resentment was evident in the propaganda of the Taiping Rebellion and grew stronger toward the end of the dynasty, during the birth of Chinese nationalism. Much of the feeling of Chinese nationalism was directed against the Manchus.

It remained, of course, politically dangerous to make overt anti-Manchu comments.

Acculturation and Its Limits

Ethnic prejudice against the Manchus lasted to the end of the dynasty.

The Han Chinese were disturbed that the Manchu rule had lasted so long and tried to explain it by saying the Manchus had become like the Han, that their secret for minority rule was to absorb the Chinese ways. This fit the adage that China may be conquered from the outside but China will always conquer its conquerors.

So how did they acculturate? By the 1880s, many Manchus had abandoned the "Old Manchu Way", that is, they had abandoned the court ideals of Manchu identity, by:

- Speaking Chinese on the street
- Weakening their pursuit of martial skills: riding and shooting
- Living extravagant lives, often in debt to others.
- Taking Chinese names
- Studying poetry, writing, and the fine arts and becoming patrons of the arts

They did not, however, intermarry to any great extent. Did they stop being Manchu? They must have preserved some difference to remain a target of anti-Manchu sentiment.¹⁵⁸

Manchus were the target, Prof Elliot explains, because:

- They lived in Banner garrisons
- They limited interaction with Han Chinese to commercial transactions, and were typically the victims of sharper businessmen.
- They practiced the Shamanic religion.
- Manchu women looked different with unbound feet and large shoes, distinctive headdresses, and three earrings.
- They held onto political and legal privileges until nearly the end of the dynasty.
- While they did speak Chinese, it was with a distinct Beijing accent rather than the local dialect.

Therefore, while they failed to live up to the court ideals of Manchu identity, they remained distinctive in their everyday lives, drawing resentment from the Han Chinese.

¹⁵⁸ I'm not sure that's true. If they were ancestral Manchu and they were the ruling party, what other differences would the Han Chinese need to make them the target of anger, resentment, and prejudicial comments?

Sinicization and its Discontents

What were the implications for the Qing and for China today, of the sustained distinction of Manchu identity? The model of complete assimilation doesn't agree with the reality of the separate Banner garrisons, the distinct religious practices, styles of dress and special political privilege. Separate and not equal.

So the rationale that sustained Manchu rule succeeded because of acculturation is unsatisfying. Considered another way, perhaps Manchu rule succeeded because they did *not* acculturate. They successfully balanced the ancestral traditions that enabled them to maintain a distinct identity with the Confucian traditions required to rule the overwhelming majority of Han Chinese.

Changing Ethnicity of the Manchu

Consider ethnicity as the social organization and assertion of difference that is bound to ancestry.¹⁵⁹ You had to be born into the Banners. But that doesn't mean ethnic identity is fixed. It is bound to ancestry, but its manifestation can change.

This principle appears throughout human history, of a common thread of ethnic identity woven through a fabric that changes over time. The statement "we have always been this people, we have always lived in this land" is not always true but its assertion is part of the identity.

Ethnicity is a transaction: one party asserts who they are and the other party must recognize them as distinct, though perhaps not for the same reasons.

In the early Qing, a Manchu was a tough guy, knocking around the Han Chinese, and generally above the law. In the later Qing, a Manchu was someone who lived with a Bannerman's salary and bought an extravagant lifestyle from Han Chinese businessmen and had his salary garnished to pay for it. A very different Manchu in the two cases, but always distinct from the Han.

A Hybrid Dynasty

The Qing was a hybrid of Manchu and Chinese thinking about politics, governance, economics, and the frontier. That notion of a hybrid dynasty will be the subject of the next lecture.

¹⁵⁹ Wikipedia defines [ethnicity](#) as "a socially-defined category of people who identify with each other based on common ancestral, social, cultural, or national experience."

Discussion: The Nature of Ethnicity

The primary focus of this module has been the shifting nature of Manchu identity in the Qing, and the main question has been to ask how the Manchus managed to hold on to a sense of themselves as a separate people, even as they adapted many cultural forms and practices from the Han Chinese. To address the apparent paradox of persistent identity in the face of acculturation (or "Sinicization"), Professor Elliott argued that ethnicity—that which makes a Manchu person "Manchu," a Chinese person "Chinese," or a Scot "Scottish"—is historically constructed, a universal social phenomenon, the product of a mutual constitution of "Self" and "Other" that is determined by particular contexts and that changes over time. Do you agree? Is ethnicity "primordial," fixed, and unchanging, or is it the outcome of a transactional process that is socially constructed? If the latter, then is ethnicity "modern"?

My thoughts:

Whereas ethnic identity is often focused on physical traits that distinguish one cohort from another (epicanthic folds, skin color, hair texture), it's the social boundaries that create the group. For the purposes of historical discussions concerning culture, politics, philosophy, commerce, warfare and so forth, these dimensions are controlled by geography and climate and natural events, and by how people relate to one another. If the physical characteristics of an ethnic group were to limit the ability of that group to engage in culture, politics, philosophy, commerce, warfare or any of the other human activities, then ethnicity would hinge on a persistent trait, the trait associated with that physical limitation. Perhaps Manchus were shorter, or stronger. But likely they weren't.

My feeling is that any physical differences in ethnicity merely provide a focal point for differentiating social groups, which then becomes the catalyst for the social differences (segregation within an Eastern European ghetto or a Banner garrison, privileges granted the ruling cohort). People use those differences (physical distinction or genealogy) to persist the social differences. Once that happens, the social differences take over as the basis for the ethnicity (political privilege, lifestyle, language), decoupled from any physical or genealogical distinctions.

Once the physical characteristics are decoupled, there's no reason the measures of ethnicity, that is, the observable differentiating characteristics of a cohort, cannot change.

So if the set of defining traits can change, will they change or will they crystallize? In this regard, there are competing forces. Stable traits give an ethnic group common practices to hold them together in the face of assimilation. Changeable traits adapt to modern pressures, keeping ethnic groups from dissipating as the youth 'leave' for happier circumstance.

26: The Scholars

Historical Overview



The three Qing emperors of the 18th century, Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong, led a growing population through a time of stability and prosperity within China proper. Along the borders, however, Qianlong fought to expand his territory until he held Taiwan, Vietnam, Tibet, and Xinjiang, a vast empire of 13 million square kilometers.

Qianlong represented himself as a Confucian, a Buddhist, and a Chakravartin king, with his roots as Manchu warrior.

In his visit to Beijing in 1793, Macartney was impressed with China's vigor. Yet, beneath the apparent splendor lay bureaucratic corruption and deep social unrest which would bring disaster for the Qing in the following century.

Introduction to an 18th Century Novel: The Scholars



Prosperous Suzhou

On a tour of the south, Qianlong was so impressed by the City of Suzhou that he ordered a scroll to illustrate the city. Created in 1751, the scroll is 12 meters long and filled with detail. 4800 people and 2000 buildings.

The Scholars

Wu Jingzi, a literatus, set his novel, *The Scholars*, during the Ming dynasty, to avoid offending his contemporaries in the ruling Qing dynasty. Also known as *The Unofficial History of the Confucians*, the novel located its characters in Nanjing, the southern capital of the Ming, on the Yangtze not far from Suzhou. It focused on the lives of the literati as they revolved around the civil service exam.

Relating the Two Works

Besides coming from the same period and set in nearby places, the painting and the novel both claim to be a window on the social life of the people.

The Rise of the Novel and The Scholars

Provincial Graduate



When Xu Zhang finished painting the scroll he was given the rank of Provincial Graduate, an honor equivalent to passing the provincial exams, with the right to compete for the metropolitan level, freedom from certain taxes, eligibility for official positions, and immediate access to the elite of Suzhou.



In contrast, Wu Jingzi, author of *The Scholars*, never passed the exams beyond the county level, remaining at the bottom of the literati strata.

The Rise of the Novel



The first novels appeared in the Late Ming and by 1740, novels had found an audience among a wealthier population¹⁶⁰.

The Scholars appeared as a series of 56 acts, parsed into chapters. This sectioning was no coincidence considering the form of the novel derived from Chinese opera. By the Late Ming, operas comprised as many as fifty acts and were intended to be read as well as performed. In a sense, the novel was an opera in narrative and without song. It preceded the appearance of the short story.

Four Great Novels

These novels were written within a century of the emergence of the novel as literary form. The characters engage in natural dialogue rather than the stilted language of the elite, though they are targeted at an elite audience.

They draw upon the "minor tale tradition," *xiaoshuo*, which came to mean *novel* but first meant a record of gossip, a story told of the backdoor scenes that never reached the public eye.

The Three Kingdoms

Set in the Han dynasty, it centered around feudal power struggles and battles for primacy, in the fashion of Game of Thrones.

The Water Margin

aka *Outlaws of the Marsh*. Set in the Song, it told of 108 heroic men living on the edge of society, practicing their martial arts in defense of the meek.

Journey to the West



A book of fantasy about a Buddhist monk in search of the dharma who traveled to the west in the company of a pig, a horse, and a monkey, anthropomorphic companions with magical powers. The monkey remains a popular character in modern China.¹⁶¹

It was translated as *Monkey*, by Arthur Waley.

The Plum in the Golden Vase

The story of Ximen Qing, a corrupt merchant, and his seven wives. See page 201.

¹⁶⁰ Here's an essay on [The Genesis of the Chinese Novel](#).

¹⁶¹ From Wikipedia: Enduringly popular, the tale is at once a comic adventure story, a spring of spiritual insight, and an extended allegory in which the group of pilgrims journeys towards enlightenment which each of them can achieve only with the help of all of the others. (my thought: sounds like the Wizard of Oz).

The Dream of The Red Chamber

After *The Scholars* was written, this novel appeared, arguably the most famous novel in Chinese history. The English translation by Hawkes and Minford titled *The Story of the Stone*¹⁶², makes for good historical reading, if you like hundreds of characters and a dizzying array of obscure literary references.

It's the story of a family in decline, told by the children growing up in the garden. It draws upon the reader's strong knowledge of Chinese literature.

Prof. Wai-Yee Li on The Dream of The Red Chamber



The plot centers on the Jia family, where *Jia* is homophonic with fiction. The protagonist is a young man who was a stone in his previous life.

Two titans in heaven fighting a battle break one of the pillars supporting heaven and earth. To repair the break, a goddess needs 36,500 stones but she makes one too many. The remaining stone, touched by the goddess, becomes sentient with the intellectual powers of a human, but still merely a stone. One day a monk and a Daoist transmit the stone to the human world where he becomes the protagonist, with no memory of his previous existence.

This backstory of his life as a stone is not revealed until deep into the novel. Instead, we see the life of a boy from the age of 11 or 12, finding love and learning about life, until he's 19 and leaves the world. The Daguanyuan, the garden where he spends his youth, is a microcosm of a world free of adult responsibility, of social constraint (the garden isn't built until chapter 17 or so, which is at the very end of the first volume of the Hawkes translation).

The book has 120 chapters. It's widely understood that Cao Xueqin wrote the first 80. It embeds many literary references, to the extent that either you should know them before attempting to read it, or you'll know them by the time you're done. It both teaches you the life of the Chinese cultural elite in the eighteenth century, while expecting you to know it.

In contrast to *The Scholars*, which is critical of the elite, *The Dream of the Red Chamber* basks in literati culture. By the time Cao Xueqin began writing, his family had fallen from wealth into poverty, leaving him nostalgic for the cultured life they'd left behind.

The Dream of the Red Chamber had general popularity, not merely the popularity of an English classic, like *David Copperfield*, which is read primarily as a school assignment. The story is well-known, it's performed on stage as an opera and on TV as a soap opera and read in comic book form. Its tapestry of images and themes are woven into the cultural fabric of China.

¹⁶² See [here](#) for review of the translation. *Few books can even be considered for the title of 'Book of the Millennium', but *The Story of the Stone* surely is a strong contender. This classic novel from the Qing dynasty, considered the greatest work of Chinese fiction, is a brilliant achievement and a marvelous read.* The book is available from [Amazon](#). Here's an [article by the author](#).

The Rise of the Meritocracy

Previous discussions of the Civil Service Examination

The exam was introduced in the Song for the recruitment of government officials: page 147.

It became a force for uniting families across genealogical boundaries: page 173.

Timeline

605 CE	Exam established in Sui
1000 CE	Exam expanded in Song
1075 CE	Exam system adopted in Vietnam
1392CE	Exam system adopted in Korea
1853CE	Exam system used as a model for the British civil service exams.

The Government Perspective

To recruit talent for government, officials need civil talents.

- Writing
- History
- Politics
- Philosophy

When the government chose to recruit through the exam, it forsook recruitment through personal connections and patrilineal heritage. This partly explains the disappearance of the great clans of the Tang.

Meritocracy promotes the idea that those who are good at learning should have political power.

Fairness

To make the exams fair, the government:

- Anonymized the exams (replaced the names with a number. See page 172, Exams and Elites).
- Copied exams to hide the original calligraphy.

Legitimacy

Although the emperor inherited his position, in principle everyone else received their government appointment by fairly administered exams, which helped legitimize government.

Ming and Qing Civil Service Exam

See page 172 for a discussion of the chances of receiving the *jinshi*, or Presented Scholar, degree, the highest degree. Only 600 every three years of roughly 450,000 candidates.

By 1600, roughly 800,000 had some kind of exam status and only 300 every 3 years received the *jinshi*.

By 1850, 1.4 million had an exam status and still only 300 every 3 years received the *jinshi*.

Why did people even try?

Because the lower levels of awards had merit, too. At the beginning of the Ming, the government decided to recognize people at the prefectural and provincial levels as well as at the capital level. Those recognized at the prefectural level were licentiates (*shengyuan*).

Over time, the number of statuses grew. Even without the highest official status, these lower statuses brought a stipend and freedom from labor service. Further, one's highest achieved exam level was the most important social status during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Social Mobility vs. Social Rotation



The story of Fan Jin comes up in *The Scholars*. Fan Jin was a poor young scholar whose father-in-law slapped him around and called him a fool. When Fan Jin passed the provincial exam, he collapsed unconscious in shock. The neighbors, thinking Fan Jin would die, urged his father-in-law to slap him around like he always did, just to wake him up. He refused, saying 'I dare not. He's going to be an official.'

In other words, exams granted social mobility with greater value than kinship, a mobility that transcended circumstance.

Was it truly social mobility?

Scholars today argue that social mobility is only real if the candidate who passed the exam had neither a father, a grandfather, or a great grandfather within the system. That is, the candidate is new blood.

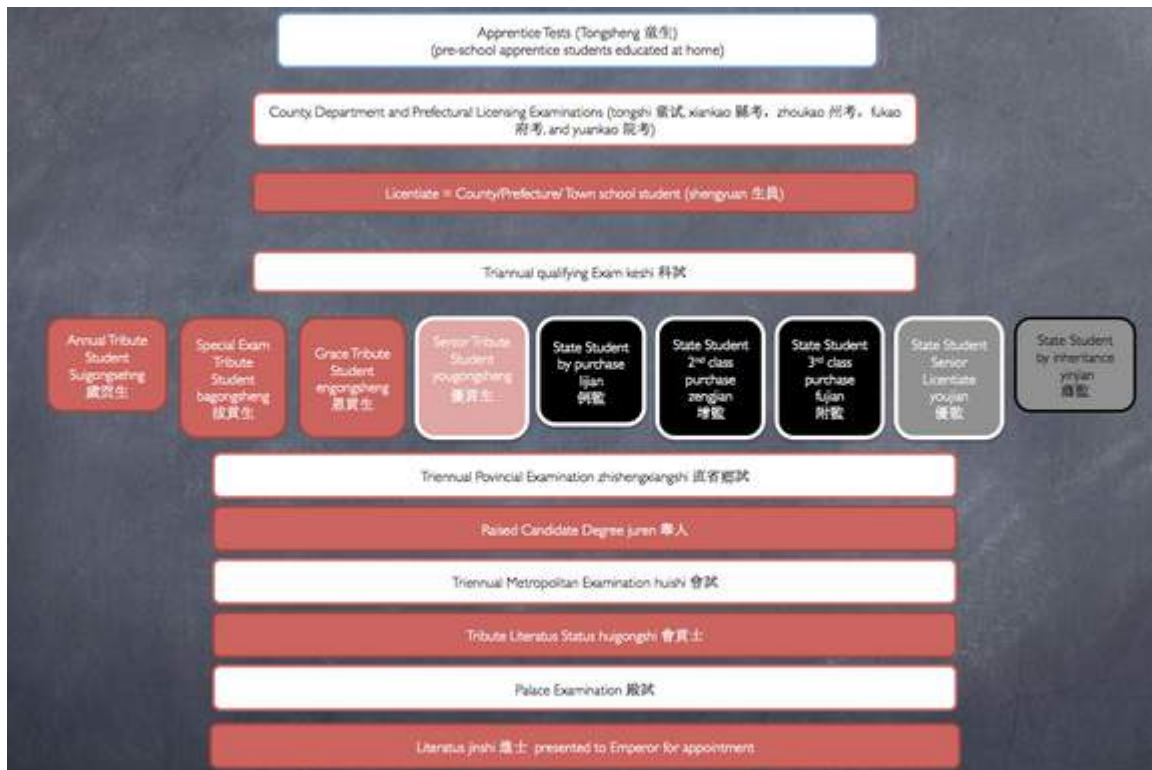
These scholars argue that once a family established itself as a local elite, it was difficult to dislodge with new blood. That these elite families had great comparative advantage in getting relatives through the examination system.¹⁶³

Or was it social rotation?

While the exams may not have served to bring in new men from outside the wealthy families, they prevented one elite family from consistently dominating official appointments. The exams leveled the playing field, as it were, among those who could afford to step onto the field, rotating officialdom between those families.

¹⁶³ For more on comparative advantage, see footnote 107 on page 173.

The Civil Service Exam



Unfortunately, the text in this presentation never stayed on the screen for more than a half second. It was hard to understand. Sometimes the transliteration of the Chinese was shown and sometimes it wasn't. Sometimes the writing wasn't on the screen at all.

Three Formal Degrees

- Local
- Provincial
- National

Bureaucracy

- *tongsheng*: Apprentice Tests: Pre-school apprentice students who study at home

Once they pass the county/town/prefectural exam, they become:

- *shengyuan*: Licentiate:
 1. Exempt from corvee duty
 2. Late Ming and Qing licentiates were sold to raise money
 3. Addressed as Mister and considered scholar-commoners.
 4. No opportunity for official status / not considered local elite, e.g. Fan Jin was a licentiate - no respect

Once they pass the triannual qualifying exam (*keshi*), they become:

- *gongsheng*: Tribute student

Other ways to become *gongsheng* besides passing the exam

1. Purchase the degree
2. Be chosen from the prefecture school
3. Be chosen from school dept county school
4. *Some other ways that were said too quickly*
5. Grace tribute student chosen during imperial celebrations
6. Be chosen for literary talent
7. Imperial academy - privileged group among commoners - but not eligible for government positions - also sold for cash

- *juren* - Elevated man
 1. Eligible for 9th and 8th rank (asst or deputy magistrate, police master - local positions with official status)
 2. Part of the scholar class
 3. This is what Fan Jin became - a *juren*

Once they pass the Triennial Metropolitan exam:

- *huigongshi* - Tribute Literatus Status

Once they pass the Palace exam:

- *jinshi* - Literatus
 1. Middle strata, 4th - 5th rank, censor, magistrate
 2. Can be recommended to the emperor
 3. Parent of the People
- Highest level
 1. 1st to 3rd rank: grand secretary, prime minister
 2. Sons and grandsons are eligible for State Student by Inheritance, 2-3 generations

The Scholars

Zhou Jin

This was a guided reading on The Scholars. I found that trying to use the software to highlight the reading was a distraction, so I'm adding my notations here instead of through the software. These are my notes.

It's just after New Years at the temple and people are filing in. Shen Xiangfu berates the monk for not using the money people are donating. Village Head Xia struts in and boasts how everyone has invited him for dinner and how much of a chore it is to attend.

Constable Li is giving a feast at Bailiff Huang's house. The Bailiff is on official business.

Mr. Xun has donated much to the temple and now Xia is leaning on him for more for the lanterns.

Shen's son is Xia's son-in-law. The two were in cahoots to squeeze Xun for money, I think. Now they're asking for a teacher from the county seat. Xia recommends Zhou Jin, a 60-year-old man who hasn't passed the prefectural exam (i.e. not even a licentiate).

He tutors Gu's son and at Gu's graduation from the prefectural exam, Zhou toasts him with music from an opera about a man who passed the exam at eighty (who could be himself) but also about a boy who passed at 17 (who could be Gu's son). Xia, hearing the story, is obviously only concerned about himself, that is, educating Shen's son. No one seems to care about Zhou except how they can use him.

Mei Jiu graduated at the same time as Gu's son. Now that he's a licentiate and the village scholar, he treats Zhou as beneath him, rising slowly when the disheveled Zhou appears at feast which is, in fact, honoring Zhou's appointment as Shen's son's tutor.

(Perhaps I got that wrong. Mei Jiu explained that a licentiate is senior to one who has not passed the exam, regardless of age, but on this day honoring Zhou, he would bow to Zhou. Zhou refused to allow it. Mei Jiu argues to the villagers that he *must* bow to Zhou, and does so. Mei Jiu is showing great respect for his elder and is clearly a humble man, despite his rank.)

The point here is that the Ming exam system imposes a set of social rules that supersede the ancient Confucian rules of respect for elders - such is the power of the exam system in Chinese society.

At the feast, Zhou does not eat, he is fasting because of a vow he made to Buddha over his mother's illness. Mei Jiu made fun of him, telling a verse about a fasting scholar who couldn't succeed in the exams. So again, I am wrong about Mei Jiu, I thought he was respectful, but now he's boasting. He is merely pretending to be respectful.

Shen is embarrassed by the verse, Mei Jiu apologizes rather rudely, and Zhou is embarrassed by the apology, but maintains his fast.

Xia is not at the feast, he is at another feast with Constable Li. Li is wealthy, making 1000 taels a year, but gambles it away. He dreams of catching up in wealth with Huang. Mei, indicates his own visions of wealth and taunts Zhou with his success in the exams.

Zhou begins his teaching all the children and finds that Xun is contributing the most to him. The others contribute so little that he doesn't have enough to eat and is in debt to the monk.

Two months later, a boat comes downstream to the temple and a man disembarks with two servants. The man wears a scholar's cap and without introducing himself, merely nodding to Zhou, he enters the school and asks for the monk. The monk treats the man, who is Wang Hui – a provincial scholar, with great respect. Wang assumes the respect without modesty and demands Zhou's name.

Apparently Zhou scored at the top of some test that Mr. Pai, Wang's patron, supervised. Zhou remarks that Wang's own examination essay was brilliant, whereupon Wang tells him that it was written by spirits, green-faced men. Wang has now become respectful of Zhou, urging him to attend to the children. Wang was visiting the graves of his ancestors (ah, a true Confucian!).

A seven-year-old boy was named after the pretender, Mei, who said his name was auspicious. Wang insists that spirits guided his exam as a way to deflect Zhou's praise: he is modest. Now Wang says achievement depends upon study and there is no magic to Mei's name - he is disparaging Mei. It's all about the context.

The meal comes and Wang eats a feast without inviting Zhou to join in. After he's finished, Zhou eats cabbage and tea. I'm not following this, as I thought Wang appreciated Zhou, but I believe the distance between student and provincial scholar is too great to bridge. Wang is overbearing.

Wang tells of a dream where Xun Mei passes the provincial exam at a ridiculous age. The villagers make fun of Mr. Xun (his father) and Zhou is ultimately dismissed, in part because he isn't obsequious before Xia.

Zhou goes with his brother-in-law, Jin, to the provincial capital as part of a merchants guild. The guild bribes the gateman at the examination school so Zhou can see it. Zhou sees the seat for Number One and falls to the floor as he imagines what might have been and hasn't been, for him. When he comes to, he beats his head against the desk, sobbing.

Jin remarks that Zhou has been unlucky. The guild decides to buy him a seat at the provincial exam. Zhou is eternally grateful, calling them his foster parents (there is no greater Confucian honor!). They pay 200 taels for him to take the exam.

Zhou eventually passed the provincials with distinction. Total strangers bowed before him. Shen and Xun paid their respects.

Zhou passed the Metropolitan exam in the capital and rose to the rank of censor and commissioner of education for Guangdong. He swears to read all the papers so no true scholar will be hidden from the light.

Later, at the county exam, he comes upon Fan Jin in a threadbare robe and sees his early self in the struggling man.

Fan Jin

This is a lighter and quicker story than the first one.

Fan Jin is talking to Zhou, telling him he lied about his age - he's 54 not 30 and that he's taken the exam 20 times and that his essays were too poor for him to pass. Zhou questions if that's the case, but reading the latest essay, he sees no clear statement or theme.

Wei Haugu appears, asking for an oral exam on ancient poetry, which is not the focus of the exams. Zhou sees it as superficiality and has him tossed from the building. Zhou relents and reads his essay after the man is gone and decides to pass him.

Now, upon reading Fan Jin's essay, he finds the theme deep within and declares it genius, *this shows how often bad examiners must have suppressed real genius*. He passes him first.

Fan Jin returned home to his mother and wife, who was the daughter of Butcher Hu. Disparaged by Butcher Hu, he finds a way to raise money to take the Provincial exam, passes it, goes a little nuts. The townsfolk ask Hu to slap a little sense in him and Hu refuses, he's so in awe of the 'stars in heaven.'

Prosperous Suzhou

- First thought: Suzhou is absolutely beautiful. If that's what China looks like, I want to go there tomorrow. What a magnificent city. I love the little walking bridge that crosses the river to the hilly island.
- Big boat for 10 guys to be poling or rowing on the river.
- Artwork of things and scenes was good. Of people, not so good, but not so bad given how many there were.
- Seeing the scroll is a great way to understand life in eighteenth century China. You can only learn so much by listening and reading.
- What's striking about the scroll where it shows human figures is the amount of action. One question is whether that's how busy Suzhou was, or if the paintings are an amalgam of many days plus imagination. People carrying wares, climbing masts, carrying all sorts of objects, playing games, crossing bridges. Nearly everyone is in motion.

Thoughts on the image tools:

- Resolution and panning and zooming of the image was excellent.
- Tags did not work for me. Couldn't tag anything.
- Sometimes the annotation cursor wouldn't turn off and then I couldn't pan or zoom.
- The highlighting of scenes is distracting. It would be nice to turn it off when you want to examine a highlighted scene.
- Might be nice to see other students' highlights, or just the students from a study group, or just one other student, if you're having a discussion.
- Because the scroll really needs a full screen, it's hard to anything other than move around the scroll and annotate. I think the software gets fouled up if you have two browsers open in edX. Would be nice if you could have both open and alternate between the image browser and a discussion browser.
- The scenes in the exercise took way too long to paint. The scroll seemed faster to view.

Scene Analysis

Scene 1

Dense population. Lots of occupations: merchants, farmers with pigs in the courtyard, fabric or silk weaving (the long white strip in the courtyard), home construction (dedicated craftsmen, or did everyone know how to lay roofing shingles?).

Scene 2

The crowd on the canal is almost too busy to be real. How does a boat get through it? I can't imagine transit is efficient and cost-effective on a canal like this. I'd like to know if that's an accurate depiction. In this scene there are two-story buildings, which you don't see elsewhere in the scroll, as I recall. So canalfront property was at a premium. Living quarters and restaurants above, storefronts below.

Scene 3

One common thread in this scroll is that it's true to its name. Everyone is prosperous and well-dressed. There are no scenes of desperate struggling peasants. I didn't see any beggars. People are hard at work, that's true, but people are also lounging in cafes and restaurants. I love the paintings of the trees. They're magnificent.

Scene 4

At first glance, this looked like a lock in the canal but I think it's just a bridge. Again, the canal traffic appears too dense for efficiency. On the large boats, there don't seem to be enough people to push them along the canal. I commented on one of the scenes that 10 oarsmen on one of those large boats isn't enough. As with many market cities, any common well-traveled passage, like a bridge, is also a center for commerce.

Scene 5

I'd love to know what all the banners mean. There's a lot of transport of things, wares, on people's backs. No vehicles. No carts. Is there a regulation against it? Why are there no wheeled vehicles, no pack or draw animals on the streets?

Concluding Discussion

What was Wu Jingzi's solution to the social ills that he perceived in eighteenth century China? Do you think Wu Jingzi's position was right?

My thoughts:

There are elements in *The Scholars* where he sees great hope for China. First, his view of people tended to be either black or white. There were many villains and they were venal, nasty men, full of pretension and disregard for others. There were brilliant artists, good men, driven to poverty or to isolation.

He was wrong about people, though he may have been right about society. People's traits are mixed, but a situation that rewards presentation, fawning, manipulation, false modesty, as rigid bureaucracies tend to do will highlight their traits and force people to emphasize the bad in their struggle to survive.

If it was true that the petty bureaucrats ruled China in the middle tiers of government, then it was indeed ripe with corruption and hollow inside. His solution, I believe, was to root out the petty men and replace them with the brilliant and thoughtful and honest men. But I didn't see in what I read exactly how he thought that was going to happen.

Further Discussion

Do you agree with Wu Jingzi's condemnation of Chinese society in the hands of the literati? The civil service examination was supposedly based on a principle of fairness. After this week's module, do you think social life in mid 18th century China was basically fair or unfair? Discuss

My thoughts:

****Consider The Ruling System As Well As The Meritocracy****

Prof. Bol points out that the exam system was used as a model for Korea, Vietnam, and for the British. We didn't live in Wu's time, we couldn't see it, but clearly others who were in power agreed with those of the Chinese government who were in power. With the understanding that those in power are only concerned with the utility of fairness.

When weighing the problems of the exam system, one has to consider the alternatives rather than simply comparing to an ideal. I feel that Wu is making an emotional argument based on the success or failure of characters with sharply contrasting virtue. This is not a balanced argument. He has a point, but it can't be considered in isolation.

So what is the alternative? What's missing from the meritocracy is a mechanism to root out corruption from the top (because you certainly can't root it out from the bottom). Autocracies are poor at rooting out corruption. The British took the civil service exam and applied it within a system of royalty, providing an administration beneath a regal system. I don't know enough British history to know how different this was from the Qing system. I certainly don't know anything about Korea and Vietnam and the systems within which their meritocracy was imposed.

****What's missing is some form of democracy above the meritocracy to promote fairness and root out corruption.**** This provides some rule from the bottom, from the 'people,' which is missing in all these 18th century systems where meritocracy exists primarily to create an effective bureaucracy.

A democracy threatens the magistrates at the top with dismissal, as they would be directly elected, or appointed by directly elected officials and therefore themselves judged by the people. Absent that, the magistrates retain in perpetuity their authority over the exam without oversight.

****There's one flaw in the picture Wu paints that I can't reconcile. The exam was anonymized**** - both the names and the calligraphy of the candidates was concealed. The novel doesn't indicate this at all. It shows the Magistrate considering the essays of candidates while knowing their identities. Considering that the anonymity is an historical fact, I have to question Wu's condemnation of the literati. It may well be true that 18th century Chinese society was unfair, but so was Wu's depiction.

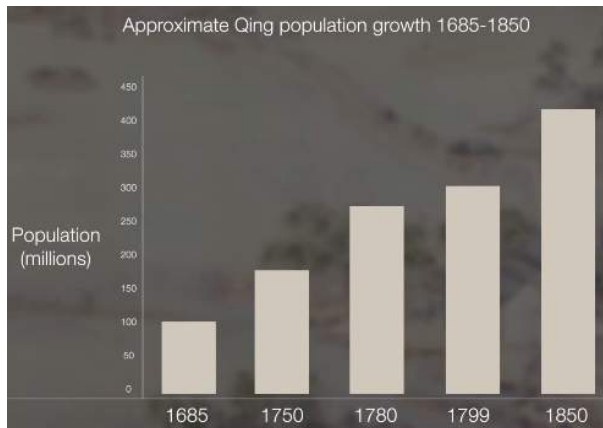
27: High Qing

China Today as a World Power



The *High Qing* refers to that time in the 18th century when imperial China was at a peak, as opposed to the middle of the 19th century, when the Opium Wars and the Taiping Rebellion drew China into decline.

There's talk today of China rising to a position as a superpower, but a look back at history shows that China has always been a dominant power, regionally if not globally, in culture, politics, and economy. The leaders in China today look back on the High Qing as a touchstone for modern political and cultural identity - as a *shengshi*, a prosperous age.



A sign of the prosperity was the demographic boom, from 100 million in 1685 to 410 million in 1850, where it would stay for the remainder of the century, about one-quarter of the world's population. This growth drove the economy, controlling costs of labor and commerce, spurring waves of internal migration to the frontiers, perhaps (my thought) similar to the US exploration of the west.

Land under cultivation doubled from 470 million *mu*¹⁶⁴ in 1685 to 950 million in 1850. New food crops appeared: peanuts, sweet potato, corn, as well as cash crops: cotton, oil seed, sugar, tobacco and, in the 19th century, opium.

The population increase has never been fully explained. Possible reasons include:

Fertility. But it didn't change much and wasn't particularly higher than the rest of the world.

Mortality. Little evidence for decreased mortality.

Inaccurate Recording. Perhaps the answer is that the census of the 17th century was corrected in the 18th century, leading to an apparent boom. People were remarking at the time on the apparent increase in numbers, so it's not fully understood.

No development in the 18th century was more influential than the dramatic rise in the population.

¹⁶⁴ A *mu* is Chinese areal measure. 1 *mu* = 0.16 acres, 1 acre = 6 *mu*

Qing Economic Growth

The Eye of the Beholder

Westerners tend to look at China through the lenses of the 18th and 19th centuries, the Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. [Ranke](#) said China was a land of eternal standstill. Yet visitors to China prior to the 19th century consistently remarked on the industriousness of the people, the vibrancy of the markets and the quality of the goods.

Basis for Chinese Productivity

Recent research indicates that the 18th and 19th century saw an economy that equaled or outstripped Europe, and that the wealthiest Chinese cities, Jiangnan and Beijing, were comparable in their standard of living to London and the Netherlands.

The wealth came from land and commerce. Two-thirds of government revenue prior to 1800 came from the land tax.

Because of the near impossibility of passing the civil service exam, many of the failed aspirants joined the merchant class, which helped create the boom in 18th century commerce.

Taxes

Despite Confucian proscriptions against commerce, the state promoted commerce by keeping taxes low on commercial activity.

Banking and Currency

Banking became more sophisticated, with a third of the money circulating in paper rather than silver. The paper was private money. Transactions were facilitated by family firms, *piaohao*, many of which were in Shanxi.

Contrast with the People's Republic of China

In the Qing, growth was led by private commerce, with the government adopting laissez faire policies, rather than the state-led growth of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Trade

Because different areas of China specialized in different kinds of agriculture, large volumes of grain (particularly rice) were transported domestically. The volume of domestic grain trade transfer was five times that of Europe. Further, Jingdezhen exported a million pieces of porcelain annually. The wealthiest men in China and for that matter, in the world, were these Chinese traders.

Cosmopolitan Life

The world of the wealthy (the 7% who lived in the cities, and the wealthiest among them) would be familiar to us today.

Ever Normal Granaries¹⁶⁵

Grain would be released during famine, at below-market prices, to help families survive drought or floods. This was effective in limiting the damage due to natural events.

Territorial Expansion

Many military campaigns were carried out in the 18th century, each costing between 10 million and 70 million taels of silver, amounts that the empire could afford. What it could not afford was the massive corruption towards the end of that century.

¹⁶⁵ It's an old idea, dating back to the [Han](#) and mentioned in the [Old Testament](#), of the government providing a physical grain buffer to ward against hard times. In more recent history, it was a prominent element of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, with the ever-normal granary promoted by [Mordecai Ezekiel](#).

Three Kings



Parsing Time

In the West, the period might be referred to as the 18th century, but in China, time was denoted by the emperors who ruled between 1662 and 1795 (1799):

- Kangxi, 1662-1722
- Yongzheng, 1722-1735
- Qianlong, 1735-1799

These emperors ruled over a period of unprecedented growth in wealth, population, and territory. They ruled with a continuity we can never experience in democratic countries.

Kangxi 1662-1722

The Man

Perhaps the greatest emperor since Wu of the Han, his reign was the longest in Chinese history to his day. He kept Western missionaries in his court to answer questions about math and astronomy and was interested in cartography and music as well. An aficionado of hunting, he built a resort beyond the Great Wall on the rim of Inner Mongolia. He was known for expertly navigating between the Confucian literati of the Han Chinese and the martial traditions of the Manchus.

On the Battlefield



In 1689, Kangxi signed the Treaty of Nerchinsk with the Russians, and grew concerned about the Dzungar Mongols who were competing for the support of the Dalai Lama, the leader of the Gelug sect of Tibetan Buddhism. In 1695, he led an army of 100,000 soldiers with an additional 300,000 men in support, through 750 miles of desert in pursuit of Galdan, the leader of the Dzungar Mongols. He defeated Galdan in 1696 at the [Battle of Jao Modo](#).

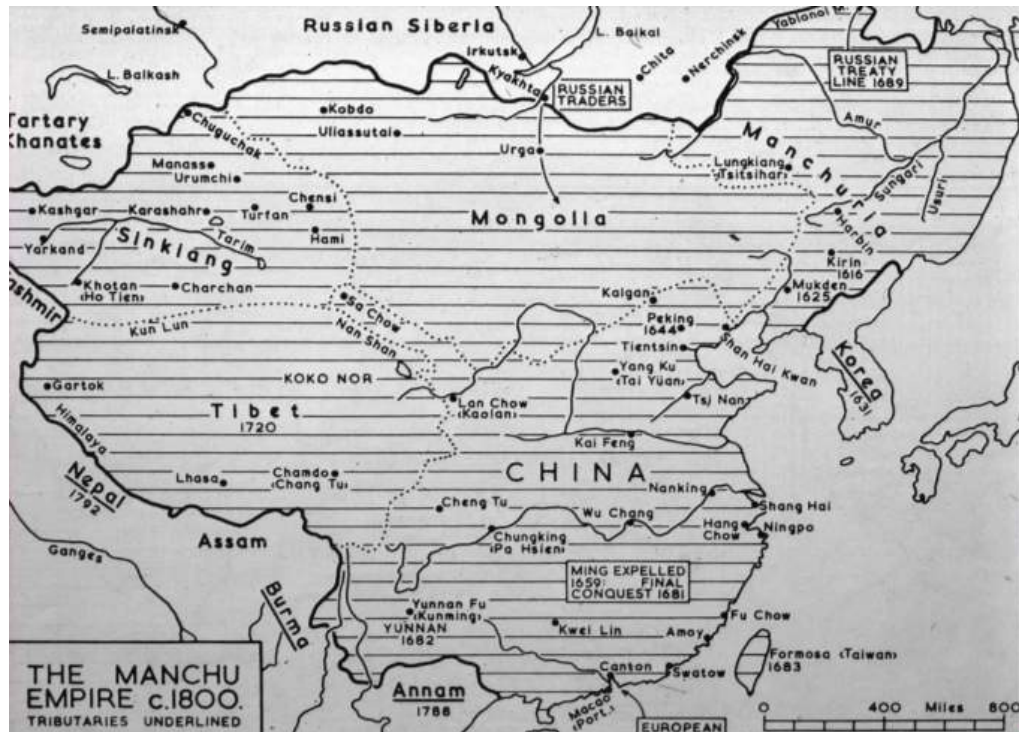
Yongzheng 1722-1735

Kangxi had 55 children, leading eventually to succession disputes. The fourth son ultimately became the next emperor, with some historians arguing that Yongzheng was a usurper, although Prof. Elliot doesn't agree with that characterization.

Even in his own time, Yongzheng felt he had to prove his legitimacy. He labored more than Kangxi over his duties, rising early and staying up late, micro-managing the empire, and overworking himself into an untimely death in his late fifties.

His reputation was mixed and he was often described as vengeful and jealous, but recent research indicates he was an enlightened despot, taking China from financial deficit to surplus in his thirteen-year reign, laying the basis for the Qianlong Emperor.

Qianlong 1735-1799



Qianlong wanted to be known as more generous than Yongzhen, but he also wanted officials to fear him. Yongzhen had done much to stamp out corruption and Qianlong continued those efforts. His reign was a balancing act between generocity and ferocity.

Coming to power at the age of 25, he stepped aside 60 years later to transition power to his son in 1795, though behind the scenes he continued to rule for another 4 years.

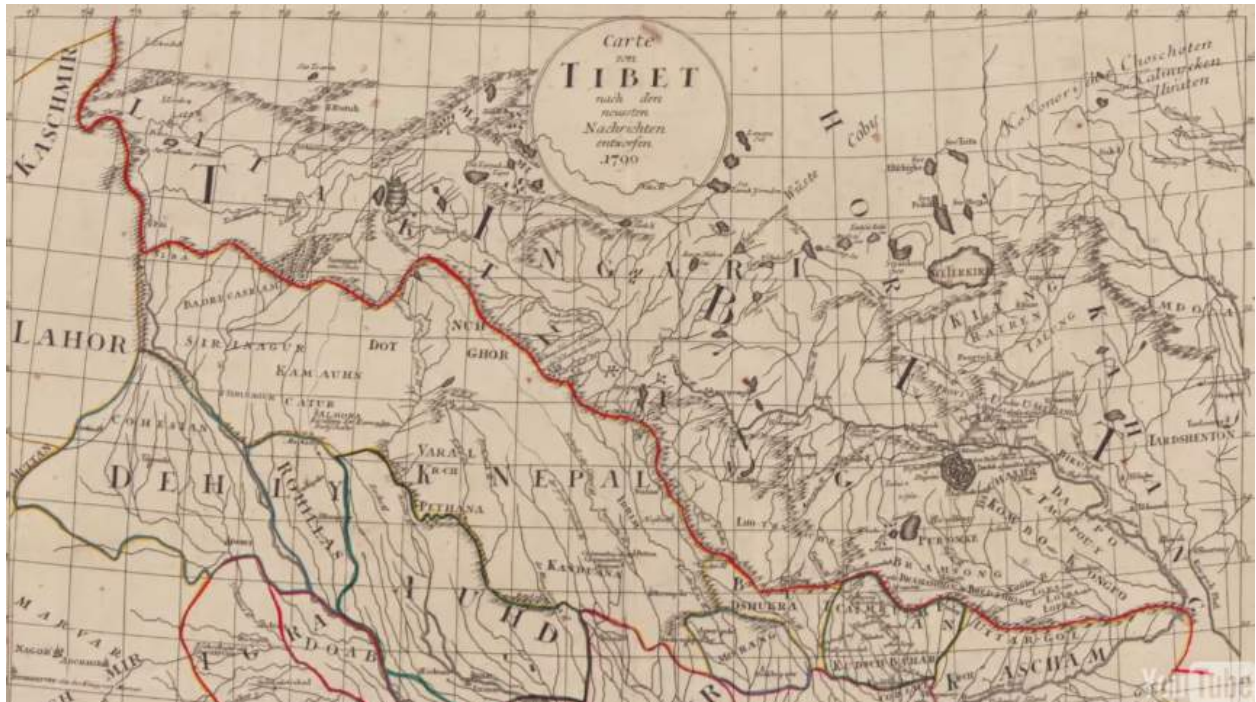
A serious ruler, he was up early like his father, eschewing breakfast until he'd completed his morning meetings and devoting his afternoons to poetry, reading, calligraphy and painting. He may have been the most prolific poet in Chinese history, with 44,000 poems in his name, though he likely did not write them all.

Like Kangxi, he was physically active, hunting, riding and shooting until he was 87. He read and spoke several languages. A student of Tibetan Buddhism, he took many Tantric initiations.

His talents as a polymath made him a universal emperor, one who ruled without favor over all the peoples and all the territories of his empire, making the 18th century truly the Age of Qianlong.

The Qianlong empire included Inner Asia, Manchuria, Mongolia, eastern Turkistan, Tibet, Taiwan, all rolled into a Pax Manjurica, the largest Chinese empire since the Tang, laying the foundation for modern China.

Territorial Expansion Under Qianlong Old Man of the Ten Great Accomplishments



Qianlong was conscious of burnishing his legacy in the context of the great emperors like Wu and Kublai Khan. Specifically, he wanted to be remembered as the *Old Man of the Ten Great Accomplishments*, which were military deeds occurring in the second half of his reign. These included the suppression of rebellions in Taiwan, Sichuan, Burma, Guizhou, and the final defeat of the Dzungar Mongols, a conflict that began with Kongxi.

Even after Kongxi's defeat of Galdan in 1696, the Dzungars still held western portions of Mongolia along with the Tarim Basin. In 1720, Qianlong pushed the Dzungars out of Lhasa, extending his presence in Tibet through the 18th century.

Galdan Tsereng, the successor to the first Galdan, defeated a large Qing army in 1731 and signed a peace treaty with Qianlong in 1739. Galdan Tsereng died shortly thereafter, forcing a succession battle within the Dzungars that threatened the peace with the Qing. Qianlong's attempt at a diplomatic solution fell apart when two of his principal interlocutors turned on each other. Qianlong sent an army to restore the peace, but the leader of that army turned against Qianlong.

To correct this litany of miscalculations and disloyalty Qianlong sent two large armies, one in 1756 and the second a year later. Many Dzungars were killed, enslaved, or deported. The Dzungar name was disallowed and those formerly of the Dzungars who returned were called Oirats, a people who are still living today in Mongolia and Xinjiang.

Annexing Xinjiang



The victory over the Dzungars led the Qing into new and unfamiliar territory south of the Tianshan mountains, an area called Altashahr: the Tarim Basin and the Silk Road cities that encircle the Taklamakan Desert. Xinjiang today is obviously important, but in the late 18th century, few Han Chinese officials wanted to spend resources fighting for this territory.



In 1864, Yaquob Beg led a rebellion and created Kashgaria, an independent khanate near Turpan in Muslim inner Asia, that lasted 13 years. It was recognized by the British and by the Ottoman Empire. The Qianlong court could not decide whether to retake the territory or invest resources in the maritime frontier, which in the 1870s was becoming a problem.

Eventually, the court opted to send an army led by Zuo Zongtang, who in 1884 recaptured the territory and integrated it into China as the Xinjiang province.

Inner Asian Empire and the Unity of China

The conquests of the 1750's, of Dzungaria and Kashgaria, completed the expansion of the Qing empire and the unification of *tianxia*.¹⁶⁶

How was this expansion possible?

Timing. The Russian empire was pushing east while the Qing pushed west, closing the steppe and crushing the burgeoning Mongolian state between them.

Organization. Maintaining logistics for large armies over supply lines that stretched hundreds of miles across hostile terrain was a significant accomplishment deserving of some acclaim.

Local Knowledge. While the areas south of Tianshan were unfamiliar, Tibet and Mongolia was a world the Manchus knew. They could negotiate with Mongolian princes and Tibetan Lamas in a way the Ming could not.

Pragmatism. The Qing did not attempt to control all aspects of the local bureaucracy, leaving day-to-day administration in local hands. They governed lightly.

Portrayal of the Expansion



The extension to the west emerged from a general Manchu policy toward the northern frontiers, rather than a deliberate policy to expand the empire. Nevertheless, Qianlong conducted a massive public relations campaign after the consolidation of Dzungaria and especially after Kashgaria. He wore battle dress for portraits to imply that he personally led the military campaigns, though he was not militarily active like his grandfather Kangxi. He met representatives from Inner Asia in his hunting retreat instead of Beijing, and dine them on roast lamb in his tent while wrestlers competed outside. He portrayed himself as a true Manchu, a Manchu in body¹⁶⁷ and portrayed his state the same way.

He had maps drawn and stele erected to mark battlegrounds. He ordered portraits of the brave and copper-plate engravings of the battles.

¹⁶⁶ From Wikipedia: [tianxia](#) literally translates as *under heaven*. In [ancient China](#), *tianxia* denoted the lands, space, and area divinely appointed to the Emperor.

¹⁶⁷ See page 229 for what it takes to be a true Manchu.

Meaning of the Expansion



How was it seen worldwide, this incorporation of the Xinjiang province and the greater control of Tibet? The territories are today a major part of the People's Republic of China. How is that reflected in the politics of today's China?

These territories were naturalized under the Republic of China as well as the People's Republic of China and reflect a continuing problem of governance for the PRC. If not for the imperial expansion in the 16th and 17th centuries, China would be half the size it is today.

It's misleading, at the least, to say that China is the last continuous empire dating back to antiquity. It is, in fact, a successor to the vast hybrid state of the Qing, combining peoples of many backgrounds, languages, religions, and traditions - an empire of conquest comparable to the Ottoman and Romanov empires.

The Qing wasn't just another reign in a long line of Chinese dynasties, inheriting and preserving the land and traditions of Confucian times. Not at all. They wore the robes of Confucius in Beijing and the battledress of the Manchu warriors on the frontiers.

As [Benedict Anderson explains](#), it's difficult to "stretch the short, tight skin of the nation over the vast body of the empire."

The Macartney Mission



When Lord George Macartney arrived in China in June of 1793, Qianlong was 82 years old, having seen most of everything, but never having seen an Englishman. For his part, Macartney had been charged with negotiating a commercial treaty and establishing a permanent British embassy in Beijing. He failed in that attempt, though his visit was a landmark in Sino-European relations.

Protocol

They came to Canton in three ships, with eighty-four people, including artists and doctors, bringing exquisite gifts to celebrate Qianlong's birthday. They trekked out past the Great Wall to Qianlong's summer palace in Chengde, along the way receiving instructions in how to kowtow¹⁶⁸.

Qianlong knew what he did and did not rule. He recognized the Empress of Russia as a political equal and the Dalai Lama as a spiritual equal. He knew of the [French Revolution](#) that was taking place in the same year. So Lord Macartney was permitted to kneel, rather than to kowtow, before the emperor.

Negotiation Spurned

After the exchange of protocol, which the British thought they'd won, Macartney wanted to negotiate, but from the Qing perspective, the visit was over and despite Macartney's repeated attempts to get a productive audience beyond the offering of gifts, the mission failed.

Qianlong wrote a famous response to George III, stating in particular that he had no need for British goods.

"As your Ambassador can see for himself, we possess all things. I set no value on objects strange or ingenious and have no use for your country's manufactures."

Perhaps bringing Wedgwood to the land of porcelain was a mistake.

At the time, the letter from Qianlong was seen as the proper response of an emperor, but a hundred years later it was construed as quintessential Chinese arrogance. In 1920, Bertrand Russell wrote a book titled [The Problem of China](#), in which he said that

... no one understands China until this document [Qianlong's response] has ceased to seem absurd. The Romans claimed to rule the world, and what lay outside their Empire was to them of no account. The Empire of Chien Lung was more extensive, with probably a larger population; it had risen to greatness at the same time as Rome, and had not fallen, but invariably defeated all its enemies, either by war or by absorption. Its neighbours were comparatively barbarous, except the Japanese, who acquired their civilization by slavish imitation of China. The view of Chien Lung was no more absurd than that of Alexander the Great, sighing for new worlds to conquer when he had never even heard of China, where Confucius had been dead already for a hundred and fifty years. Nor was he mistaken as regards trade: China produces everything needed for the happiness of its inhabitants, and we have forced trade upon them solely for our benefit, giving them in exchange only things which they would do better without.

¹⁶⁸ See footnote 117 on page 193.

The Qianlong Twilight

Macartney's Diary

During his stay, Lord Macartney kept a diary of his travels, and one of the artists in his entourage later published a book of paintings that was sold across Europe. [Macartney wrote that:](#)

The Empire of China is an old, crazy, first-rate Man of War, which a fortunate succession of able and vigilant officers have contrived to keep afloat for these hundred and fifty years past, and to overawe their neighbours merely by her bulk and appearance. But whenever an insufficient man happens to have the command on deck, adieu to the discipline and safety of the ship. She may, perhaps, not sink outright; she may drift some time as a wreck, and will then be dashed to pieces on the shore; but she can never be rebuilt on the old bottom.

His comments were prescient, a different take on the *shengshi*, the prosperous age of the High Qing.

Rebellion

The troubles originated in the same population boom that founded the Qing success.

- Jobs were scarce.
- Success was nearly impossible in the tightly restricted (and, according to *The Scholars*, corrupt) examination system.
- The bureaucracy failed to appoint sufficient administrators even as the population doubled and tripled.
- Taxes fell behind.
- The legal system stagnated.
- The granary system fell apart.

Looking for support in a system that was failing to provide it, they turned to their extended families and to religion, especially in the frontiers. These groups came in conflict with the government, particularly the White Lotus sect of Buddhism. Rebellions became common in the late 18th and through the 19th centuries, requiring considerable resources to suppress them.

The Taiping Rebellion of 1850-1864, the largest civil war in human history, began in Guangxi, in the south, eventually wracking all of southern China, nearly taking down the dynasty.

Corruption in the Qianlong

Officials were never paid much and some skimming was built into the system. Yongzhen brought the empire's finances under control with his strict policies that controlled graft, but this discipline was lost by the 1780s, with fraud and embezzlement common toward the end of the Qianlong reign.

Niohuru Hesen (1746-1799)

Known as the most corrupt official in Chinese history, Hesen was a young Manchu who received lavish attention from the Emperor, promoted beyond men senior to him, causing controversy and distrust. His son married one of the emperor's daughters, further establishing the trust and deepening the corruption. With many people beholden to Hesen, he continued to work the system to his advantage.

Within five days of Qianlong's death in 1799, the Jiaqing emperor arrested Hesen, who hanged himself a month later. When they examined Hesen's estate, they found his wealth exceeded the emperor's:

- 800 million ounces of silver, one half of the annual income of the state
- 5.8 million ounces of gold
- Almost 5000 gold bowls and dishes and 119 gold wash basins
- 600 silver pots

Campaigns against corruption

The Jiaqing emperor began campaigns against corruption that were largely unsuccessful. Even today, the campaigns against corruption led by Xi Jinping in the People's Republic of China make reference to Hesen as a cautionary tale.

Because Jiaqing failed to destroy the vast network of patronage that Hesen had put in place, there was no great rejuvenation of the dynasty after Qianlong died. This weakening of the center of the reign, which began at the end of the 18th century, left the country ill equipped to deal with the British in the 19th century when they came to the sleepy fishing village of Hong Kong, not with birthday gifts, but with warships.

Discussion

The Question

Following Lord Macartney's embassy to the court of the Qianlong emperor in 1793, Qianlong wrote two letters to King George III. In these letters – or “edicts” – the Qing emperor explained his reasons for declining the British government's offer of a commercial treaty between the two empires.

AN EDICT FROM THE QIANLONG EMPEROR TO KING GEORGE III OF ENGLAND

[September 1793, on the Occasion of Lord Macartney's Mission to China]

You, O King, live beyond the confines of many seas, nevertheless, impelled by your humble desire to partake of the benefits of our civilisation, you have dispatched a mission respectfully bearing your memorial. Your Envoy has crossed the seas and paid his respects at my Court on the anniversary of my birthday. To show your devotion, you have also sent offerings of your country's produce.

I have perused your memorial: the earnest terms in which it is couched reveal a respectful humility on your part, which is highly praiseworthy. In consideration of the fact that your Ambassador and his deputy have come a long way with your memorial and tribute, I have shown them high favour and have allowed them to be introduced into my presence. To manifest my indulgence, I have entertained them at a banquet and made them numerous gifts. I have also caused presents to be forwarded to the Naval Commander and six hundred of his officers and men, although they did not come to Peking, so that they too may share in my all-embracing kindness.

As to your entreaty to send one of your nationals to be accredited to my Celestial Court and to be in control of your country's trade with China, this request is contrary to all usage of my dynasty and cannot possibly be entertained. It is true that Europeans, in the service of the dynasty, have been permitted to live at Peking, but they are compelled to adopt Chinese dress, they are strictly confined to their own precincts and are never permitted to return home. You are presumably familiar with our dynastic regulations. Your proposed Envoy to my Court could not be placed in a position similar to that of European officials in Peking who are forbidden to leave China, nor could he, on the other hand, be allowed liberty of movement and the privilege of corresponding with his own country; so that you would gain nothing by his residence in our midst.

Moreover, our Celestial dynasty possesses vast territories, and tribute missions from the dependencies are provided for by the Department for Tributary States, which ministers to their wants and exercises strict control over their movements. It would be quite impossible to leave them to their own devices. Supposing that your Envoy should come to our Court, his language and national dress differ from that of our people, and there would be no place in which to bestow him. It may be suggested that he might imitate the Europeans permanently resident in Peking and adopt the dress and customs of China, but, it has never been our dynasty's wish to force people to do things unseemly and inconvenient. Besides, supposing I sent an Ambassador to reside in your country, how could you possibly make for him the requisite arrangements? Europe consists of many other nations besides your own: if each and all demanded to be represented at our Court, how could we possibly consent? The thing is utterly impracticable. How can our dynasty alter its whole procedure and system of etiquette, established for more than a century, in order to meet your individual views? If it be said that your object is to exercise control over your country's trade, your nationals have had full liberty to trade at Canton for many a year, and have received the greatest consideration at our hands. Missions have been sent by Portugal and Italy, preferring similar requests. The Throne appreciated their sincerity and loaded them with favours, besides authorising measures to facilitate their trade with China. You are no doubt aware that, when my Canton merchant, Wu Chaoping, was in debt to the foreign ships, I made the Viceroy advance the monies due, out of the provincial treasury, and ordered him to punish the culprit severely. Why then should foreign nations advance this utterly unreasonable request to be represented at my Court? Peking is nearly 10,000 li from Canton, and at such a distance what possible control could any British representative exercise?

If you assert that your reverence for Our Celestial dynasty fills you with a desire to acquire our civilisation, our ceremonies and code of laws differ so completely from your own that, even if your Envoy were able to acquire the rudiments of our civilisation, you could not possibly transplant our manners and customs to your alien soil. Therefore, however adept the Envoy might become, nothing would be gained thereby.

Swaying the wide world, I have but one aim in view, namely, to maintain a perfect governance and to fulfil the duties of the State: strange and costly objects do not interest me. If I have commanded that the tribute offerings sent by you, O King, are to be accepted, this was solely in consideration for the spirit which prompted you to dispatch them from afar. Our dynasty's majestic virtue has penetrated unto every country

under Heaven, and Kings of all nations have offered their costly tribute by land and sea. As your Ambassador can see for himself, we possess all things. I set no value on objects strange or ingenious, and have no use for your country's manufactures. This then is my answer to your request to appoint a representative at my Court, a request contrary to our dynastic usage, which would only result in inconvenience to yourself. I have expounded my wishes in detail and have commanded your tribute Envoys to leave in peace on their homeward journey. It behoves you, O King, to respect my sentiments and to display even greater devotion and loyalty in future, so that, by perpetual submission to our Throne, you may secure peace and prosperity for your country hereafter. Besides making gifts (of which I enclose an inventory) to each member of your Mission, I confer upon you, O King, valuable presents in excess of the number usually bestowed on such occasions, including silks and curios—a list of which is likewise enclosed. Do you reverently receive them and take note of my tender goodwill towards you! A special mandate.

(in E. Backhouse and J. O. P. Bland, Annals & memoirs of the court of Peking (from the 16th to the 20th century). Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914. 322-325. https://hollis.harvard.edu/prime-explore/fulldisplay?docid=TN_crossref10.2307/1946192&context=PC&vid=HVD2&search_scope=everything&tab=everything&lang=en_US)

In the early years of the twentieth century, this letter was seized upon as an example of outrageous Chinese arrogance and inability to adjust to the modern world. Then, in 1920, British philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote of Qianlong's letter, "No one understands China until this document has ceased to seem ridiculous. "

Does Qianlong's letter seem ridiculous to you? Why? Or why not?

My thoughts

****We don't need your customs, we've got enough of our own****

Qianlong is managing his relations with other Europeans. They must adhere to the Manchu style of dress. Since foreigners can never assimilate entirely, they must stay within their own compounds, they cannot correspond with their home country. Once in the dynasty, they may not leave. *They may not disrupt the self-contained world of China.*

Why the restrictions? While Qianlong is not unaware of the wide world, it is not a wider world, not for him. Qianlong runs a superpower. His one concern - his only concern - is the proper management of that vast Chinese empire. He's having enough trouble stretching a tight skin over it. **He's not about to denigrate his Court and threaten the solidarity of his nation with more foreign customs, especially those of nations that don't owe fealty to China.**

And of the goods they offer: Qianlong disdains these trinkets for natives offered by patronizing missions. China is an advanced and cultured state with more to offer the world than the world has to offer China.

(That's not to say that trade in a broadly diverse world doesn't benefit all parties - it most surely does - but Qianlong is already seeing the dangers of the internet, that is, of showing the possibilities of different customs and freedoms to his people and the instability that would ensue and he juxtaposes that against the benefits of trade. His empire is already a melting pot of many cultures that he's trying to shoehorn into the Manchu Way. The last thing he wants is to introduce even more variation.)

So, Qianlong says, take a few trinkets from us and go away.

Final Assessment Discussion

(Although I've added my thoughts here, reading the discussion posts it's glaringly obvious how little I know of modern China. I was only able to answer the question based on what we learned in the class so far. I have to wait for the next set of modules to learn enough to begin to engage the other participants in these kinds of questions.)

The question

Some historians have made the claim that the foundations for modern China were laid in the Qing period, particularly in the eighteenth century. Can you make the same or a similar argument, based on what you have learned in this mini-course? Do you agree?

My thoughts:

What I've learned so far...

Clearly, the territory of Modern China was laid in the Qing, but the foundation was laid with many bricks:

- Ancestor worship, a practice that may have begun in pre-historic periods, set the stage for the earliest dynasties and the concepts of tian and tianxia.
- The Zhou dynasty brought the concept of tianming.
- The Warring States period brought Confucius, who created the moral foundation for the elevation of scholars in society and into government. Many other great philosophies grew from this period as well.
- The Qin unified China.
- The Han ultimately defeated the feudal structure and extended the bureaucracy throughout unified China.
- Successive Chinese dynasties, the Neo-Confucians, Wang Anshi and Sima Guang all combined in different ways to create the civil service exam, promote education and lessen the power of the great clans, instituting enduring changes in Chinese bureaucracy from the inside out, structurally and philosophically.
- The conquest dynasties, particularly the Qing, extended the territory and cemented the unity of China, but not until a strong foundation of Chinese culture and administration created the means for them to do so.

The Qing could not have succeeded without the foundation laid by thousands of years of Chinese culture and philosophy.

...and yet, how little I know

Reading through the answers from other posters, I can see how they reference much of modern Chinese history that I haven't yet learned. I barely know the terminology.

I'm glad we've established a good foundation in the first six parts of the course. But to stop now, without learning what follows would leave me ignorant of all the important recent changes in Chinese history

Part 7: Invasions, Rebellions, and the End of Imperial China

Part 7 Introduction

Pre-modern vs. Modern



When does modern Chinese history begin? Some say during the Opium War, the late 1830s and 1840s. Others date modern history from 1919 and the May Fourth Movement.

In this course we take the 18th century, when the Qing was at its height, to begin modern Chinese history.

Considering that modern history bears some relation to the present, what events signified the beginning of that period? In Europe, historians often chose 1789, the French Revolution.

The signifying events, the transitional events, for China begin with its transition from empire to nation-state, with population growth, with the inclusion of Xinjiang and Tibet during the Qianlong reign, and with the challenges of maintaining unity in a multi-ethnic population.

Encounter with the West

In the 19th century this evolving state ran head-on into the mobile, militarized nation of Great Britain, the likes of which it has never seen before. This encounter was nothing like the visits from Jesuit missionaries (footnote 134 on page 1) or Lord Macartney (page 254). It challenged all the principles of imperial rule.

Foreign Enterprise

Today's Chinese economy has its roots in the Sino-foreign enterprises born during these early encounters. Opium was one of its main enterprises. Christianity was a kind of enterprise. These enterprises combined to weaken and humiliate the Qing. As would be said of a later time, these foreign insults were a "disease of the skin."¹⁶⁹ It was the Taiping Rebellion that struck at the heart.

Taiping Rebellion

The greatest war of the 19th century, the Taiping Rebellion, was a Chinese Christian civil war that nearly toppled the Qing. It led to the deaths of tens of millions of Chinese.

Economy

The biggest economy in the world in 1820 was the Qing empire and by 2020 the biggest economy will again be the Chinese economy. And so it was in 1200 and in 1600. So it's the norm for the Chinese economy to be the world's largest. The period of the 19th century diverged from the norm.

From the late 18th century through the early 19th century a period of intense international competition threatened the survival of the Chinese civilization.

Linking the Modern to the Pre-modern

This course links the pre-modern to the modern because the issues of today are bound to the past. Confucianism still plays a large role in China. While the old imperial exams disappeared overnight in 1905, and yet today they've been reinvented in the *gaokao*, the university entrance exam. But as noted in the office hours by one of our ChinaX students, the *gaokao* is not the civil service exam of modern times. Instead, the *guokao*, the National Official Examination, is the qualifying exam for service as a bureaucrat.

¹⁶⁹ I believe this refers to Chiang Kai-shek saying (quoted in [Wikipedia](#)) "the Japanese are a disease of the skin, the Communists are a disease of the heart."

28: Myths and Lessons of Modern Chinese History

Historical Overview

How we know what we think we know

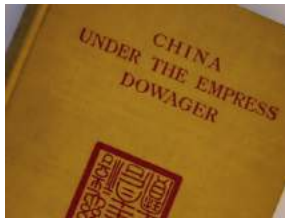
Boxer War of 1900

Incited by the Boxers, on the 25th day of the fifth month of the 26th year of the Guangxu Reign, which was June 21, 1900, the Empress Dowager of the Qing declared war on the world. She besieged the Beijing legations of England, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Russia, Japan, and the U.S.

These nations responded with an expeditionary force of 20,000 men who freed the legations, sacked Beijing, and occupied its palaces. The Celestial Court submitted to the onerous terms of the conquest, including an indemnity four times the Qing revenue, to be paid through 1940.

Popularized in the U.S. by the movie 55 Days In Peking with Charlton Heston and Ava Gardner, China was brought to its knees in humiliation by a small foreign force. Eleven years later the Qing collapsed, ending a 2000 year imperial tradition.

China and the world consciousness in the last hundred years



China has grown into an international powerhouse of industry, education, art, and culture that today extends worldwide with its bright center once again in Beijing.

But what did we know 100 years ago? The most popular book was *China Under the Empress Dowager* by J.O.P. Bland and Edmund Backhouse, helping to shape popular and scholarly views of China. A major source for the book was the diary of a high court official, which proved to be entirely fictional, a construction of Backhouse, who also claimed, falsely of course, to be the Empress Dowager's secret lover.

The Great Wall, visible from space?



Voltaire called the Great Wall "an engineering marvel superior to the pyramids of Egypt," though of course he never saw either. It is supposedly the only work of human construction that can be seen from outer space, although it cannot, in fact, be seen from space because it blends too well with its natural environment. So what was the origin of this myth? In 1932, the comic strip *Ripley's Believe It or Not* declared the Great Wall to be "the mightiest work of man-- the only one that would be visible to the human eye from the moon."

How old is China?

Chinese and foreign students tend to reply with the stock answer that “we have more than five thousand years of history.” In this course, we think of China as home to the longest continuous civilization in world history. But we also think of China as a young country that did not exist until 1912, when the Republic of China was declared the successor to the Qing dynasty.

Myth 1 – Unity

Political Unity

From the unification of the Warring States by the Qin in 221 BCE (page 54), political unity has been a consistent goal, sometimes achieved and often not, in cycles of unity and disunity. When the Qin standardized the systems of writing, weights and measures, language and currency, those standards reigned long after the Qin had fallen.

After 220 CE, at the end of the Han, China fell into disunity for three-and-a-half centuries – the periods of the Three Kingdoms, the Six Dynasties of the south, and the Sixteen Kingdoms of the north. China remained in disunity until the Sui (589-618 CE) and the Tang (618-907 CE).

Dynasties relied on *tianming*, granting the emperor his legitimate seat as the Son of Heaven, the liaison between heaven and earth (see page 26).

Conquest Dynasties. The expansion of borders beyond those controlled by the Han Chinese led to empires ruled by peoples not of Han descent, beginning with the Mongols of the Yuan (1279-1368) and ending with the Manchus of the Qing (1644-1911). See page 213.



These extended borders beyond core China included Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet. The China of today has the extent of the Qing without the rule of the Manchus. The concept of “Chinese” unity may be seen as a modern phenomenon.

No unified political territory has ever been so large for so long as that of the great Qing empire and its Han Chinese successors. Despite this overall unity, economic life centered on *macro regions*, smaller regional economies.

And although Shanghai newsman Carl Crow, in his *Handbook for China*, touted 400 million Chinese customers, there has never been just one Chinese national market. China today is broken into interlocking macro regions with populations the size of European nations or larger.

The Charoen Popkhand Group (CP Group), one of the world’s largest agricultural businesses, established an integrated supply chain from animal feed to food processing, to their own CP supermarkets, in 28 provinces. But they’ve had to advance into each province individually, with specific localized approaches tailored to each region. There are no easy national markets for poultry, eggs, meat and fish.

Despite the evident power of the central Chinese government, there are many levels of government beneath it - provincial, municipal, and local – with their myriad of party committees and power brokers that can make Beijing seem very far away.

Cultural Unity



Through the last thousand years, China's exam system has provided a means of cultural unity, encouraging young Chinese men to study a common core of art and literature as a requirement for advancement in the political system.

The book by Miyazaki Ichisada, *China's Examination Hell*, reflects on the *gaokao*, the modern University exams, that test for political correctness as well as math, science, and composition, ensuring a continuing set of common beliefs. These must be passed for entry to the prestigious Tsinghua and Peking Universities that are far more selective than even Princeton or MIT.

The common cultural denomination is Confucianism, generally taken to be the moral principles that seek social and political harmony and define one's conduct according to one's status: ruler over ruled, elite over commoner, elder over younger, male over female.

The Little Red Book replaced Confucianism. In the 1950's, the hierarchy would change to farmer over landlord, worker over manager. By the principle of conduct according to one's status remained the same. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, China remains one of the most status conscious places on Earth.

The Party works hard to maintain the difficult concept of cultural unity in an ethnically diverse nation, imposing a single time zone on an area the size of the continental U.S.

Myth 2 – Isolation

A myth promulgated by both Western and Eastern literature is that China did not emerge from its millennia of isolation until Western civilization “opened” China in the 19th century, and more recently after the reform of Deng Xiaoping's leadership in 1978.

The Great Wall is symbolic of this insularity, of sturdy borders within which China huddled. But for most of its imperial history, China crossed its loosely-defined borders for trade and for expansionism. The Han sent envoys for great distances along the Silk Road. The Tang was known for setting out a welcome mat in Chang'an for ambassadors from all over the world (see page 100). Buddhism migrated from India and captured China more completely than any foreign invasion. The Southern Song capital of Hangzhou was one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world.

Today the Chinese diaspora population exceeds 40 million, mostly in Asia but also in Europe and the Americas. The current Chinese boom could not have occurred without overseas Chinese entrepreneurs. The efforts by Mao to cast them out and isolate China would prove short-lived.

Myth 3 – Historical Suppression of Commerce

Chinese tradition defined a four-part social order¹⁷⁰ with officials at the top and merchants at the bottom, used as evidence for Mao's claim that imperial China suppressed “all but the sprouts of capitalism.” This was, perhaps, no more proscribed than usury in Christian Europe. Even in comparison to Europe, late imperial China had a highly commercial economy. Land could be freely bought and sold, rented and worked.¹⁷¹ Late imperial China had landed elites, but no hereditary estate holders like France or Prussia, and no serfs like Eastern Europe of the 19th century.

Population flowed freely, even into Manchuria. There were few state monopolies, few administrative barriers to trade, and comparatively low taxes. Property rights and contractual rights were protected, even without England's system of legal precedence. Corporations and shareholding partnerships allowed the distribution of ownership, risk, and profit in farming, mining, and commerce.

This great Chinese economy, the aggregation of many regional economies, would eventually be destroyed by Chinese Communism. But not for a while.

In a speech to Chinese entrepreneurs in 2010, Chen Dongsheng, Chairman of the Taikang Insurance Company, said China was in the second golden decade of modern Chinese capitalism. He referred to Chiang Kai-shek's National Government rule from 1927-1937 as the first golden decade. But today, state-owned enterprises are again ascendant, crowding out private enterprise.

¹⁷⁰ See page 71 for Guan Zhong's social order, proposed during the Warring States period.

¹⁷¹ See page 201 for the *Three Lords of the Field* as it began in the Ming, dividing up ownership of the subsoil, topsoil, and the right to farm.



Lu Guanqiu of the Wanxiang Group was born outside Hangzhou, a region that bred entrepreneurs¹⁷². In 1969, at the height of the Cultural Revolution, he and his family started what was called then a Commune and Brigade Enterprise that has blossomed into China's largest manufacturer of automobile parts.

In public, he credits the Chinese government for his success. Privately he talks about the natural and persistent entrepreneurial spirit of the Chinese.

Discussion Topic

Browse through a few current news articles about China today. Choose one article to analyze. What are some of the assumptions made by the article's writer about China? Do these assumptions show a biased or a more balanced view of China? What are the focuses of the articles you read? How do these articles show us the importance of China in world politics today?

My thoughts:

The Dangers of State-Owned Enterprises

I've looked at two articles in *The Economist*:

Apr 27th, 2013, *Perverse Advantage, A new book lays out the scale of China's industrial subsidies.**

Aug 30th, 2014, *Fixing China Inc., Reform of state companies is back on the agenda**

****Assumptions****

Both articles state the disadvantages to the Chinese people and to the Chinese government (and to foreign companies) of the subsidies and structural advantages that accrue to the SOEs. Neither article gives any credence to the possible advantages to the Chinese people of subsidizing SOEs. Not that I personally think the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, not by a long shot, but if I were writing for the *People's Daily*, that's how I'd attack the articles.

****Bias****

First, I believe there's no such thing as an unbiased view. The bias in this case is that of a free-trade Western capitalist rag (my favorite rag, but that's neither here nor there) slamming China for parochial protectionism that stifles its own economy as well as the world's.

****Focus****

The focus is on the impact of sheltering SOEs, the potential for reform, and the forces of negative feedback, corruption and cronyism, that hinder reform. My opinion is that government subsidies are sticky, creating valleys of suboptimal equilibria that become stable over time and exceedingly difficult to escape.

****Importance of China****

The Economist in particular devotes more articles and special briefings to China as they do to any other nation except for the United States (and possibly Britain, but it *is* after all a British magazine).

¹⁷² Birthplace of Jack Ma, perhaps China's greatest entrepreneur.

28: Achievement and Limits of Manchu Rule

Ming and Manchu Memories



The founding of the Ming was directly related to the expulsion of the Mongols.¹⁷³ The primary strategic concern was defending the northern perimeter as that was traditionally where threats to the Chinese, like the Mongols, originated.

The Mongols were, in his mind, the only serious threat, and against this Zhu Yuangzhang maintained a force of 3 million men and refurbished and extended the Great Wall that had been started in the Qin.

In the early 20th century the Manchus were reviled as barbarian usurpers of the Mandate of Heaven, who suppressed

Chinese development while the rest of the world advanced through the Industrial Age, selling out China to the West and to Japan, and to [restoring Puyi to the throne in Manchuria](#).¹⁷⁴

Even as the Mongols retained their own state, Mongolia, the Republican revolutionaries kept the memory of the Ming close to their hearts when they restored the capital to Nanjing.

The Manchus, on the other hand, got nothing and the violence with which their imperial rule was excised from the heart ensured that China would not have a constitutional monarch to ease the transition to a modern state. The Manchu language is now dead, their lands settled by Han Chinese. The Manchu culture that expanded China's borders and established its longest individual reigns was extinguished.

The Manchus succeeded because they embodied both the steppe and the sown, being semi-nomadic agrarians.¹⁷⁵ They lived in a region where Chinese and foreigners traded and intermarried, mixing Chinese administrative skills with their nomadic military.

Manchu Origins



The story of Wu Sangui, the Ming general who opened the Shanhaiguan for the Manchus (page 221), bears on the decision Yuan Shikai would have to make at the time of the Republican Revolution.

In the last days of the Ming, who would Wu join? Li Zicheng held Wu's father hostage and was offering a large bribe. The Qing matched the bribe. But there's a story that Wu's concubine, Chen Yuanyuan was being held by Li Zicheng and was taken as the concubine by one of Li's entourage, helping to make Wu's decision.

Conquering

Over 17 years, Dorgon hunted down and murdered the last vestiges of the former imperial family. After the War of the Three Feudatories (page 226), Wu and his followers and allies were dead and all three feudatories were abolished.

Taiwan



Like Chiang Kai-shek three centuries later, Zheng Chenggong would hold out on the Ilha Formosa (beautiful land) against a mainland force (page 222).

The Qing finally subdued Zheng's heirs in 1683 and made it a prefecture of Fujian province. Immigration was banned, forcing it underground, transforming Taiwan into a frontier society of merchants and pirates.

¹⁷³ See page 192 for three different views of the governance of Zhu Yuangzhang (aka Ming Taizu).

¹⁷⁴ In the [The Last Emperor](#), starring John Lone and Peter O'Toole, Puyi was portrayed as the "archetypal last and dissolute emperor of a fallen dynasty." The movie won nine Academy Awards including Best Picture.

¹⁷⁵ See page 181 for the differences between steppe and sown and page 214 for a discussion of the nature of the Manchus.

The Rule of the Manchus

The Kanxi emperor expanded the Manchu empire to an extent matched only by the Tang and secured his reign by ruling well in peace and prosperity. It was said by an advisor of Liu Bang that the empire can be conquered from horseback but must be ruled from the palace. Li Zicheng was merely a “horseback king.”

Secret Memorial System. The Manchu obsession with suppressing dissidence resulted in a network of high officials informing on each other.

Literary Inquisition. See page 224 on the Library of the Four Treasuries and especially footnote 152 on the same page, describing the destruction of thousands of literary works that offended Manchu censors.

Dual Rule. The Manchus maintained a two-tier ruling system of Manchus and Han Chinese, keeping the most important part of their military with the Manchu’s only. This heralds the two-tier structure of Party and Government that would rule China after 1949. The Manchus also channeled money from imperial lands directly to the throne, bypassing the formal bureaucracy. This dual rule is what John Fairbank called a diarchy.¹⁷⁶

Observance of Chinese Rites. The Manchus gave the last Ming emperor a proper burial. They maintained the exam system right down to its main curricula and lofted themselves as patrons of the arts, thus reaching an unspoken agreement with the elite landholders of the lower Yangtze.

Land Tax Freeze. Kangzi froze the land tax in 1712, enabling the population to increase without a corresponding increase in taxes, as he believed a rising population was the key to prosperity. He could do this because revenues from imperial lands and monopolies were funneled to the throne outside the bureaucracy.¹⁷⁷ The tax freeze was maintained by Yongzheng and his successors.

Economy. The empire recovered sooner than any other major power from the world economic crisis of the 17th century. The Qianlong reign had so much wealth that when Lord Macartney visited, Qianlong issued his famous edict to King George III (see page 254):

"As your Ambassador can see for himself, we possess all things. I set no value on objects strange or ingenious and have no use for your country's manufactures."

Lack of Challenge. Perhaps the lack of challenge had its cost. The government became a thin wrapper over the rapidly growing population. The stable Chinese institutions and military failed to change with the changing world around them. In particular, the military was built only to control the peoples of inner and east Asia.

Diminishing Central Authority. The tax base was not substantial enough to address the central government’s growing problems even as taxes for local government grew. Over time the conquest dynasty became peripheral. By the end of the 18th century, corruption grew rampant.

Discussion

In September 1793, the Qianlong emperor’s edict to King George III, which proclaimed that the Qing lacked nothing within its borders, seemed to show no awareness of the empire’s growing links with international economic and cultural currents. Given what you know, could he have responded otherwise? If he had, what difference might it have made? To read Qianlong emperor’s edict to King George III you may visit [this](#) site.

Spring Festival Group – My thoughts:

Of course he could have responded otherwise, knowing what we now know and ignoring that he didn’t know the future. He could have been more accommodating, treating the King of England as an equal rather than a barbarian islander segregated by “intervening wastes of sea”. He could have negotiated an agreement that would allow him to find out more about the English, probing their industries while engaging in trade.

But he’d established a practice for encapsulating the trading community within their own compound, just as the Bannermen had their own compound. He couldn’t treat the English differently without changing how he treated everyone else, which would have changed the way the Empire regarded the world and its position within it, which would *then* reflect on the Empire’s position over its subjects. Bearing in mind that the Manchus were a conquest dynasty with a tiny minority rule, it risked showing all of China that the

¹⁷⁶ Prof. Kirby is referencing an article titled *The Manchu-Chinese Dyarchy in the 1840's and '50's* by John K. Fairbank; *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 265-278. “Once the half-and-half division of posts had been set up at the capital after the Manchu conquest, the maintenance of this rough proportion became a guaranty both of Chinese participation in the central government and of Manchu control over it.”

¹⁷⁷ This is a theme Prof. Kirby will follow as it relates to the diarchy of party and state in the People's Republic of China.

Manchus were not only a small portion of China, but an even smaller morsel in the world – a world that granted no mandate, heaven or otherwise.

Should he have taken that risk to change his relations with foreign embassies, if he'd known the English would come back, hell bent for leather? I just can't get past that **he didn't know**.

Would it have made a difference to the end result? I can't answer that either, because "what I now know" is quite little. I'm a rank novice to Chinese history, especially that part of history beyond what we learned in Part 6. Presumably, what I'll know in a month or two would help me formulate an answer.

29: Opium and the Opium War

The Chinese World Order

East Asia, or what Europeans called the Far East, had China at the epicenter of a world including Korea, Vietnam, Japan, and the Ryukus. These nations had similar ideographic scripts, Confucian teachings, social order, and concepts of governance, all of which had originated with China.

China viewed this world as its world, as tianxia presided by its tianzi. Having now recognized the existence of a wider world, tianxia no longer meant the entire world – its common usage implied the Chinese empire, the world that *mattered*.

The world view of the Chinese

Sinic Zone. The Chinese cultural zone that included those societies culturally similar to the Qing: Korea, Vietnam, the Ryukus, and briefly and at a great distance, Japan.

Inner Asian Zone. The nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples of Inner Asia. Not Chinese, but within China's power.

Outer Zone. Initially the outer barbarians, eventually Japan, some of the Southeast Asian states, and in theory, Europe.

Tribute



The states of the Outer Zone were all supposed to send tribute when trading, as Beijing was the center of the tribute system. Those paying tribute faced the long walk to the palace reception hall, as “gate after gate would sweep by, square after square, until the viewer would be overcome with a growing sense of fatigue and perhaps *déjà vu*.”

The ritual of tribute was taken from the **Yijing**, with the ruler facing south and the visiting minister facing north and kowtowing in three kneelings and nine prostrations.

This was the ideal form of foreign relations.

Chinese centrality in foreign relations

Not so central

Though the Chinese ideal was elaborate and imposing, in practice it was more nuanced. Looking back in history, Gaozu, the Han Emperor, made peace with his own tribute to the Xiongnu, a princess, along with annual gifts of grain and silk. The Tang sent an ambassador to the Uigurs, of a princess and silk.

Throughout history, the Chinese dealt with different people in different ways. But the Europeans wanted all nations to be treated equally.

From the Sinic zone, the Chinese sought respect. From the Inner Asian zone, the Chinese (the Manchus) sought peace.

The Outer zone was more complicated. At first they tried shoehorning the maritime west into the group of tributary nations, even as the western nations were seeking formal diplomatic ties based on equality, which the Qing found insulting.

The Qing hoped these strange and incomprehensible Westerners who had come to trade first in Macao and then in Canton would eventually go home and leave China to its familiar world of hierarchy and tribute. Why did they dismiss the Western nations so readily? Because the Westerners had first appeared as carriers of Asian trade rather than as sources of trade themselves: the Portugese from Macao, the Dutch from Taiwan. These eventually were all supplanted by Great Britain.

The Canton System

In 1770, the Qing imposed a system that restricted all European trade to Canton in Guangzhou, through a Chinese monopoly of approved merchants known as the Cohong. All *Europeans* would be treated equally and commerce would be conducted between *companies* rather than nations. Primarily this was the Cohong and the Dutch East India Company. Thus they avoided addressing the concept of true national equality.

Opium and a Changing World Order

Mutual Addictions

There's some question whether conflict would have erupted without the influence of opium, because of the different perceptions of international relations. But it did matter in the events and in the later interpretation of the events, that opium was involved.

Over time the British people had grown to enjoy drinking tea to the extent that one might say it was a national addiction. The average Londoner spent 5% of his household income on tea. By 1800, the East India Company was investing over £4 million annually. The British government taxed tea at 100%.

History of Opium

Opium had been used in China as medicine for at least a thousand years, following a practice of swallowing it raw, until the 16th century. With the development of tobacco, the habit of smoking opium began¹⁷⁸, starting around the 1620s in Taiwan. *Madak*, a crude opium mixed with leaves, was smoked in a pipe, yielding about 0.2% morphine. The pure opium introduced by foreigners yielded 9% to 10% morphine, 50 times as strong.

While madak might produce a mild high, pure opium slows the heart and lungs, reduces appetite and creates a chemical addiction. Withdrawal is physically debilitating.

The Opium Trade



In 1773, an opium monopoly was established for the East India company in Bengal, India, to produce Patna opium, the finest quality available, specifically for sale to China.

In 1793, the Qing government reiterated its long-standing prohibition on opium smoking. As a result, the East India company sold opium indirectly through private traders who marketed the drug in Canton. The East India company used the proceeds to buy tea for export to England. Trade in opium rose from 5,000 chests in 1820 to 18,000 in 1830. A chest roughly the size of a steamer trunk weighed 145 pounds. That's 1300 tons annually.

Ultimately, the company lost its monopoly, leading to trade increases up to 40,000 chests or nearly 3000 tons by 1839. A vast illegal distribution network moved the opium along the Pearl River and through the canals of Southern China, corrupting and addicting officials throughout. Roughly 1 in 166 Chinese and Manchus were addicted in the Qing dynasty, chiefly among young and middle-aged men, including soldiers and officials. Over a hundred thousand were addicted in prosperous Suzhou.

The view from England

Public opinion in Britain, influenced by missionaries in China, was largely against the trade practices. The British government did nothing to stop the trafficking, since it was paying for tea that was so well enjoyed and highly taxed, accounting for one-third of national revenue in the 1830s.

Discussion

Why do you think the Qing's efforts to limit the opium trade were ultimately unsuccessful? Who do you think profited most from drug trafficking within China?

My thoughts: From the images and the bit of history we've seen, I believe opium was a social drug with a long history of practice among the young men of the elite. The increase in potency may have caught them by surprise, addicting millions before any policy could be enacted or knowledge gained and communicated. With strong demand within, the natural weakness of humanity, and great wealth to be made, nothing but a stern interdiction could slow the trade. The local dealers and foreign traders would have profited the most.

¹⁷⁸ See [here](#) in Wikipedia:

Smoking of opium came on the heels of tobacco smoking and may have been encouraged by a brief ban on the smoking of tobacco by the Ming emperor. The prohibition ended in 1644 with the coming of the Qing dynasty, which encouraged smokers to mix in increasing amounts of opium.

Effects of Opium and the Qing's Response

Economic consequences of the Opium Trade

Until the late 18th century, the Qing had a trade surplus, resulting in silver specie flowing into China as the British imported tea. By the 1820s, the Qing was running a trade deficit and by the 1830s the amount paid for opium totaled 34 million silver dollars annually.

Chinese Currency and Taxes on Farms

The currency consisted of copper cash for small payments and silver ingots for large transactions. Farmers were assessed taxes in silver, but had to pay in copper at the domestic copper/silver exchange rate. The trade imbalance raised the cost of domestic silver, devaluing copper and therefore raising the real tax rate.¹⁷⁹

Commissioner Lin at Canton



In the 1830s, Beijing actively debated whether opium trade should be prohibited entirely or taxed and placed under a government monopoly.

To his credit, the Daoguang Emperor (r. 1812-1850) refused to allow the government to operate opium dens selling 'foreign mud.' Nor did he think that arresting Chinese addicts or dealers would solve the problem. So in December of 1838, he sent Commissioner Lin Zexu to Canton with a three-part plan.

Three-Part Plan

1. Offer to rehabilitate addicts in government sanitariums.
2. Round up the Chinese dealers and break up the drug rings.
3. Confiscate opium from foreign sellers and force them to sign bonds that they would exit the opium trade.

Arriving in Canton in March of 1839, Lin had great success in parts 1 and 2, setting up sanitariums in Guangdong and arresting over 1600 Chinese dealers. Foreign traders couldn't sell even at reduced prices.

Lin continued on with the most confrontational third part of the plan, addressing Captain Charles Elliot, the British Superintendent of Trade, and even writing directly to Queen Victoria.¹⁸⁰ He believed that the English were ashamed of their drug trade, and that a direct appeal to the Queen might stop it.

Instead, the British position was that the Canton system was inadequate for managing trade of any kind and that formal diplomatic relations leading to unrestricted free trade was the necessary next step.

Lin believed he could fight the opium trade by cutting off all trade, shutting down the supply of tea to England. But first, on March 24, 1839, he ordered troops to surround 13 warehouses in Canton, holding 350 Europeans hostage until the merchants turned over the 21,000 chests of opium within. Captain Elliot interceded, promising to

¹⁷⁹ My thought: this is not unlike the inflation of silver during the Ming (page 199) which was compounded by the Single Whip System (page 202). Paying taxes in silver is no different than paying in copper at silver exchange rates.

¹⁸⁰ The full letter can be found [here](#). Following is a slightly different translation of the excerpt read in Prof. Kirby's lecture:

*We find that your country is distant from us about sixty or seventy thousand miles, that your foreign ships come hither striving the one with the other for our trade, and for the simple reason of their strong desire to reap a profit. Now, out of the wealth of our Inner Land, if we take a part to bestow upon foreigners from afar, it follows, that the immense wealth which the said foreigners amass, ought properly speaking to be portion of our own native Chinese people. **By what principle of reason then, should these foreigners send in return a poisonous drug, which involves in destruction those very natives of China?** Without meaning to say that the foreigners harbor such destructive intentions in their hearts, we yet positively assert that from their inordinate thirst after gain, they are perfectly careless about the injuries they inflict upon us! And such being the case, we should like to ask **what has become of that conscience which heaven has implanted in the breasts of all men?***

We have heard that in your own country opium is prohibited with the utmost strictness and severity:---this is a strong proof that you know full well how hurtful it is to mankind. Since then you do not permit it to injure your own country, you ought not to have the injurious drug transferred to another country, and above all others, how much less to the Inner Land!

reimburse the merchants, at which point they gave up their inventory and the Chinese destroyed over 2.6 million pounds of opium.



Lin required the Europeans to sign a bond agreeing to abstain from the opium trade and be subject to Qing law if they broke their bond. Elliot refused, unwilling to consign British citizens to Chinese law.

Through the autumn of 1839, Lin and Elliot negotiated. All the while, Lin refused to allow vessels to land at Canton or Macao with food and water to resupply the British ships.

The first shots of the Opium War were fired off Kowloon on September 4th, when the British ships that were barred from Canton landed instead at Hong Kong in

search of supplies.¹⁸¹

[Lord Palmerston](#), the British foreign minister, under pressure from the merchant lobby, sent an expeditionary force to China. But he did so based on Captain Elliot's reports from *before* the action at Kowloon. Some of the British believed that Lin's hostage-taking, in itself, was an act of war and that a military response would encourage a proper progression of trade relations. Others were opposed to military action to support the drug trade.

Discussion

How did the British see Lin Zexu's taking hostage of opium traders in 1839? How did Chinese see the same event? What can account for the different perspectives between British and Chinese views of the beginning of the opium war?

My thoughts:

Lord Palmerston was taking an opportunity to expand trade by suppressing Chinese resistance with his military. He was offended by the Canton system and the practice of kowtow, which was seen as arrogant in a new world of nations as equals (some more equal than others).

Captain Elliot was trying to resupply his ships and waiting for eventual support from his superiors. With his first-hand observations of the Chinese, he must have known the great military advantage the Royal Navy would have.

Commissioner Lin was trying to shut down opium addiction in a multi-step plan that began specifically and in some cases, harshly, with his own citizens. The last step was to shut off the supply of opium, which he intended to accomplish through all means including taking hostages and poisoning water supplies.

All three had different goals and saw the events in terms of those goals.

¹⁸¹ From [Wikipedia](#):

The Battle of Kowloon was fought between British and Chinese ships off Kowloon, China, on 4 September 1839. It has been called "the first shot of the First Opium War" and arose following a fight in which a local Chinese died at the hands of British troops. The Chinese did not consider the punishment meted out to the perpetrators sufficient and as a result suspended supplies of food to the British at the same time poisoning their water supplies. In retaliation the British summoned nearby warships in an attempt to force the Chinese to change their minds.

The Aftermath of the Opium War

南京條約 The Treaty of Nanjing (1842)

The first of the Opium Wars ran from 1839 to 1842, with the British handing the Qing a humiliating defeat. Manchu warriors and Chinese war junks were equally unable to stop modern forces. Henry Pottinger advanced up the Yangtze unopposed, reaching Nanking in August 1842.

The Daoguang Emperor accepted the terms of surrender, knowing he might lose his mandate if Nanking fell to the British. Commissioner Lin was taken into exile and the Treaty of Nanjing signed, the first of the ‘unequal treaties.’

- Hong Kong was ceded to the British
- The ports of Canton, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai were opened to trade, to diplomats, to businessmen, and to missionaries.
- Reparations of 21 million silver dollars were owed to England
- The Cohong monopoly was abolished
- Tariffs and duties were sharply limited
- Foreign officials were given equal status and access to Chinese officials
- Full extraterritoriality of British subjects¹⁸²

The treaty made no mention of opium, in part because the British did not want to be seen as a country fighting over drugs, and perhaps because they believed they were fighting for free trade and the rule of law. But the most important result of the treaty was to resume the trade of opium, amounting to 200,000 chests annually or nearly 15,000 tons at its peak, over ten times the amount imported in 1839.

China would forever remember the war as a humiliating subjugation of their people to a British drug.

As William Gladstone said:

*A war more unjust in its origin, a war more calculated -- to cover this country with permanent disgrace, I do not know, and I have not read of.*¹⁸³

Discussion

Does Lin Zexu's letter to Queen Victoria treat the Queen as an equal to the emperor? Does he see Great Britain as of equal standing with China? Finally, with whom do you sympathize most in the letter? Why?

My thoughts:

I appreciate Dougma's comment on opium legality and addiction within Britain. Dougma, your comments are always thoughtful and well-researched. Nevertheless, the scale of British mobilization to sell opium to China seems criminally callous in its enormity.

My comments on Lin's treatment of the Queen:

Commissioner Lin explicitly treats the Qing Emperor as having a Mandate of a Heaven that presides over all humanity including the Queen and thus treating the Queen of England rhetorically as a feudal lord, a vassal of the Qing empire. Further, he implies that the trade of tea to England is all to the benefit of England, when clearly China profits hugely from that trade, to the detriment of the British economy.

I can't judge how Lin meant the word 'barbarian' or how the British interpreted it. In today's lexicon, it would be insulting and derogatory.

Stripping away his superior attitude, Lin's moral stance was strong and as he was watching the destruction of his country by opium addiction and had first taken action on his own citizens, his appeal was heartfelt. In this, it's hard to side with Britain.

¹⁸² From [Wikipedia](#):

Extraterritoriality is the state of being exempted from the jurisdiction of local law, usually as the result of diplomatic negotiations. Extraterritoriality can also be applied to physical places, such as foreign embassies, military bases of foreign countries, or offices of the United Nations. The three most common cases recognized today internationally relate to the persons and belongings of foreign heads of state, the persons and belongings of ambassadors and other diplomats, and ships in foreign waters.

¹⁸³ For a more complete quote from Gladstone, see [here](#).

30: Christianity and Chinese Salvation

Encountering the West



Modern China began with the Opium War as the first of many defeats to foreign forces that were smaller but had an overwhelming advantage in military technology. Steam-powered paddle-wheeled iron ships cruised upriver past outmatched Chinese war junks struggling under sail. These incursions cost the Qing dynasty control over foreign relations but the internal rebellions, like the Taipei Rebellion, struck to the heart.

The combination was labeled *nei luan wai huan*, disasters within and without. In the midst of this, two great movements based on Christianity attempted and failed to save China from itself.

Neiluan, Internal Turmoil

With the ports of Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai opened to trade, millions of Southerners lost their jobs and some turned to banditry. The economic situation in these regions became desperate.

In Guangxi, there was an ongoing feud between the *Hakka* or *Guest People*, and the *Bendiren* or *Indigenous People*, who were Han Chinese. A religious sect called the *God Worshipping Society* sprang up among the Hakka, further fueling tensions.

The rise of Hong Xiuquan



The Hakkas and God Worshippers were at the center of what became the Taiping Rebellion, when a Hakka visionary name Hong Xiuquan rose up as the self-proclaimed Heavenly King and younger brother of Jesus Christ.

Despite private tutelage at great expense, Hong failed repeatedly to pass the civil service exam, finally suffering a nervous breakdown with concomitant delirious visions. He saw himself conversing with a bearded, golden-haired man and a younger man whom he referred to as his “elder brother.”

When he failed the exams for the last time, he returned home to re-interpret his visions according to the Christian pamphlets left behind by missionaries. He saw himself as the son of god and the younger brother of Jesus Christ with Christianity a long-forgotten Chinese doctrine that it was his duty to restore.

Taiping, The Age of Great Peace

According to Hong Xiuquan, the foreign invaders were not the British, but the Manchus. They were devils and exterminating them would bring an Age of Great Peace that would unite the world in brotherhood.

After expulsion from his home town, Hong travelled to the Hakka in Guangxi. By 1850, he had a military force of 20,000. Under Hong’s cult, all wealth was communal, all men and women lived as brothers and sisters in segregated quarters with complete abstinence from sex, under the rule of the ten commandments. (Abstinence was waived, of course, for the top leaders.)

The effect of communal living was to break down old social norms. Former gentry lived alongside peasants, their land held in common. Women had, at least in theory, the same rights as men. Confucian hierarchy and the quest for the mandate of heaven was abandoned. Men grew their hair long in defiance of the Manchu queue. Hong proclaimed himself the *tianwang*, the heavenly king.

The Manchus and the Chinese elite were united in their opposition to Hong. But the Chinese and Manchu troops were a poor match for the messianic rebels, who captured Nanjing in 1854 and massacred the Manchus within. For the next eleven years, Hong took residence in the former Ming palace, sending out his rebels to slay millions.

Unable to stop Hong, the Manchus ordered the provincial Chinese governors to raise armies to defend the Qing and the traditional Confucian hierarchy that the Taiping Rebellion threatened to destroy.

Waihuan, External Disasters

Arrow War

Meanwhile, foreign invasions continued. The Arrow War of 1860¹⁸⁴ led to the sacking of the Yuan Ming Yuan palace in Beijing, the ruins of which are visible today (#travelNote).

Western Mercenaries

The Qing hired mercenaries to assist in battling the rebellion.

Christian Missionaries

Missionaries came from the west, supported by the Qing under pressure from conquering western forces. This confused the Chinese gentry who were battling indigenous Chinese adherents to Christianity on the one hand and supporting foreign Christian missionaries on the other.

Fall of Heavenly Kingdom

Under siege in Nanjing in 1863, Hong and his follows 'ate dew drops' in a lengthy fast. In July 1864, the Hunan army breached the walls of Nanjing to rape and slaughter at least 100,000 rebels and burn the city. Hong had likely died of malnutrition before then.

Tianjin Massacre



French Catholic missionaries had established orphanages in Tianjin, to which they brought sick and abandoned children, some of whom died in their care. But to the Chinese, the happenings in the orphanage were a mystery. Children entered and some disappeared.

Meanwhile a spate of child kidnappings were occurring across Tianjin. There were rumors of cannibalism in the orphanage. A angry mob gathered.

The French consul stood before the mob and fired a shot¹⁸⁵ to disperse them. He was torn apart by the mob which proceeded to burn the consulate, the orphanage, and the church, killing and mutilating nuns and priests or burning them alive.

The massacre dashed the hopes of peace between China and the West, destroyed any trust between Catholics or Protestants and Chinese, and would be

remembered when the next great popular rebellion, the Boxer Rebellion, arose.

After the Massacre

The Qing dynasty held on, crafting policies that wove around the internal and external threats, led by the most feared woman in Chinese history, the Empress Dowager Cixi.

¹⁸⁴ I'll summarize the Arrow War, also known as the Second Opium War, from [Wikipedia](#) and other sources.

The British wanted to renegotiate the Nanking Treaty to (among other things) open all of China to their merchants and legalize the opium trade. To protect those Chinese merchants who traded with the British from trouble with the Chinese government, the British allowed them to sail under the British flag. One such ship, the *Arrow*, was suspected of smuggling and was seized in 1856 by the Chinese, who then imprisoned twelve members of the *Arrow* crew. The British demanded their release. The Chinese refused. (I couldn't determine if the ship itself was released).

The British governor of Hong Kong responded by sending his warships to bombard Canton. Lord Palmerston supported the bombardment, which captured or destroyed 4 Chinese forts and 23 war junks. The Qing were actively fighting the Taiping Rebellion and could not effectively oppose the British. Palmerston's support drew controversy in British Parliament, causing a general election, which Palmerston won. The British then joined forces with the French to attack and occupy Guangzhou in 1857. They forced the Chinese to sign new treaties with additional indemnities and trading rights.

A second phase of the war began in 1859, when a British force of 21 ships sailed to Tianjin, which had previously been reinforced with 4,000 Mongolian cavalry. The Mongolian general, Sengge Richen, refused passage of the 2,200 troops in the British warships. The British responded by demolishing the iron barricades in the Baihe River and attempted passage, but grounded at low tide and were forced to retreat under cannon fire from Sengge.

Stung by the loss, the British returned in 1860 with the French, in a combined force of 173 ships which eventually took Beijing in October, looting and destroying the two summer palaces, one of which was Yuan Ming Yuan. The emperor had fled the capital and his brother, Yixin, signed the Treaty of Tianjin. In Britain, Lord Palmerston was hailed as a hero, having handed China another humiliating defeat.

¹⁸⁵ See [Wikipedia](#). The French consul shot and killed an assistant to the Chinese magistrate, but it's unclear whether that was before or after he was threatened by the mob.

Discussion

Read the following passage from the *Principles of the Heavenly Nature* (1854), which represents the official position of the Taiping's crusade. How do the Taipings justify their mission to establish an order in the world? What is their vision of the family in relation to the state? Finally, how do you think the Chinese elite, educated in Confucian values, would react to their "Christian" vision of the state and family?

In the *dingyou* year [1837], our Heavenly Father displayed the heavenly grace and dispatched angels to summon the Heavenly King up to Heaven. There He clearly pointed out the demons' perversities and their deluding of the world. He also invested the Heavenly King with a seal and a sword; He ordered the Savior, the Heavenly Elder Brother, Jesus, to take command of the Heavenly soldiers and Heavenly generals and to aid the Heavenly King, and to attack and conquer from Heaven earthward, layer by layer, the innumerable demons. After their victory they returned to Heaven and the Heavenly Father, greatly pleased, sent the Heavenly King down upon the earth to become the true Taiping Sovereign of the ten thousand nations of the world and to see the people of the world. He also bade him not to be fearful and to effect these matters courageously, for whenever difficulties appeared, the Heavenly Father would assume direction and the Heavenly Elder Brother would shoulder the burden....

We brothers, our minds having been awakened by our Heavenly Father, joined the camp in the earlier days to support our Sovereign, many bringing parents, wives, uncles brothers, and whole families. It is a matter of course that we should attend to our parents and look after our wives and children, but when one first creates a new rule, the state must come first and the family last, public interests first and private interests last. Moreover, as it is advisable to avoid suspicion [of improper conduct] between the inner [female] and the outer [male] and to distinguish between male and female, so men must have male quarters and women must have female quarters; only thus can we be dignified and avoid confusion. There must be no common mixing of the male and female groups, which would cause debauchery and violation of Heaven's commandments. Although to pay respects to parents and to visit wives and children occasionally are in keeping with human nature and not prohibited, yet it is only proper to converse before the door, stand a few steps apart and speak in a loud voice; one must not enter the sisters' camp or permit the mixing of men and women. Only thus, by complying with rules and commands, can we become sons and daughters of Heaven.

At the present time, the remaining demons have not yet been completely exterminated and the time for the reunion of families has not yet arrived. We younger brothers and sisters must be firm and patient to the end, and with united strength and a single heart we must uphold God's principles and wipe out the demons immediately. With peace and unity achieved, then our Heavenly Father, displaying his mercy, will reward us according to our merits. Wealth, nobility, and renown will then enable us brothers to celebrate the reunion of our families and enjoy the harmonious relations of husband and wife. Oh, how wonderful that will be! The task of a thousand times ten thousand years also lies in this; the happiness and emoluments of a thousand times ten thousand years also lie in this; we certainly must not abandon it in one day.

(SCT, vol. 2, 228-230)

My thoughts:

The Confucian gentry put great stock in the centrality of family, but there was a tradition of the primacy of the state over the individual. "the state must come first and the family last" doesn't differ as much as one might think from tradition. Guan Zhong, from the Warring States period, defines four groups strictly in terms of their service to the state.

The hierarchy of a father, an elder brother, and a younger brother is a Confucian hierarchy. Despite the invocation of a Christian god and son of god, it's not too far from a Confucian Heavenly Mandate.

But the notion of a new rule would be disturbing to the gentry as it would supplant the old rule under which they prosper and as much as the gentry chafed under Manchu rule, they would more greatly fear an uprising that places their property and wealth under common ownership, with forced separation from their women until the rebellion has conquered all of China.

I think Christians of the time would simply find it to be lunacy.

31: Fall of Imperial China

Introduction

It's understandable that China was unprepared for the sharp differences in capability between its military and that of its opponents in the Opium Wars. The West had changed with unprecedented rapidity. But historians judge the Qing harshly for their inadequate response to the Age of High Imperialism, a response that left China a battered and underdeveloped nation. Japan, in sharp contrast, responded to the challenge and modernized in only a few decades; a difference that would be striking in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894.

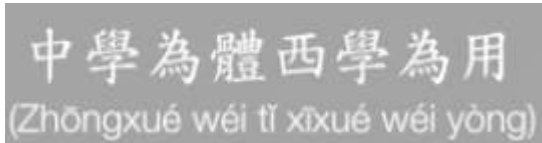


From 1861-1908, The Empress Dowager Cixi, aka *The Old Buddha*, usurped the throne repeatedly from boy emperors. She ruled conservatively, more intent on establishing her legitimacy by maintaining Chinese tradition, at the expense of advancing China's position with respect to the rest of the rapidly advancing West.

Even after her death she anointed one last boy as emperor, Puyi, depicted by John Lone in the film *The Last Emperor*. Three years later, the Qing dynasty ended.

By the late 19th century, the Age of High Imperialism was hitting its stride, with the Western powers carving up the world into colonies. During this time and into the 20th century, the Qing tried three strategies to catch up: self-strengthening, resistance, and political reformation.

Self-Strengthening



How would the Qing modernize without abandoning tradition? The phrase *Zhongxue wei ti xixue wei yong* means Chinese learning as the foundation, Western learning for practical application. Years later, Deng Xiaoping would characterize this tension with the phrase: *throw open the windows, but know that flies can come in*.

The Qing hired foreign advisers who oversaw the construction of the Jiangnan Arsenal in Shanghai, a shipyard in Fuzhou, and modern postal and customs systems, building a Sino-foreign bureaucracy alongside the traditional Manchu-Chinese bureaucracy, though the new order was separated from the centers of political power.

The exam system, meanwhile, did not change. Instead, students were sent abroad to learn Western ways.

[several paragraphs of notes were lost due to a Word crash: essentially self-strengthening was a failure. Boys sent abroad were seduced by Western culture. There were several attempts to mitigate the seduction, none particularly successful.]



The Chinese fleet was shocked by a loss to the Japanese in 1894.¹⁸⁶ The sharks circled, carving up China for trade and mercantilism: the Germans in Shandong, the French in Guangdong, the Russians in Liaoning. Only the Italians were successfully shooed away.

The reformist Kang Youwei saw the coming of the end of the Chinese people. He quoted Mencius that “a state must first smite itself, then others will smite it,” that the collapse of China had begun with the Qing's passivity.

Resistance

In 1898, the young Guangxu emperor attempted reform but Cixi killed the reformers and placed the emperor under house arrest.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ From [Wikipedia](#): The First Sino-Japanese War (1 August 1894 – 17 April 1895) was fought between Qing Dynasty China and Meiji Japan, primarily over control of Korea. After more than six months of unbroken successes by the Japanese land and naval forces, as well as the loss of the Chinese port of Weihai, the Qing leadership sued for peace in February 1895.

¹⁸⁷ From [Wikipedia](#): The Hundred Days' Reform was a failed 104-day national cultural, political and educational reform movement from 11 June to 21 September 1898 in late Qing dynasty China.

The Boxer Rebellion¹⁸⁸

義和拳
righteous and
harmonious fists

In the Shandong province of north China, a rebellious sect arose, practicing military and magic rituals. They called for a coup and the expulsion of all foreigners. These Boxers started a rebellion by killing missionaries, besieging the foreign legations in Beijing and inciting terror in the countryside, especially among Christians and foreigners. The Qing reacted by declaring war on eight nations leading Europe to react with outrage and send a force of 20,000 men to China. The siege was lifted, the foreign force pillaged Beijing and the Qing was soundly humiliated.

The film *55 Days at Peking*, with Charlton Heston and Ava Gardner, depicts the siege.

Reform

Elements of Reform

To change what was left of the Qing was to destroy it. What it needed was extensive:

- A central army instead of an uncoordinated collection of provincial armies. But the army created was no longer morally-committed Confucians, instead it was professional military men whose obedience was to their officers.
- A unified railway system – but the provinces were reluctant to give up their regional control.
- A workable political system for making decisions. But when the Qing held elections, the resultant government had little allegiance to the Qing and it ended the exam system.
- Laws governing the creation of capital to invigorate the economy.
- An education system that included Western science and math. By the early 20th century there were schools that taught these subjects, but they were outside the mainstream.

Ending of the Exam System

Though it had its weaknesses, the exams had been used for hundreds of years to preserve the moral orthodoxy, recruit civil servants, and maintain the allegiance of local elites. Without it, the elites abandoned the monarchy and the social and cultural foundation of the Qing evaporated.

Chinese regimes are searching today for the proper successor to the ancient exam system, for a means to funnel and train China's young talents into government service.

Fall of the Qing

One by one, between 1911 and 1912, the provinces declared their independence from the Qing.

The Qing fell because of increasingly justifiable beliefs that the Manchus could not be entrusted with the salvation of the Chinese people, that they were presiding over the humiliation of the Chinese by rapidly advancing Western nations. The Chinese escorted the Manchus back to their Manchurian homelands, from the place where they had emerged 268 years earlier and into which they vanished without a trace.

With the fall of the Qing, two millennia of imperial rule ended. From that point forward, the non-Chinese idea took hold that the Chinese nation was more important than any imperial house.

¹⁸⁸ From [Wikipedia](#): The uprising took place against a background of severe drought, and the disruption caused by the growth of foreign spheres of influence. After several months of growing violence against foreign and Christian presence in Shandong and the North China plain, in June 1900 Boxer fighters, convinced they were invulnerable to foreign weapons, converged on Beijing with the slogan "Support the Qing, exterminate the foreigners." Foreigners and Chinese Christians sought refuge in the Legation Quarter. In response to reports of an armed invasion to lift the siege, the initially hesitant Empress Dowager Cixi supported the Boxers and on June 21 authorized war on foreign powers. Diplomats, foreign civilians and soldiers, and Chinese Christians in the Legation Quarter were under siege by the Imperial Army of China and the Boxers for 55 days.

Discussion

My Thoughts:

Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang advocated chaperoned instruction abroad, with students chosen presumably for their obedience and loyalty. While this appeared to have the potential of working, it also created dissonance as the students were exposed to more permissive and democratic societies. Some of the students were inevitably drawn toward resistance if not outright revolt against their controlling elders. Further, I don't see how this method in isolation would have any broad effect on Chinese modernization.

Kang Youwei advocated substantial reform in the model of Japan.¹⁸⁹ The Japanese model was of reform from the top using ideas from foreign nations and restructuring government according to those ideas. Japan's example was not, however, easily followed. In Japan, the government was able to override its traditionalists and provincial authorities. In China, the Manchus had a desperate need for adherence to tradition to maintain their legitimacy, faced rampant corruption and was no match for the increasingly independent provinces. The dynasty lacked the power and influence to restructure China without abdication.

Chu Chengbo referred to the period of the Tongzhi reign when Western ideas were taught successfully in isolated instances in China. He felt that if these were continued intensively and effectively and then broadened nationwide, China could surpass the West. He claims it failed because these efforts were poorly managed by ineffective men. If the emperor found the right men to lead these new institutions, effective reform would follow.

My feeling is that Chu Chengbo was only partly right. No institutional leaders can effect reform without support from the institutions and leaders above. Kang Youwei advocates first reforming those institutions, which I think is correct. If the institution has as its primary goal the modernization and industrialization of the economy and the military, it will find the right managers and if it errs, it will replace those managers, as there is no higher goal.

But since Kang underestimated the difficulty of reform, his ideas could not help Chu.

I don't know how China could have thrown off the traditions of Confucian imperial rule and adopt a modern approach without inviting the provinces to step into the power vacuum they would inevitably create. It would have required the provinces to see the danger from outside and to choose the necessity of reform over the opportunity to increase their own power. The Qing lacked the authority to enforce this reform.

¹⁸⁹ See [here](#) for a discussion of Japanese Transformation without Revolution. Japan's reform started at the top, with Meiji government abolishing feudalism, sending samurai abroad, and using their political observations to restructure the state, with a new constitution enacted in 1889. In 1870, the new Ministry of Industry built model factories and encouraged private enterprise.

Part 8: Creating Modern China – The Birth of a Nation

Part 8 Introduction

Historical Overview

October 1911	In Wuchang, Hubei, anti-Manchu revolutionaries toppled the provincial government, the first of many such actions throughout the provinces which established the Republic of China . Sun Yat-sen was provisional president, followed by Yuan Shikai, the turncoat Qing commander.
February 12, 1912	The Qing emperor abdicated, ending 268 years of Qing rule and 2000 years of dynastic reign.
December 1912 through January 1913	The Republic held elections for the National Assembly , the first election in Chinese history. It was an electoral vote marred by bribery.
1913	President Yuan Shikai appointed himself military dictator, limiting the powers of the Assembly.
1916	President Yuan Shikai proclaimed himself emperor of a constitutional monarchy. His death in 1916 threw China into chaos, leading regional commanders to take local control.
May 4, 1919	The May 4th Movement , aka the New Culture Movement, led by university students, protested the Treaty of Versailles' transfer of Shandong from Germany to Japan.
1921	The Chinese Communist Party was created with the aid of the Soviet Union.
1927	Chiang Kai-shek, Sun Yat-sen's successor to the leadership of the Kuomintang or Nationalist party (Guomindang in Pinyin), routed the regional warlords in his Northern Expedition, creating a new national government in Nanjing.
1934	Chiang Kai-shek forced the CCP out of southern China to Yan'an in northern China.
1932	Japan created a puppet regime, Manchukuo, in NE China.
1937-1945	Aided by the United States, China under the Nationalists outlasted Japan in the Second Sino-Japanese War, preserving China as a unified state.
1940's	Mao Zedong gained recognition for the participation of the CCP in the war.
August 1945	Chiang Kai-shek declared victory over the Japanese. On the brink of recognition as a great Asian power, China disintegrated into civil war.

32: Foreign Models for a Chinese Republic

The End of the Empire

Until recently, the period of 1911-1949, the history of the Republic of China, was written as a mere interregnum between the Qing and the ultimate Communist triumph. But did this period present a viable alternative to Communist rule before it was shunted off to Taiwan?

Begin with the ending of exams

We watched as the Qing came apart in the face of neiluan waihuan, internal rebellion and foreign invasion, falling in 1911 to the anti-Manchu revolutionaries, but perhaps falling before that, in 1905, when the exam system ended, taking with it the social support for dynastic reign that civil promotion through exams had provided from the Song to the Qing.

The exams were dismissed because its teachings were deemed irrelevant to the central issues of the 20th century. Yet nothing replaced this powerful systems for channeling bright young Chinese into civil service. When, in 1911, Puyi abdicated, both the bureaucracy of the exams and the emperor himself were gone, allowing Confucianism and its moral and political philosophies to come under attack as the cause of China's backwardness, the anchor that stilled its progress.

A philosophical void

Without the Confucian anchor that for millennia had held China together between dynastic transitions, people drifted freely in the modern currents of ideology. In the past, the gentry was able to reintegrate itself around a new political regime while retaining a familiar outline. But this time, in the 20th century, China fell apart politically and socially.

A new middle class

A bourgeoisie arose to run light industry and commercial ventures, with or without foreign partners. Under these entrepreneurs a new urban industrial working class, a proletariat¹⁹⁰, arose in big cities like Shanghai.

A new political scholar

Meanwhile a class of scholars separate from the civil bureaucracy came from the former gentry. These intelligentsia had Western PhDs in specialized fields rather than the omniscience of the old Confucian scholars. This group began to experiment with new social ideas.

Urban vs. rural

In addition to the elite scholars, by 1915 there are four million students of all kinds, some of them women, all of them urban, challenging China with a dichotomy between the urban and rural worlds.

All of these changes would make it far more difficult for political transition than the comparatively simple process of establishing a new dynasty.

Short Discussion

The question:

As we have seen, Chinese society had transformed into several independent classes from both urban and rural areas in the 20th century. What could unite these different classes into a whole? When you look at the world today, what are the major forces that unite people together within a nation?

My thoughts:

In general, people are unified by common problems they must solve and common traits they share. The problems can be external invasion, natural forces (storms, draughts), protection from fire and crime, economic dislocation, social issues (needs for education or family structure). The common traits include geography, language, religion, genealogy, ethnicity.

Confucianism and the exams were a major unifying force for millennia. Clearly, communism became a new force. Simple nationalism doesn't define the precise political force. I would have thought that a political force that arose out of Confucianism would have been the strongest component of any new moral and political foundation.

¹⁹⁰ Later, the Soviets would sniff the scent of an orthodox Communist revolution in this new proletariat, but Mao would prove that the basis for a revolution was not with the urban working class, the nature of which dominated Russia, but with the peasantry that was the bulk of China.

Republicanism

China's transition was unprecedented, lacking the elements of the *ancien régime*¹⁹¹:

- Bureaucracy
- Emperor
- Confucianism

Still, it had models to draw from in other nations and it chose to draw from the most modern of institutions: the republic. And it has largely been a republic since.

The word *republic* comes from the Latin term *res publica*.¹⁹² All of these are republics, yet all differ significantly:

The Republic of France

The United States of America

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

The People's Republic of China

The one common element is that none of these is a monarchy.¹⁹³ Since 1911, China has engaged in a series of experimentations, all of which originated from some Western model.

1912-1915	Constitutional republic
1915-1916	Constitutional monarchy
1916-1924	Parliamentary republic
1916-1928	Different attempts at military unification through a military republic
1927-present	Leninist one-party republic under Kuomintang and the CCP
1930's	Fascism
1949-present	Various forms of socialism including Maoism

How these models came about in China

They came to life through the interpretations of individual Chinese leaders and to them through foreign advisers.

¹⁹¹ *ancien régime*: a political or social system that has been displaced, typically by one more modern.

¹⁹² From [Wikipedia](#):

Res publica is a Latin phrase, loosely meaning 'public affair'. It is the root of the word 'republic', and the word 'commonwealth' has traditionally been used as a synonym for it; however translations vary widely according to the context. 'Res' is a nominative singular Latin noun for a substantive or concrete thing – as opposed to 'spes', which means something unreal or ethereal – and 'publica' is an attributive adjective meaning 'of and/or pertaining to the state or the public'. Hence a literal translation is, 'the public thing/affair'.

¹⁹³ From [Wikipedia](#) with my **emphasis**:

A republic is a form of government in which power resides in the people, and the government is ruled by elected leaders run according to law (from Latin: *res publica*), rather than inherited or appointed (such as through inheritance or divine mandate). **In modern times the definition of a republic is also commonly limited to a government which excludes a monarch.** Currently, 135 of the world's 206 sovereign states use the word "republic" as part of their official names.

Communism

Anti-Western

By the end of WW I, the Chinese were looking for an alternative to the kinds of Western democracies that had led Europe into a devastatingly brutal war. Those models of governance had not covered themselves with glory.

So the Chinese looked to communism, still a Western model, but not as thoroughly Western as the constitutional monarchies and elective democracies of Western Europe and the United States.

Comintern



The Chinese Communist Party was founded in 1921 on a tourist boat on South Lake in Jiaxing, as a member of the Communist International, the Comintern, an organization that was itself founded in 1919 in Moscow by Lenin. Indeed, the intellectuals who founded the CCP found kindred spirits in the ideologues of Russian revolution who were anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist.



Soviet communism claimed science as its ally, that it could predict the evolution of societies, and that the other Western models of governance were a thin layer above the greed of capitalism that led inevitably to the kind of imperialism that had humiliated China in the 19th century.

Communism offered China a role in the struggle against imperialism. Perhaps most important, communism legitimized a small ruling committee from which a band of strong-willed Chinese intellectuals could demand total obedience from their followers.

Lastly, communism offered rapid development, bypassing the capitalist phase and taking China directly to modern socialism.

Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, the co-founders of the CCP, embraced the promise of communism, spending their first two years organizing the urban proletariat to seize power.

The Comintern, however, reserved the right to make policy for all its members, demanding the same obedience of Chen and Li that they demanded of their followers. The Comintern insisted that China first become capitalist before becoming socialist. But the idea of wading through a bourgeois democratic phase alienated the young idealists of the CCP, who wanted revolution *now*.

The First United Front



In 1924, the CCP reluctantly acceded to the Comintern's demands that they join Sun Yat-sen's Kuomintang to form the First United Front, an alliance between the nationalists and the communists.

The Comintern sent many young Soviets to help the cause, arming and training 150,000 Chinese troops by 1926, the only Chinese army with an ideology. They marched from their base in Guangzhou to conquer most of the south, then marched north to unify China under a new government.

Despite their military success, the leaders of the CCP were dismayed. Stalin declared Sun Yat-sen and his protégé, Chiang Kai-shek, to be the embodiment of the Chinese bourgeoisie, destined to complete the bourgeois revolution that would necessarily precede socialism. It was a fine theory, but they neglected to tell Sun Yat-sen, or perhaps the diktat was lost in translation.

Oddly enough, since the Soviets didn't speak Chinese and the Chinese didn't speak Russian, all the meetings and the minutes of those minutes were in English. Further, the Kuomintang drew its support from the broad base of *merchants, land holders and professionals*¹⁹⁴ who were captivated by Sun Yat-sen's charisma. These were not, however, the capitalist bourgeoisie that the CCP would need to prop up as its enemy and even after Sun Yat-sen's death in 1925, the Kuomintang grew more powerful every day, overshadowing the CCP.

Chiang Kai-shek seemed to know of the Soviet plans to dump him. After consolidating his power at the Yangtze River, Chiang had the communists shot and the Russian advisers expelled, replacing them with advisers from Germany.

¹⁹⁴ I copied this phrase verbatim from the lecture notes, but it leaves me confused. Aren't 'merchants, landholders, and professionals' the very soul of bourgeois capitalism?

Discussion

Based on the study of the evolution of Western societies, Marx assumed that societies would go through a capitalist phase before attaining socialism. Why is this assumption problematic when applied to 20th century China?

My response:

No settled form of governance since Imperialism

Having abandoned 2000 years of dynastic rule, China had no immediate replacement and was led more by a charismatic leader than by an established form of governance with the corresponding generation-spanning institutions. What capitalists there were had no chance to establish a base of power against which the communists could revolt.

Fascism

German Advisers



German political advisers to Chiang Kai-shek

[Hans von Seeckt](#)¹⁹⁵ and [Alexander von Falkenhausen](#)¹⁹⁶

Italian Fascism and particularly German Fascism had a particular appeal for Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist party in the decade from 1928-1938, prompting Chiang to have closer relations with Germany than any other nation. Germans replaced Russians in advising the military and in personally advising Chiang on politics and economics. Chinese students educated in Germany returned to high levels in the Chinese bureaucracy.

¹⁹⁵ From [Wikipedia](#): From 1933–1935 [von Seeckt] served as an adviser to Chiang Kai-shek and helped to establish a new basis for Sino-German cooperation until 1941. In October 1933, Seeckt arrived in China to head the German military mission. At the time of his arrival, Sino-German relations were in a bad state owing to the racial arrogance of the Germans, and Chiang was considering firing the Germans and bringing in a French military mission. In order to save the military mission, Seeckt ordered the German officers to behave with more tact towards the Chinese and to start showing some respect for Chinese sensibilities. In this way, Seeckt saved Germany's position in China.

¹⁹⁶ From [Wikipedia](#): (*I'm quoting from a rather poorly written section of Wikipedia, but it gives the gist of Falkenhausen's role and the close relationship he had with Chiang Kai-shek.*) In 1930, Falkenhausen retired from the service and went to China to serve as Chiang Kai-shek's military advisor in 1934. In 1937 Nazi Germany officially allied themselves with the Empire of Japan, who by then had launched a war against the Republic of China during the Second Sino-Japanese War as part of the Sino-German cooperation to reform the Chinese Army. As a goodwill gesture to Japan, Germany recognized the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo and withdrew German support to China, including forcing Falkenhausen to resign his advisor post by threatening to have his family back in Germany punished for disloyalty. After a goodbye dinner party with Chiang Kai-shek's family, Falkenhausen promised he would never reveal any battle plans he had taught him to the Japanese.

Ideological Affinity and National Character



Chiang saw Germany as a model for China, since it had emerged industrially in the last third of the 19th century and had recovered rapidly from its defeat in WW I. He saw in Germany's recovery that military and industrial development was the key to national strength without the prerequisite of a political revolution.

Rather than politics, Chiang envisioned China as emulating Germany's model of a nation based on the particular character of its people: frugal, conservative, organized, and law-abiding. He sent two sons to study in Germany, telling one of them, Jiang Wei-kuo:

China should learn from a country that is solid, not fancy. We can't do things yet in the fancy way. We have nothing to learn from the Japanese. Their goods are too cheaply made. The Americans are too fancy, the British too slow, the French too vain. Germany is the country from which we can learn something. They can give us the base from which we can develop our own style, firm and solid.

Max Bauer, Chiang's first military adviser, urged him to study what Mussolini had done to motivate the 'degenerate' Italians. *Mein Kampf* was translated into Chinese and sold on the streets while Chinese soldiers were outfitted with blue shirts to emulate the brown and black of the Nazis.

Lost in Translation

法西斯主義
(Fàxīstī zhǔyì)

Yet there was little understanding in China of what fascism truly meant. Some thought it meant nationalism while others thought its focus was on planned economy. Still others picked up on the socialism of *national socialism*.

Tellingly, the word *fascism* was never translated to Chinese, only transliterated, while other political terms had specific Chinese definitions:

Democracy	People's rule
Socialism	Social society
Communism	Shared production
Fascism	Whatever you want it to mean

A Chinese Alternative



Only the practice of self-government prepared a country for self-government...

We of the East ask only one thing of the West. It is this—that you of the West stay away from us and our problems: leave us to solve our own problems, to work out our own destinies, while you spend your time looking after yours.

The greatest good you can do us, the lasting benefit you can confer on us, is to let us alone.¹⁹⁷

[Sudhindra Bose](#)

China did not become constitutional in the 1910s or communist in the 20s or fascist in the 30s. At the American Political Association's annual convention in 1915, Frank Goodnow asserted that the Chinese were unsuited for representative government. He was denounced by Charles Beard and then by Sudhindra Bose, as quoted above. Nevertheless, the two systems that remained from this period of political experimentation were the modern state with a modern military.

¹⁹⁷ For Bose' quote, see [An Early Tragedy of Comparative Constitutionalism: Frank Goodnow and the Chinese Republic](#), as published in the June 2012 issue of *Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal*, vol.21 no.3. The above quote is on page 588. If I have time someday, I'd like to read this paper.

Discussion

The period after the fall of the Qing, from around 1912 to the late 1930s, is sometimes seen as an interregnum or “waiting period” until the Communist Party of China finally rises to power. Yet the period of Nationalist rule from 1927 to 1937 has been called a “golden decade.” What might China look like today if Chiang Kai-shek had continued to rule the mainland after 1949?

My thoughts (Guangzhou fixed group):

I’m completely out of my depth in answering this question, so I’ll have to look at what other posters think, those who are far more knowledgeable of modern China.

I do think there is a concept of a national character that is a function of the shared traditions and education and cultural goals of the people, especially when the people is as homogeneous as China. I know many folks will argue that it’s not: that China includes Uigur’s and Manchus and Tibetans and Mongols, but it’s dominated by the Han Chinese and is less mixed than many European nations and far less mixed than the U.S. or England.

The culture dates back to Confucianism, to the elevation of the elderly and the educated, to service to the state. Though it reveres collectivism far less than Keightley would advocate, it has greater cultural focus on the relationship between family and state than most Western societies.

I believe Chiang Kai-shek would have found his national character and would have continued to build his authoritarian government with its centralized bureaucracy but I also believe he would not have survived the communications age (TV and radio and internet) without either revolution or evolution.

Chiang would either have changed or been overthrown. It’s impossible to predict what would have taken his place.

33: Military in Modern China

Assumptions Regarding the Military in Chinese History

Imperial China assumed success followed alongside the civilian bureaucracy, not the military ranks, and that culture would triumph over arms.

“You don’t use good iron for nails and you don’t use good men for soldiers.”

In other words, save the best men for government. Sunzi argued that the aim of war is to subdue your opponent, ideally without fighting.

But having lost the Opium Wars and experiencing total humiliation against the Japanese and in the Boxer Rebellion, there’s an assumption that the Chinese were a passive, non-militaristic people who seduced opponents with their culture. The truth is that though their weapons were no match for those of the newly industrialized nations, their history was filled with some of the most violent episodes in all of humanity.¹⁹⁸

The biggest Western export to China before 1950 was arms and ammunition. Since the 1910s, China has had, on a continuing basis, the largest number of men under arms as any nation.

Regional Militarization

In the middle of the 19th century, the Taiping Revolution caused so much destruction that in some districts, two-thirds of the population was dead or missing. Social services decayed, floods destroyed farmland, epidemics broke out. As one example, Guangde county went from a population of 300,000 to 6,000.

To combat the rebellion, militias formed at the provincial and regional levels. After the rebellion, unrest continued, requiring a semi-permanent militia. Yet there was no strong national commitment to a standing army.

Militarization of the State in Republican China

Creating a National Army

The national army began under the Qing by Yin Chang, a Manchu officer who was sent to Germany for training. Yin created a military code separate from civil law, which meant that soldiers were outside civilian jurisdiction, which remains the case today.

Until that point, militias fell under the control of the bureaucracy; the heads of the largest forces were provincial scholar-officials. The New Army introduced the concept of military professionals, who saluted instead of bowing, who wore uniforms instead of gowns, and who cut their Manchu queues to fit them in their helmets.

Yuan Shikai, the leader of the New Army, would ultimately take down the Qing dynasty to become the first president of the Chinese republic.

The Presidency of Yuan Shikai, 1913-1916



Taking their cue from the French and American revolutions, the Chinese turned to the republican form of government. A republic seemed to naturally integrate local and national interests. Yuan Shikai was more interested, however, in a strong national government. When members of parliament used their influence to secure local favors, Yuan did everything to suppress them, from bribery to murder, along the way crushing the young democracy and turning the Chinese state into a military dictatorship.

His critics would say that Yuan Shikai lived by the simple rule that *people feared weapons and loved gold*. Still, he gave lip service to legitimation by performing rites at the Temple of Heaven on Confucius’ birthday and in 1915 he sought to have himself declared emperor. Further, he asked Harvard University to send him a constitutional adviser. Frank Goodnow, the recommended adviser, an expert in comparative politics, felt China was not ready for a parliamentary republic and should make Yuan either president for life, or emperor.

Warlordism

Warlords were local military leaders who commanded their own personal army, participated in shifting alliances, and acted independently of any national authority. The warlords were constantly in conflict, leading to seven heads of state and a brief imperial restoration, from 1916 to 1928. The desire for national unity led to frequent attempts by individuals to conquer all the other warlords.

¹⁹⁸ Four of the ten worst human conflicts in history took place in China. See [here](#).

The brutality and incompetence of the warlords, along with the spectacle of Chinese fighting Chinese with foreign arms and advisers, created a force for nationalism and a desire to expel the foreigners.

Competing Models for the New Military

The two Chinese governments that remain today, the Nationalist government of Taiwan and the CCP of mainland China, both had their origins as warlord armies, tied to a single powerful military leader. Both knew that military strength was the road to power but not the means of keeping it. Under both governments, however, true power lay with the chairman of the military commission.

Both governments geared Chinese industry toward the military. From the 1920s through the '70s and '80s, industrial and military growth ran together. Having learned from the disastrous warlord period, these governments linked the military to a broad role.

From 1927 to 1937, the National government focused on domestic enemies, the Communists, and anticipated enemies, the Japanese. Chiang Kai-shek spent 50% of his budget on the military. With his German advisers, Chiang focused on:

1. Dominating regional warlords
2. Exterminating communists
3. Defending China from foreign forces

He kept his army separate from the people as a purely professional force. As Xunzi said, "The people are the water and the rulers the boat. The water can support the boat, but it can also sink it." This separation was a mistake, as the Chinese society remained militarized and violent and ripe for military organization.

Mao Zedong opted to immerse his army among the people, saying, "the soldiers are the fish and the people the water."

Chiang, however, was forced to create his professional army by Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931, followed by the massing of its troops on the Korean/Manchurian border.

Chiang had several quick successes against local militias and against the Chinese Communists, who he forced on the famous Long March.¹⁹⁹ He used his army as the school of the people, holding them as an example of moral conduct and loyalty.

New Life Movement

In 1934, Chiang attempted to use the army to teach that the values of Confucianism were in line with the military values of the day and were the cause of the strength of Italy and Germany.

The Military under the People's Republic, 1949-

The militarization of the soul...

The factors that militarized China included the eight-year war with Japan, the civil war between the Communists and the Nationalists, and then, under the rule of the CCP, Mao's effort to spread the military ethic throughout Chinese life. Mao and Chiang both ruled as Chairman of the Military Commission.

Chiang wanted civilians to obey orders like soldiers and talked about the militarization of Chinese society.

Mao went further, embedding military concepts in every facet of life, in political terminology, in the roll call of the civilian 'production brigades' and the huge mess halls in which they ate.

The height of Mao's militarization came during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, when Lin Biao, the leader of the People's Liberation Army (see page 311) turned the PLA into a cult and created a cult hero out of Lei Feng, a soldier who died when a truck backed over him. Mao had taken Chiang's promise of teaching China through its army and made it real.

Tiananmen Massacre Not a Surprise. By 1989 the cult of militarism had receded, which was why the massacre at Tiananmen Square came as such a shock. It shouldn't have. The old men who set policy, like Deng Xiaoping, knew revolution. From the 1950s to the '80s, it was true that the ingrained norms of military order controlled society

¹⁹⁹ From [Wikipedia](#): The Long March began Mao Zedong's ascent to power, whose leadership during the retreat gained him the support of the members of the party. The bitter struggles of the Long March, which was completed by only about one-tenth of the force that left Jiangxi, would come to represent a significant episode in the history of the Communist Party of China, and would seal the personal prestige of Mao and his supporters as the new leaders of the party in the following decades. However the true role of Mao in the Long March remains disputed, with many claims that Mao's role was heavily exaggerated and certain events in the Long March entirely fabricated.

without the need for force. But in 1989, the military emerged to suppress the largest popular demonstrations in world history because those old leaders understood from the early days of conflict and revolution that control was won with blood.

... and the absence of a civilian bureaucracy

As late as 1989, Chinese governments from Yuan Shikai to Jiang Zemin had shown they could exert tight military control over a billion people, governing and industrializing with absolute authority. But they had not shown that they could stand among the people as a legitimate government without the threat of force.

Discussion

On the secret police vs. the military

We watched a short news video of Beijing during the Great Leap Forward. I've quoted a fascinating thread on the whether we were seeing the influence of the military or the hidden influence of the secret police. I corrected spelling and added my own emphasis in places, but otherwise copied these comments literally.

Dougma I don't think the film supports a militarization thesis - there are no PLA on view. It was a tightly controlled society, but controlled by the secret police led by the Party, not by the military, though of course they needed to be kept on-side.

Leotra To say that they were controlled by the secret police in that time is inaccurate, the method for control was like in the Qing's street or family groups that were responsible for the whole collective, it is more efficient, no secret police would have been enough in that time and there was not an existing institution like that, historical facts, one thing is China and other Eastern Germany

Dougma I don't dispute that there were the social controls you outline, but there were also undoubtedly ununiformed public security officials. And who was telling the street groups what the policy was?

Pczhang @Dougma: Chinese policy is always distributed through the various local Communist Party branches. In China there is this organization called "居民委員會" (Residents' Committee) in urban areas and "村民委員會" (Villagers' Committee) in rural areas that usually carry out the nitty gritty mundane work of policy at the local level. I don't believe in the history of the PRC there was ever a secret police to the proportions of that seen in East Germany or the Soviet Union, and certainly did not leave a mark on Chinese society as a whole.

During the Cultural Revolution, when Mao was arguably at the zenith of his personal power, he moved against his foes within the leadership by motivating the masses - not through assassination. Many of his political opponents were tortured, but mostly at the hands of zealous masses, not at the hands of a secret police service.

To conclude from this particular video clip that Chinese society at the time was controlled by "the secret police led by the Party" is quite unwarranted.

Dougma @pczhang You misrepresent what I said. I did not conclude from the video clip that society was controlled by anyone. I think it absurd to draw any broad conclusion from one clip taken by a foreigner with an agenda. Nevertheless I have no doubt that the Ministry of State Security officials, who are non-uniformed, are tasked to maintain internal security and have the power of arrest, were quite as powerful as the Stasi in East Germany were (though this is not a comparison I myself originally made). I am well aware of the role of the various committees you cite, which did inculcate conformity to prevailing policy, but to suggest this was not backed by a secret police presence is naive. The reason Chinese people were frightened to be seen speaking to foreigners had nothing to do with the committees. Even today who is it that monitors and arrests dissidents? Of course every country has internal security forces but I am surprised you seek to down-play their strength in China. That Mao was able to incite ordinary people to behave appallingly does not seem to me to disprove the existence of the secret police.

Pczhang @Dougma: I am not trying to disprove the existence of the secret police, but stating that there is no evidence to show that the secret police "controlled" Chinese society at any point in the known history of the PRC.

The Ministry of State Security no doubt employs "plain clothes" police to monitor certain political dissidents. Local governments also have tendencies to hire "thugs" to carry out some dirty work for the government. But I seriously doubt that this enables them to "control" Chinese society - they're barely able to "monitor" it.

No doubt the Ministry of State Security monitored the interactions between foreigners and ordinary Chinese citizens, but based on how few foreign travelers there were in China at that time I seriously doubt that this could amount to evidence showing that the secret police "controlled" the entire Chinese society.

Communist China in its early years relied much more on effective propaganda to control Chinese society. Especially in the early years of the People's Republic, there was tremendous widespread popular support for Mao Zedong and the Communist Party, and people genuinely believed the ideology put forth by the Communist Party

Dougma I quite agree the MSS or secret police, however one wants to call them, never controlled China by themselves - they were directed and controlled by the Party. Perhaps my original brief comment was too elliptic. I was in fact arguing that those we saw in the film clip showed no particular sign of being militarized and I believe the authorities at that time were genuinely popular with most people. Your final paragraph is quite correct in my view. I still think that if the centre of Beijing looked empty that was because it was tightly controlled for security reasons by security personnel.

My own view is that part of the tragedy of Mao and the Party was that they had needed to develop powerfully centralised organs of control to win the civil war and though this is a good model for an army, it is too open to abuse for a political party and Mao abused his centralised power, including his control of the security organs, much as happened in the Soviet Union. I think Professor Kirby over-stressed the thesis of the militarisation of Chinese society, as it has always seemed to me that the army was fairly withdrawn from political conflict (and hence remained the object of popular admiration). Of course any army is inevitably the final guarantor of state stability, but it has always seemed to me that the Party has carefully guarded its political authority over the army.

Pczhang I think "militarizing" Chinese society is perhaps a misnomer. To speak of "militarizing" one often thinks about armaments.

What the Communists succeeded the most in doing was to find an effective system to organize and mobilize Chinese society. In this process they borrowed many ideas, principles, and methods from managing a modern professional army into organizing civil society, hence the impression of "militarization". Propaganda terminology also borrowed heavily from military jargon - in the early days of the People's Republic, many social projects were described as "campaigns" or "battles" (戰鬥、鬥爭), and were always completed "victoriously" (勝利) (as opposed to "成功" or "successfully"). But this "militarization" of Chinese society should not suggest that Chinese society as a whole was actively seeking armed conflict.

Dougma Yes, and of course they had the example of the Soviet Union where much the same sorts of terminology were equally commonplace.

Ronaldyeo The PLA had always been part of the Party; in fact, Jiang Zemin was the very first Chinese leader who had no military experience; though he did work in a military style factory....

Deng was actually a combatant in the seventh battalion of the People's army during the conflict against the KMT (this was before sino-japanese war). During the last years of the conflict between KMT and CCP in the last 1940s, he served as political commissar of a Field Army.

While the security services like Gong An and MSS were keeping a close-eye, most people, during that era, showed genuine support.

China was incredibly centralised from the 1950s to 1970s; the strong man approach was at its peak and it was only after the economic de-centralisation of the 1980s did the PLA slowly withdraw from the public and political sphere.

Dougma @ronaldyeo I think you risk getting the emphasis wrong. The fact that Deng had been a military commander, as inevitably had virtually all of the Party leadership as a result of the civil war, was not the source of his power, which came from the Party. For obvious reasons the loyalty of the PLA to Party policy has always been a high priority for the Party, but I don't think it was seriously in doubt in the early decades of communist rule. I think the uncertainty shown by elements of the military in the Tiananmen crisis has in fact made their role a little more problematic of late - it's harder to attract and motivate high calibre military personnel under current economic policies, but their role in a China becoming more assertive on the international stage is growing in importance.

Ronaldyeo Hi Dougma I think you risk misinterpreting my thoughts. I did say "most people, during that era, showed genuine support.". Furthermore, I did not say it was doubt, I did stated that "The PLA had

always been part of the Party" However, it was the PLA that kept the Red Guards in check just as the cultural revolution came to close.

However, their role has indeed more problematic of late; as evidenced by PLA troops building a road in disputed border territory right next to indian troops while Xi Jinping is on one of the biggest diplomatic trips of his administration.

Dougma

You're right we got away from the exact specifics of the question, but it was comment on the thesis presented in this week's lectures. I think that philosophically what we see is a communist, not a military mode of organisation, and I don't think they are exactly the same.

34: Culture and Revolution

Introduction

The themes of post-imperial China discussed so far include the growth of militarism, the search for a political model, and the growth of state power at the expense of civil society. Among other things, these themes had in common the search for a means of securing China's place in the world as a strong and independent nation.

One other approach to solving this problem was the cultural revolution: to revolutionize a nation's culture as the first step along the path of revolutionizing society.

How does culture shape a nation?

China and Culture (wenhua)



Mao Zedong: *to reshape culture in order to reshape the people.*

The central idea of previous generations of Chinese culture, in its role as an aid to maintaining an imperial empire, was to encourage people to behave properly according to the status and their role in society. My opinion: proper behavior by status and role is the core concept of Confucian thought. The exam system ingrained this concept with its concomitant submission to power.

In China it was always assumed that the cultures of the arts - literature, opera, poetry – affected the culture of society: behavior. Thus, studying the classics promoted cultural behavior.

With the end of the examination system in 1905, the most important source of shared culture evaporated.

Yuan Shikai tried and failed to replace the exams with 'constitutional Confucianism.' Some believed the reason for China's backwardness was, in fact, the Confucian tradition, denigrated as the 'old culture.'

In the early 20th century, Lu Xun and Hu Shi, promoted the **New Culture Movement** to oppose the 'old culture.' Chiang Kai-shek, in the 1930's, created the militaristic **New Life Movement**, as a counterrevolution to the New Culture Movement.

Revolution of High Culture

May Fourth Movement

Among the elite, the May Fourth Movement brought new universities with the explicitly stated goal by Cai Yuanpei of Peking University, that there would be unfettered academic freedom.

Chen Duxiu and New Youth

In 1915, before he co-founded the CCP, Chen Duxiu wrote the *Call to Youth*²⁰⁰, a famous call to cultural revolution.

Chinese compliment others by saying: 'He acts like an old man although still young.' Englishmen and Americans encourage each other by saying: 'Keep young while growing old.'

He told the youth of China to embrace a new culture instead of following the lead of their ancestors.

1. Be independent, not servile.
2. Be progressive, not conservative.
3. Be aggressive, not retiring.
4. Be cosmopolitan, not isolationist.
5. Be utilitarian, not formalistic.
6. Be scientific, not imaginative.

Most of his admonishments directly contradict Confucian tradition.

²⁰⁰ For a translation of Chen Duxiu's writings, see [here](#).

Short response

Read the following excerpt from Chen Duxiu's "Call to Youth," written in 1915. How does the author define freedom and slavery? Who is his intended audience? Does the call to "be independent, not servile!" provide a viable solution to the problems facing China in the 1910s and 20s?

Note that the reading is apparently the full text of the section on "Be independent, not servile."

My thoughts:

He's talking to all of China's youth, but also to those in power, that they should break with Confucian tradition. He defines slavery as both a state of being (enslaved) and a state of mind (thinking like a slave). Freedom is both equality of treatment and independence of thought.

I don't believe that completely discarding Confucian tradition was in the interests of the Chinese at the turn of the century. They needed industrialization and modern technology and a new form of government, not to mention a strong outward-facing military. By discarding all their traditions, they found themselves with a lot of guns turned upon themselves. Moderation and less of a puppy-dog entrancement with the fascists would have eased the transition.

Bai Hua – Plain Speech



Although novelists had turned to the vernacular during the Late Ming²⁰¹ most written text remained in classical Chinese (was this *wen yan*?).



Lu Xun, a short story writer of the early 20th century, quickly adopted *bai hua*. It offers a more economical writing, as in this example of classical (wei she me) vs. vernacular (he gu) for the question 'why?'

One important result was to make writing more accessible to the masses. In particular, when a proclamation is read to an illiterate person, it doesn't have to be translated to the language they speak, it's already in that language.

Nevertheless, since most Chinese were illiterate, for them the argument was moot and was engaged primarily by the elite.

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

Cultural Reorientation

Under Mao, the cultural revolution would take Chinese culture away from both the West and from Chinese tradition, and toward the Soviets. And then away from the Soviets to find its own niche.

In the early years of the People's Republic, Western ideas and especially Western religions were suppressed. Western schools were closed and correspondence with foreigners was deemed criminal. Proletarian simplicity was advocated over Western fashion, music, and culture.

By the 1960s the cultural revolution had turned against Chinese tradition as well, taking language beyond *bai hua* to simplify written characters, which had the effect of making classic texts and literature indecipherable to those educated under the new regime.

Jiang Qing and Cultural Revolution

Art as a vehicle for the new way

From 1966 to '76, Mao's coterie took control over the cultural changes, tying them to his particular charisma. His contribution to the history of socialism was to turn it from one based on sharing the outputs of society to a spiritual sharing even before the economy was up to the task of socialism.

Though Mao himself read the classical literature, he didn't want the classics as part of a scholarly curriculum, preferring to use literature to promote his ideas. Famously, he viewed literature "as the artistic crystallization of the political aspirations of the Communist party."

Mao felt that literature should idealize the lives of peasants and soldiers, that "there is no such thing as art for art's sake."²⁰²

²⁰¹ See page 204 for a discussion of the use of vernacular in novels, instead of the traditional *wen yan* of classic literature.

²⁰² See page 204 yet again. This time not for the vernacular, but how the classics were used for *wen vi zai dao*, as a vehicle for the way. *Plus ça change*.

My thoughts: I don't see Mao's views as all that different from the Imperial elite using the Confucian classics, through the exam system, to cement the rigid respect for status during the dynastic period. The difference was not in Mao's advocacy of literature as a means of promoting ideology, but in his strict censorship of anything contrary to his ideology.

Jiang Qing²⁰³

Also known as *Blue Apple*, Mao's last wife became the leading proponent of cultural dictatorship, insisting that all we should ever celebrate in the arts is the labor of the peasants and the workers, and the guardianship provided by the PLA. She insisted upon this over the objections of Deng Xiaoping, who rather enjoyed 'feudal art' like Peking opera.

For the duration of Mao's cultural revolution, every work of art that failed to conform was proscribed.²⁰⁴ Instead, Mao was enforced as the sole muse of the Chinese artist.

The Little Red Book was all students had to memorize, and if they did, they would engage in *the living study of Mao Zedong thought*. New forms of art sponsored by the state took the place of the pantheon of historic Chinese art, several millennia of creative works.

Reading: The Red Lantern

The Red Lantern, first produced in 1964, celebrates the resistance of revolutionary forces against the Japanese occupation during the Anti-Japanese War 抗日戰爭 (Kangri zhanzheng). The main characters, Li Yuhe, Diemei, and "Grandma," are not blood-related, but as a family they overcome difficulty and guard a red lantern, from which the play derives its name.

Li sneaks home with a secret code hidden in a canteen of porridge. The dialogue is treacly and without nuance, like a child's fable. The red lantern, a family heirloom "lighted the way for us poor people, for workers."

If drama is defined as the presentation and resolution of inner conflict, *The Red Lantern* offers no drama and certainly no subtlety. "We are one family even with the wall," they solemnly intone.

Enemy agents surround the house and try repeatedly to get the secret code. Tieh-mei's father must leave and face the danger outside. He drinks an overtly symbolic bowl of wine. Granny says "Don't cry, Tieh-mei. Our family has this rule: when one of us leaves, nobody must cry."

In the arts there is a line distinguishing drama and melodrama. To quote one [website](#)²⁰⁵ on writing: "The last thing an author wants is for his work to be labeled melodramatic—because it means his story has stepped over the bounds of realistic conflict and tension into the realm of the sensationalized and overwrought." In *The Red Lantern*, the playwright high-stepped over the line.

²⁰³ From [Wikipedia](#): Jiang Qing (Chiang Ching; March 19, 1914 – May 14, 1991) was the pseudonym used by the major Communist Party of China political figure who was Mao Zedong's last wife. In the West, Jiang was known as Madame Mao. She went by the stage name Lán Píng during her acting career, and was known by various other names during her life. She married Mao in Yan'an in November 1938 and served as Communist China's first first lady. Jiang Qing was best known for playing a major role in the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) and for forming the radical political alliance known as the "Gang of Four". She was named the "Great Flag-carrier of the Proletarian Culture"

Jiang Qing served as Mao's personal secretary in the 1940s and was head of the Film Section of the CPC Propaganda Department in the 1950s. In the early 1960s, she made a bid for power during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). In 1966 she was appointed deputy director of the Central Cultural Revolution Group and claimed real power over Chinese politics for the first time.

Before Mao's death, the Gang of Four maintained control of many of China's political institutions, including the media and propaganda. However, Jiang's political success was limited. When Mao died in 1976, she lost the support and justification for her political activities. She was arrested in October 1976 by Hua Guofeng and his allies, and was subsequently accused of being counter-revolutionary. Since then, Jiang Qing and Lin Biao have been branded by official historical documents in China as the "Lin Biao and Jiang Qing Counter-revolutionary Cliques", to which most of the blame for the damage and devastation caused by the Cultural Revolution was assigned. The assessments of western scholars have not been as uniformly critical. Though initially sentenced to execution, her sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 1983, and in May 1991 she was released for medical treatment. Before returning to prison, she committed suicide.

²⁰⁴ Not unlike the Soviet proscription of art and literature during the communist era. See [here](#).

²⁰⁵ [K.M. Weiland](#), *Drama vs. Melodrama: Can You Tell the Difference*.

At one point, Granny tells the story of the CCP overcoming the warlords and then the Japanese. She doesn't just tell it, she has to stand up to tell it. Tieh-mei doesn't just listen, she announces that "Granny tells a stirring tale of the revolution."

*The red lantern's light
Shines on my father fighting those wild beasts.
Generation shall fight on after generation,
Never leaving the field Until the victory is won.
(Granny and Tieh-mei hold high the red lantern, which throws a radiant light over the stage.)*

Just a tad overwrought.

We move on now, to Li as a hostage to the evil enemy who speaks in the language of capitalism, "beliefs can be bought or sold. The main thing is to make a profit." Of course, Li laughs in their faces, "We Communists are tough. We look on death as nothing."

Hatoyama, the enemy captain, is a believer in Buddhism. Li is not. So much for Buddhism under Mao. Hatoyama is about self-preservation, Buddhism, capitalism. Li is about the communal spirit, abstention, resistance.

Thus does Mao's culture follow Mao's ideology in lockstep.

The Red Detachment of Women²⁰⁶

Nixon saw this ballet in 1972 in Beijing. It's marching music, rather pleasant. It's a ballet that begins with a beautiful woman suspended from chains. An obviously evil man tears off her chains rudely so she can dance. Evil, obviously smirking men with armbands trot around bearing lanterns. Our heroine always wears an expression of deep suffering. The evil men are always grinning and smirking.

Swallow and Dawn

This story embodies Mao's *Theory of Contradictions*.²⁰⁷

When something goes wrong with [a construction] crane, it means there's an internal contradiction. So check to find the principle aspect of that contradiction. If the crane is rocking, it means a bent shaft or a faulty wheel.

In other words, if something is wrong with the world, seek out the problem and fix it. Don't persist in a static existence of slavery to capitalism and imperialism.

²⁰⁶ From [Wikipedia](#): Adapted from the earlier film of the same title under the personal direction of Zhou Enlai, which in turn adapted from the novel by Liang Xin, it depicts the liberation of a peasant girl in Hainan Island and her rise in the Chinese Communist Party. The novel was based on the true stories of the 100+ member strong all-female Special Company of the 2nd Independent Division of Chinese Red Army, first formed in May 1931. As the communist base in Hainan was destroyed by the nationalists, most of the members of the female detachment survived, partially because they were women and easier to hide among the local populace who were sympathetic to their cause....

...The ballet was later adapted to a Beijing opera in 1964...It is one of the so-called eight model plays, the only plays, ballets and operas permitted in China during the Cultural Revolution... and is now part of the permanent repertoire of the National Ballet of China.

Despite its political overtones and the historical background when it was created, it remains a favorite of music and ballet lovers nearly 30 years after the Cultural Revolution in China. Many numbers were based on the folk songs of Hainan Island, a place that, with its coconut trees rustling in tropical wind, evokes much romantic ethos. Though there are unmistakable elements of Chinese music, the music of this ballet was performed with basically a Western symphony orchestra.

²⁰⁷ From [Wikipedia](#): Along with On Practice, [On Contradiction] forms the philosophical underpinnings of the political ideology that would later become Maoism. It was written in August 1937, as an interpretation of the philosophy of dialectical materialism, while Mao was at his guerrilla base in Yen-an. Mao suggests that all movement and life is a result of contradiction. Mao separates his paper into different sections: the two world outlooks, the universality of contradiction, the particularity of contradiction, the principal contradiction and principal aspect of contradiction, the identity and struggle of aspects of contradiction, the place of antagonism in contradiction, and finally the conclusion. Mao furthers the theme laid out in his essay On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People. Mao describes existence as being made up of constant transformation and contradiction. Nothing is constant as in metaphysics and can only exist based on opposing contradictions. He uses the concept of contradiction to explain different Chinese historical time periods and social events. Mao's form of talking about contradiction creates a modified concept that brought forth the ideal of Chinese Marxism.

Discussion

After reading and watching and listening to various cultural outputs from the May 4th Movement to the Cultural Revolution, using evidence (giving specific examples) from these pieces, what role do you think culture played in society during this period? How does culture relate to revolution? You may choose to focus on a specific era or look at the whole period.

My response:

Art was written and performed exclusively in service to the CCP. The Red Lantern espoused the principle of communal thought, that the best families were created outside the lineage of father and mother, bound by common principles and especially by common enemies, a bond stronger than blood. The enemy were the Japanese, steeped in capitalism, in bacchanalian pursuits and selfish thoughts. Art was melodrama, never questioning its premises, starkly painting good and evil.

Swallow and Dawn reinforced the principles Mao wrote about in On Contradiction, which he adapted from Marx' and Engels' dialectical materialism. The principle, boiled down for the masses, is that capitalism and imperialism are old broken systems that enslave the proletariat and must be fixed through revolution. That people and systems evolve by identifying and fixing the contradictions (I think that's what it means.)

Once again, I'm compelled to quote Dougma's response as superior to mine²⁰⁸:

The May 4th intellectuals seem basically to have been so contemptuous of what was happening to China that they wanted to jettison the whole pre-existing Chinese culture. Most of them took their initial cultural inputs from Japan, though Japan of course had imbibed much European culture and influence and this was refracted on to China. The work of the major writers tended to gravitate to the more easily translatable genres of essays and the novel, though there were playwrights and poets, all taking their models from Japan and Europe, but producing some fine work. Lu Xun and Lao She for example produced stories and novels of social criticism which can rank with what was produced in the countries they modeled themselves on. But did China want the literature of capitalist individualism?

The great counter-example was of course the Soviet Union and the home for the dissident intellectual that communism offered. Modernism in Europe was in itself perhaps a response to the perceived evils of industrial capitalism, but it was not a literature that offered the intellectual a powerful social role. Intellectuals like Chen Duxiu were perhaps attracted to communism because it was a modern western ideology that offered a plank for the individual. Even Lu Xun was sucked into its gravitational pull. On balance I fear the greatest result of the cultural upheaval of the early decades was to facilitate communism.

Mao seemed initially as if he might be prepared to countenance artistic creativity, but his increasing unwillingness to tolerate disagreement and his almost mechanistic belief in his ability as an engineer of human souls led to the disasters of the Cultural Revolution. Sometimes one can nostalgically smile at the sheer incongruity of these pastiche productions based on nineteenth century European art forms, and I confess I find the musical and narrative drive of the 'Red Detachment' can carry me along if I'm in mawkish mood, but then I get back to thinking about those writers and artists who met a violent end because they didn't fit the mould.

I find it hard to believe that culture played any serious role in China during the Cultural Revolution period. People conformed because they were scared but I suspect they privately felt derision for Jiang Ching all along. I think people always preferred the apolitical juggling troupes - not even Mao could claim all those plates stayed in the air because of dialectical materialism.

... Contradiction within an object fuels its development and evolution...

... With dialectical materialism we can look at the concrete differences between objects and further understand their growth...

Also from [Wikipedia](#): Dialectical materialism (sometimes abbreviated diamat) is a philosophy of science and nature, based on the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels... The main idea of dialectical materialism lies in the concept of the evolution of the natural world and the emergence of new qualities of being at new stages of evolution. As Z. A. Jordan notes, "Engels made constant use of the metaphysical insight that the higher level of existence emerges from and has its roots in the lower; that the higher level constitutes a new order of being with its irreducible laws; and that this process of evolutionary advance is governed by laws of development which reflect basic properties of 'matter in motion as a whole!'"

²⁰⁸ There are so many articulate contributors who know so much more than me. I list Dougma and Pczhang and a few others because there's only so much time to read responses. I try to take the time to read theirs.

Conclusion

Some cultural works, like the Red Detachment of Women, despite being propaganda pieces were beautiful and entertaining. Many were not. But the censorship process was so cumbersome that few were approved during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution and the Chinese were forced to watch the same productions over and over.

Jiang Qing became one of the most hated people in China.

Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art

Mao's speech is translated into the public domain at www.marxists.org. The full text is [here](#). Following is my summary of Part II of his speech, which is a larger portion than the excerpt given to the class.

“Should we devote ourselves to raising standards, or should we devote ourselves to popularization?”

The basis for literature and art starts with an understanding of what the masses can absorb, because you cannot raise the standards of the masses by starting at the level of the bourgeoisie. “you must raise a bucket from the ground.”

Nor do you raise the standards to the false heights of the bourgeoisie, you raise in the direction of cultural advance of the proletariat.

The life of the masses must be the source of all literature and art. Works of the past are not a source, they are part of a stream which “we must on no account reject.”

“Revolutionary literature and art should create a variety of characters out of real life and help the masses to propel history forward.”

“Popular works are simpler and plainer... Works of a higher quality, being more polished, are more difficult to produce and in general do not circulate so easily”

“For [the peasants fighting the revolution] the prime need is not ‘more flowers on the brocade’ but ‘fuel in snowy weather’... therefore, popularization is the more pressing task”

“Internationally, the good experience of foreign countries, and especially Soviet experience, can also serve to guide us. With us, therefore, the raising of standards is based on popularization, while popularization is guided by the raising of standards.”

“literature and art of a higher level are entirely necessary for [the more educated cadres]. To ignore this would be a mistake.”

“Whether more advanced or elementary, all our literature and art are for the masses.”

“We should esteem the [authors, playwrights, artists, and composers], for they are very valuable to our cause. But we should tell them that no revolutionary writer or artist can do any meaningful work unless he is closely linked with the masses, gives expression to their thoughts and feelings and serves them as a loyal spokesman. Only by speaking for the masses can he educate them and only by being their pupil can he be their teacher. If he regards himself as their master, as an aristocrat who lords it over the “lower orders”, then, no matter how talented he may be, he will not be needed by the masses and his work will have no future.”

“Is this attitude of ours utilitarian?... We are proletarian revolutionary utilitarians and take as our point of departure the unity of the present and future interests of the broadest masses”

“It is wrong to depart from this policy and anything at variance with it must be duly corrected.”

My contribution to the discussion:

I read Part II of the full text of the speech on www.marxists.org, which is a slightly different translation, but should be the same content.

There is certainly a connection between the censorship of the 1960s and Mao's speech in 1942, but there is also considerable departure. In 1942, he accepted the use of prior literature and art when he said that works of the past though not a source for new art, are part of a stream which “we must on no account reject.” If I understand correctly, during the cultural revolution, only newly approved material was presented and it seems the past was rejected.

Mao was saying that in general, new material was to be derived from the lives of the masses to fuel the revolution. Jiang appears to have followed that slavishly, only providing pure propaganda pieces, when Mao in 1942 also gave license for art drawn from the lives of the masses to provide inspiration, and not necessarily pure propaganda.

Mao closed with the statement that “It is wrong to depart from this policy and anything at variance with it must be duly corrected.” Jiang took that part to heart.

35: Engineering a Modern China

Introduction

Two trends dominated the last century and shaped China's development:

1. Transition from a culture of elite scholar officials educated in the arts, to one of engineers and technocrats.
2. A new focus on building modern infrastructure.

Some of the major changes taking place:

Transportation

Expressways growing from 2,000 km to 65,000 km in the last 20 years, with a 20% annual growth in major (trunk) highways, making it the second largest in the world.

Automobile production doubling to 32 million in in the next six years.

Rail expanded from 223 miles in 1900 to 57,000 miles, second only to Russia and the U.S., but carrying many more passengers and freight.

High speed rail, that is, rail supporting speeds over 125 mph, did not exist before 2006 and now exceeds 4,000 miles, the longest in the world. It will triple in the next three years.

Urban Migration and the Hukou System

Several hundred million Chinese have moved to the cities. This weakens the *hukou* system²⁰⁹, the household registration system that kept the poor in their villages during the Maoist period.

Booming Growth

The town of Kunshan has a per capita income among its legal residents of \$51,000. It has an additional 1.2 million temporary residents who support the high-tech industries.

Short Response

We generally think of expansion of highways and railways as a good thing, and for good reasons. What do you think are some of the effects of China's expanding highway and railway system?

Road and rail today has the effect of rivers and canals of ancient times. The fortunes of the towns and villages depend on the routes over land and water. I would expect the politics and corruption surrounding those routes to be intense.

Engineering

A shift in educational values

From the Song to 1905, the civil service exam, based on the study of liberal arts, defined the elite and established a common perspective among government officials. They memorized the classics and studied the enduring principles of human behavior.

After 1905, Chinese education tended toward math, science, and engineering. The May Fourth Movement initiated an attack on the Confucian foundation of Chinese culture. By 1949, when the mainland fell to the CCP, less than 10% of Chinese university graduates had liberal arts degrees.

²⁰⁹ From [Wikipedia](#):

A hukou is a record in the system of household registration required by law in the People's Republic of China (mainland China). The system itself is more properly called "hujū", and has origins in ancient China.

A household registration record officially identifies a person as a resident of an area and includes identifying information such as name, parents, spouse, and date of birth. A hukou can also refer to a family register in many contexts since the household registration record is issued per family, and usually includes the births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and moves, of all members in the family.

Because of its entrenchment of social strata, especially as between rural and urban residency status, the hukou system is often regarded as a caste system of China. The system descends in part from ancient Chinese systems of household registration, which also influenced neighbouring countries. In present times, a similar household registration system exists within the public administration structures of Japan (koseki), Vietnam (Hộ khẩu), and North Korea (Hoju). In South Korea, the Hoju system was abolished on 1 January 2008. While unrelated in origin, propiska in the Soviet Union had a similar purpose.

Technocratic leadership

Two themes dominated 20th century Chinese education:

1. The belief that culture exists only to serve the state.
2. The belief that in the age of science, government could engineer the future.²¹⁰

The second theme led to projects like the Three Gorges Dam, conceived by Sun Yat-sen in 1921 and finally built by Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao.

Nearly every member of the recent Standing Committees of the Politburo of the CCP, the seven to nine men who run China, have engineering training.

In 2011, 340,000 Chinese students were overseas, 200,000 in the U.S., more than half studying engineering, science, or management.

Engineering Culture

In 1926, Soviet engineer Peter Palchinsky wrote to the Soviet prime minister that the 20th century was more about technology than communism, that the international community needed a *Tekhintern* rather than a *Komintern*.

In contrast to other professions – law, medicine, religion, the arts – engineers obtained autonomy and a privileged status in modern China, first by the nationalists and then by the communists. The only other profession with similar status was the career military officer, with the obvious difference that engineers don't threaten the state when they gain autonomy. The state and the engineer are mutually dependent.

The Legacy of Sun Yat-sen

China's modern engineering state

In 1922, Sun Yat-sen published his industrial plan²¹¹, *shiye jihua*, six years before the Nationalists reached power. He envisioned a state with 100,000 miles of rail, a dam at the Three Gorges, and a car in every garage. What? No chickens?

His plan for a rail network emphasized politics over economics and became the model for the actual rail network.

He is known as the *guo fu*, the father of modern China.

From an excerpt of the industrial plan...

- After WW I, what do we do with \$120 million per day of war industry and capacity, now turned to peace?
- China will be a market for all the world's surplus machinery to enable the industrial revolution, machinery for farms, mines, utilities, factories, and transit.
- China will take America's place as the world's young industrial nation.
- Three proposals:
 - An international bureau of standards for materials and machinery, to eliminate waste.
 - Get the Chinese people to sign onto a new industrialization plan
 - Sign a contract with a foreign company to assist in China's development along the lines of Sun Yat-sen's proposal

The new Nanjing

A year after the Nationalists reached power in 1927, they had an engineering plan for rebuilding Nanjing as the new capital. The plan included a government district situated west of the old Ming palace, a headquarters building for the Kuomintang, 12 new parks and tree-lined avenues. The city wall would be retained, with a ring road on top.

It was the first Chinese city that was planned in every detail.

In contrast, the CCP modernized Beijing in Soviet fashion. Five hundred years of historical architecture, except for the Forbidden City, were demolished or diminished.

International Science and Technology

The nationalists required that every university have a school of science, engineering, medicine or agriculture.

National Resources Commission. Technical students from these schools were recruited into this new 'super bureaucracy' that ran the SOEs in mining and defense and industry. Led by geologist, Weng Wenhao, the NRC was

²¹⁰ But wasn't that the belief in the age of the Sage Kings when Yu, faced with an horrific flood, channeled and drained rivers and dried out the land? That man conquers nature? See page 12.

²¹¹ a.k.a. *The International Development of China*, 238 pages, available [here](#).

China's largest employer, even before the war with Japan, and outlasted the Nationalists. By 1947, it employed more than a half million with 70% of China's industrial capital at its disposal. Weng became premier of the Republic in 1948.

Engineering during the rise and fall of Mao

After the defeat of the Nationalists, the mainland engineers worked in cooperation with partners from the Eastern Bloc nations, which led to the creation of technical schools along Soviet models, such as Tsinghua University. Most degree programs were in industrial engineering.

Enrollment expanded in the 1950's, but Mao's disdain for scientific planning shut off those engineers from the government. Nevertheless, by 1979 the rank of engineer was restored to the bureaucracy, the universities began reopening and the percentage of engineering majors rose to the former levels of a third of all students, and to 90% of those studying abroad.

Engineering after Mao

Engineering grew in importance under Jiang Zemin, who counted 14 engineers among his 24 politburo (full and alternate) members. Jiang himself was an engineer.

[... the lecture follows with more recitation of statistics and backgrounds to further hammer the point of the domination of engineers in national politics ...]²¹²

China may have moved toward a socialist economy, but the state remains committed to Sun Yat-sen's ideals of commitment to infrastructure. China's new construction of superhighways compares to Eisenhower's interstate highway construction of the 1950's. In only 15 years, Shanghai has been largely rebuilt, with 13 subway lines, four tunnels, three bridges, an elevated highway system, and two airports.

Is all this development to the good?

Chinese Infrastructure Today and in the Future

The U.S. highway and rail systems, which inspired the Chinese, now are aging and require heavy maintenance and are almost impossible to expand.²¹³

Infrastructure and national unity are intertwined. The railways from Sichuan to Lhasa will cost \$10 billion. It's a political project to link the PRC with a restive outlying region.

Physical infrastructure is a mixed blessing. It opens China to international products and influence and it disrupts the environment. The Three Gorges Dam is a prime example of the latter.

If Taiwan is any guide, the lawyers will take more seats at the political table.

Discussion on promotional videos of Nanjing, Shanghai, and Beijing

I didn't get all that much out of these videos.

²¹² Perhaps if the CCP is so concerned about restoring the rule of law to China, it should promote a few more jurists! The dominance of lawyers in U.S. politics is hardly a good thing. Some balance might be a good idea for both countries.

²¹³ But this is because of the U.S. rule of law, which prohibits the taking of private property even through eminent domain. The Chinese experience might well be different.

36: Against the Empire of the Sun: USA and China

Introduction

Consequences of the War for the U.S.

The US began a military buildup and an economic emergence that changed its place in the world and made it a permanent Pacific power. The US fought two more wars in Asia and still maintains troops in Korea.

Consequences of the War for China

China had been preparing for the war since 1931 when Japan seized the NE provinces and installed Puyi as the head of the puppet state of Manchuko.

In 1937, the National government had established a currency and a new central army and was the internationally recognized reigning authority. No one imagined then that they would fall to the communists shortly after the war.

The War of 1937-1945

Economic and social consequences

- 15 to 20 million Chinese died
- Destruction of industry, including mining
- Soviet theft of \$2 billion of Chinese industrial equipment
- Rampant inflation of Chinese currency, from 4 yuan to the dollar in 1937, to 23 million yuan to the dollar in 1949

Agricultural Consequences

- 65% of China's pre-war output
- Labor shortage caused by:
 - Deaths of millions of farmers
 - Forced conscription of millions of others.
- Conscription of tools, carts, and livestock for the war
- Famine in Henan Province in 1942 and '43

Political Consequences

The burdens, particularly of inflation, were borne mostly by those groups loyal to the Nationalist regime: the military, the bureaucracy, and the elite.

Psychological Consequences

Why would China engage in a three-year civil war after eight years of Japanese brutality? Why would they not join together to lick their wounds and rebuild?

Perhaps because the brutality of war inured them to violence. Japan was determined to break the will of the Chinese resistance.

Nanjing, destroyed in the Taiping rebellion, besieged in 1912, was once again subjected to horrific brutality under the Japanese in 1937. This was the infamous Rape of Nanking, witnessed by many foreign observers, that turned world opinion against Japan and remains a source of tension between China and Japan. More than any other event, the Rape of Nanking made Germany and Japan partners in their crimes against humanity.

From W.H. Auden's poem, *Here War is Simple*.

*Here war is harmless like a monument:
A telephone is talking to a man;
Flags on a map declare that troops were sent;
A boy brings milk in bowls. There is a plan
For living men in terror of their lives,
Who thirst at nine who were to thirst at noon,
Who can be lost and are, who miss their wives
And, unlike an idea, can die too soon.
Yet ideas can be true, although men die:
For we have seen a myriad faces
Ecstatic from one lie,*

*And maps can really point to places
Where life is evil now.
Nanking. Dachau.*

The Chinese-American Alliance

Never before or since were China and the US as close as during WW II.

Other nations have had a special relationship with China:

England	19 th century mentors
Germany	1930s
Russia	1920s founding the CCP and KMT 1950s building Chinese industry

The US-China alliance was formed during the war by a common enemy rather than born out of some long-standing relationship over mutual geographic, political or commercial interests. Indeed, the US did not come to China's aid until it, too, had been attacked by Japan.

The Nationalist government had long term goals to create a single-party state, to restore China as a great military power, to gain control over the treaty ports and the role of foreigners.

The US wanted China to remain open to private investment.

After the war, these conflicting goals weakened an alliance that had been formed solely to defeat Japan.

Prior to the war, there were cultural exchanges: the YMCA and the founding of some universities. Most Chinese who went abroad to study, went to the US. But there was little interaction at the government level.

For those who believe that cultural exchange leads to governmental understanding, there's little evidence from this period.

Some in the US hoped that China's 400 million people would become a market for American goods. But through the 1920s and '30s, the US was 2nd or 3rd among trading partners.

FDR thought that post-war China would become a liberal government and a strong ally, even though there were no historical precedents to support this idea.

Generals Joseph Stillwell and Patrick Hurley

FDR sent Stillwell to China to command allied troops. Chiang Kai-shek refused to let this happen.

FDR sent Hurley to heal divisions between the Nationalists and the CCP. Hurley envisioned a two-party system, like the Republicans and Democrats, not seeing that neither side wanted a representative democracy. He made little effort to understand the Chinese, imposed his American perspectives, and spoke disparagingly of Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong.

After the War

FDR ceded extraterritorial rights in his desire to treat China as a great power, but it was the way in which China sought that power that led to the greatest differences. China planned for a state-run socialist economy that funneled all foreign and domestic investment into the state, just as Sun Yat-sen had imagined. Chinese laws restricted the activities of Americans and still do.

Senator Wherry of Nebraska argued for a Marshall plan for China, to strengthen Chiang Kai-shek in the face of Mao's CCP, and to rebuild China industrially. But such support was not universal, and the two nations grew distant.

Two New Chinas

Chiang Kai-shek may have lost more territory than any other leader in history, first to the Japanese, then to Mao, finally retreating to Taiwan.

The Communists are a Disease of the Heart

On the video *China: The Roots of Madness*

The video shows images of flying the Burma hump. I remember reading about this years ago when I studied the flights of American aircraft in WW II. My father flew as a gunner in the U.S. 8th Army Air Force (over Germany) and I was then an avid student of WW II.

Clearly from an American perspective, Theodore White relates Mao's story of George Washington, diminishing Mao's understanding of technology (that he didn't know in what century electricity had been popularized), emphasizing American support for the Nationalists and the danger of the Communists. He recalls Chiang saying, "the Japanese are a disease of the skin, the Communists are a disease of the heart," and reports this as a "prophetic vision of an apocalypse to come." Of course, he's writing in retrospective in the middle of both the cold war with Russia and the Vietnam war, when America sees itself in an ideological fight to the death with the Communists.

To cement this difference, he says about Mao that, "his self-assuredness freezes to dogma...his truths become, for Communists, a holy script."

He shows America as fighting side-by-side with the Chinese, but shows how the alliance was with the Nationalists, not the Communists and uses that to imply that the alliance necessarily dissolved when the Nationalists lost the civil war, when in fact the alliance dissolved more simply with the defeat of Japan.

Part 9: Communist Liberations

37: Rise of the Communist Party

"A Revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture. It cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained, & magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, by which one class overthrows another. And a rural revolution is a revolution by which the peasantry overthrows the power of the feudal landlord class."

革命不是請客吃飯
不是繪畫繡花
不是寫文章
不能那樣雅緻
那樣從容不迫，文質彬彬
那樣溫良恭儉讓
革命是暴動 是一個階級推翻
另一個階級的暴烈的行動。
農村革命是農民階級推翻
封建地主階級的權力的革命。

Part 9 Introduction

Founded in 1921 with only 57 members, the CCP had millions of members by 1949 and ruled all of China. Mao Zedong was only 28 when he attended the first Congress, but he led that ruling party in 1949. John Fairbank wrote that no one in human history ever equaled that accomplishment, given the sheer size and magnificent history of China.

How did the CCP come to power? The success was in part the result of early efforts under the Comintern to plan the revolution. But not everything was planned in advance. Many of the twists and turns of the success of the CCP were due to on-the-fly adaptations of political tactics.

The Period of Orthodoxy

In its first six years, from 1921 to 1927, Stalin guided the CCP toward a bourgeois revolution even though China had a tiny proletariat. Further, Stalin enlisted China in its global struggle against capitalist imperialism, its National Liberation Struggles. Lastly, the CCP was joined in an unholy alliance - the First United Front - with the Kuomintang. In 1927, Chiang Kai-shek crushed the CCP.

For more details the First United Front, see page 281.

The Period of Experimentation



Mao saw the overthrow of the existing rural order as the central objective of revolution. This is a Chinese-centered view of a world dominated by rural peasantry rather than the kind of urban proletariat that was prevalent in industrialized Europe.

Autumn Harvest Uprising

Mao tried his form of peasant revolution in Hunan. It was put down and he was arrested, bribing his way to freedom while the peasants he led were massacred. From this he learned that "political power comes from the barrel of a gun."

Rather than going underground, he established a base in an inaccessible region of the Jinggang Shan mountains, and founded the Red Army with a local warlord named Zhu De. They gathered 10,000 men and armed them with 2,000 guns.

In 1931, he founded the Chinese Soviet Republic in Jiangxi. Chiang Kai-shek launched five campaigns against him. The Comintern was also opposed to Mao since he hadn't followed the communist doctrine of a proletariat revolution. In 1934, the Politburo seized control of the Jiangxi Soviet and briefly arrested Mao.

At its height, the Red Army numbered 300,000. They escaped from the Nationalists with 85,000 troops plus 15,000 officials and party bureaucrats. Thus they began The Long March, a retreat across China that lasted a year, crossing thousands of miles to Shaanxi, with only 8,000 survivors of the original 100,000.

The Long March



Politically, the Long March began in January 1935 in the town of Zunyi, where the Communist leadership named Mao its chairman, handing control to the man who had disavowed the Comintern.

While the Long March was indeed a retreat, it held the seeds of future success due to its survival against overwhelming odds, strengthening Mao's concept of voluntarism.²¹⁴

While voluntarism was a Marxist concept, under the Soviets it sprang from the urban proletariat rather than the rural peasants, which were the corresponding underclass of China. Mao would leapfrog capitalism and drive straight to

Communism, away from the rule of the "bad gentry and local bullies."

The strength that was necessary to survive The Long March and that would later fuel the revolution became known as the Yan'an Spirit. Mao's view that the people could accomplish anything would carry into his leadership of the People's Republic. It was perhaps most evident in the horrific Great Leap Forward that would starve tens of millions of Chinese.²¹⁵

An example of Mao's vision was illustrated in his famous [*Speech At The Enlarged Session Of The Military Affairs Committee And The External Affairs Conference*](#):

There are so many things to study now, how shall we go about it? Just keep on in the same way, learning a bit, persevering and penetrating a bit deeper. I say that, if you are resolved to do it, you can certainly learn, whether you are young or old. I will give you an example. I really learned to swim well only in 1954; previously I had not mastered it. In 1954, there was an indoor swimming-pool at Tsinghua University. I went there every evening with my bag, changed my clothes, and for three months without interruption I studied the nature of the water. Water doesn't drown people! Water is afraid of people, people aren't afraid of water, of course, there are exceptions, but it should be possible to swim in all kinds of water. This is a major premise. For example, the Yangtse at Wuhan is water, so it's possible to swim in the Yangtse at Wuhan. So I refuted those comrades who opposed my swimming in the Yangtse. I said, 'You haven't studied formal logic.' If it's water, you can swim in it, except in certain conditions: for example, if the water is only an inch deep you can't swim in it; if it's frozen solid you can't swim in it; you can't swim in places where there are sharks, nor where there are whirlpools, as in the three gorges of the Yangtse. Apart from certain circumstances, it should be possible to swim wherever there is water, this is the major premise, the major premise derived from practice. Thus, for example, the Yangtse at Wuhan is water; hence, the conclusion follows that it is possible to swim in the Yangtse at Wuhan. The Milo and Pearl rivers are water, you can swim in them. You can swim in [the sea off] Peitaiho; it's water, isn't it? Wherever there's water, you should be able to swim. This is the major premise; apart from the fact that you can't swim in one inch of water, and you can't swim in water that's at a temperature of over 100 degrees, or in water that's so cold it's frozen, or where there are sharks or whirlpools — apart from these circumstances, all water can be swum in; this is a fact. Do you believe it? **If you are resolute, if you only have the will, I am convinced that all things can be successfully accomplished.** I exhort you comrades to study.

Mao was born with an indomitable spirit. But his leading of the Party to survive the Long March created in him a belief that he could accomplish anything. Anything at all. Because the people had the Ya'an Spirit.

²¹⁴ From [Mao's speech in 1945](#), *The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains*:

... We must also arouse the political consciousness of the entire people so that they may willingly and gladly fight together with us for victory...

²¹⁵ See footnote 222 on page 309 for more on the Great Leap Forward.

Yan'an

When the Japanese invaded, they weakened the Nationalists and led to an uneasy cooperation, the “Second United Front”, with the Communists. This legitimized the Communists and their army.

Almost all of the casualties of the war were Nationalists whereas the Communists lost less than 3%, though they gave the impression of presenting major resistance to the Japanese. The Communists increased their strength from 92,000 in 1937 to 800,000 by 1945.

The United Front ended in 1941. Blockaded from the south by the Kuomintang and pressured from the east by the Japanese, the Communists were forced back to Yan'an, with only the spirit of the Long March to sustain them. The Communist values of volunteerism and cooperation became more than slogans; they became social policies necessary for survival, and were known as the Yan'an Way.

38: Socialist Elder Brother

Introduction

Single World System

In 1959, Nikita Khrushchev said:²¹⁶

If we want to speak of the future, it seems to me that the further development of the socialist countries will in all probability proceed along lines of reinforcing a single world system of the socialist economy. One after another the economic barriers which separated our countries under capitalism will disappear...Not a single sovereign socialist state is able to shut itself up within its own frontiers and rely exclusively on its own potential or its own wealth. If the contrary were true, we would not be communist internationalists, but national-socialists.

Khrushchev's vision of international socialist unity differed greatly from what actually transpired with China.

In practice, socialist unity manifested itself as individual special trade agreements in a separate international market between the brotherhood of socialist countries exclusive of the tariffs and restrictions among the capitalist countries.

The Soviet Union, the GMD, and the CCP

If the Kuomintang was Nationalist, the CCP styled itself as *internationalist*. In 1958, Mao admitted to the Soviet ambassador that he “could not have succeeded without the October Revolution.” Mao maintained a partnership with the Soviets and with Stalin that differed from the Eastern Bloc in that his allegiance was not bought at gunpoint.

The PRC had never aimed for what Stalin called “socialism in one country.”

In the post-war years, China became a part of the parallel world market of the brotherhood of socialist countries that stretched from Berlin to Canton.

²¹⁶ From [Global Conjectures: China in Transnational Perspective](#), by Prof. Kirby et al. From a quote in *Pravda*, March 27, 1959.

Inherited Patterns of Sino-Soviet Relations

The Soviets created the original model for a planned socialist economy:

- The state had ownership of industry
- The key to state power was heavy industry and military development

Nationalist and communist regimes shared these precepts, easing cooperation with the Soviets. By 1938, a series of revolving barter and credit arrangements financed Chinese trade, supporting the Nationalist war effort.

Some Sino-Soviet correspondences were less cooperative:

- Industrial activities close to the Soviet border smacked of Soviet imperialism: plants were run by Soviet personnel as Soviet factories on Chinese land.
- In the Karakhan Manifesto of 1919, the Soviets were the only power to retain extraterritoriality. All Soviet personnel in China fell under Soviet law.
- Separation of Outer Mongolia from China

Nonetheless, Sino-Soviet cooperation was close and mutually beneficial.

Transitions to High Stalinism

After Mao's victory, it's no surprise that the CCP entered into a close relationship with the "elder soviet brother." The Alliance of 1950²¹⁷ was a logical extension of decades of cooperation. The PRC closely studied and copied the institutional structure of the Soviets. For example:

- The coalition government as a façade for party leadership
- Sham elections to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC)
- A constitution modeled on the Stalin constitution

Stalinism:

- Uniformity, [according to author Ben Fowkes](#).
- Absolute rule, Oligarchic rule
- A dominant personality: like Ceausescu.
- A security organization, like the KGB or the Stasi or the *gong anju* – the Public Security Bureau (PSB) of China.
- Command economies that emphasize heavy industry and armaments and destroy private commerce
- Denunciation of alternatives, like Tito's proposals
- Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) established in 1949
 - Limit trade with capitalist countries
 - Strengthen integration of the socialist world economy

²¹⁷ See [Wikipedia](#):

The Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance, is the treaty of alliance concluded between the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union on February 14, 1950. It was based to a considerable extent on the prior Treaty of the same name that had been arranged between the Soviet Union and the Nationalist government of China in 1945 and it was the product of extended negotiations between Liu Shaoqi and Stalin. Soviet Union officially recognized the People's Republic of China and recalled the recognition of the ordinary Republic of China.

Mao travelled to the Soviet Union in order to sign the Treaty after its details had been concluded, one of only two times he travelled outside China in his life. The Treaty dealt with a range of issues such as Soviet privileges in Xinjiang and Manchuria and one of its most important points was the provision of a \$300 million loan from the Soviet Union to the PRC, which had suffered economically and logistically from over a decade of intense warfare. The treaty did not prevent relations between Beijing and Moscow from drastic deterioration in the late 1950s - early 1960s, at the time of the Sino-Soviet split. In light of opening up China to the international market and the expiration of the Treaty, Deng Xiaoping wanted China not to negotiate with the Soviets unless they agreed to China's demands. Those were that the Soviets retreated from Afghanistan, removed their troops from Mongolia and Sino-Soviet borders and stopped supporting Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia.[1] The treaty expired in 1979, which allowed China to attack Vietnam, a Soviet ally, in the Third Indochina War as a response to Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, as the treaty had prevented China from attacking Soviet allies.

Tutelage in the Northeast

In 1949, the Soviets taught the Chinese how to administer a communist nation in terms of taxes and political parties. In 1950, Chen Boda²¹⁸ learned how to set up the Chinese party. Soviet urban planners headed to Shanghai. In July 1951, an annual economic plan was created for the first time.

The Short Course

Mao wanted to accelerate the transition to a Soviet model. He gave lip service to a 'mixed economy' that had both private and state-run institutions, but he believed in migrating to an entirely state-run economy. This was based on Mao's reading of *The History of the All-Union Communist Party (Short Course)* written by Stalin in 1938.²¹⁹

Discussion

What might the early PRC have looked like if China had truly pursued a moderate coalition government committed to "New Democracy"?

My response (which I've subsequently edited): Of the many problems faced by uniform absolute rule, the state does not allow solutions to national problems to emerge from many individual thoughts and ideas and attempted practices, but imposes a single solution on all areas. It thus commits the enormous resources of the state in a single manner everywhere.

Stalinism has advantages of dictating solutions where a competitive political system might be stalled in debate or constantly producing camels by compromise. On the other hand, the democratic practice of experimentation and iteration toward solutions generally avoids the big mistake.

China, in adopting a strict and uncompromising bureaucracy, may have found itself making fewer small mistakes and more bold and necessary policy initiatives, but it made far too many mistakes of enormous magnitude and consequence, like the Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap Forward.

A less Stalinist model might have avoided that.

China and the Socialist World Economy

Problems with the Socialist World Economy:

- Tended to be countries with greater damage from the war.
- Disrupted pre-existing patterns of trade
- Began as a series of bilateral agreements without any one overarching multilateral agreement.
- With each country operating a five-year plan modeled on the other five-year plans, countries were all at the same stage, reducing the differences that make trade beneficial. If every country is emphasizing,

²¹⁸ From Wikipedia:

Chen Boda (1904–1989) was a member of the Chinese Communist Party, a secretary to Mao Zedong and a prominent member of the leadership during the Cultural Revolution, chairing the Cultural Revolution Group. ...

In 1951, he wrote an article with the title Mao Zedong's theory of the Chinese Revolution is the combination of Marxism-Leninism with the Chinese Revolution and a book entitled Mao Zedong on the Chinese Revolution. These works made him one of the most important interpreters of Mao Zedong's thoughts, and in the 1950s he became Mao's personal secretary and close associate, authoring several key policy documents.[2] In 1958, he became the editor of the party journal Hongqi (The Red Flag).

During the Lushan Conference (July 1959), because Mao was no longer the president of the PRC Liu Shaoqi having taken his place (although he was still chairman of the CCP for some time), and as he didn't want to lose credibility in front of the CCP, he used Chen Boda to criticise Peng Dehuai.[3]

²¹⁹ From [Wikipedia](#):

History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks): Short Course, translated to English under the title *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)*, is a propagandist textbook on the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union first published in 1938. Colloquially known as "the Short Course", it was the most widely disseminated book during the reign of Joseph Stalin and one of the most important representing the ideology of Stalinism.

For the full text of the Short Course, see [here](#).

by Stalinist doctrine, heavy industry over farming, then there are few opportunities to trade, say, wheat for steel.

- Stalin emphasized autarky, or self-sufficiency, which also demotes trade.

Trade between the USSR and China

Soviet aid to China was massive, including turnkey industrial projects, some of which were enormous, training for Chinese workers, and books. Although China paid the Soviets, it often paid below the market price and at exceptionally low interest rates, and enjoyed the free exchange of technology.

Agreements between countries were renegotiated annually to a fine level of detail, with plans for all the communist bloc nations which at the time encompassed one-third of humanity. There was a sense of fairness in the negotiations, with the attitude that they would compromise with their socialist brothers.

The Primacy of Politics



No alliance could withstand the enormous expectations of the Sino-Soviet partnership, driven by Stalin's *Short Course*. The alliance didn't fail for economic reasons, falling instead to Mao's vision of himself as Stalin's heir to international communism, in contradiction to the Soviet view of succession within its own hierarchy.

In 1989, Gorbachev became the first Soviet leader to visit Beijing since Khrushchev, wishing to rebuild bridges 'burned so recklessly 30 years earlier.' He renounced Soviet claims to leadership of international

communism. This was, however, during the time of the protests in Tiananmen Square, when international communism was under fire. The morning after Gorbachev left Beijing, martial law was declared.

39: Fleurs du mal

Blooming and Contending in Early Communist China

Introduction

In the dynastic age, the emperor stood atop the world politically and culturally, setting the standard for Confucian thought and defending against heterodoxy. Qianlong, for example, sponsored the twenty-four dynastic histories (see page 224, the Library of the Four Treasuries). In the process, Qianlong's men confiscated and destroyed 2,320 books and executed or punished the authors (see footnote 152 on page 1).

Historically, there was tension between the emperor and his scholars, where the scholars understood that a true Confucian had a moral obligation to speak out. There was a maxim from the Song dynasty that said:

*A scholar should be the first to be concerned with the world's troubles
and the last to rejoice in its happiness. – Fan Zhongyan*

But no laws protected scholars. In the Ming dynasty they were beaten publicly when they angered the ruling authority. The Donglin Academy of the Ming grew famous for its heroic protests.²²⁰

²²⁰ See page 95 for the founding of the Donglin Temple.

From [Wikipedia](#):

In 1604, during the Wanli era, Gu Xiancheng, a Ming Grand Secretary, along with Gao Panlong, a scholar, with fellow scholars Qian Yiben and Yu Kongjian restored the Donglin Academy on the same site with the financial backing of local gentry and officials from Changzhou state governor Ouyang Dongfeng and Wuxi county governor Linzai. The academy gave its name to the resulting Donglin movement.

In 1626 the academy was brutally destroyed leaving only part of the stone memorial arch. The nowadays academy was a rebuilt during Qing dynasty period by Manchu emperors Yongzheng and Qianlong to win hearts of Han scholars in Wuxi area.

In 1981 - 1982, Chinese government re-decorated the Academy. The Donglin Academy park can be found at 867, Jiefang Donglu, Wuxi City now.

Even today, these tensions remain, though not as severely as in the 1950s. The People's Republic of China inherited the tradition of having an official orthodoxy with no legal opposition. What made the PRC different was its ownership of the means of control: a far-reaching government with secret police. The intellectuals, for their part, lacked the common training and brotherhood of the elite inspired by the civil service exam.

Despite the barriers, intellectuals played an important role as the conscience of the nation. As long as their critiques were aimed at Japan or the Kuomintang, they were safe. The Zhengfeng (Rectification) Movement of 1942 purged liberal intellectuals who challenged the party.

The loyalties of the intellectuals, which included anyone with higher education, including engineers, remained suspect, but their contribution was essential to the creation of the modern state.

Hu Feng Affairs

Hu Feng – poet and literary theorist

Lu Xun – famous writer

These two, as part of the League of Left-Wing Writers, urged Chinese writers to look at Western realism. Hu Feng was praised by the early CCP for his protests against the Kuomintang, but he was condemned later for disagreeing with Mao that the role of literature was to serve politics. Further, the man in charge of the literary establishment, Zhou Yang, was a personal enemy of Hu Feng. In 1954, Hu Feng was forced to confess to anti-communist activities in order to save his followers from punishment. Nonetheless, others in the literary community were targeted and suicides were said to be common.

Blooming and Contending: Fragrant Flowers

There was a growing perception among some, including Zhou Enlai, that the Hu Feng campaign had gone too far and it was time for healing. The Soviet plan was lacking and there was a need for greater involvement in China's planning by the intellectuals, who were increasingly dispossessed.

At a party conference in 1956, Zhou Enlai said that the party should allow greater self-expression among intellectuals. For artists, let a hundred flowers bloom; for engineers and scientists, let a hundred schools of thought contend.

But at the same time, Khrushchev gave a speech denouncing Stalinism and calling for moderation. After a lessening of controls, riots broke out in Poland and Poznan in the Spring and by Autumn there was an uprising in Hungary.²²¹

With this, the movement toward liberalization in China came to a halt. Party leaders scaled down their second five-year plan to invest more in agriculture. Mao Zedong, in contrast to his colleagues, still wanted higher levels of growth and surprisingly, greater freedom for the intellectuals, but the latter mostly to encourage those intellectuals to criticize his opponents in the party.

Mao initiated a rectification campaign urging people to speak out against the **three scourges**:

- Bureaucratism
- Sectarianism
- Subjectivism

Most of the vociferous criticism was directed at the top and middle layers of the bureaucracy, at the controlled press (the People's Daily), and at the Soviet system and the Chinese students returning from there. Almost everything was criticized except Chairman Mao.

Repression: Poisonous Weeds

But some critics went too far. These 'poisonous weeds' criticized not merely the bureaucracy and the party, but the structure of government itself. Su P'ei-ying said that living under the CCP was worse than living under the Japanese

²²¹ From [Wikipedia](#):

The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 or Hungarian Uprising of 1956 was a spontaneous nationwide revolt against the government of the Hungarian People's Republic and its Soviet-imposed policies, lasting from 23 October until 10 November 1956. Though leaderless when it first began, it was the first major threat to Soviet control since the USSR's forces drove out the Nazis at the end of World War II and occupied Eastern Europe. Despite the failure of the uprising, it was highly influential, and came to play a role in the downfall of the Soviet Union decades later.

or the Kuomintang. Some uttered the heresy that per capita availability of food on Taiwan exceeded that on the mainland.

Why open the CCP to criticism at all? Perhaps Mao wanted to identify the disloyal. Perhaps the party was taken in by its own rhetoric and was surprised to find that others were not.

Mao may have hoped for loyal disagreement in the style of the Confucian scholar-official, undermining bureaucratic caution in the Party. But he did not expect open disloyalty in the style of a Western free press.

The period of open disagreement lasted five weeks before it was shut down with an anti-rightist campaign.

Hundreds of thousands of intellectuals were “sent down to the countryside” to embrace the masses, as Mao led China through another campaign, this time anti-intellectual, the Great Leap Forward.²²²

40: Cultural Revolution

Professor Roderick MacFarquhar

Setting the Stage for Revolution

The Cultural Revolution is rarely talked about in China, though it was a ten-year period of killing and chaos that ran from May 1966 to October 1976. To be clear, this was primarily a period of devastation for the Party; for the *people* of China, the greatest modern period of devastation was the Great Famine from 1959 to 1962, during which 30 or 40 million died.

The Cultural Revolution and the Great Famine were both initiated and led by Mao. Why, in 1966, did the founder of the most highly organized state in the Communist world want to tear it all down?

The impetus for the Cultural Revolution began in the period following the Great Famine, when other party members wanted to introduce incentives to spur recovery. Mao called these people *revisionists*, that they would challenge Communist doctrine.

The Soviets, Lenin and Stalin, created the model that China followed. But the Soviet leaders of the late 50s, in their attempts to appease the U.S., were deserting China: not pressing to include them in the U.N. and abandoning the war between capitalism and socialism.

²²² From [Wikipedia](#)

The Great Leap Forward of the People's Republic of China (PRC) was an economic and social campaign by the Communist Party of China (CPC) from 1958 to 1961. The campaign was led by Mao Zedong and aimed to rapidly transform the country from an agrarian economy into a communist society through rapid industrialization and collectivization. The campaign caused the Great Chinese Famine.

Chief changes in the lives of rural Chinese included the introduction of a mandatory process of agricultural collectivization, which was introduced incrementally. Private farming was prohibited, and those engaged in it were labeled as counter-revolutionaries and persecuted. Restrictions on rural people were enforced through public struggle sessions, and social pressure, although people also experienced forced labor. Rural industrialization, officially a priority of the campaign, saw "its development ... aborted by the mistakes of the Great Leap Forward."

The Great Leap ended in catastrophe, resulting in tens of millions of deaths. Estimates of the death toll range from 18 million to 45 million, with estimates by demographic specialists ranging from 18 million to 32.5 million. Historian Frank Dikötter asserts that "coercion, terror, and systematic violence were the very foundation of the Great Leap Forward" and it "motivated one of the most deadly mass killings of human history".

The years of the Great Leap Forward in fact saw economic regression, with 1958 through 1962 being the only period between 1953 and 1985 in which China's economy shrank. Political economist Dwight Perkins argues, "enormous amounts of investment produced only modest increases in production or none at all. ... In short, the Great Leap was a very expensive disaster."

In subsequent conferences in March 1960 and May 1962, the negative effects of the Great Leap Forward were studied by the CPC, and Mao was criticized in the party conferences. Moderate Party members like Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping rose to power, and Mao was marginalized within the party, leading him to initiate the Cultural Revolution in 1966.

In a meeting in Moscow, Mao said that a new and beautiful socialist society could be built upon the ruins of a worldwide nuclear war.²²³ The Russians considered this an unnecessary and destabilizing statement, pushing them farther apart.

Mao took it upon himself to become the leading Communist theoretician who would drive the revolution forward and he grew obsessed with the search for his successors. Stalin's successors were clearly failing. Mao was determined that his own successors would not.

Thus, the moderate policies suggested by Mao's colleagues, like Liu Shaoqi, were an indictment of their qualifications as future leaders. How could Mao train future revolutionaries without a revolution to temper their steel? The answer: to create an artificial revolution.

He began by removing those who might oppose him:

- The boss of Beijing
- The boss of propaganda
- The Chief of Staff of the army
- The head of the General Office of the Party's central committee
- Liu Shaoqi
- Deng Xiaoping

He initiated their removal by inciting a revolution on university campuses with the notion that Mao's leadership was under threat and the students had to rise up to protect his ideas. Liu Shaoqi asked Mao to intercede and he said, no, you can handle this. So the Party leaders tried to calm the students. After a short time, Mao turned against his own party leaders, accusing them of suppressing the revolutionary urges of the students, and he had them dismissed.

Discussion: What, in your opinion, was the significance of China's Cultural Revolution? What do you think happened during the Cultural Revolution?

My response:

Mao was trying to steer his country back on the path of rigid adherence to Communist doctrine, according to the principles he'd believed in and espoused all his life. Appeasement of capitalists and moderation of policies was in direct opposition to these founding principles. He could see in Russia how the failure of Stalin's successors to follow his policies had destroyed Stalin's legacy. Mao *believed* in the value of Communism for creating a better world regardless of the cost. Even full-scale nuclear war.

So he launched his county, his party, and his comrades into turmoil to raise a new generation of devout Communists. Those who did not believe in the religion of Mao and the strict interpretation of Communism would be swept aside.

But the world had changed. Without the Soviets as partners, China would slip steadily behind the advancing industrial world if it did not change as well. Reversion to policies of the early twentieth century were doomed to fail.

Bombard the Headquarters

Mao incited the students to revolution, holding eight rallies in Tiananmen Square, calling upon them to bombard the headquarters and allowing those students who called themselves the Red Guard to present him with an armband and pin it on his sleeve. They waved the 'little red book' of Mao's quotations.

When they went home, these students violently attacked the Party institutions. The Administrator of Public Security gave the students the names and addresses of those they should attack.

²²³ From [The United States and China Since World War II: A Brief History](#), by Chi Wang, page 55:

...A further split between Moscow and Beijing involved the notion of nuclear war. Some Soviet accounts claim that Mao remarked to Khrushchev that he would be willing to incur a loss of 300 million Chinese in a nuclear war if the other 300 million could develop and live under socialism. Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko claimed that when he visited Beijing in August [1958], Mao tried to sell the Russians on a plan to lure American troops deep into China, and then use Soviet nuclear weapons against them. In "Long Live Leninism," parts of which were believe to be written or edited by Mao himself, the assertion was made that, if nuclear war occurred, then "on the ruins of old civilizations the victorious peoples will build an even more beautiful future for themselves."

After two years, Mao decided the violence had gone on long enough, that continuing would risk alienating the PLA. He sent Work Teams to calm the students, just as Liu Shaoqi had done a few years before to his ruin, only this time the Work Teams were called Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Teams. Some Red Guard students who failed to see the difference, attacked Mao's work teams, killing five members.

In July of 1968, Mao confronted the students and told them that their Red Guard had let them down, that they lacked the maturity to run China. His experiment in nurturing successors by inciting revolution had failed and all he'd done was disrupt his own party (and killed a lot of people, but was that really a concern?).

So he sent twelve million students from the campuses to the countryside and the factories to live among the peasants and workers. There they would learn the wisdom of the people.

During these early years of the Cultural Revolution, the PLA had largely taken control in order to keep the students in check. This left the leadership of most of the provinces in the hands of generals and colonels which was not what Mao had ever envisioned – in fact the opposite of his philosophy of party control of the military.

Lin Biao's Demise

In 1969, Mao held a Party Congress to appoint Lin Biao his heir apparent. At this point, Mao wanted to reassert the primacy of the party over the military.

Meanwhile, in a border skirmish the Soviets had demonstrated their military superiority over the Chinese. With the Soviets and Mao having established their different philosophies, Mao feared a surprise attack. He was well aware that the recent Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia demonstrated their intolerance of non-Soviet interpretations of Communism.

Mao ordered the leaders of the party to spread out away from Beijing so they could survive an attack on the capital.

Reacting to Mao in his role as Defense Minister, but without Mao's approval, Lin Biao moved millions of men and matériel to positions of greater safety. The movements were so significant that the U.S. and the Soviets detected it.

Mao was enraged and responded with a campaign against Lin Biao, which resulted in Lin's son being accused of conspiring to assassinate Mao. Lin Biao fled with his family in a plane that crashed in Mongolia. Though it's difficult to sort fact from Party fiction, it appears the charges were trumped-up. If not, Mao was a fool for having trusted this Brutus sufficiently to declare him his heir apparent.

In February of 1972, when Nixon came to China, Mao suggested that the reason Lin was a traitor was his opposition to talks with the United States.

So if Mao was in favor of talking to Nixon, what exactly did he stand for? Adherence to Communist doctrine and opposition to the Capitalist enemies? Opposition to the Soviets? Opposition to military control of the Party? Incitement of student revolution? Or was it simply one man's quest for power?

Discussion: How would you characterize the Sino-US Rapprochement? What roles did ideology and realpolitik play in Mao's decisions during the Cultural Revolution?

My thoughts: Ideology played an enormous role in Mao's vision of China, but the specter of the Opium Wars and of the Japanese invasion could never have been far from his mind. As evil as Capitalism was for Mao, the U.S. had already proven itself a stout military ally.

Life and Death in Shanghai by Nien Cheng

- Why was the author placed in this terrible state of solitary confinement?

To increase the emotional pressure of isolation and helplessness to eventually force a confession. The confession could then be used against her and as propaganda for the state and to force her to betray others who could also be imprisoned.

- Based on what you have read, how does the system of crime and punishment work during the Cultural Revolution?

Crime is defined by the hierarchy of the state; the interpretation of Mao's writings to suit each official as they carry out the orders down the chain of command.

- How do you prove someone's innocence?

If you're in prison, you're not innocent, by definition.

- Who was in charge of the prison? What does this fact tell us about the participants of the Cultural Revolution?

She doesn't say, but it appears to be the local officials of the Red Guard.

This is an excerpt from the book published in 2010. From the Amazon review:

In August 1966, a group of Red Guards ransacked Nien Cheng's home, threatened her and destroyed priceless, irreplaceable ancient Chinese relics. Cheng's background made her an obvious target for the fanatics of the Cultural Revolution: educated at the London School of Economics, the widow of an official of Chiang Kai-shek's regime, and an employee of Shell Oil, Cheng enjoyed comforts that few Chinese could afford. When she refused to confess to the false accusations that she was a spy, Cheng was placed in solitary confinement. Cheng suffered year upon year of brutality and deprivation, but she refused to give in to her torturers and interrogators. After more than six years, when they told her would be released because of her "attitude of repentance," even then she remained defiant, vowing to remain in detention until the Communist officials declared her innocent and published an apology.

Life and Death in Shanghai is Cheng's powerful story of her imprisonment, of the hardship and cruelty she endured, of her heroic resistance, and of her insistent quest for justice when she was released. It is the story, too, of a country torn apart by Mao Zedong's savage fight for power. A penetrating personal account of a terrifying chapter in twentieth-century history, Life and Death in Shanghai is also an astounding portrait of one woman's courage.

Following are my excerpts from the text (*italicized*) and my comments.

...In Mao Zedong's China, going to prison did not mean the same thing as it did in the democracies. A man was always presumed guilty until he could prove himself innocent....

...From the moment I became involved in the Cultural Revolution in early July and decided not to make a false confession, I had not ruled out the possibility of going to prison. I knew that many people, including seasoned Party members, made ritual confessions of guilt under pressure, hoping to avoid confrontation with the Party or to lessen their immediate suffering by submission...

At the detention house where she is taken on September 27, 1966, she comments on a guard who is having trouble writing entries in a ledger:

... That he was doubtless barely literate did not surprise me, as I knew the Communist Party assigned men jobs for their political reliability rather than for their level of education...

She is assigned a number, 1806, and told to read the prison regulations aloud. They must read Mao's proverbs daily, confess to their 'crimes', and report on any prisoners who don't follow regulations.

Reporting on others to authority is a common thread of repressive Chinese governments.²²⁴

One of the guards said, "*What you should do now is to consider the crime you have committed. When he calls you, you must show true repentance by making a full confession in order to obtain lenient treatment. If you denounce others, you'll gain a point of merit for yourself.*"

²²⁴ See footnote 34 on page 56 for more on the long tradition among Chinese rulers of encouraging snitches.

An annotation in the text notes that Cheng's daughter was killed by the Red Guard was Cheng was in prison.

A guard says, "If you have not committed a crime, why are you locked up in prison? Your being here proves you have committed a crime."

"Perhaps you did not realize you were committing a crime at the time. You are probably still quite muddled," the guard said. He seemed quite sincere. ... "We go by the teachings of our Great Leader Chairman Mao. His words are our criteria. If he says a certain type of person is guilty and you belong to that type, then you are guilty. It's much simpler than depending on a lawbook."

Images from the Cultural Revolution around the world

Mao was revered in left-wing revolutionary circles around the world.



Black Panther Party members holding up Mao's Little Red Book. Huey Newton, the founder of the Black Panther Party, was influenced by Mao's works



Ieng Sary in 1970 shaking hands with Mao, with Pol Pot, the leader of the Khmer Rouge, in the background. Pol Pot was a Communist and was heavily influenced by Maoist ideology



Posters for Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The SDS is an important organization for student activism in the US in the 1960s and 1970s. The society included not just civil rights and anti-Vietnam War advocates, but also Maoists and Trotskyists.

Discussion

Who was responsible for the chaos of the Cultural Revolution? Was it Mao, the Gang of Four, the Red Guards, or the ordinary Chinese who sometimes betrayed their own families and colleagues? Does it matter? What other aspects of the Cultural Revolution should we also pay attention to?

From PriscillaN:

Mao certainly was the instigator. All the other groups provided support that allowed the Red Guard to run completely out of control. I don't think that it matters who did what from this remove except as a matter of historical accuracy. The great damage to the Chinese state, CCP and the people and culture of China was done and it will be long and hard for the recovery to be complete. China moved from a culture where the extended family was all important to one where it was not uncommon for family members to denounce one another to the authorities to save their own skins in a relatively short time. The loss of artifacts and books, the loss of trust in other people and in the government and the general destruction of the elements of civilization must surely have left scars both mental and physical.

My thoughts:

As always, Priscilla, very well said.

A leader cannot lead his people into ruin without ardent followers. While I'm comfortable blaming anyone for brutality no matter who gives the order, the moral responsibility intensifies the higher up you go. The intent to persuade the malleable to brutality is a greater crime than the brutality itself (though that is still an horrific crime).

To me, it does matter who did what. Holding people responsible for their evil is a deterrent we shouldn't relinquish and I'd lay the blame first with Mao, then with the Gang of Four, and then the Red Guards and right down the line. I can hardly take the blame off a family member who betrays another, though that I believe, is a social misdeed the family should punish, and not a crime.

Perhaps the greatest challenge that faces the human race as we strive to improve ourselves is to find ways to help the individual retain their individuality and resist the teachings of brutal leaders. This is one of the greatest goods that may come of our probing into the brain and human psychology.

Though it's tough to even think about the evil that may arise from these probings when in the hands of dictators.

41: Last Years of Mao and the Reopening of China

Professor Roderick MacFarquhar and Prof. Kirby

Introduction



In the 1950s, the ‘east wind had prevailed’, meaning that Mao had favored the Soviets, but by the time of the Cultural Revolution, Mao shunned the Soviets and attempted to reinvigorate Communism within China by instigating a false revolution among the youth, and then made tentative advances toward the U.S.

In the last years of Mao, the old cadres purged during the Cultural Revolution were brought back, now that they were ‘re-educated’. The damage from the Cultural Revolution lingered, with strife between factions that twice in the 1970s seemed to threaten civil war.

Mao himself began a time of physical and possibly mental decline, making the end of his reign similar to the end of a dynasty, with court intrigue surrounding a ‘doddering old man still in power.’

The Fall of Lin Biao

What Happened?

In April 1969, the CCP declared in its constitution that Lin Biao was Mao’s official successor:

Comrade Lin Biao has at all times held high the great red banner of Mao Zedong thought.

Two and a half years later, in 1971 when Lin Biao fell from power, the People’s Daily was still praising him, but would not mention him again until he was denounced by the party in 1973:

Expel Lin Biao, the bourgeois careerist, conspirator, counter-revolutionary, double-dealer, renegade, and traitor from the party once and for all.

Suddenly, he was:

dog-droppings, indigestible to human society

What happened to the trusted subordinate, the ordained successor, the man who edited Mao’s Little Red Book?

The 571 Plan²²⁵

This was the name of Lin Biao’s plan, as concocted by the CCP, to justify his denunciation.

*B52 [the code name for Mao] has not much time to go... he abuses the trust and the status given him by the Chinese people... he implements the laws of Qin Shi Huang, the founding emperor of Qin... the biggest feudal despot in Chinese history...*²²⁶

²²⁵ From [Wikipedia](#):

Project 571 was the numeric codename given to an alleged plot to execute a coup d’état against Chinese leader Mao Zedong in 1971 by the supporters of Lin Biao, then Vice-Chairman of the Communist Party of China. In Chinese, the numbers "5-7-1" sound like the term "armed uprising". The Chinese government initially claimed that Lin Biao himself had devised Project 571, but evidence inside and outside of China has made it more likely that Lin's son, Lin Liguo, a high-ranking officer in the People's Liberation Air Force, instead developed the plot. Any plots that may have been planned or attempted by Lin Biao or his family ultimately failed. Lin's family attempted to flee China for the Soviet Union, but died when their plane crashed over Mongolia on September 13, 1971. A draft copy of the Project 571 Outline was discovered following Lin's death, and was publicly circulated by the Chinese government as a means of explaining the event.

²²⁶ Mao compared himself to Qin Shi Huang (see pages 52 and 53) and the students in Tiananmen Square didn’t forget.

New Foreign Policy

Factors leading to negotiations between China and the U.S.

- China's fear of the Soviets
- U.S. need to negotiate an end to the war in Vietnam
- Nixon's desire to score a political coup before the 1972 presidential elections

Nixon came to Mao in the modern form of the Imperial kowtow. The Shanghai Communiqué²²⁷ that followed:

- Recognized the CCP
- Acknowledged (without approving) the One-China Policy that included Taiwan
- Asserted that no one power should control the Asia-Pacific region, in defiance of the Soviets.

Domestic Policy After Lin Biao

The criticism of Lin Biao carried out by the Gang of Four in 1974, after Lin's death, confused ad hominem attacks on the man with attacks on Confucian values. By targeting Lin Biao's opposition to the Cultural Revolution and his steps toward capitalism, they were really targeting Zhou Enlai. Even the Duke of Zhou was reviled for restoring the rituals and the slave-owning aristocrats, again an arrow at Zhou Enlai.

From an historical perspective, Chinese Communist leaders argued with each other in an obscure language that only the elite understood.

²²⁷ From [Wikipedia](#):

The Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China, also known as the Shanghai Communiqué (1972), was an important diplomatic document issued by the United States of America and the People's Republic of China on February 28, 1972 during President Richard Nixon's visit to China. The document pledged that it was in the interest of all nations for the United States and China to work towards the normalization of their relations, although this would not occur until the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations seven years later.

The US and China also agreed that neither they nor any other power should "seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region". This was of particular importance to China, who shared a militarized border with the Soviet Union.

Regarding the political status of Taiwan, in the communiqué the United States acknowledged the One-China policy (but did not endorse the PRC's version of the policy) and agreed to cut back military installations on Taiwan. This "constructive ambiguity" (in the phrase of US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who oversaw the American side of the negotiations) would continue to hinder efforts for complete normalization.

The Gang of Four²²⁸

- Jiang Qing** Chairman Mao's wife, mistress of the arts.
- Zhang Chunqiao** Party secretary and party leader of Shanghai.
- Yao Wenyuan** Propagandist for Mao, his critique²²⁹ of the play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* unleashed the Cultural Revolution.
- Wang Hongwen** 'Helicoptered into power' from obscurity as a peasant. After Lin Biao's death, he was named Vice Chairman of the CCP.

All four were committed to continuing revolution and to the primacy of class struggle over party building or modernization. They were all members of the Politburo.

²²⁸ From [Wikipedia](#):



The Gang of Four was the name given to a political faction composed of four CCP officials. They came to prominence during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) and were subsequently charged with a series of treasonous crimes. The members consisted of Mao Zedong's last wife Jiang Qing, the leading figure of the group, and her close associates Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen.

The Gang of Four controlled the power organs of the Communist Party of China through the latter stages of the Cultural Revolution, although it remains unclear which major decisions were made by Mao Zedong and carried out by the Gang, and which were the result of the Gang of Four's own planning.

The Gang of Four, together with disgraced general Lin Biao, were labeled the two major "counter-revolutionary forces" of the Cultural Revolution and officially blamed by the Chinese government for the worst excesses of the societal chaos that ensued during the ten years of turmoil. Their downfall on October 6, 1976, a mere month after Mao's death, brought about major celebrations on the streets of Beijing and marked the end of a turbulent political era in China.

²²⁹ An article in [The Economist](#) quotes the character Hai Rui in *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*:

*You pay lip service to the principle
that the people are the roots of the state.
But officials still oppress the masses
while pretending to be virtuous men.
They act wildly as tigers
and deceive the emperor.
If your conscience bothers you
you know no peace by day or night.*

The Economist goes on to say that Yao...

fancied himself as Balzac to Mao's Napoleon, wielding his "golden" pen to smite the bourgeois individualists and "right deviationists" who might get in the chairman's way. When the Hai Rui business came up, he was happy to be useful. He took himself away to a sanatorium, pretending to be ill, in order to write his 10,000 words of diatribe against the play—words so tedious that the Beijing People's Daily published them as "Academic Research". There were said to be ten drafts, three of which Mao wrote himself. The central thrust, however, was Mr Yao's: "If we do not clean up [this poison], it will harm the people's cause."

They made enemies during the Cultural Revolution, especially of party members rehabilitated by Zhou Enlai. Even Mao grew weary of his wife's tirades, purportedly writing:

You have made too many enemies. It's lucky I'm still around. What will you be after I'm dead? I'm already 80 and in poor health. You are still troubling me with trifles. Why can't you be more considerate of me? I do envy Zhou Enlai's marriage.

In Mao's last years, the government was an alliance of convenience between the Realists, led by Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping, and the Gang of Four.

In April 1975, Zhou Enlai was hospitalized with cancer. Jiang took advantage, building her base, having herself declared an *expounder of Mao Zedong thought*, the highest honor, previously accorded only to Zhou Enlai and Lin Biao. The media praised Empress Wu Zetian of the 7th century, a concubine who had usurped the throne (see page 101). For Jiang's benefit, the press brought Empress Wu's better side to light.

Four Modernizations

Even as Zhou Enlai struggled with cancer, his policies went on. He had set in motion plans, based in part on Mao's "Ten Major Relationships"²³⁰, to modernize

- Agriculture
- Industry
- National Defense
- Science and Technology

The trouble with this policy was its reliance on increased exports and on foreign credit, which contradicted the goal of national self-sufficiency. This was then conflated with the colonial-style mercantilism, evoking the vision of a China sucked dry of its natural resources in exchange for capitalist baubles.

Not all agreed with this characterization. One Chinese newspaper reporting that:

If socialist construction needs it, foreign equipment and technology must be imported on conditions of equality and mutual benefit. We must emphasize self-reliance. This does not mean that we have no need for learning and borrowing foreign things.

As Deng Xiaoping's and Zhou Enlai's legions fought for ascendance with the Gang of Four, foreign business negotiations could succeed one day and fail the next.

Mao's Last Year

It's not clear what Mao's mental state at the close of 1975, but he was clearly in decline. Foreign leaders tried to assess him, from the Chancellor of West Germany, to Gerald Ford, to the Prime Minister of New Zealand. A trio of assistants would read his lips when he mumbled to translate for others (presumably three to avoid a tie vote).

After Zhou Enlai died, rather than appointing Deng Xiaoping, he made Hua Guafeng from Hunan, the chief of public security, the Vice Premier. He chose the man for his loyalty and lack of arrogance.

Meanwhile, he grew increasingly critical of Jiang Qing and when Hua Guafeng and the Gang of Four demurred that they were not poised over his deathbed waiting to snatch his will, he laughed at them, saying he would have no will.

²³⁰ See [here](#).

Speech at an enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Bearing in mind lessons drawn from the Soviet Union, Comrade Mao Tsetung summed up China's experience, dealt with ten major relationships in socialist revolution and socialist construction and set forth the ideas underlying the general line of building socialism with greater, faster, better and more economical results, a line suited to the conditions of our country.

Discussion

Jiang Qing circulated a poem that she claimed Mao had sent her as a kind of a last testament.

"You have been wronged.

Today we are separating into two worlds.

May each keep his peace.

Human life is limited, but revolution knows no bounds.

In the struggle of the last 10 years I have

tried to reach the peak of revolution, but I was not successful.

But you could reach the top.

If you fall, you will plunge into a fathomless abyss.

Your body will shatter, your bones will break."

My thoughts:

Mao did not write this.

Jiang is protecting her legacy, still thinking about revolution as the end and not the means. She uses the poem to give her license to "reach the top" and think only about the climb and not about the fall. That is what revolution always was to her – a constant struggle, a constant climb, where the summit is only something to think about, never to be reached, and the bodies that pile high at the base of the mountain are there only to give purchase to the climbers that follow.

By saying "she was wronged" she is saying that Mao should have accorded her the honor of an *expounder of Mao Zedong thought*, an honor she now receives in his death (so she says) that she always wanted while he was alive.

Discussion

The notion of "struggle" was a key concept utilized throughout the history of the Chinese communist party from its founding in 1921 to the death of Mao in 1976. How does the idea of struggle manifest itself in this history? Are there periods of more intensified struggle than others? Discuss.

Mao believed that the strength of the CCP came from revolution and that a vibrant party would be in a constant state of revolution. He came to that belief from his early years of fighting with Chiang Kai-shek, especially of The Long March, the most intense period of struggle, though he also struggled to distinguish himself from the Soviets, first by resisting their orthodoxy and later by resisting their attempts at moderation. His Cultural Revolution came from his belief in constant revolution – in constant struggle – that without such struggle, no proper successor to Mao could ever emerge.

He did not believe that the successful establishment of a stable Communist government could ever be an end in itself. He believed instead that revolution was not merely the means to an end, but that it was an end all of itself.

Lecture Transcript

Lecture Transcript

Lecture Transcript

Lecture Transcript

Lecture Transcript (Last Days of Mao)

Part 10: Greater China Today: The People's Republic, Taiwan, and Hong Kong

42: The Political and Economic World of Post-Mao China

Part 10 Introduction



Greater China includes Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan. Whether Taiwan is part of mainland China depends on where you sit. Greater China can also be considered to include Chinese abroad no matter where they live and what their citizenship.

In this section we'll have interviews with several professors from Harvard:

Professor Dwight Perkins	focus on the contemporary Chinese economy
Professor Vogel	biographer of Deng Xiaoping
Professor Elizabeth Perry	focus on social movements and social unrest

The module is organized around several views of China: agricultural China, entrepreneurial China, educational China, environmental China, writing China. In addition, we'll cover Harvard Business School cases, including discussions with people who were directly involved in those cases: the CP Group, Wanxiang Corporation in Hangzhou, and Tsinghua University. Plus an interview with the writer, Yu Hua.

We'll cover the environment. Professor Kirby now wears a mask when the air gets foul.

Lastly, we'll cover Taiwan and 'normalization without unification' under President Ma Ying-jeou.

Historical Overview

Sep 9, 1976: Mao died. ending a chapter in Chinese history.

1978, Deng Xiaoping assumed leadership. Hua Guofeng, Mao's designated successor, served as interim leader, successfully ousting the Gang of Four (page 317). Deng Xiaoping retook the post of Vice Chairman in 1977, repudiated the Cultural Revolution, and took over from Hua in December 1978.

December 1978, Gaige kaifang. "Reform and Opening Up", this was Deng's two-stage introduction of market principles.

1981, Household Responsibility System. Deng moved from Mao's collective economy to a more market-oriented system, returning responsibility for individual farms to rural families. The *iron rice bowl*²³¹ was partially replaced with competitive hiring and employer health care.

²³¹ From [Wikipedia](#): "Iron rice bowl" is a Chinese term used to refer to an occupation with guaranteed job security, as well as steady income and benefits. The Chinese term can be compared to the similar (but not identical) English concept of a breadwinner with cradle to grave socialism. Traditionally, people considered to have iron rice bowls

1986, Taiwan, Two-Party Politics. Meanwhile, in Taiwan, the Democratic Progressive Party was established as the first opposition party to the Kuomintang. Martial law was lifted in July 1987 in Taiwan for the first time since the civil war.

April 1989, Death of Hu Yaobang. University students gathered in Tiananmen Square to mourn Hu. The demonstrations turned into nationwide public critiques involving millions, extending into Gorbachev's visit. Martial law was declared in China at the end of May and on June 4th, PLA tanks cleared the square.

1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. In the run-up to Taiwan's 1996 election, its first direct presidential election, China fired missiles to signal its opposition to the separatist Democratic Progressive Party, leading President Clinton to provide US naval support, and to sign the Taiwan Relations Act.

Economic but not Political Liberalization. Deng appointed Zhu Rongji as Vice Premier and promoted the SEZs or Special Economic Zones, of Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Zhuhai. With Jiang Zemin's support, Zhu completed the dismantling of the iron rice bowl and developed inland cities. Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping continued this rapid economic growth, heedless of the negative consequences.

Changing Demographics. Single-child couples have to support four parents. Pollution grows worse. Official corruption created enormous ghost cities. How will China chart its course to grow a stable economy and overcome the legacy of past policies? (and as I write this, the disastrous results of China's meddling in its stock market proves the difficult of walking the line between market policies and a command economy).

Interview with Ezra Vogel



Professor Vogel wrote the bestselling book Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China, which sold 650,000 copies in its Chinese translation.

Born in 1904, Deng lived in France for five years and the Soviet Union for one year. He was in the army twelve years fighting as a guerilla and as a commander of a half-million front-line troops. Before coming to Beijing in 1952, he ran one of the six administrative regions in the southwest, giving him experience with land reform and with government leadership.

In 1956, long before he took the helm in 1978, Deng led China's modernization. But as an intensely loyal disciple of Mao, he also had a hand in the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign that was a reaction to the Hundred Flowers Campaign (both of which were orchestrated by Mao) and in the Great Leap Forward.

By 1962, he was distancing himself from Mao's push for continual revolution. When Mao spoke, Deng sat in the background, pointedly not listening.

Deng suffered tremendously during the Cultural Revolution but came back to power in 1973 and in 1975 he led the Four Modernizations (page 318). He wanted to re-unite a political body that was divided by the Cultural Revolution, during which over a million had died, while the survivors still harbored bitter resentments.

Economics

Of all the economic programs, Deng focused most on science, technology, and education. He was beginning to restart the universities when Mao got rid of Deng again in 1976 for not being sufficiently revolutionary.

Professor Vogel noted that many great leaders including De Gaulle, Churchill, and Lincoln had been forced out of government and 'into the countryside' at some point early in their careers, during which they reflected on their situations to great benefit. Deng spent three-and-a-half years in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution and once again, in 1976, had time to pace in his garden and ruminate. He was brought back in 1973 with a full slate of ideas, only to be purged again.

Saved by his allies in the PLA, he was put in charge of foreign policy in July 1977 and volunteered to run science, technology, and education. He wanted normalization with the U.S. and a treaty with Japan, to encourage aid. He insisted on reopening the universities despite the challenges caused by their abandonment for ten years during the Cultural Revolution. Further, he insisted on entrance exams that ignored class politics – he wanted to train the elite for leadership.

include military personnel, members of the civil service, as well as employees of various state run enterprises (through the mechanism of the work unit).



By the time he came to power in 1978, China had good relations with Japan and the U.S. The universities were open. Deng could move ahead with *gaige kaifang*, reform and opening. Through the 1980s, he decollectivized agriculture, grew the private sector, grew the TVEs ([Township and Village Enterprises](#)) in the countryside, grew agricultural production, and invited foreign investment. The growth and change was extraordinary, particularly in agriculture.

To get around the resistance to his removal of Mao's policies, rather than announcing his opposition to the old policies, he pointed out that people were starving and that the government had to let them find their own way. It was a clever tactic, creating a position that was tough to argue with. Sometime later he showed reporters how people were growing food on their plots and suggested they allow contracting of agriculture down to the household level. This brought back private farming. And once that started, people grew extra beyond their quotas. They could sell the surplus in the rural markets which began to thrive and generate money. The Town and Village Enterprises put that money to work locally, building the rural economy.

In addition, the experimental 'Special Economic Zones,' particularly in Shenzhen, worked especially well. By the late 1980s, these ideas had been extended across China. Private enterprise flourished and began to compete with the SOEs. For three decades, China grew at an average annual rate of 10% per year.

Politics

As strategic as Deng was in dismantling Mao's economic policies in favor of his own, he was far less bold with political reform. In 1979, when the protests around the Democracy Wall grew too large and chaotic, Deng moved the wall and restricted access to it.²³²

Tiananmen Square

In 1986, he allowed a broad study of political reform under Zhao Zhiyang, examining how other socialist states had changed.²³³ But when, in Deng's opinion, the student movement got out of hand with many demonstrations across China, particularly in Beijing in 1986, he thought reform was too dangerous. In 1989 when the demonstrations began again, he left responsibility to Zhao, but took control himself on May 20th, initially sending unarmed troops. When they were unable to restore order, Deng sent armed troops against the protesters. We don't know how many they killed, but a Canadian researcher who visited the hospitals estimated between 700 and 900 deaths.

²³² From [BBC News](#):

In November and December 1978, prompted by hints of political change, people began putting up posters in public places expressing their views and telling of their suffering during the Cultural Revolution. In Beijing, the most outspoken posters appeared on a section of wall near the Forbidden City, and this became known as Democracy Wall. At first, the new leadership under Deng Xiaoping allowed the posters to stay... The most prominent critic, Wei Jingsheng, called for China to adopt democracy as the "fifth modernisation", implicitly criticising Deng who had said China only needed four.

²³³ From [Zhao Ziyang and China's Political Future, Wu and Lansdowne, pg 18](#):

In September 1986 [Zhao Ziyang] set up a Political Reform Study Group (PRSG). From 1986 to 1987, Zhao's secretary, Bao Tong, organized a series of meetings/seminars on various aspects of political reform, including the reform of the cadre system. Zhao and his associates argued that the piecemeal reform measures introduced so far, such as the mandatory retirement requirements and the so-called second and third echelons of successors, were only short-term solutions to the pressing problems in China's personnel system. In the long run, China would have to develop a civil service system pattern after Western models... "in foreign countries there is the division between civil servants and politicians. Civil servants are managed by the Government and politicians are subject to Party management."

At this point, Vogel says that Deng's long view of history led him to see a thousand deaths as a small number compared to WW II, the Great Famine, the Cultural Revolution. My thought: when Deng compared his own period of history to that of Hitler, Hirohito, Stalin, and Mao, he wasn't setting a high bar.

Deng's followers believe that Deng's actions preserved order, which saved far greater numbers from poverty and starvation.

Deng's Legacy in Modern China

Why is 1992 not only remembered, but emulated by Chinese leaders that followed Deng?

In 1988, Deng decontrolled prices, which led to inflation, which made a lot of people unhappy, which was one of the reasons the student protests garnered so much support among ordinary people. Conservatives tightened monetary policy through 1991. This, along with the effect of foreign sanctions, slowed growth. Deng started to think that if China didn't grow faster, the country might descend into chaos.

But in 1992 Deng was retired. He had no real say. So he went on a 'family vacation' and while traveling, he spoke out against the sluggishness of reform. The free press outside mainland China picked up his comments and they leaked back to the mainland. Jiang Zemin took heed and allowed greater reform and openness, to the delight of those in the south.

Asked how he would rate Deng Xiaoping against other dominant leaders of the 20th century, Vogel said:

“...nobody has had the impact on the world that Deng did-- raising several hundred million people above the poverty line, bringing back an ancient civilization to the first time where it was not only a power in the region but taking part in the world activities and accepting world norms, joining World Trade Organization, taking part in other international organizations, and then being so influential that it's one of the two dominant powers in the world today.”

Interview with Dwight Perkins

The Economic and Political Situation in 1979

Professor Perkins, former Chair of Harvard's Economics Department, began studying China in the mid-1950s. He was in Hong Kong in the last year of the Great Famine and came back in 1960-1961 when the Chinese economy was 'going over the cliff.' Comparing China with the Tigers of East Asia, he said it had fallen well behind.

Perkins considered the period from 1949 to 1979, noting how the Chinese stabilized their society and then modeled it after the Soviet planned economy and collective agriculture, doing so with less death and disruption than the Soviets. At that early time it was doing well.

After 1957, despite published figures of 6% annual growth, real growth was more like 2% per capita, with little going to individual consumption as most had been plowed into investment. The standard of living was unchanged and almost no housing was built, leaving the typical family of three with only 180 square feet, including the kitchen, bedrooms and all their living space.

Moving Toward a Market Economy

Deng Xiaoping and others in the leadership felt for decades that they'd lost the opportunity for growth and had fallen well behind. To viscerally illustrate the gap, Deng went to Japan in the 1950s and demonstrated to the Chinese elite how the Japanese had built up their society.

Even though some changes would have occurred with or without Deng, he was critical to the transformation. After Mao's death and the purge of the Gang of Four, there was a rush to buy foreign technology, but China had no foreign currency to pay for it. It wasn't until the late 1970s to decide they needed to export manufactured goods, a conclusion the Koreans and Taiwanese reached in the 1960s. That they had no exportable natural resources.

Another major figure, Chen Yun, though not as powerful as Deng, still believed in a state-planned economy. So even as Zhao Ziyang was returning farms to households, they weren't yet moving toward a market economy. But then agriculture and foreign trade both took off, which opened their eyes.

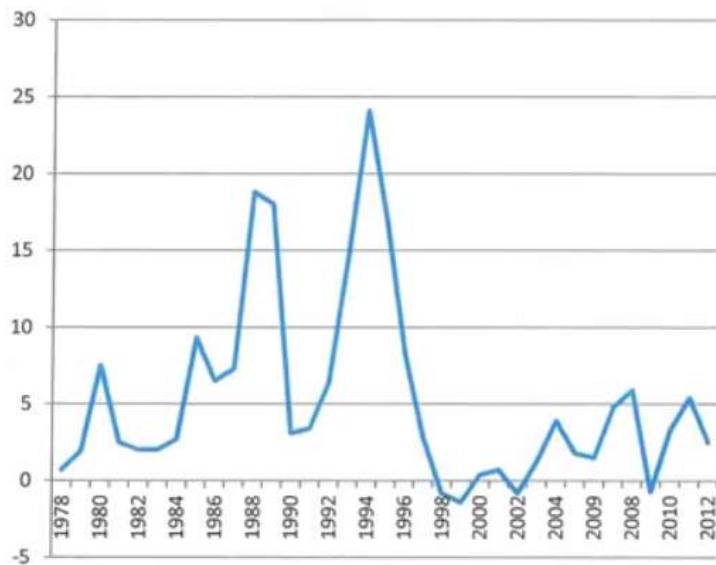
Much of the gains came from undoing Mao's policies. But other reforms came from new ideas. Zhou Ziyang created two radical think tanks: the Systems Reform Institute and the Rural Development Group. They freed rural markets to move toward a market-oriented rather than a state-planned distribution, though there were still state quotas.

In 1984 these think tanks turned their focus to state-owned enterprises, releasing industrial inputs to be freely purchased at market prices, which were higher than the controlled prices available to the state-owned enterprises. This dual-pricing amounted to a subsidy for the SOEs. The TVEs, created during the 1970's, had to apply to receive those industrial inputs and now in the 1980's they could buy them. Despite having to pay more than the SOEs, the aggressive management of the TVEs allowed them to compete and provide much of the growth for the next decade, leaving the SOEs to stagnate.

So they were moving toward a market economy faster than much of the leadership understood.

The Economic Background of Tiananmen in 1989

The market reforms coincided with the rise in corruption but were not the direct cause. The Cultural Revolution had made it a sin against society to become wealthy. People dressed poorly on purpose, women cut their hair unattractively short. The Red Guard destroyed even the small luxuries. Once the cultural restrictions on wealth were removed, the regulations remained, requiring licenses from officials and instituting the dual-price system that created a black market for industrial goods.



China's Consumer Price Index – 1978 to 2012

Without the State Planning Commission restricting their borrowing, the SOEs began expanding and borrowing huge amounts from banks they could never pay off, creating bad loans that eventually led to a banking crisis.

The borrowing also drove up prices in a country that, because of price controls, had not experienced inflation for the twenty years prior to 1979, having chosen shortages and rationing over a market allocation of goods. Suddenly, inflation was running 18% annually, making it harder to buy necessities.

This was a factor behind the unrest that led to Tiananmen.

China's Economy in the 1990s

At first, China had followed the Soviet model of ignoring its infrastructure. China's infrastructure improvements - highways, bullet trains, airports - boosted productivity for the first 10-12 years of the projects. From no high-speed highways to 50,000 miles of them, longer than the U.S. interstate system. The bullet trains went nearly everywhere. New airports cropped up in provincial capitals, well ahead of demand, though they still met a real need.

My own thoughts: As I write these notes, I can't understand how infrastructure built well ahead of demand meets a real need. Certainly they needed better infrastructure, but that much? When you suddenly transform from country roads to the world leader in highways, trains, and airports, are you correct in your assessment of need, or are you spending way too much?

China Today

	Urban housing Sq meters per capita	Residential construction Millions sq meters	Number of families housed * Millions
1978	6.7		
1985	10	909.7	9.1
1990	13.7	864.3	8.6
1995	16.3	1074.3	10.7
2000	20.3	1345.3	13.5
2005	26.1	1328.4	13.3
2006	27.1	1314.1	13.1
2007		1462.8	14.6
2008		1594.1	15.9
2009		1842.1	18.4
2010		1746.1	17.5
2011		1974.5	19.7
2005-2011		11262	112.5

*Assumes a family of 3 in a 100 meter apartment

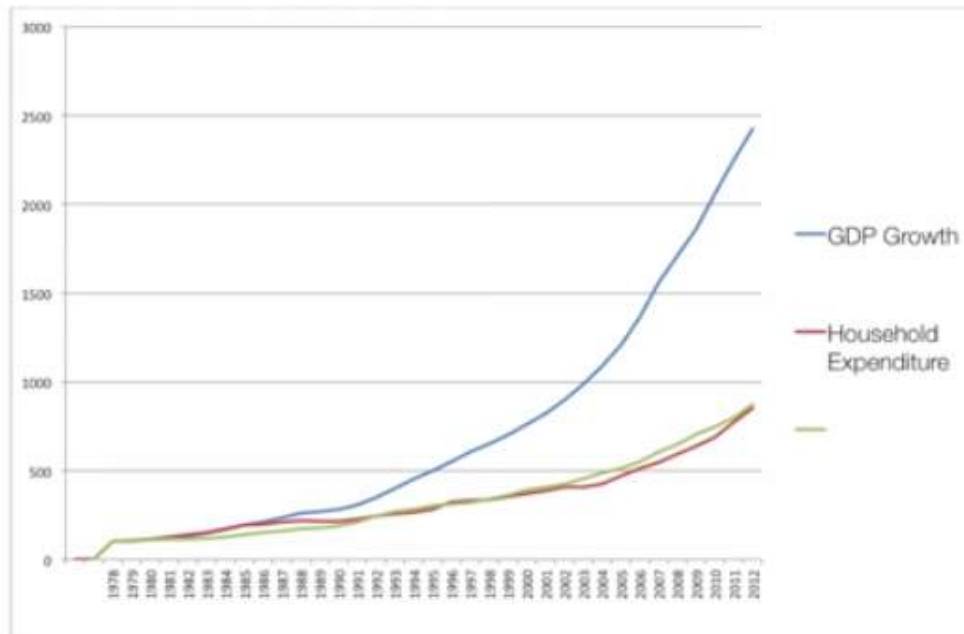
For twenty years, between the late 1950's and the late '70s, little housing was built. It picked up in the 1990s and skyrocketed between 2005 and 2011, a seven year period when the Chinese built enough housing for 300 million people. Apartment space *quintupled* from 200 square feet per household in 1978 to 1100 square feet in the early twenty-first century.

Enough housing built for three hundred million people in seven years – what would happen when they stopped?

Because housing prices kept rising, people invested in second and third apartments, creating an enormous bubble. Inner Mongolia had suburban developments that were largely empty. They had multi-lane expressways in western China with little traffic. Each new capital improvement offered decreasing marginal returns, without market forces to stop the flow.

Besides transportation and housing, the other major infrastructure improvement was to move Yangtze River water to the north, to solve China's water problem.

China GDP and Urban, Rural Household Income Growth



But the source of growth, this massive need for infrastructure, was slowing down.

Though China's household incomes and consumption grew more slowly than GDP, that didn't mean income and consumption grew slowly. Still, there was a gap and in order to maintain full employment, something had to substitute for the enormous economic buildup once the capital investments in housing and transportation slowed.

They needed to improve productivity. We looked at two approaches to that end: reducing income inequality and attacking corruption.

Income Inequality

A perception in Mao's day was that everyone was equally poor, but Prof. Perkins feels that's a misperception, that some were more equal than others. And poverty today was not as severe as it was 20 years ago.

One major source of growing inequality is the gap between rural and urban incomes. We can expect that this will mitigate over time as 90% of those between 18 and 40 years of age have now left the farm and in many cases have left parents and even children²³⁴ behind in order to work in the city for higher wages, sending money back home. Wages are higher because market forces beyond the control of the government drive them up.

These higher wages can be generated by several factors:

- People who have high skills
- People who have very high skills, esp. PhD's earned abroad, who need to be paid according to an international wage scale or they won't come back to China.
- People who contribute as entrepreneurs

None of these folks garner much resentment because others feel they've earned their higher wages. On the other hand, those who make money through economic rent and through political connections, skating past regulations, engaging in corruption – these people garner enormous resentment.

One part of the solution would be to remove unnecessary regulations that provide opportunities for corruption and streamline those regulations that remain. Then aggressively and impartially administer the regulatory process, firing those who abuse it. The kinds of measures that more effectively control inequality, like massively progressive taxation, would impede growth too much to be feasible at this time. But China could expand its welfare system to help those at the bottom and to eliminate the discriminatory aspects of the hukou or household registration system.

Household Registration (Hukou)

Chinese who live in an urban area but are registered as rural residents have difficulty getting access to schools and healthcare and housing. It is this hukou system that encourages migrants from rural areas to leave their children behind. For more details, see footnote 209 on page 1.

Projecting the Future

Assuming no major disruptions, like a war over the South China Sea, Prof. Perkins projects per capita income growth of 4-6% while GDP grows at a half-point or so higher rate. Less than 10% of the people will work on the farm. SOEs will shrink and the middle-class will grow (defined as a family income of \$20,000 or more).

Given the larger middle class, will everyone want a car? With a strong network of high-speed rail, it may not be necessary. But if the middle class all buy cars, there'll be 500 million cars in urban regions far denser than the U.S. Where will all those cars drive and park? *My thought: by the time this happens, autonomous cars may greatly reduce the need for individual ownership. China, more than any other nation, can require cars to be autonomous*

²³⁴ From *The Economist*, Oct 17th, 2015, [Little Match Children](#):

Over the past generation, about 270m Chinese labourers have left their villages to look for work in cities. It is the biggest voluntary migration ever. Many of those workers have children; most do not take them along. The Chinese call these youngsters *liushou ertong*, or “left-behind children”. According to the All-China Women's Federation, an official body, and UNICEF, the UN organisation for children, there were 61m children below the age of 17 left behind in rural areas in 2010. In several of China's largest provinces, including Sichuan and Jiangsu, more than half of all rural children have been left behind (see map). In effect, some villages consist only of children and grandparents. This is a blight on the formative years of tens of millions of people. Alongside the expulsion of millions of peasants from the land they have farmed and the degradation of the country's soil, water and air, this leaving behind is one of the three biggest costs of China's unprecedented and transformative industrialisation.

and can require roads and highways to be retrofitted for autonomous driving. The occasional death from software bugs will not be the issue it would be in the United States or Europe.

Other changes? The welfare system will expand and the service sector will grow at the expense of manufacturing, as China transforms into a modern post-industrial economy.

Political Changes?

Prof. Perkins finds it difficult to imagine a society of 1.5 billion with a large number of educated elite continuing to be governed without elections, though they've been doing this for some time.

My thought: China is a political outlier in many respects, in large part because its population is schooled in Confucian thought that encourages obedience within an established social hierarchy and a strong desire to serve that hierarchy with honesty and respect. It may well survive with a dynastic political class for many more generations.

Discussion

Given what you have just learned, what do you think is the greatest economic problem facing China today? Why?

My thoughts:

If I had to pick one problem (there are many), I'd choose management of economic externalities, which is the heart of reigning in pollution. In a free market society, the most effective way to wage war on pollution is to tax it at the source. Tax oil as it's burned, plastics as they're made, wastewater where it enters the sewer. And then let companies determine for themselves the best ways to make money with the least cost on society.

A command-and-control society, rife with corruption and stifled by regulation, will struggle with this solution.

The US, with its lobbyists, it's 650 powerful senators and congressmen, struggles mightily, but has in many cases succeeded (e.g. the Clean Air Act). China can also get it done, maybe better, but probably with less innovation as command-and-control governments are (in my opinion) the enemy of innovation. The cost of pollution is perhaps the greatest weight on the Chinese economy.

Interview with Professor Elizabeth Perry

The Harvard-Yenching Institute

Professor Perry is director of the Harvard-Yenching Institute, which was founded in 1928 with the core mission of promoting higher education across nearly a dozen Asia countries, but with a focus on classical Chinese studies. These days the institute is intent on bringing the results of Asian scholarship to an international audience outside Asia.

Professor Perry is the author of [Anyuan: Mining China's Revolutionary Tradition](#).

Social Movement in China Today

The extent of popular protests in China since Tiananmen may seem surprising, but the sweep of Chinese history shows evidence that broad protests were common, but were limited in scope like they are today. In other words, today's protests in China lack the broad ambition and popular unity of the civil rights or women's liberation movements in the United States. The Chinese protests are fragmented and uncoordinated.

The Chinese government expends considerable effort preventing these fragmented protests from coalescing into weighty and unified social movements. From the U.S. perspective, the 1999 repression of the Falun Gong movement used excessive force, but from the Chinese perspective, [Li Hongzhi](#)'s leadership from abroad made it a serious political threat. Further, his followers crossed many backgrounds and demographics and were well-organized through cell phones. In a similar vein, the China Democratic Party crossed many regions and demographics and was also brutally suppressed.

Limited protests, on the other hand, are a well-regarded source of information. The peasant protests against taxes in the 1990s caught the attention of the State, which responded by abolishing the 2000-year-old agricultural tax. When individuals can't express their opinions by voting, limited protests are a way of informing the Party of the will of the people and even if the Party is under no obligation to respond, it often does.

In answer to the question of whether Prof. Perry could see a nationwide environmental movement in China comparable to the one in Taiwan in the 1970s and 1980s that helped push the Kuomintang toward democracy, she responded that such a movement might take the form of nationalism and would be very dangerous, indeed. The State applauds nationalism, with considerable media coverage of WW II. Nationalist protests hark back to Maoism,

to what many think of as a stronger and less corrupt state, which implicitly critiques the current state. Further, nationalism has different meanings for the fifty-or-so minority cultures and can include protests from secessionists like those in Tibet and Xinjiang.

Portrait of the Revolutionary as a Young Man

One of my favorite lectures.



Many visitors to China are surprised to see the image of Chairman Mao, in portraiture and statuary, throughout the provinces, from Shanghai in the east to the Muslim city of Kashgar in the far northwest. By comparison, there are few statues of Lenin or Stalin remaining in the former Eastern Bloc, save those preserved in memorial parks²³⁵. Yet Mao was an early disciple of Stalin and in the founding years of the CCP followed many of the Soviet methods.



Poster of Mao on his way to Anyuan to lead a strike

A young Mao Zedong began his revolutionary activities in the 1920s in Anyuan, an obscure coal mine in the middle of China. He joined there with Liu Shaoqi (page 310), [Li Lisan](#), and others in a time of idealism when people were drawn to the movement by the pure force of charisma without resorting to the proverbial ‘barrel of a gun’ (page 302). Li Lisan taught the Classics to the miners. Mao taught school in Changsha. Together they inspired with Chinese culture and tradition even as their ideas were drawn from the Soviets.

The schools they founded were the beginnings of a labor movement from which they drew communist cells. This may have been for Mao a utopian vision of what China could become if it followed in the footsteps of the Soviets.

But Mao understood the need to enrich his Soviet vision with Chinese tradition. Reflecting on the fall of communism across Central and Eastern Europe, we can see how the Polish and Hungarians and Czechs saw this outside vision imposed on their national culture turning their home-grown communist leaders into traitors. The Soviets were a conquest dynasty that encouraged revolt, eventually collapsing along ethnic and national boundaries.

From the beginning, Mao cultivated an image as a Chinese nationalist, speaking in aphorisms and writing poetry and eventually combining in one man both Lenin’s image of the revolutionary and

Stalin’s image of the powerful head of state. For many Chinese, his image is one of strength and tradition and they remember him fondly. Others, particularly university intellectuals, detest everything about him.

His legacy continues among the current party elite. Xi Jinping is considered a princeling because his father was a revolutionary comrade of Mao. Perhaps in the manner of dynastic leaders drawing power from *tianming*, Mao legitimizes the children of the revolutionaries. His legacy is complex, depending on the place, the age and the social class of each individual.

Prof. Kirby asks: whereas Mao’s history is vastly different from Stalin’s, he still had purges, the Anti-Rightist movement, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution – a history of death without parallel in any other regime: 40 million individuals. How will future historians judge him?

Prof. Perkins responds that it’s impossible for an honest history to emerge while the CCP depends on Mao’s legacy to legitimize their power. They see, as Mao most certainly did, that Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin in 1956 led directly to the Hungarian Revolution (see page 308) and eventually to the fall of the Soviet Union. Mao responded with the Anti-Rightist Campaign, preventing anyone in that era from thinking such views would be tolerated in China.

²³⁵ [Memento Park](#) outside Budapest preserves the old Communist statuary for tourists, with little reverence and much humor.

Retrospective

In roughly thirty years, from 1958 to the late 1970s, Mao's utopian vision of communism shattered in his hands, even as the rest of Asia swept past. And yet, since then, in the next thirty years, China grew into the second largest economy and a global power whose seat at the world table is assured. The question from Prof. Kirby is how Prof. Perry would explain what others have called the 'resilient authoritarianism' that gave China this extraordinary second chance.

Prof. Perry had personal experience first with Japan's rebirth and then with Taiwan's, but the growth in China has far surpassed both. With her colleague, Sebastian Heilmann, she attempted an explanation in [Mao's Invisible Hand](#).²³⁶ On the one hand, market reforms unleashed the economy ala Adam Smith, but on the other hand, Mao developed what Prof. Perry calls 'guerrilla policy-making,' as distinguished from policy decided by other forms of communism that lacked a strong tradition of revolution. Mao's China embraced decentralized experimentation²³⁷ called point-to-surface, where a policy applied with success to one point, or locale, could be extended to other regions. Once broadly successful, these ideas are incorporated in the central policy.

Mao may have buried much of this decentralized experimentation under the weight of his personality, but the method took root and in the post-Mao period came to fruition.

Another colleague of Prof. Perry, Amartya Sen, had a different perspective, comparing China with India, rather than with other developing countries in East Asia. Although China and India began their modern lives in similar conditions in the late 40s, most Westerners expected India, a democracy, to outpace China. Indeed, India had more industrial investment. Yet even a snapshot comparison at the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution would show China to have far greater literacy and life expectancy while India had stagnated.²³⁸ It was China's investment in human capital that provided the foundation for growth in the post-Mao period and explains the difference today between the two countries.

²³⁶ In the *New York Review of Books*, Jonathan Mirsky said "Mao's Invisible Hand is one of those books that make one feel good about scholarship. It describes inner workings of Chinese Communist society about which few nonexperts know anything--it may even surprise the experts--and it will interest anyone professionally interested in China. Its central purpose is to explain how China has escaped the disintegration of other Communist states."

²³⁷ I found a good description for these experimental methods in [Sebastian Heilmann's article](#) *From Local Experiments To National Policy: The Origins Of China's Distinctive Policy Process*, which appeared in *The China Journal*, No. 59, January 2008, pp.1-30. Here's a description of the process:

The existence of a sophisticated indigenous policy-making methodology of "proceeding from point to surface" (you dian dao mian 由点到面) suggests an entrenched legitimacy of decentralized experimentation that goes far beyond the sporadic and unconnected local experiments that were carried out in other authoritarian polities or in the paradigmatic Party-state of the Soviet Union.⁵ The Chinese point-to-surface approach entails a policy process that is initiated from individual "experimental points" (shidian 试点) and driven by local initiative with the formal or informal backing of higher-level policy-makers. If judged to be conducive to current priorities by Party and government leaders, "model experiences" (dianxing jingyan 典型经验) extracted from the initial experiments are disseminated through extensive media coverage, high-profile conferences, intervisitation programs and appeals for emulation to more and more regions.

²³⁸ Amartya Sen won the Nobel Prize in economics in 1998. Here's an [article](#) on his thoughts on India's policies.

"India will prick up its ears when comparisons with China are made, but the comparison is not just tactical. China invested in massive expansion of education and healthcare in the 70s so that by 1979, life expectancy was 68 while in India it was only 54."

Discussion

Thirty years ago, Deng Xiaoping argued that China must adhere to a "socialism with Chinese characteristics." Do you agree or disagree with Deng's assertions, looking back thirty years from now? How might China have developed differently if it had not taken the "socialist" path? Read the following excerpt and discuss. From *SCT*, vol. 2, 507-508.

“People may ask, If China had taken the capitalist instead of the socialist road, could the Chinese people have liberated themselves and could China have finally stood up? The Nationalists took that road for more than twenty years and proved that it does not work. By contrast, the Chinese Communists, by adhering to Marxism and integrating Mao Zedong Thought, took their own road and succeeded in the revolution by encircling the cities from the countryside. Conversely, if we had not been Marxists, or if we had not integrated Marxism with Chinese conditions and followed our own road, China would have remained fragmented, with neither independence nor unity. China simply had to adhere to Marxism. If we had not fully believed in Marxism, the Chinese revolution would never have succeeded. That belief was the motive force. After the founding of the People’s Republic, if we had taken the capitalist rather than the socialist road, we would not have ended the chaos in the country or changed its conditions—inflation, unstable prices, poverty, and backwardness. We started from a backward past. There was virtually no industry for us to inherit from old China, and we did not have enough grain for food. Some people ask why we chose socialism. We answer that we had to, because capitalism would get China nowhere. We must solve the problems of feeding and employing the population and of reunifying China. That is why we have repeatedly declared that we shall adhere to Marxism and keep to the socialist road. But by Marxism we mean Marxism that is integrated with Chinese conditions, and by socialism we mean socialism that is tailored to Chinese conditions and has Chinese characteristics.

“What is socialism and what is Marxism? We were not quite clear about this before. Marxism attaches utmost importance to developing the productive forces. We advocate communism. But what does that mean? It means the principle of from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs, which calls for highly developed productive forces and overwhelming material wealth. Therefore, the fundamental task for the socialist stage is to develop the productive forces. The superiority of the socialist system is demonstrated by faster and greater development of the productive forces than under the capitalist system. One of our shortcomings since the founding of the People’s Republic was that we neglected the development of the productive forces. Socialism means eliminating poverty. Pauperism is not socialism, still less communism. The superiority of the socialist system lies above all in its ability to increasingly develop the productive forces and to improve the people’s living standard. This brings us back to the point of whether to continue on the socialist road or to stop and turn onto the capitalist road. The capitalist road can only enrich less than 10 percent of the Chinese population; it can never enrich the 90 percent. That is why we must adhere to socialism. The socialist principle of distribution to each according to his work will not create an excessive gap in wealth. Consequently, no polarization will occur as our productive forces become developed over the next twenty to thirty years.”

My thoughts, in response to D18:

The argument that simple success argues for the tried system versus the untried system means nothing. The performance of the untried system will always remain unknown. The Nationalists did not fail politically or economically – they were drained by a war with Japan that the Communists evaded.

And in any case, the success of socialism and Mao Zedong Thought will forever be tarnished by the casualties and destruction of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. If the United States ever experienced such a ‘success,’ it’s perpetrators would hardly have statues erected and posters adorning every major town. This is a clear case of history written by the victors.

What led, therefore, to Mao’s success? If Professor Perry is correct in saying that China’s development was a result of an educated populace (compared to India, at least) then any of Mao’s policies that led to literacy should be given appropriate credit.

Had China not taken a socialist path then, recognizing the importance of an educated populace, a capitalist society ruled by a government whose bureaucrats compete for office through a modern Civil Service Exam, appropriately weighted for science and technology, could very reasonably have outstripped Mao’s economic development. An educated elite, trained in the kind of Confucian thinking that mandates service to the people as one of its highest goals, would help keep the nation from straying toward the kind of cruel and unregulated capitalism that is too often the truth of the United States. That’s the China I would like to have seen.

43: Agricultural China

This was a case study of the Charoen Pokphand Group. The case study was prepared for Harvard Business School and I believe has greater interest for business students, but also covers an economic history of China to give a context for the company's growth. I only took notes on the history that provided the context for the business case.

The case recaps the collective farming of the Great Leap Forward (see footnote 222 on page 1) and the subsequent land reform under Deng Xiaoping (see the Household Responsibility System on page 320) that reduced rural poverty from 30.7% in 1978 to 1.6% in 2007. It goes on to show how the focus of Chinese investment was on cities, using the "rural surplus in labor and production to subsidize the country's industrialization."

Sannong wenti

Three central issues, or *sannong wenti*, pressed down upon China's rural peasants:

1. Income had to rise to balance the wage gap with urban citizens, to prevent unrest.
2. Rural development was needed to bring the regions outside the cities into parity.
3. Agricultural productivity was needed to move past subsistence farming.

Hu Jintao's Rural Reform Resolution of 2008

To resolve the *sannong wenti*, the government subsidized training in agricultural technology and began to eliminate the agricultural tax that was first levied in the Qin Dynasty (as noted in Elizabeth Perry's discussion earlier). Then, in 2008, Hu Jintao announced the Rural Reform Resolution²³⁹ to signal his intention to support China's farmers. Under the resolution farmers could lease their land to others, giving them flexibility to find the best economical use of their 30-year land-use right. Bearing in mind that the State ultimately controlled all rights to the land.

At the time of the case, most crops were produced on small farms averaging 1.6 acres, employing over half the population and producing just over 10% of China's GDP. Hu Jintao's reforms were intended to consolidate farms for economies of scale. These consolidated farms could generate greater income per acre, while the peasants who held the land-use rights could use the income from leasing the land to start their own business. There was some concern, however, that China's scarce arable land would shrink further as the land might be leased for non-farming purposes

Rural reform relaxed the rules of Household Registration (*hukou* - see footnote 209 on page 1), giving farmers greater rights in cities to find housing and pursue employment. The reform also permitted greater lending and provided subsidies to farmers to increase capital investment in equipment.

Chinese Agriculture Before and After 1949

Because of the broad distribution of small plots of land to hundreds of millions of peasant farmers, the high per-acre expenditure of labor, essentially a nation of intensely farmed gardens, productivity per acre was high. Farms grew food, of course, but also animal feed for livestock, silk and tea for export. The perception among both Nationalists and Westerners was that Chinese farming was in crisis, and yet while its labor productivity was low, its land productivity was exceptionally high and it supported both food production and many cottage industries.

After 1949, Mao redistributed land to collective farms, essentially transferring ownership to the State. The result was the Great Famine. Farmers could not leave their land because of the *hukou* system and they could not survive on their land because it was owned and worked by the collective, so they starved *in situ*.

²³⁹ From [Hu Jintao's Land Reform: Ambition, Ambiguity, and Anxiety](#) by Cheng Li:

It may well be the judgment of future historians that the Third Plenary Session of the 17th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which was held in October 2008, was a landmark event in contemporary China. Approximately 500 high-ranking officials and experts on rural affairs, including 368 members and alternates of the Central Committee, attended the meeting, and they passed the "Resolution of the CCP Central Committee on Some Major Issues in Rural Reform and Development" (hereafter referred to as the Resolution). The Resolution not only endorsed the plan for new land reform that aims to boost agricultural productivity and peasants' income, but also signified a strategic shift toward ending China's century-long dual economy—what distinguished scholars such as John King Fairbank and Fei Xiaotong called the segregation between "rural China" and "urban China."

Who is the CP Group?

My apologies to those of you who love case studies: I didn't write any notes on this one. While studying and learning from the case study was enjoyable, turning my own reading and listening into notes was a lot more difficult than with other course material. I recommend you review the original material in the course. I've included only my answer to the Discussion Question.

Discussion

What advice would you give Chairman Dhanin? What do you think their big challenges are?

I see these challenges:

- Competition & Politics
- Training & technology
- Environment, Additives, and Disease

The greatest imperative, probably unspoken, is the necessity for the CP Group to retain its political advantage, and its greatest risk on that front will be a 100% Chinese company like Hope that gains the favor of the CCP and of provincial governments. For the same reason, I don't see Tyson and Nutreco as representing the larger risk.

With land being an immutable resource wholly controlled by the government through the farmers, political competition is, in a sense, the *only* competition. When that is won, all else follows. Political competition is also the road to easing the regulatory burden, to establishing footholds in new areas, and to broadening and deepening in existing areas.

The best way to smooth the political path will be to treat the bureaucracy well, avoid controversy, and be a good Chinese citizen. That last two items require taking care of the environment, maintaining strict inspections and quality standards, avoiding dangerous additives and monitoring the environmental impact, particularly water use and pollution.

By ensuring that the CP Group treats its farmers better than the Hope Group and similarly exceeds the Hope Group in food quality and the environment, it should have the basis for retaining an advantageous position with the government.

Lastly, the CP Group should keep an eye on the future. Just as Europe has always maintained high standards for natural foods with cleaner and more natural feed, feed mills should watch the trends and be ready to back out of any additives and antibiotic supplements that could cost them in the market and with the bureaucracy.

44: Entrepreneurship China

This was another case study and again I didn't write any notes and recommend that you review the original material in the course. I've included only my answers to the Discussion Questions.

Discussion

Who is Mr. Lu?

Lu is a determined, resourceful, thoughtful, canny and above all, daring entrepreneur. He responded to a need long ago, in a time when the State rejected individual initiative. He risked a significant sum, probably drawn from many people who desperately needed that money, to create a small enterprise. He took a calculated but daring gamble on shutting down all but his universal joint production to challenge the SOEs.

He understood the factors of success: people, equipment and technology – intuitively understanding where to focus. He worked the system within China to acquire top students, obtain raw materials and market his products. He worked the system overseas to be the quiet but profitable supplier.

He is a very impressive man. It will be fascinating to see how he and his successors handle the challenges ahead.

Why would Wanxiang want to do this case?

Do they really need the advice from a few hundred twenty-something wet-behind-the-ears foreigners? Hardly.

They believe their story is a good one, but it needs to be told well from their point of view, and put in the minds of those opinion leaders and future managers whose focus will be on China. These future managers may someday run purchasing departments or investment banks in U.S. and European companies. They may also be candidates to help operate Wanxiang's overseas businesses.

What difference does it make that this takes place in Zhejiang?

What is Mr. Lu's fundamental strategy?

Expanding overseas to provide a market for quality components built at Chinese costs, and to feed technology, people, and management skills back and forth between the acquired companies and the home operation.

What is Wanxiang America?

These are the U.S. businesses that have been acquired by Wanxiang. They are run by U.S. managers who ultimately report back to China. They benefit from Wanxiang management skills and deep pockets and cheap quality parts. They provide a U.S. face for Chinese expansion. They are profitable businesses in their own right. They provide access to U.S. technology and production skills and skilled labor.

They provide a synergy of the factors of production and marketing, because the U.S. and Chinese components of Wanxiang bring different qualities to the same table, allowing Wanxiang to mix these qualities to maximize their success.

Should they make an electric car?

Currently Wanxiang China and its U.S. and American subsidiaries manufacture mechanical drivetrain components (shafts, joints, bearings, springs, brakes, steering components, wire harnesses, lead-acid batteries.) It has, however, already begun manufacturing the Wanxiang Electric Vehicle, so the question is moot. They manufacture the batteries, motors, and control electronics and software. They make fully assembled buses and cars.

If I didn't know that from their website, I would have recommended against it, now, in January 2015. The reason? They (would have had) a long way to go to catch up technically with companies like Tesla, whose software, hardware, and battery technologies have the potential (no pun intended) to leapfrog other manufacturers in capability and cost. The cost of a Tesla is high today, but Tesla is aggressive in researching methods to reduce cost.

Their best bet would be to partner with Tesla, but Elon Musk doesn't do partnerships. An example of the challenge is rocketry: Chinese LEO rockets can't compete in cost with SpaceX rockets designed and manufactured in the U.S., and SpaceX costs are trending down sharply. Chinese costs at U.S. prices is a strategic mismatch when competing in a technology-driven market.

Their core competency (or so I thought) is mechanical components, horizontally integrated across auto manufacturing with deep market penetration through foreign subsidiaries. If they were to pick an area of expansion, I'd look for similar industries or related components (engine parts). But apparently I was wrong. ☺

45/46: Education China

A century ago, when the civil service exam ended, the system of education associated with it was replaced by new institutions which became world leaders, among them Peking University, Jiaotong University, and Academia Sinica. But by 1949, the focus had shifted to practical training. Sun Yat-sen envisioned a new future brought about through engineering and even in recent years, the Politburo has been dominated by men trained as engineers. Both Chiang Kai-shek and Mao saw the universities serving the political goals of the state, with Mao famously saying that literature and art lived only for “the artistic crystallization of the political aspirations of the Chinese Communist Party.”

Lu Xun (page 290) said that “All art may be propaganda, but not all propaganda is art.”

By 1978 the university system was buried to the point where fewer than a million university students were enrolled in the most populous country in the world. Those students returned after the end of the Cultural Revolution. By 2000, there were 6 million enrolled. Today (2015) there are 30 million. The goal by 2020 is to have 20% of all young adults in university with a long-term goal of 40%.

Unlike America and Europe, there’s a deliberate attempt to build world class universities [my thoughts: *why do we think the USA and Europe don’t deliberately intend to build world class universities? Haven’t they already done so and deliberately maintain them as such?*]

Prof. Kirby goes on to say that China is pouring money into these institutions. [*Perhaps that’s the difference, although the government has many ways of subsidizing it’s major universities.*]

Historically, American universities have not been the best. A century ago, Germany would have ranked highest. Today, not one of the top 45 universities is German. Most are American, but the Chinese universities are climbing the ladder.

Why have higher education at all? The Humboldtian Ideal²⁴⁰ stresses the education of the whole person instead of a focused training in practical skills. Translating to Chinese, Humboldt might have contrasted broad education (*jiaoyu*) with narrow, repetitive training (*xunlian*). American liberal education slants to the former.

Liberal education is the foundation of the modern Chinese university, in part to combat the tremendous pressures on students to focus on specific training, especially in math and science, for their careers.

China has a strong and deep history of liberal education in calligraphy and poetry and the classics, to train the whole person for the highest calling in China, to serve as an official. Today, even under the ‘dictatorship of the engineers,’ that legacy continues.

Field Trip to Tsinghua University

Prof. Kirby led us on a tour of Tsinghua University, whose name comes from *shui mu qing hua*, the water and the trees are pure and flowering. Here’s what we learned:

Although Tsinghua is known today for science and engineering, in the 1920s it was at the center of east and west studies, of the Chinese classics through Western methods. An American story lies behind that. When the Qing lost the Boxer Rebellion, it had to pay reparations of \$30 million to America, which Secretary of State John Hay argued was excessive and should be repaid, at least in part, to the Qing. Over \$10 million was used to send Chinese students to American universities. Tsinghua began as a preparatory school for these students.

After WW II, when the communists won control of mainland China, Tsinghua became a Soviet-style university and closed its social science departments.

²⁴⁰ From [Wikipedia](#):

Humboldt sought to create an educational system based on unbiased knowledge and analysis, combining research and teaching and allowing students to choose their own course of study... The university's features included a unity in teaching and research, the pursuit of higher learning in the philosophy faculty, freedom of study for students (*Lernfreiheit*, contrasted with the prescriptive curricula of the French system) and corporate autonomy for universities despite their being funded by the state. In addition to Humboldt, the group of reformers in Prussia included philosophers such as [Fichte](#) and [Schleiermacher](#), and Berlin University was a focus of national cultural

It is now the leading center of science and engineering in China and with the most difficult admission requirements of any school in the world. Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping both graduated from Tsinghua.

Interview with President Chen Jining of Tsinghua University

I'll paraphrase President Chen's answers to what I think are important topics. My judgment. My paraphrasing. In other words, any errors are mine.

On Tsinghua as a comprehensive university: When it was established, Tsinghua copied the American model [i.e. the Humboldtian model] of a liberal arts university. In the 1950s, all Chinese universities adopted the Soviet model of an engineering focus, eschewing liberal arts. In the 1980s, the older alumni from Tsinghua's liberal arts past combined with China's new openness inspired a return to a comprehensive education. This process took 30 years, including a transition from traditional Chinese liberal education (which I interpret as a classical Chinese education) to a broader international model of liberal arts.

On Tsinghua as a crucible for Chinese leaders and administrators: [Prof. Kirby notes that many Chinese leaders were educated as engineers at Tsinghua and asks if future leaders will receive a broader education. Pres. Chen responds:] You cannot transition to liberal arts without professors trained in it and maintain high quality.

To my ear, the question was not answered, it was only defined as being a difficult process.

On links to other universities: In the first half of the 20th century, Tsinghua was linked to America, in the 1950s with the Soviet Bloc, and it became isolated in the 1960s. In the 1980s it grew links with Japan and in the 1990s with Europe and in the late 1990s, the link with America became stronger than any other country. In three years [from 2015] Pres. Chen targets 10% of Tsinghua students to be international. America has the most of any other nation, more than Korea or Japan. English lectures are encouraged. 400 courses and 12 masters programs are taught in English.

Further, 40% of Tsinghua's undergraduates intend to study abroad as part of their education and the school wants 80% of Ph.D. students to have international experience.

Online Education: Prof. Kirby notes that Tsinghua is also on the Harvard/MIT edX program, offering courses internationally. Pres. Chen agreed to offer this ChinaX course as part of Tsinghua's online curriculum.

Interview with Professor David Daokui Li

Prof Daokui attended Tsinghua and received a Ph.D. from Harvard under Dwight Perkins. He now teaches economics at Tsinghua and directs the Schwarzman Scholars program.

He wants economists to take a broader view beyond the U.S. and Europe, to research the economics in the broader world and not simply apply U.S. economic theory to everyone. Tsinghua publishes a quarterly journal called China and World Affairs, which is internal to [Tsinghua or China, not sure which] and within which they are free to say 'many things.' [*Obviously a huge distinction with western journals, which are freely spoken and freely published.*] He invites Prof. Kirby to write for it [*but does he offer Prof. Kirby to read it?*]

What are the prospects of Chinese universities leading the world? First, Tsinghua will advance the sciences because science is labor intense and they have large numbers of students. Biology has 200 independent labs. Second, China's cities are larger and more numerous than any western country, which creates social issues on a different scale. They will be forced to be more creative in their research and their solutions to the management of energy, traffic, and communication.

Interview with Students

The interview took place at the School of Economics and Management. Rather than quoting what the students say (you can read the transcript), I'll summarize what they said (these are not my opinions):

Chinese students are good at math and textbook learning. They study hard and well. Not as strong at interacting with the outside world. Not as critical of what they learn. Not as knowledgeable of humanities. Not as creative.

One student notes that lack of continuity from the intensity of high school education where teachers actively drive the students, to the university environment where no one pushes. As a result, many superb high school students quickly drop out of college.

[My thought: *do the underlying personality differences between those who succeed without a mentor and those who need a mentor account for any of the strengths or weaknesses of Chinese higher education? In other words, can the lack of continuity alone account for some of these deficiencies?*]

Prof. Kirby notes that many Chinese believe that they work harder and are more pragmatic than Americans, who tend to be lazier and more creative. He believes that people underestimate the creativity of Chinese people. Even the Chinese.

Discussion

I have a few points to make after some reflection:

On Balance in Education

For two millennia, the Classics served to funnel China's elite into the bureaucracy, instilling them with moral values that included respect for authority and for the family and for higher learning. This disappeared overnight in 1905 and has been replaced to some extent with engineering education.

I believe the most interesting contradiction of classical education is that it teaches creativity and critique as well as it teaches respect for the past and for authority. That is the essential nature of the arts. To join the elite in Imperial China, you must write essays, develop artistic talent as a calligrapher, and write poetry.

Engineering teaches solutions to problems and in the early years there is typically one solution for each problem. While science and engineering *can* be and *must* be creative and innovative to advance, it is not necessarily creative while learning the basics.

Teaching the humanities will lead to greater creativity in science and engineering. Multi-disciplinary learning in general leads to creativity. *Those in the humanities would benefit just as well from studying science and engineering – a point that is too frequently overlooked.*

On Supply to Match Demand

A point that's been made about Obama's goal for free community college education is that the workforce has more people with associates' degrees than there are jobs requiring them. Not everyone in China should aspire to the highest levels of education. In the U.S., people would normally seek educations to match demand, but this normal flow of supply meeting demand is distorted by youthful, optimistic decisions that lack the wisdom of struggling in a rough job market.

China has the luxury of a culture that's far more driven to succeed than American youth. It can make the appropriate alternatives available, it can direct students toward these alternatives to match supply with demand, but it has the enormous disadvantage of a command bureaucracy that is slow to react to changing realities.

A wise China would create the opportunities (schedule the construction of schools at various levels) and let the natural demand of the students determine which schools of which types. Those Chinese students, far more than American students, will be driven to choose those areas where they can find work.

Traditional vs. Progressive Education

Should China pursue new techniques, like MOOCs, or other more traditional distance-learning (simple correspondence courses)? Of course! But they should be experiments, iterating toward more refined solutions with deep measurements of success that the software behind the MOOCs enables.

It's all very encouraging

There's no greater spur for economic growth, the pursuit of happiness, and the progress of civilization than a literate and broadly educated population. That China has this as a prime goal could not be more encouraging.

Kunshan

Kunshan²⁴¹ is in Jiangsu province between Shanghai and Suzhou, along the Yangtze River, well-located for trade with its proximity to export markets.

Once again, this was a case study for which I found difficulty taking notes. I include here only my answers to the Discussion Questions. These are my thoughts and not reflective of the opinions of the lecturers.

Why Do We Study Kunshan?

Earlier we studied Wanxiang, which showed how one peasant family arose from the ashes of the Great Famine and the Cultural Revolution, to beat the massive SOE's at their own game.

Here we study Kunshan, the story of a small city dwarfed by two massive neighbors, Suzhou and Shanghai, rising to greatness despite its neighbors and despite competition from the favored SEZs and ETDZs, unabashedly pro-business in a Communist society, creating wealth and jobs.

We could have studied Suzhou or Shanghai, but this rags-to-riches story of a small town in the middle of giants illustrates the influence a few people can have when their goal is larger than themselves.

What does it take to attract Taiwanese investment? How does Kunshan attract Taiwanese investment?

Attracting investment is an example of a network effect in the same sense that Silicon Valley has a dominant network effect that other locales have been unable to duplicate. To succeed in this manner it's *essential* to be the first mover.

Kunshan went out of its way to become a 'one-stop shop' - streamlining its bureaucracy, understanding what the Taiwanese businessmen wanted, and gaining an early reputation for establishing that connection. The town poured money into critical infrastructure. The network of Taiwanese businessmen began to talk among themselves about Kunshan's advantages. Once those businesses begin to establish themselves in Kunshan, it gained a reputation as a little Taiwan within China, with cheap labor and the rare favorable bureaucracy.

Why does Kunshan want to build DKU? Why does Kunshan want to partner with Duke? Why would Duke want to partner with Kunshan?

Education, especially the American form of liberal arts married to technology, was seen as the key to a productive and creative 21st century workforce. Duke has a long history in China and was seeking a partner for expanding its business school internationally. Kunshan saw the possibility of becoming a Chinese Silicon Valley, but it needed a strong university to build around.

What should Duke worry about?

Duke should be concerned with managing a campus around the world in a polar-opposite time zone, with maintaining Duke's standards and ideals, with balancing cooperation and independence and finally, with the possibility of the communist state coopting Duke's name for political purposes.

What are some challenges Duke University and Kunshan face moving forward? What advice would you give Chancellor Liu and Vice-chancellor Bullock?

Maintaining Duke's standards of liberal arts education. While DKU can have its own flavor distinct from Duke, it must also contain the soul of Duke, which is something the Duke Administration needs to determine, much like the culture of a corporation. Among other things, it includes the moral standards, the ways that students and faculty interact, the grading standards, the research standards, and of course, the academic freedom.

²⁴¹ From Wikipedia: a satellite city in the greater Suzhou region. Administratively, it is a county-level city within the prefecture-level city of Suzhou. It is located in the southeastern part of Jiangsu province, adjacent to Shanghai Municipality. The total area of Kunshan is 921.3 square kilometers. The population of Kunshan is 1.647 million (by 2010). The household population is 730,000. Kunshan is regarded as one of the most economically successful county-level administrations in China.

47: Environmental China

China's Environmental Challenge



*The Mid-Autumn Moon's luminous expanse
belongs to this lone recluse;*

*My oar dips into the transparent brightness
as I gaze across Lake Tai.*

*Beyond me – a complete silvery span of
water and sky.*

*Could such a bright moon ever be found
within a city wall?*

- Fan Chengda

(1126-1193 CE)

Lake Tai (*Taihu*) has long held sway in the hearts of the Chinese and today it's at the heart of China's booming economy. Wuxi, a city of six million on Taihu's northern shore, is developed to modern standards and prosperous.

The lake bears the cost of this development. Almost three thousand chemical factories line its shore. A neon green layer of chemical scum coats its once limpid waters. Its fisheries face extinction.

Early Pressure on Natural Resources

As early as the first millennium BCE, China began its transformation to agriculture by clearing the forests and planting the grasslands. It might not have been until the time of the Han that the Yellow River got its name from the unprotected erosion of the grasslands that colored its waters. China once was a land of virgin forest and tigers and wild elephants and skies darkened green by flocks of parrots.

The greatest force on the environment is the enormous human population that grew to overtake the other native species. See page 172 for the census recording how the population quintupled from 65 million to over 400 million in the period from 1393 to the 1890's. Unlike Europe, the people were scattered throughout China rather than concentrated in large cities. The population nearly doubled by 1950 and redoubled by the 21st century.

Nothing transformed China more or challenges China more than its enormous human population. It's difficult to imagine any simple remedy.

The Environment Under Mao

Mao believed in the unrestrained exploitation of natural resources²⁴². Mao famously said:

If people living in nature want to be free, they will have to overcome and change nature. Only then will they obtain freedom from nature

Man must conquer nature

Battling with nature is boundless joy

To catch up with the West, Mao directed the Chinese to plant grain everywhere, regardless of the suitability of the land, and to build backyard smelters that belched fumes and consumed perhaps 10% of the forests.

²⁴² See the [this review](#) of Judith Shapiro's *Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China*. *There are three broad philosophical traditions in China. One springs from Daoism which looks to accommodation with nature, and is best encapsulated in the slogan, "Harmony between the Heavens and Human Kind"; one springs from Buddhism with its reverence for all living creatures; and one springs from Confucianism with its respect for authority, including control and mastery of the natural environment. Although Mao was most influenced by the Soviet experience with its forced industrialization, collectivization of agriculture and overturning of established hierarchies, he falls well within the Confucian tradition and relied upon it crucially for the application of his ideas and policies.*

The Status of the Environment in Contemporary China

Water

While China's need for water grows with its growing economy, its per capita water resources are among the lowest in the world. It has 20% of the world's population and 7% of the water. Agriculture accounts for two-thirds of consumption and half the pollution.

Northern groundwater, which provides 70% of the local drinking water, dropped by as much as a meter per year between 1974 and 2000. Today, wells are drilled over a kilometer deep. Rivers and lakes are drying up or losing usable freshwater to pollution. 90% of groundwater is polluted – a leading cause of child mortality.

Air

Much of China's air pollution is linked to coal and biomass. It accounts for over 300,000 deaths annually and half the growth in global CO2 emissions in the last ten years.

Discussion Question

Read the following [article](#) from *The Guardian* written from Beijing in December, 2014. Why do you think that any Chinese attribute the abysmal air quality to “fog” (*wumai*) instead of “pollution” (*wuran*)? (Note for our non-Chinese speakers: the two *wus* are unrelated)

From the article:

This year's Beijing marathon, held on a day that exceeded 400 on the scale, saw many drop out when their face-mask filters turned a shade of grey after just a few kilometres. Some said it felt like running through bonfire smoke. With such hazardous conditions increasingly common, it's not surprising that foreign companies are now expected to pay a “hardship bonus” of up to 20 or 30% to those willing to work in the Chinese capital.

Land

China reserves 120 million hectares (300 million acres) for agriculture. By 2014, 60% of sown land was exposed to 85% of the heavy metal discharge. Land is lost to desertification²⁴³ at the rate of 3,600 km annually, destroying farmland and creating dust storms across the North.

Biodiversity

China has over 17,000 species of plants and animals. Perhaps 35% of vertebrates and 70% of non-flowering plants are endangered by industrialization and urbanization.

Human Health

Where lifespans in 1900 were roughly 20 years, extending to 40 years by the 1950s, they are now over 70 years. But instead of dying of starvation and disease, people die of ‘first world’ illnesses: stroke, heart disease, cancer, and emphysema. Lung cancer in particular. Every year, between 300,000 and 500,000 Chinese die prematurely from air pollution. Media sources indicate that a total of 459 ‘cancer villages’²⁴⁴ across all provinces except Tibet and Qinghai, mostly where villages are close to industry.

²⁴³ The process by which fertile land becomes desert, typically as a result of drought, deforestation, or inappropriate agriculture.

²⁴⁴ From *The Guardian*, June 4, 2013 [Inside China's 'cancer villages'](#):

Despite abundant anecdotal evidence for China's profusion of cancer villages, scientific proof has been elusive. When Wu Yixiu, toxics campaigner at Greenpeace East Asia, first visited Yanglingang in 2010, she assumed that establishing a causal connection between its pollution and cancer problems would be fairly straightforward – its population is so tiny, the disease so widespread, the pollution so caustic. "It's unimaginable that their health will not be affected by the quality of this water," she said.

Yet there are too many specific chemicals involved and too many types of cancer; diagnoses are spread over too many years. "You need to establish the fact that it's a certain chemical that's causing certain cancers, and this chemical is being discharged from this very factory," she said. "This would require years of observation and tracing disease records."

Political Responses and Prospects for the Environment in China

Focused Infrastructure Project

The Three Gorges Dam flooded 13 cities, 140 towns, and 1350 villages – 400 million square miles – displacing 1.2 million people. The main reservoir is polluted beyond the 25 million tons of sewage dumped annually into the Yangtze River. The dam itself bears on a fault line and could trigger an earthquake.

In 2013, the government launched the South-North Water Transfer Project to divert water from the Yangtze to the North China plain, which may cause even more environmental damage than Three Gorges, drawing down the river and increasing its salinity.

Some cities are acting on their own initiative:

Chengdu Taxis and motorcycles are required to use Compressed Natural Gas (CNG)

Beijing Largest fleet of natural gas buses.

By 2020 the government plans to have 15% of its energy met by renewable sources.

Can the command economy that created this problem also solve it?

Winning “the War”?

The public is raising its voice. Half of all protests in 2013 were on the environment; 60% of the citizens want the environment to be a government priority. In response, the government implemented a sulfur dioxide emissions reduction plan that may be having some success²⁴⁵.

²⁴⁵ Power Magazine, 11/1/2014, [China's War on Air Pollution](#):

Most experts agree that the policy measures have paid off, somewhat (Figure 3). As of 2012, more than 90% of the electric power fleet and a large number of steel facilities were equipped with desulfurization technology. Data from the National Center of Climate Change Strategy and International Cooperation indicates that China has exceeded its SO₂ reduction target (from power plants and other sources) by 123%.

48: Writing China

Yu Hua (1960-) (Interview by [Christopher Lydon](#))



Yu worked five years in Zhejiang as a dentist before taking up writing in 1983. So far, he's published four novels and six collections of short stories. He won the James Joyce award for *To Live*. Prof. Kirby recommends [China in Ten Words](#), which I read, which was excellent.

Yu also writes a column for the [New York Times](#). Many of the articles listed are relevant to the discussion that follows.

Pain

In the past, Chinese experienced pain similarly but now it's different for different people. The government emphasizes the historical pain of the Opium War and Western oppression and never mentions the Cultural Revolution or Tiananmen Square, the latter a taboo subject. Ordinary people feel the practical pains of today: inflation, the lack of good medical care and good education for the poor. The cosmopolitan modernity of big cities obscures the stubborn poverty of rural China where people are numb to the recent economic transformation.

He notes that since "June the 4th" is banned as an online search term (referencing Tiananmen), Chinese citizens created a new search term, [Thirty-Fifth of May](#). The American Embassy website has a few lines in remembrance of the bloodshed at Tiananmen Square. Yu is a fan of Hillary Clinton, feeling that if she becomes President, those few lines will not yield to the censorship of the CCP.

The Paradox of Hope

Successful city folk see a China full of problems while the unsuccessful poor are hopeful. Why? Those who are successful are afraid of what change may cost them while the poor have nothing to lose. Further, the successful understand more completely the problems of China and have access to unofficial information while the poor are both disconnected from information and too occupied with the burden of survival to probe deeper.

Revolution

Chinese people like their revolutions, the cycle of creating and overturning dynasties. The Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and the Market Revolution are all revolutions. Some are internal, some are economic, some are political, but they are all a tearing down and building up. Polluting and cleaning up.

Revolution in China is all-consuming. Everyone is involved, whether it's overturning the political system or making money in the Market Revolution.

Anger

The anger has lately risen from below the surface to become more obvious. Killing people in schools and on public transportation – a twisting of the violence from the government to the common people. It stems from a lack of hope – that the per capita GDP is not changing from a world ranking of 90 or 100, even as the rich get richer.²⁴⁶

The Cultural Revolution destroyed families, persecuting those accused of being rightists or landlords, causing divorces. But the effect was limited to a few. After the 1980s, divorces rose with the economy. When Deng gave individuals more room to grow, concern shifted to other freedoms, human rights and democratic freedoms leading to Tiananmen Square. Now, again, the focus on the economy has distracted people from their focus on human rights.

Money, Politics and the Chinese Dream

From the Cultural Revolution to the 1980s, China was ruled by politics. From the 1990s, during the economic revolution, money ruled. Lately, with the rooting out of corruption, politics has returned to compete for the helm.

²⁴⁶ The current ranking at the time I write this, in September 2015, is either 79 (nominal GDP) or 89 (at purchasing power parity). See [here](#) and [here](#).

Xi Jinping took a strong stance whenever he took a stance on anything: corruption, curbing local government (where he inspires great fear), and control of the media which is stricter today than under Hu Jintao or Jiang Zemin. Yet the strength of his positions is backed even by liberal intellectuals in China.

In the four years since *China in Ten Words* was published, money lost its primacy as China's driving force.

Lydon stated that no one seems to know what Xi Jinping means by the Chinese Dream. What, he asked, is Yu's Chinese Dream?

Yu's friend said that "before I die I want to vote for the president of China."

The problem with the permanent Chinese revolution is that's a top-down, undemocratic, violent revolution, sometimes accompanied by massive loss of life, with the truth behind it obscured from the people.

Yu sees two styles of government: parliamentary democracy where everyone votes, and democratic monopoly. He implies that his own dream is limited, that he cannot see any way for China to migrate to a parliamentary democracy.

Yu wrote an article on July 11, 2014 entitled [*Voting in China, a Distant Dream*](#).

Yu's novel *Fugui*, which means *To Live*²⁴⁷

Fugui is a young man in the 1940s who gambles away his family fortune. Forced to join the army, he fights with the Nationalists. He loses a son in the Great Leap Forward and a daughter in the Cultural Revolution because the Red Guard won't let a doctor care for her in childbirth. Fugui suffers greatly, losing one family member after another.

Lydon asked how Fugui would be suffering today in the Market Revolution.

Yu replied that Fugui would be a loser in this latest revolution, as well. He is too honest, too kind. You must be corrupt in today's world to succeed. He would have lost his farm and would live in a cramped apartment in a forgotten corner of China's urban society. There are many people like Fugui in China today.

Yu cooperated with Zhang Zimou on the scripts for the movie production of *Fugui*, but did not participate in the filming. Chinese censorship did not allow him to see the movie created from his book, his scripts. The censoring systems for books and movies are different because the movie censors have no economic incentive to allow Chinese films to be distributed in China.

China is a country of hard rules and creative rule-breaking (my thought: this is hardly surprising – it's the story of prohibition creating black markets. When he says "only in China will they ban the internet and make money getting around the ban", I don't agree that this is only China.)

China's Future

Lydon asked if Yu's unabashed writing was personally dangerous for him in China.

Yu replied that a New York Times journalist once told him that he, Yu, was under Chinese surveillance. Yu didn't think he was, though he noted that a friend of his who had been followed by the government was not worried for himself, but for Yu.

Lydon asked if the government was justified in its position that strong policies were needed to prevent chaos.

Yu believed this was reasonable, that however China may have a love affair with revolution, the government is afraid of it, or at least of the revolutions that begin from the bottom instead of the top.

Yu felt that the next revolution will not be controlled by a strong leader like Mao and that it will have sharp repercussions, the kind of power of the Xinhai revolution that overturned the Qing. This next revolution, he said, will end in freedom and anarchy with hundreds of groups competing for power.

The Great Leap Forward ended in famine, the Cultural Revolution led to disillusion, and Tiananmen Square ended in repression. How will the Market Revolution end? Yu believes the destruction of China is the inevitable conclusion. China suffers from problems with water, land, air, and the health of its people.

What else is there?

²⁴⁷ From Wikipedia: Published in 1993, *Fugui* describes the struggles endured by the son of a wealthy land-owner after the Revolution fundamentally alters the nature of Chinese society. The contrast between his pre-revolutionary status as a selfish fool who (literally) travels on the shoulders of the downtrodden and his post-revolutionary status as a persecuted peasant are stark. Yu Hua wrote in his introduction that the novel was inspired by the American folk song [Old Black Joe](#).

Mo Yan (1955-) (Interview by [Professor David Wang](#))

Mo won the 2012 Nobel Prize for Literature. He's best known for [Red Sorghum](#), a romantic historical novel published in 1986 and later turned into a film. His 1995 novel [Big Breasts and Wide Hips](#) generated controversy for its sexual content and portrayal of the Communists. He's an observer of rural life, having written over 80 short stories, 30 novellas, and 11 full-length novels.

He was given the name Guan Moye and grew up as a country boy from Gaomi County in Shandong before serving in the military for 20 years. He wrote a few short stories before honing his style in magical realism²⁴⁸ and attracting a large base of avid readers.

He adopted "Mo Yan" as his *nom de plume* because it means "to not speak" or "to speak little". He was raised in the late 1950s and early 1960s when simple words could mean great trouble with the authorities. His parents taught him to be cautious and speak little when he was away from the family, trying to curb his predilection to speak too much as a child. Once he began writing with royalty checks payable to Mo Yan, he officially changed his name to avoid difficulty collecting payment.

Prof. Wang asked Mo about his role in the "native soil movement"²⁴⁹, which began with Lu Xun. Mo replied that he and his contemporaries were surprised to find similar styles of writing among western authors like Faulkner and Hemingway, who became an inspiration for the genre. They were also inspired by the "red classics", books written after the Yan'an talks.²⁵⁰ He was able to read Lu Xun, but could not read, for example, Shen Congwen as Shen was censored from history until the middle of the 1980s.

As a result, Mo initially wrote some military and historical novels, following the diktats of the party. But after the root-seeking movement and after reading the corresponding western literature, he changed his writing style, unconsciously rebelling against Mao's proscriptions. This led him to his childhood, to Northeast Gaomi Township, the setting of *Red Sorghum*.

Prof. Wang noted that Mo distinguished himself by finding humor and compassion in the misery of Chinese rural life. Mo first noted that Lu Xun's 'native soil' literature and realism was broken after 1949 with the New China. Mo continued developing Lu's style.

While Mo was growing up, he and his family didn't feel they were suffering. They even felt their lives were superior to those in America or Taiwan because they didn't live under capitalism. This led to feelings of happiness despite the difficulty of their lives. Humor becomes "a sort of wisdom, a means to survival" and it draws sympathy

²⁴⁸ From [Wikipedia](#): Literature, painting, and film that, while encompassing a range of subtly different concepts, share in common an acceptance of magic in the rational world. It is also sometimes called **fabulism**, in reference to the conventions of fables, myths, and allegory.

²⁴⁹ I did some quick Googling, as well as searching through my notes, and was confused on the reference to both the *native soil movement* and to Lu Xun. Lu Xun is famous for writing in the vernacular, which is part of the *New Culture Movement*, detailed in [Wikipedia](#) and in my ChinaX notes on page 290.

The native soil movement, on the other hand, is a literary movement described as writing about life in the countryside, something that Corinne H. Dale in [Chinese Aesthetics and Literature](#) describes as a "tragic-ironic mode of writing rooted in the conscience of homeland or native soil." She quotes Shen Congwen as saying:

Native soil literature is literally and rhetorically a "rootless" literature, a kind of literature whose meaning hinges on the simultaneous (re)discovery and erasure of the treasured image of homeland.

Further, in the [Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture](#), you can find [this definition](#):

The 'Root-seeking school' denotes a group of fiction writers who explored native cultural traits to come to a new understanding of present culture during the 1980s. Instrumental in the development of the 'Root-seeking school' were Gao Xingjian's pamphlet, 'A Preliminary Inquiry into the Techniques of Modern Fiction' (Xiandai xiaoshuo jiqiao chutan), and Han Shaogong's seminal article, 'The Roots of Literature' (Wenxue de gen), which gave the school its name. The former included a first introduction to the magical realism of Borges and Marquez; the latter called for a redefinition of self-consciousness rooted in traditional but non-standard culture.

²⁵⁰ He's referring to the *Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art*, in May 1942, when Mao described the party's policy on mass culture.

from the reader, for its relief from the suffering and for its reflection of the absurdity of life. This is what Mo meant when he said he “drew upon the realist tradition of Lu Xun.”

In his novel *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, the title came from a Buddhist sutra: the “[Eight Great Awakenings](#).” From the Buddhist perspective, life is a sea of pain that we all share regardless of whether we are ‘good’ or ‘bad’ people. Only when you reach the nothingness within Buddha can you transcend it. It is within this backdrop that compassion arises, that all people are the same, that all can be forgiven.

Prof. Wang noted that Mo’s works have been cited “as a Chinese answer to Western masterpieces such as Faulkner and Gabriel Garcia Marquez.” How, Wang asks, would Mo compare his own works to these?

Mo replied that without those authors, there could be no ‘root-seeking’ movement. In 1987, he wrote *Two Blast Furnaces: Garcia Marquez and William Faulkner*, saying that to survive, Chinese authors must move away from them to avoid their own styles becoming mere reflections of these powerful writers. Having been kept from these authors until the 1980s, that first reading was a shock and a pleasure that such writing was possible and it fostered in them an irresistible urge to dig into their own experiences for the roots of a similar style. Mo forged his own style by reading deep into Pu Songling and *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*²⁵¹, allowing him to look beyond Faulkner and Marquez, though he called Marquez ‘an addiction’ and found him difficult to leave behind.

Prof. Wang redirected the interview toward politics, asking Mo about the relationship between the writer and Chinese society. Mo responded that in his novel *Garlic Ballads*²⁵² he used a quote attributed to Stalin, but insisted he was not influenced by politics, that “politics always tries to find the little writer.” [Although it seems to me, from the New York Times review footnoted below, that *Garlic Ballads* is intensely political.]

Mo went on to say that for Chinese writers, “literature is always influenced by the ties of politics.” He said there is a misconception about the role of writing in a politically repressive country. He described a game where children dare each other to pull a hair off the tail of an angry horse and says that writing is not the act of pulling the hair. It is the sketching of the horse. [Now *that* my friends, is a beautiful and evocative metaphor and it clearly shows why Mo Yan is Mo Yan and you and I are mere students of the master.]

The writer does not chronicle events, that is the job for historians and journalists. The writer draws the people who are in politics, the nature of the political animal. He learned from Shen Congwen to write close to the people. In this regard, Mo Yan wrote about the one-child policy as a human issue rather than a political issue, as one of the many details of life, though a particularly strong one, that creates conflict. He uses this detail to help us understand his character Gugu in *Frog*²⁵³. Mo Yan finished the interview by saying

...because I pinned my writing to illustrate people, I think the political issues have become literary.

²⁵¹ Written sometime between 1640 and 1715, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* is a collection of wonderfully inspirational folktales that are rich with the supernatural.

²⁵² Here’s a quote from a [New York Times review](#) of a 1995 translation of the *Garlic Ballads*, by Howard Goldblatt.

The setting of this raw, brilliant, eventful new novel by one of China's best writers is called, no doubt ironically, Paradise County. It is a rude and unforgiving place where the farmers have been ordered by county officials to plant only a single crop, garlic, and are then enraged when those same officials, after stuffing their pockets with fees and taxes, announce that the warehouse is full and they will buy no more of the harvest...

...No wonder that "The Garlic Ballads" was banned in China when it came out in the late 1980's, even though Mo Yan, the author of four novels and many short stories, already had official recognition for his other work.

²⁵³ Again, let’s read a [review in the New York Times](#) of *Frog*, as translated by Howard Goldblatt. The review is fascinating and worth reading in its entirety. Here’s a short quote about the political implications of the book.:

[Mo Yan] has been attacked both inside and outside China for his collaboration with the Communist literary establishment ... he controversially hand-copied, for a special commemorative edition, part of the 1942 "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art," Mao Zedong's statement of orthodoxy on the arts... Yet readers will find little in "Frog," Howard Goldblatt's fluent translation of Mo Yan's 2009 novel about his country's one-child policy, that validates the society created by the Chinese Communist Party. It is an anarchic, brutal book about the inhumanity of servants of the Communist state, the inadequacy of Chinese men and the moral vacuum at the heart of post-Mao China.

49: Taiwan in the Shadow of Mainland China

What is Taiwan?

Taiwan began as an Austronesian island with an indigenous population that may have originated from what is today the Philippines. In 1623 the Dutch landed, followed three years later by the Spanish. The Dutch governed the island for the Dutch East India Company until they were tossed out in 1662 by Zheng Chenggong, who was retreating from the Manchu invasion (see page 222). In 1683, the Qing captured Taiwan (then Formosa) where it was incorporated into the Southern Province of Fujian.

Today, with the fifth largest foreign reserves in the world, Taiwan is a model of export driven development. It has its own constitution, flag, anthem, and military forces, and is a self-governing, democratic state. Yet it lies beneath the spreading wing of China's political ambitions, neither at war nor at peace, neither a Chinese property nor fully independent.

Relations between mainland China and the Taiwanese Republic of China have been rapidly improving, with investments, partnerships, study, and intermarriage commuting across the strait. But these two nations have been at the brink of war three times: in 1954, 1958, and 1996.

The following data were gathered from Wikipedia in October 2015:

	China	Taiwan	Percent
Area in square miles	3.7 million	14,000	0.38%
Population	1.37 billion	23.4 million	1.7%
GDP	\$19 trillion	\$1 trillion	5.4%
Per Capita GDP	\$13,801	\$43,599	316%
Currency	Renminbi (yuan)	New Taiwan Dollar	
Ethnicity	91.5% Han Chinese	95% Han Chinese	
Official Language	Mandarin	Mandarin	
Capital	Beijing	Taipei	

Taiwan's population consists of 84% Taiwanese, including the Hakka minority (see page 272 for more on the Hakka), plus the 14% descendants of Mainland Chinese families who fled the Communist Revolution in 1949.

Chinese and Japanese Influences

Because of the Qing rules in the 17th century on emigration to Taiwan, few settlers came from the mainland and most of those were men. Thus, many of the marriages were between Han Chinese and the indigenous Austronesians. The Qing adopted more open policies towards emigration in the 19th century and by 1885 absorbed Taiwan as a province.

In 1895, Japan took Taiwan as its first colony during the Sino-Japanese war (see footnote 186 on page 1) and it remained part of the Japanese Empire until 1945. During the Japanese colonization, the Taiwanese assimilated, learned Japanese, and fought alongside their compatriots from the Main Islands during World War II.

The Taiwanese Identity

With the fall of Japan in 1945, the Taiwanese came under the rule of the Chinese Nationalists even though they had fought against them in the preceding years. To the Taiwanese, the Nationalists were an occupying force. To the Nationalists, the Taiwanese were of questionable loyalty. Former Japanese industries were nationalized, protests on the small island were crushed, and thousands of the Taiwanese elite were executed. Martial law stayed in effect for forty years, from May 1949 until July 1987.

Living under Nationalist occupation since 1947, the Taiwanese developed a fiercely distinct identity, neither Japanese nor Chinese.

Civil War Overflows into Taiwan

In 1949, the Communists defeated the Nationalists on the mainland, forcing Chiang Kai-Shek along with two million Chinese Nationalists to flee to Taiwan. There they established the Republic of China (ROC) with its capital in Taipei, run by the one-party government of the Kuomintang.

The Communists and the Nationalists agreed on one thing: that Taiwan and China were a single nation, differing only on which was the governing party.

By the 1990s, the ROC had transformed from martial law to free democratic elections. It held a seat in the U.N. until 1971 and was allied with the U.S. until 1979. From the late seventies, Taiwan gradually abandoned its claim to Mainland China and lost its aura of independence.

In contrast, Beijing steadfastly maintained its claim of sovereignty over Taiwan, neither using nor forswearing military force. It offered re-incorporation under a yiguo-linagzhi policy or 'one country – two systems', as it used with Hong Kong in 1997 and Macau in 1999.

The Taiwan Miracle

In the 1950s the ROC instituted land reform with land to the tiller and compensation to the landlord. This succeeded in quieting the native Taiwanese and was in stark contrast to the violent confiscation of farmland that was taking place on the mainland during the Great Leap Forward. Agriculture on Taiwan thrived and would help finance Taiwanese industry even as the Great Famine swept China.

Taiwan began a period of export-led growth that began with small- to medium-sized enterprises that attracted foreign investment. It was not the pure capitalist antipode to Mao's communism but rather an economic bureaucracy that insisted on retaining a role in guidance and planning. SOEs continued to be protected and subsidized while private Taiwanese-owned businesses grew alongside and eventually overtook them.

In 1978, Taiwan created the [Industrial Technology Research Institute](#) to help enterprises break into high-tech, encouraging educated and successful members of the Chinese diaspora, like Morris Chang of Texas Instruments, to return to Taiwan. Between 1952 and 1999, Taiwan's economy grew at 9.2% annually. It became an economic powerhouse even as its political position weakened to the point of exclusion from nearly all international political organizations.

Democracy and Tension Across the Strait

Meanwhile, those who petitioned for free elections were intimidated and imprisoned. Letters written by university students were opened and censored. It was not until 1987 that pressure from a growing middle class forced the ROC and the son of Chiang Kai-shek, President Jiang Jingguo, to finally end martial law.



This created a new source of tension with the PRC across the strait, for now the Taiwanese people could speak freely about their desire for a formally independent Taiwan. In 1996, China fired missiles over the cities of Keelung and Kaohsiung in an attempt to influence elections²⁵⁴. The U.S. responded by sending two carrier battle groups, the Nimitz and the Independence, with the Nimitz traversing the length of the Strait – an enormous display of military power.

Meanwhile, politics in Taiwan were changing. Since its founding in 1986, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) emerged as the only viable opposition party to the Kuomintang, with a tradition

²⁵⁴ From [Wikipedia](#):

The **Third Taiwan Strait Crisis**, also called the **1995–1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis** or the **1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis**, was the effect of a series of missile tests conducted by the [People's Republic of China](#) (PRC) in the waters surrounding [Taiwan](#) including the [Taiwan Strait](#) from July 21, 1995, to March 23, 1996. The first set of missiles fired in mid-to-late 1995 were allegedly intended to send a strong signal to the Taiwan (ROC) government under [Lee Teng-hui](#), who had been seen as moving ROC foreign policy away from the [One-China policy](#). The second set of missiles were fired in early 1996, allegedly intending to intimidate the Taiwanese electorate in the run-up to the [1996 presidential election](#).

of advocacy for human rights and independence²⁵⁵. In 1997, it received more votes than the Kuomintang²⁵⁶. With the election of the DPP's Chen Shuibian to the presidency in 2000, the movement toward independence was officially encouraged. High school students were taught the separate and distinct histories of Taiwan and China. China meant only the mainland and those who struggled against Chiang Kai-shek were officially revered. And in place of the One-China policy, President Chen advocated one China, one Taiwan.

Meanwhile, across the strait, Chinese nationalism was growing. Since 1950, Mao had declared Taiwan a Chinese territory and the citizens of the PRC were taught that Taiwan had always been Chinese. Following the return of Hong Kong and Macao to China, Taiwan was the one piece remaining for the reunification of (most of) the Qing empire. As a result, in March 2005 Hu Jintao responded to Chen's policy of independence with the Anti-Secession Law, reasserting the right to use "non-peaceful means" if Taiwan declared independence²⁵⁷.

Revival of Cross-Strait Economic and Cultural Relations

Deng Xiaoping's reform in the 1980s was similar to Taiwan's development model of the 1960s and 1970s, in that the CCP maintained political control as the Kuomintang did in Taiwan, but it relaxed economic control with land reform and the encouragement of private enterprise.

During the period of martial law (May 1949 to July 1987) the ROC forbid communication and transit with the mainland though some trade, about \$1 billion, took place through third parties. Once martial law was lifted, indirect links typically through Hong Kong led to investment and trade which today exceeds \$200 billion, making China the largest trade partner with Taiwan. Projects initiated by Taiwanese businesses were focused in Guangdong, Fujian, and the Yangtze River Delta, and over a million Taiwanese now live on the mainland. Over 300,000 have inter-married.

The Presidency of Ma Ying-Jeou

Ma was born on the mainland and raised in China. His family has strong ties to the U.S. to the point where opponents have questioned his loyalty. He's strengthened ties with the mainland, pledging to normalize relations without reunification.²⁵⁸ Those in China predict that reunification is the inevitable outcome of increasing economic and cultural ties, but strong political forces in Taiwan continue to chill the waters of the Strait.

²⁵⁵ From [Wikipedia](#):

Founded in 1986, DPP is the first meaningful [opposition party](#) in Taiwan. It has traditionally been associated with strong advocacy of [human rights](#) and a distinct [Taiwanese identity](#), including promotion of [de jure Taiwan independence](#).

²⁵⁶ *Taiwan nudges towards independence*, from [The Economist](#) Dec 4th, 1997:

Though many Taiwanese have supported the social reforms proposed by the opposition Democratic Progressive Party, they have not been willing to trust the DPP to govern. It might be bad for business, and the party's support for Taiwan's independence would upset China.

Things may be changing. In elections for county chiefs on November 29th, the DPP won 12 seats to the KMT's eight (three seats went to independents). This is the first time the DPP has received more seats than the KMT in countrywide elections, and the first time it has received more votes.

²⁵⁷ From [Wikipedia](#), a description of Articles 8 and 9 of the Anti-Secession Law:

Article eight deals with non-peaceful action, and is the article which has caused the most controversy and attention. It states that the State shall use non-peaceful and other necessary means under these alternative conditions: (1) if "Taiwan independence" forces, under whatever name and method, accomplish the fact of Taiwan's separation from [China](#), (2) or if a major event occurs which would lead to Taiwan's separation from [China](#), (3) or if all possibility of peaceful unification is lost.

Article nine states that, in the planning and implementation of "non-peaceful and other necessary actions", the State must as much as possible act to protect the persons and property of Taiwanese *civilians* and foreigners in Taiwan, and to minimise their losses. The State must also protect Taiwanese interests in the PRC.

²⁵⁸ From [Wikipedia](#):

Ma, in his inaugural address, laid out his promise in dealing with cross-strait relations that there would be "no reunification, no independence, and no war" during his tenure as President. However, after Ma formally took office, his policies have been largely pro-PRC and have been seen by critics as part of a long-run scheme to steer

Economic Integration and Political Partnership

World history tells us not to expect economic ties to lead to political unity. Germany's customs union, the Zollverein, is often credited with propelling a political union, but on close inspection, this was not the case.²⁵⁹ And Europe's deep economic co-dependencies did nothing to stop the devastation of World War I.

In China's history, political unification either through dynastic power or military conquest more typically preceded economic unity, as with the Qin emperor and with Mao. No Chinese empire saw political unification as a successor to economic unity.

In the case of Hong Kong, its businesses quickly recognized the economic potential of Deng's reforms in China. Investments would flow with or without political reunification. Even as economic and cultural ties strengthen, politics maintains a life of its own. [My thought: whereas economic and cultural ties don't automatically create unity, they also don't preclude unity the way cultural friction (e.g. the Balkans) often does.]

Unlike Hong Kong, Taiwan has its own military and remains politically autonomous with parties committed to resisting the mainland's desire for unification. Since this autonomy doesn't restrict economic integration, there's no compelling economic reason to unify.

Whether there is unity will be decided not by businessmen, but by statesmen.

Taiwan to "eventual unification." Critics argue that Ma, rather than follow his campaign promise, has been following his father's will instead, where Ma Ho-ling clearly states his final words were "Repress independence supporters; Lead (Taiwan) to unification." During an interview in England in 2006, Ma affirmed that his goal was to lead Taiwan to "eventual unification."

²⁵⁹ From [Economic Integration and Political Sovereignty](#) by Richard J. Bazillion, in the Canadian Journal of History, page 190:

Despite Motz's prognosis and Biedermann's hopes, and indeed the formidable reputation which the *Zollverein* continues to enjoy, uncertainty persists about the Customs Union's influence on subsequent events. "... [I]t is extremely doubtful," according to one recent account, "whether the contemporaries who saw the *Zollverein* as the vehicle of perfect internal free trade for the German states or of nascent political strength for some German collectivity were anywhere near the truth." One reason to question the germinal role of the Customs Union is provided by Helmut Bohme, who has argued that Prussia acquired its interest in "hegemony" only after 1848, in reaction to Austria's attempts to force its way into the *Zollverein*.¹¹ Thus, contrary to the expectations of Motz, Berlin came rather belatedly to understand the political implications of tariff policy.

50: Can China Lead

Will the 21st Century Be the Chinese Century?

In the early years of the 20th century, many writers predicted it would be a “Chinese century,” and now in the early years of the 21st we’re once again hearing that old refrain. Here’s a short list of modern books:

[*As China Goes, So Goes the World: How Chinese Consumers Are Transforming Everything.*](#) Karl Gerth

[*China's Rise: Challenges and Opportunities.*](#) C. Fred Bergsten, Charles Freeman, Nicholas R.

Lardy, Derek J. Mitchell

[*When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order.*](#) Martin Jacques

One of the more recent books and the one I’d recommend was written by our very own Professor Kirby.

Abrami, Regina M., Kirby, William C. and McFarlan, F. Warren. (2014). [*Can China Lead: : Reaching the Limits of Power and Growth.*](#) Harvard Business Review Press

China’s leaders of the early 20th century earned their chops in the military or in armed revolt: Yuan Shikai, Sun Yat-sen, Mao Zedong, Chiang Kai-Shek. Because of the actions of these military men and out of a need to defend itself in a world turned against them, China became a great power, even as it did not become a democracy.

This new ‘golden age of Chinese capitalism’ is really the second golden age; the first was in the late Qing and in the Republic. In the 1930s, the world looked to Shanghai as the East Asian center of commerce, rather than that ‘colonial backwater of Hong Kong,’ or even Tokyo.



The foundations of some of the great Chinese universities date back to that Republican period: Beijing University, Yanjing University, Nanjing University – formerly Jinling Women’s College. National Central University was modeled on the University of Berlin and has a reproduction of the Brandenburg Gate at its entrance.

The great Tsinghua University dates from the Qing – its entrance gate was built in 1911 – modeled after the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

China’s rise is not a recent event. If not steadily, then relentlessly, China has been rising over the last hundred years in terms of its military strength, its economy, and its leadership in education. It is now resuming the global position of strength that it held for thousands of years, a position it relinquished only in recent history and only for a relatively short while.

Beijing in 2035

Will Beijing still be the capital in 2035 or will it be a casualty of growth and pollution and the scarcity of water? On a positive note, there’s no debate within China on the priority of environmental remediation, in part because the state limits debate – which in this case may be an advantage. Taiwan in the 1970s may be a model of what will happen. It suffered through extraordinary pollution during a period of rapid growth, exercised strict remediation, and now Taiwan is once again a place of great natural beauty.

Infrastructure State

The plans for China’s tremendous growth in infrastructure date back to Sun Yat-sen (see page 297, especially footnote 211, where you can follow the link to Sun Yat-sen’s comprehensive paper). Chinese high-speed trains are the envy of the world. Plans have been laid for 45 airports in the next five years, including another in Beijing that will engulf an area the size of Bermuda. The sea bridge over Qingdao Bay is the largest of its type in the world. China’s mobile telecommunications reach even the most remote locations. Clearly there are limits to this intensive growth as urban migration ebbs but even as that happens China is likely to remain the world leader in infrastructure.

Education

No modern state has led the world without first leading in education. China’s reinstatement of modern education in 1978 was covered on page 334. The following graph shows the recent growth in higher education:

Public and Private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

Year	Private HEIs	Public HEIs
2002	131	1265
2003	173	1379
2004	226	1505
2005	250	1542
2006	276	1591
2007	295	1613
2008	638	1625
2009	656	1649

Source: PRC Ministry of Education,
<http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s4958/list.html>

In the 19th century, Germany and Britain led the world in education and in the 20th century the U.S. took that mantle. China looks to be vying for leadership now, as evidenced by the growth in quantity *and* quality at places like Tsinghua and Duke Kunshan Universities, and because of the strong government support of education. On the other hand, academic organizations like the [Chinese Academy of Social Sciences](#) have become increasingly politicized under Xi Jinping's administration, with an emphasis on scholarly adherence to the Party's vision in a manner few have seen since Mao's Cultural Revolution.

Teacher, please don't talk like that about China

In November of 2014, the Liaoning Daily published an open letter purportedly from university students accusing educators of denigrating Chinese society and praising unworthy Western political systems²⁶⁰. The article received a frigid response outside China as it was strong evidence of the ratcheting of academic censorship. Three months later, the president of Peking University, Wang Enge, was summarily dismissed by the CCP.

So on the one hand, it's clear that China is well-positioned to share the mantle of world academic leadership, yet its direct incursions on academic freedom leave us doubting its moral leadership.

Chinese World Order

The burden of national defense, against Japan and in the subsequent civil war between the Communists and the Nationalists, led to the centrality of the People's Liberation Army, both in the Army's position alongside the Party and as a model for the Chinese citizen. But with Chinese borders now secure and China's ambitions limited to the East and South China seas, why has its military budget risen so high in recent years?

The answer? The PLA gets a 10% budget increase every year because it can.

That doesn't mean China is in a position to challenge the world's dominant superpower. In many ways, it shares the same concerns as the United States: ensuring free access to trade routes, defeating piracy at sea, and maintaining the peace that permits and encourages economic growth. Given those shared goals, it's unlikely to have conflict with the United States in the direct exercise of military power.

China has, however, a history through several millennia of spreading its own concepts of civilization, an exercise of soft power. The Chinese values of family, community, language and governance have reached across Asia in the past and are reaching farther today. But Chinese values now include the censorship and harassment of intellectuals and writers who voice opinions against the Party. It is the exercise of this old soft power enlivened with these new values, that is perhaps the area most ripe for conflict with the West.

Can China Lead?

Professor Kirby posed the question: after decades of Chinese economic growth and now with the Western economic malaise, why is the Party still so insecure?

[I find it interesting that this question was asked in early 2015 before the sudden and unanticipated decline of the Chinese stock market, a decline that appears to have been accelerated by government interference. Perhaps the Party had reason to feel insecure!]

²⁶⁰ A translation of the article can be found [here](#).

Why, our professor asks, does China spend more on domestic public security than on national defense? Because the external danger has quieted, leaving the remaining dangers on the inside.

Writers and intellectuals and advocates of human and environmental rights are under surveillance and censorship. Migrant workers are second-class citizens in the cities where they live. Inequality is at a record high for *any* country; a shocking development for a communist country.

And how much of an insult does the Party bear when two of its most outspoken enemies, the Dalai Lama and the writer Liu Xiabao, have individually won Nobel Peace Prizes for their resistance.



What does the mighty CCP fear from these men? What does it fear from its own people that it cannot give them the freedom to communicate either with each other or with the world at large? Surprisingly, Gary King and his fellow authors²⁶¹ found that China does not suppress criticism of the state so much as criticism of the censors themselves and of any discussion that might lead to collective action.

The man who oversees party discipline, Wang Qishan (pictured at left), recommended that his comrades read *The Old Regime and the Revolution*,²⁶² de Toqueville's book on the French revolution. This tells us how the CCP believes that its own people cannot be trusted.

How can any county lead the world when it cannot lead its own people without repression?

The Transition to President Xi

In the history of the People's Republic of China only one transition of power was without violence or political trauma: from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao in November of 2002.

Reverting to the norm, when Xi Jinping took power he did so in a divisive struggle with Bo Xilai. So far, his legacy has been outspoken nationalism, centralization of authority, and suppression of political dissent. In universities, he funds heavily the study of *Xi Jinping thought*, an eerie regression toward Mao and the Cultural Revolution, right down to the color of Xi's own little red book.

Will the 21st Century be the Chinese Century?

Despite all its power, China remains unable to civilize its own country in the manner of its dynastic heritage.

First, it lacks the long-standing tradition of a civil bureaucracy led by a meritocracy founded on a Civil Service Examination deeply embedded in the core of Chinese education, culture and governance.

Second, it fails to lead either itself or the world in enduring human values.

These were two of the greatest strengths of the Chinese model of governance that influenced all of East Asia for thousands of years.

By 2035, Professor Kirby sees a prosperous and powerful China with less centralized authority. The question remains: what form will Chinese political society take to replace its ancient model of governance? How will it earn its legitimacy and the confidence of its people? What vision of the future will it give them? Until it answers those questions and answers them well, it can thrive, but it cannot lead.

But after 50 weeks of Chinese study we should all now understand that if indeed the 21st century *is* the Chinese century, it won't be the first and it certainly won't be the last.

²⁶¹ Professor Kirby referenced a paper entitled [How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression](#), published in May 2013 in [American Political Science Review](#).

We offer the first large scale, multiple source analysis of the outcome of what may be the most extensive effort to selectively censor human expression ever implemented.

²⁶² See [Wikipedia](#). *The Old Regime and the Revolution* by Alexis de Toqueville, [available in PDF](#).

My Own Closing Thoughts

This was my response to the Final Discussion of *Can China Lead*.

What is your vision of China in the year 2035? What will be China's greatest strengths? What are China's greatest challenges? What do you most wish for, as you think of China's future?

Politics and Governance 2035

This is a time of great pessimism toward politics in China. Just yesterday the 'Saturday Essay' in the Wall Street Journal ([The Coming Chinese Crackup by David Shambough](#)) predicted the collapse of the Chinese government in a coup d'etat.

Call me an optimist or a contrarian, but there is often more truth in defying the common wisdom than parroting it and today's common wisdom says Chinese politics are descending into another Maoist era. I don't believe it. Much as people compare Xi to Mao, he is ([as Lloyd Bentsen might say](#)) no Mao Zedong. He doesn't have the iron grip and he doesn't command the wide-eyed admiration. His little red book will not sell and those who study *Xi Jinping Thought* will not be admired. Either Xi will lose his hard edges or he'll be pushed aside but I expect the change will be quieter and less dramatic than the pundits predict.

And then this too will pass, and China can repower its engine of growth in all areas without concomitant destruction of its environment and social structure – but it cannot achieve that if it shuts down free thought.

It only needs to look a short ways to the West, to see in India a neighbor with a population of similar size but far more youthful and finally experiencing a surge in economic strength that may turn out as impressive as China's. And as China worsens its reputation as the neighborhood bully, it opens the door for others to take its place. China is not without competition for leadership in the East.

Environmental and Energy 2035

Much harm has been done, but we've seen in the United States the relative ease (given the seeming intractability of the problems) with which damage can be reversed. The Clean Air Act in the U.S. and its effect on Los Angeles and other cities is a striking example. Air and water can both be recovered. But the key input is clean energy.

The world is moving quickly toward finding energy solutions: grid battery storage, advanced solar panels, and especially molten salt and [traveling wave](#) nuclear reactors (wind is not proving to be a good answer). By 2035 the move from coal will be well underway. It has to be. China doesn't have North America's natural resources. Between pollution control, desalination, and clean energy I believe China can and will solve the problem of clean water – though it will not be cheap and will come at the expense of growth.

The same vigor that created the world's most extensive infrastructure can pour the concrete and weld the steel for a clean energy and clean water infrastructure that will be every bit as extensive as its national transit.

Academia 2035 and Freedom of Thought

Can a government that keeps its people from electing their own leaders allow them to think their own thoughts? The CCP clearly does not believe it can.

Thousands of years ago, ancestor worship became the founding philosophy of the Chinese people, inspiring the first written records on the shoulders of oxen and the bellies of turtles. This reverence for the parents and the elderly, and through them, the State, led to the beliefs in ritual, in hierarchy, and in status that were formalized by Confucius and his followers in the Five Classics, and further cemented by Zhu Xi and the Neo-Confucians in the Four Books. This culture was embedded throughout society and government with the civil service exam, one of the keystone developments in all of human history.

But while Confucius advocated a smaller state focused on itself, many of the dynasties, like the Tang and the Qing opted for an expansionist China. Under Han leadership, the Chinese absorbed barbarians into their culture. Under conquest governance, the barbarians themselves, particularly the Qing, declared allegiance to many of the Confucian ways (with the notable exception of hairstyle). They added immensely to the historical documents (while burning others) and continued to empower the civil service exam.

Geographically, China today is a mix of these Confucian principles and the expansionist interpretation of *tianxia*. Many regions of China, specifically Taiwan, the Xinjiang Province and Tibet were taken by the Qing and were never historically part of greater China.

Politically, China succeeds today as an autocratic state because of a cultural reverence for authority. It is *not* that the Chinese are without individuality, it is that individuality must be expressed within the framework of respect for the deep roots of wisdom and history that are the foundation of modern China.

Today, with democracies not only surrounding China but educating many of its elite and suffusing its internet, the autocracy is convinced that free thought is an existential threat.

And yet you cannot have creativity without free thought. You cannot have truly great universities without freedom of expression, certainly in the liberal arts but also in the sciences. To hear those Chinese students repeat, one after another, that China needs to encourage creativity did not lead me to think they'd gotten the message. To the contrary, it sounded like they were parroting the same message, in lockstep.

Can China adopt the Western policies of freedom of the press and freedom of expression without threatening the autocracy? I don't know. It may depend on whether China's Confucian reverence for status allows them to accept the autocracy as the reasoned and necessary alternative to Western styles of governance.

I'm sure China will achieve its goal of bringing higher education to hundreds of millions of its people, but it will have to change its attitude toward free thought if it truly wants to build a culture of creativity. I can't predict whether it will. I don't think anyone can.