

*China Perspectives*

# CONTEMPORARY STUDIES ON MODERN CHINESE HISTORY

Edited by  
Zeng Yeying



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# Contemporary Studies on Modern Chinese History I

The study of modern Chinese history has developed rapidly in recent decades and has seen increased exploration of new topics and innovative approaches. Resulting from a special issue of *Modern Chinese History Studies*, this volume is devoted to showcasing the healthy development of Chinese modern history studies, and has already been revised twice in the original language.

This volume exhibits major achievements in the study of modern Chinese history and shows how the role of history was in debate, transformation and re-evaluation throughout this tortuous yet prosperous period. Articles on eight different topics are collected from 11 prominent historians in order to represent their insights on the developmental paths of Chinese historical studies. Drawing on a large number of case studies of critical historical events, such as the founding of the Communist Party of China and the May 4th Movement, this volume reflects on economic history and military history, while moving on to explore more pioneering topics such as intellectual history and cultural history.

This book will be a valuable reference for scholars and students of Chinese history.

**Zeng Yeying** is a researcher, Professor and Doctoral supervisor at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. His professional research direction is the history of the Republic of China. His representative works include *The History of the Republic of China, Vol. 1* (2nd edition).

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# Contemporary Studies on Modern Chinese History I

Edited by Zeng Yeying

Translated by Li Wenzhong  
and Wu Jinshan

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# Preface

More than ten years ago, in 1999, I worked as the editor-in-chief of the journal *Modern Chinese History Studies* sponsored by the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. In order to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the PRC, and also to help researchers in modern Chinese history to learn from the past practice with discrimination and precaution in the coming twenty-first century, I once discussed with Huang Chunsheng and Xu Xiuli, the deputy editors, and decided on a special issue (the fifth issue of the year) with the theme of *Research on the History of Modern China in the Past 50 Years*. We then planned 24 special topics, such as the theories and methods for modern Chinese history studies, the political history of the late Qing Dynasty, modern economic history, cultural history, ideological history, social history, urban history, women's history, the history of youth movements, the history of workers' movements, the history of Sino-foreign relations, the history of the Republic of China, and the history of the Communist Party of China, for which we invited a group of prominent historians on the mainland to write introductory articles looking forwards and backwards, with a view to promoting the healthy development of Chinese modern history studies. Subsequently, we received positive responses and support from many notable scholars. But it turned out that the limited space made it impossible to accommodate all the contributions at one time. The original fifth issue had only published 16 of them. Then the published articles together with the other eight pieces were made into a volume with the title *Research on Chinese Modern History in the Past 50 Years* and submitted for publication by Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House.

The publications mentioned above aroused widespread concern among historians, especially young students. Many readers wrote to the journal editorial board asking for mail orders, and almost all college history students had a copy, thus making the fifth issue the most widely distributed for many years. The book *Research on the History of Modern China in the Past 50 Years* was first published in April 2000 and second edition in July 2002. In August 2003, perhaps because it was the first of its kind to systematically introduce the PRC's studies on modern history, it was also approved by the State Council as one of the "Tenth Five-Year Plan" key projects for the "211

Project” of higher education, namely the “Digital Library Project for Classic Coursebooks of Higher Education.” Accordingly the book was published by Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House as an e-book for online reading by lecturers and students of the 100 “211 Project” universities, 400 universities offering graduate programs, and another 1,000 universities. In October and November of 2008, during my visit to Taipei for historical materials, I was also informed by many Taiwanese friends that “the book also sold well there” and was asked whether I was “interested in continuing to do it.” It seems that this book was helpful for people studying and researching the history of modern China. This is the main reason why I am still willing to take up the old job and edit this *Contemporary Studies of Modern Chinese History (1949–2009)* today, more than ten years later.

This book is a revision with new additions of *Research on the History of Modern China in the Past 50 Years*. Other than combining individual topics into chapters, the main changes are the addition of an “Overview” as an independent chapter, the inclusion of research between 1999 and 2012 in each chapter together with modifications and feedback from pre-1999 reviews in some chapters. The introduction of the research mainly adheres to the following principles: first, due to the limited space in this book, while it is not possible to cover everything in detail, we concentrate on major events, important people, with the research well focused, adequately dealt with, well justified and properly delivered. Second, an introduction has to be impartial with regard to the representative viewpoints. For controversial issues, different views are given equal exposure to prevent bias. Third, for some representative views that have a wider impact on academia and society, the main arguments and key factual evidence held by researchers are introduced appropriately. Fourth, practical review and prospects should be given as a summary of past research. Of course, everything is easier said than done. Despite all this, readers may still find the book unsatisfactory, and we feel obliged to ask for forgiveness.

Other aspects remain unchanged. Twenty-three topics have been retained, though the chapter on the “history of education” was reluctantly removed, because its author Wang Bingzhao died, and other scholars felt it was inappropriate to revise it. Moreover, a few chapters such as “Social history,” “History of Northern Warlords” and “History of historiography” have been changed or have acquired new authors for various reasons. The writing style remains diverse depending on the authors’ own choice, with no unified and consistent style guideline being imposed upon them. Authors vary to a great extent in their presentation in terms of organization, ordering, focus, representation and citation.

It needs to be noted that in order to maintain the extent of each chapter, necessary deletions, occasionally significant ones were made to some. Other chapters were written while most were revised and modified in the light of historical facts. I am responsible for such modifications rather than the original authors. However, I have also retained some slightly repeated content

in individual chapters, which would not have been appropriate for a unified book, without having deleted them altogether. This is because 1) the fact that the original design ignored the possibility of overlapping events in different chapters simply makes it impossible to avoid them at this stage; 2) although the book is composed of 24 chapters as a whole, each chapter is actually a separate unit, with its own independence, integrity and internal logic; 3) despite of some slight repetitions, they complement each other on account of their varied emphases and different ways of delivery. In addition, most of the works introduced in this book are carefully cited with their sources for further reference by readers. However, now that the important figures introduced in this book are limited in number and discussions of them are concentrated in several chapters, there is no index of personal names in order to save space.

For the successful publication of this book, heartfelt thanks go to all the contributors for their warm support, to China Social Sciences Press for permission to quote from *Report of Development of China Philosophy and Social Sciences*, and to Zhang Xiaoyi and Liu Zhibing for their guidance, especially Liu Zhibing for his painstaking work in proofreading, citation format, and compilation of references. Finally, I honestly welcome discussion and criticism from both professionals and general readers.

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# 1 An overview

*ZENG Yeying*

It has been over 70 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, during the course of which studies of the modern Chinese history have developed from what used to be the least substantial in Chinese historical research and was even hardly regarded as a branch of "knowledge," into an established branch of science in Chinese historiography today with its own scientific system in unprecedented prosperity. This is obvious to all. However, the same is also true that due to various factors both at home and abroad its development is far from smooth, having experienced the same problems of all kinds as emergent in the development of Chinese social sciences as a whole, and suffered serious setbacks as well as twists and turns in the whole process. It is therefore not only undoubtedly necessary but useful to conduct a brief review of such a tortuous process for the future development of modern Chinese historical research.

## 1.1 Initial development

Ever since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), modern Chinese history studies have been highly valued by the Central People's Government, especially by its top leader, Mao Zedong, the outstanding leader of the Chinese revolution.

As early as May 1 1950, just six months after the birth of the PRC, the Central People's Government established, on the basis of the Historical Research Department of the North China University, an institute of modern Chinese history with the Marxist historian Fan Wenlan as the director. It was the first of its kind in the humanities and social sciences after the founding of the PRC. In September 1953, as was proposed by the Publicity Department, the CPC Central Committee, and according to the "resolution" by the "Chinese Historical Research Committee" of the CPC Central Committee, it was officially placed as the third department of the Institute of Chinese Historical Research in the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the national science research center. Soon its original title was restored, namely the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and then evolved into today's Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Social

## 2 ZENG Yeying

Sciences. At the time of its creation, there were no more than ten people, most of whom were history researchers cultivated during the period of the democratic revolution of the Communist Party of China. Later, a group of distinguished senior scholars of history study were gradually recruited from universities or scientific research institutions before 1949, together with a growing number of young researchers trained in the PRC. As the result, the institute became the research center for modern Chinese history in China, with its membership having quickly reached over one hundred. In the meantime, history institutes focusing on modern Chinese history were established in many provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, such as Shanghai, Tianjin, Hunan, Guangdong. In addition, history departments concentrating on teaching and research in modern Chinese history were established in many universities, thus involving a large number of people in teaching and research. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the total number of modern history researchers at central, provincial, municipal and regional research institutions as well as universities within the first ten years of the PRC had far exceeded its pre-1949 levels. This is a good example showing how much importance the PRC has placed on modern Chinese history study.

With the support of the central government and local governments, and the joint efforts of the majority of researchers, remarkable progress was made, in the study of modern Chinese history during this period, in the following three aspects.

The first is the establishment of an independent scientific system of modern Chinese history as a discipline. For a long time, Chinese history study, including modern Chinese history, had not been able to embark on a scientific path, since it invariably concentrated on the rise and fall of the state and social prosperity and collapse in terms of whether the ruler was “wise” or “virtuous,” thus covering up the facts of class struggle with various idealist fallacies. Although historians of the Chinese bourgeois democrats, with an orientation of incredulity and discrimination, had also criticized the traditional historical view and historical account based on the genealogy of the emperors, and thus had played a moderate role in the development of Chinese history, they still failed to reveal the truth of China’s modern history because they always denied the decisive role of productive forces in the course of history and thus disavowed the historical role of class struggle. Since the founding of the PRC, the majority of the modern Chinese history researchers, having studied Marxist historical materialism and class analysis methodology and research practice, and confirmed that “the history of all societies is but that of class struggle,” have basically reached a consensus on the disciplinary issues in modern history for its upper and lower time limits, basic development tendencies and research methodology, while it is true that they occasionally hold different views on some specific issues. It is the shared view among most of the historians that modern Chinese history starts from the Opium Wars in 1840 and ends in the May 4 Movement in 1919 (and extends to 1949 when the PRC was founded, as was recognized with the deepening study of history

after the reform and opening up), and that it is by nature a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, whose fundamental task is to fight imperialism and feudalism. Therefore, the basic clue in the study of modern Chinese history should be the Chinese people's anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle and its development, with the Marxist Materialist conception of history and class analysis method being its fundamental methodology. Three representative works fully reflect and demonstrate such a subject system: the first and second are the course books for the teaching of modern Chinese history in universities published in 1962, the *History of China* (Vol. 4) with Guo Moruo, the dean of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, as the chief editor, and Liu Dalian, the deputy director of the Institute of Modern History, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, as the executive editor, who organized the researchers into writing teams, and *An Outline of Chinese History* (Vol. 4) whose chief editor was Jian Bozan and its author Shao Xunzheng and Chen Qinghua of Peking University. The third one is *From the Opium Wars to the May Fourth Movement* written by Hu Sheng, which was published as late as 1981 though its system is not very much different from the first two books.

Second, a number of basic documentaries and literature of modern Chinese history have been collected, collated and published, having thus laid a solid foundation for further study. Historical data is the core and foundation of historical research, and the latter simply cannot exist without the former. Therefore, the Association of Chinese Historians, which was set up by the "Chinese Historical Research Committee," undertook as its top priority even in its preparatory stage the collection, collation and publication of the basic documentaries of modern Chinese history. As early as July 1949, the eve of the founding of the PRC, Fan Wenlan, who was in charge of the preparation of the Association of Chinese Historians, was already beginning to plan this work. He aimed to compile the *Reference Documentaries on Modern Chinese History Series*, and to organize historians to compile special references in respect of the major historical events in modern history for successive publication. At the time of the fiftieth anniversary of the Yihetuan (The Boxer) Movement in 1950, *Yihetuan (The Boxer)* was edited and published by Jian Bozan as a special collection. From July 1951, when the Association of Chinese Historians was officially established, to 1959, ten books were successively edited and published in accordance with the plan, among them were *Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, *The Uprising of the Hui People*, *The Reform Movement of 1898*, *The Opium Wars*, *The Sino-French War*, *The Sino-Japanese War*, *The Revolution of 1911*, *The Nian Army*, and the *Westernization Movement*. Of the book series the most dense consists of eight volumes and over 2 million words, whereas the lightest consists of four volumes and over 1 million words; the Taiping series of ten books can be regarded as the most comprehensive literature collection and one of the biggest publication events by academic historians in the early years of the PRC. In 1954, the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Sciences founded the journal *Materials on Modern History* specifically for the publication of materials on modern Chinese history. At the same

time, under the unified planning of the Association of Chinese Historians, many economic historians, such as Yan Zhongping of the Institute of Economics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, started the compilation of a work on Chinese modern economic history. As the result, a series of books on China's modern economic history were in continuous publication, such as *Reference Materials on Chinese Modern Economic History Series*, including *Selected Materials on the Chinese Modern Economy*, *Materials on the History of Chinese Modern Industry*, *Materials on the History of Chinese Modern Agriculture*, *Materials on the History of the Chinese Modern Handicraft Industry*, *Materials on the History of Chinese Modern Railways*, *Materials on the History of Chinese Modern Shipping*, *Statistical Historical Materials on Chinese Modern Foreign Debt*, and *Historical Materials of Old Chinese Bonds*, *Materials on the Imperialism and China Customs Series*, including *Chinese Customs and the Burmese Issues*, *Chinese Customs and Continued Loans from Britain and Germany*, *Chinese Customs and the Boxer Movement*, *Materials on the History of Chinese Capitalist Industry and Commerce Series*, including *Beijing Ruifuxiang*, *Shanghai National Rubber Industry*, *Shanghai Cotton Cloth Industry*, *Shanghai National Machine Industry*, *Shanghai National Match Industry*, *Shanghai National Wool Textile Industry*, *Yong'an Textile Printing and Dyeing Company*, and *Statistical Materials on Old China's Flour-Producing Machine Industry*, *Historical Materials on Shanghai Typical Capitalist Enterprises*, which contains specific materials on the Nanyang Brothers' Tobacco Company, the Rong's Enterprise, and Liu Hongsheng's Enterprise. These journal and book series, being carefully selected by experts and scholars and of considerable reference value in respect of modern political and economic history, are still widely cited by modern Chinese history researchers. It should be noted that they were just a few remarkably large-scale material collections beside many other works. There were also *Adapted Collection of Historical Materials on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Series* edited by Luo Ergang, *Memoirs of the Revolution of 1911* edited by the CPPCC (The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference) National Committee, *Selected Materials of the Chinese People's Liberation Army in the Second Civil Revolutionary War Period* and *Selected Materials of the Chinese People's Liberation Army in the Third Civil Revolutionary War Period* edited by the Academy of Military Sciences, to name just a few, whereas other works, which varied in size, due to the limited space of this book, will not be mentioned here. However, these alone are enough to show that the painstaking efforts shown by Chinese researchers of modern history to material collection as well as the remarkable achievements they have made are beyond any doubt.

Finally, a systematic and in-depth study of the major events and topics in modern Chinese history was undertaken regarding the history of the imperialist invasion of China, the peasant movement of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the Revolution of 1911, and the capitalist economy. On the history of imperialist aggression against China among the first batch to be published

were Liu Danian's *History of the American Invasion of China* and Chin Benli's *History of the US Imperialist Economic Invasion of China*. Later, the first volumes of *History of Imperialist Aggression against China* compiled by Ding Mingnan *et al.* were published, which, although dealing merely with the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, gives a full and systematic “synthetic account” of the history of the oppression of China, opposing China's independence and the impeding of Chinese social progress by the major capitalist nations in the late Qing period. The most significant progress in this period was made in the study of the peasant movement of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Take the papers in the journal *Historical Research* as an example, before the “Cultural Revolution” in 1966. Altogether 113 papers were published on modern Chinese history, of which 65 were on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, accounting for 57.52 percent of all the papers on various topics, almost two-thirds of them. As for monographs, significant accomplishment was made in the textual research on historical events as demonstrated in the seven monographs written by Luo Ergang, such as the *History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, a biographical general history, *Essays on the Corrections of the Historical Records of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, *The Textual Research on the Historical Events of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, *Collected Essays on the Discrimination of the Historical Materials of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, *Textual Research on the Heavenly Calendar (of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom)* and a *Cross-reference Table of the Heavenly Calendar, Xia Calendar and Gregorian Calendar*, *Essays on Research and Interpretation of the Historical Materials of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, *Interpretations on the Images of the Cultural Relics of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, and *Essays on the Survey on the Historical Sites of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*. Although less progress was made on the Revolution of 1911 compared with the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, 22 papers were published on *Historical Research* before the “Cultural Revolution,” ranking second in terms of quantity. What is more important is the fact that significant changes took place in the direction and focus of the study, which no longer, just as the historiography in old times used to do, focused on isolated political events and studied the personal activities of a small number of celebrities; instead the economic backgrounds and class relations were explored, and emphasis was placed on the status and role of ordinary people. Moreover, the Revolution of 1911 was regarded as the product of the fundamental contradictions that were intensifying in the late Qing Dynasty. Such studies have greatly contributed to the study of the Revolution of 1911 and helped to reveal much of its historical truth. In the study of the capitalist economy, first of all, fruitful accomplishments were achieved: as many as 61 important monographs were published before 1966, such as Wu Jie's *China's Modern National Economic History*, Shang Yue's *A Preliminary Study of the Occurrence and Evolution of the Capitalist Relations in China*, Wu Chengming's *Imperialists' Investments in Old China*, Wei Zichu's *Imperialism and Kailuan Coal Mine*, Fu Zhufu's *China's Primitive Capital Accumulation*, Zhou Xiuluan's *The Development of China's National*

*Industry during the First World War*, Zhang Yulan's *History of China's Banking Industry*, and Yang Peixin's *Inflation in Old Times China*. Second, many new research fields were opened up. It was from then on that many new subject areas began to arouse research interest and in which substantial progress was made, such as primitive capital accumulation, the national market, the national bourgeoisie and the comprador bourgeoisie, the commercialization of agricultural products, the new democratic economy, and the impacts of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the Reform of 1898, and the Revolution of 1911 upon the economic development.

The reason that such remarkable progress in the study of modern Chinese history was made in the period can be, in addition to the above mentioned support by the central and local governments, attributed to several other important factors.

First, there was a relatively stable period of time for research. Any scientific research, in order to be successful, must be dependent on the availability of both research object and the researchers themselves. And for the study of modern Chinese history, the most important thing for the former is the availability of theory and methodology as well as data. As mentioned above, since Marxist historical materialism and class analysis methods were established, and there was a certain amount of prepared data available, it was certainly not a problem. The one that is more crucial is the latter, that is, whether the researchers had the initiative and the time for concentration on the study of modern Chinese history without interference from other unrelated activities. The victory of the revolution in China and the founding of the PRC has washed off the disgrace and humiliations that imperialism had imposed on the Chinese people for over a century, and basically ended the state of division and war. Modern Chinese history scholars, being either prominent senior experts on old times or new scholars who grew up in the PRC, were fêted like the rest of the whole country, and were keen to give their best to the development of the PRC's scientific and cultural cause; everyone had unprecedented enthusiasm beyond any doubt. Therefore, the only thing that mattered was whether there was availability of time. Before 1966, especially in the early 1950s, in spite of the fact that the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) repeatedly carried out ideological criticism campaigns targeted at repelling the so-called ideological attack of the bourgeoisie, stressing that social science researchers must transform their world outlook, so that the research work always made way for ideological criticism movements to the effect that it was occasionally interrupted, yet the time period can still be said to be relatively stable because the durations were relatively short and small scale. Many researchers, with their whole-hearted support for the PRC's cultural construction and love for the study of modern Chinese history, engaged themselves in their own research using every minute of available time by taking advantage of this relatively stable environment and with strong will and perseverance. This should be one of the reasons for the remarkable progress in the period.

Another reason was the broad implementation of the policy of “letting a hundred flowers blossom and letting a hundred schools of thought contend.” In August 1953, Mao Zedong personally put forward the forthcoming *Historical Research* the policy “Let one hundred schools of thought contend,” to promote the development of historical research. On 2 May 1956 in his speech at the Supreme State Conference, he again formally declared “let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend” in the fields of art and science. He said: “There are schools of this and that in social sciences, let them talk. And they can also voice their opinions in journals and on newspapers.”<sup>1</sup> This is a far-reaching policy; it had not only mobilized to the utmost the initiative of the majority of scientific workers, but also it was a necessary way to develop sciences, because only the academic viewpoints that stand up free discussions of different views may be a tenable truth. A general survey of the research in modern Chinese history in this period reveals that, in contrast with the subsequent period, there still existed a relatively strong atmosphere of free academic discussion. As an example, in 1954, Hu Sheng’s article “On the periodization of modern Chinese history” was published in *Historical Research* and immediately caused a heated discussion, which lasted more than three years. According to the statistics of “Discussion on China’s modern history periodization comes to an end” published by the Xinhua News Agency in 1957, a total of 24 related papers were published within three years. Such an event, having involved so many people for such a long term on a specific historical topic, has been to this day unprecedented in the study of history of modern Chinese history. Another example was Jiang Duo’s “The Westernization Movement and its facilitation of the early national capital,” “The contradictions between the economic activities of the Westernization Movement and the foreign capital of aggression” and his other papers published in the *Wen Hui Bao* newspaper (Shanghai) between 1961 and 1962 also provoked a heated debate. On Jiang Duo’s views, some disagreed, some held the middle position, and others took a half-for-half-against view, reflecting a favorable attitude of those modern Chinese history scholars at that time for freely speaking their mind in their pursuit of truth. Even after Qi Benyu published *Historical Research* in 1963 and 1964 “On Li Xiucheng’s self-account” and “How to deal with Li Xiucheng’s surrender and treacherous behavior?,” there were still scholars standing up and voicing their dissent. It can be seen from these cases that the “double-hundred” policy of this period was actually well carried out, and had thus played an important role in promoting modern Chinese history study at that time.

There was a third reason. A group of highly respected senior historians played an important guiding role. This was because besides the significant progress mentioned above, certain problems, and even wrong tendencies also arose, and they should have been promptly overcome and corrected. Moreover, new problems could arise any time in a changing situation. In such cases, it was of crucial importance whether some people showed the right way for a smooth development of research. Fortunately, at that time a number of

respected senior historians, such as Guo Moruo, Fan Wenlan, Jian Bozan and others, were not only in good health, but still able as usual to play a guiding role. They not only were aware of such problems, but also in a timely manner pointed modern Chinese history study to the right direction, with their strong sense of responsibility and their considerable learning and experience, by frequently writing books and delivering speeches.

Take Fan Wenlan as an example. As early as in 1950, he published an article reviewing his own *A Brief History of China* and *The Modern History of China* with a sense of matter-of-fact and self-examination, hoping to invoke people's criticism. In the article Fan Wenlan said that one should adopt a Marxist historical analysis for history and individual historical figures in the entire feudal era. Either condemning all or praising all before, any analysis was merely subjective non-historicism. He also said that to some extent the practice of "talking of the past to allude to the present" damaged the historical viewpoint of seeking truth from facts, indicating that in his former book he made a false analogy by associating the union between the Wu and Shu in the Three Kingdoms period with the national united front of anti-Japanese, and by referring Sun Quan of the Wu to the Kuomintang reactionaries and their undermining of such a united front, and reprimanded the Kuomintang's spy reign by the faulty analogy of Wu Zetian (Empress of the Tang Dynasty, who reigned 685–705); in the latter, the *Modern History of China*, he again blamed Chiang Kai-shek by talking of Emperor Daoguang's "difficulty of begging to surrender" during the Opium Wars.<sup>2</sup> Fan Wenlan set a brilliant example for the historians with his spirit of seeking truth from facts and courage of self-criticism. In 1954, to deal specifically with the situation that some historians were often constrained by the individual assertions of the classical writers of Marxism, Fan wrote "Why China became a unified country from the Qin and Han dynasties," arguing from the reality of Chinese history that the Han nationality had come into gradual formation as early as the Qin and Han dynasties, which is not what Stalin said, that the nation cannot be formed until the capitalist age. This was a specific demonstration opposing book-copying dogmatism. In 1957, in a lecture to the History Department of Peking University Fan further pointed out that learning Marxism was to "think like" rather than "look like," and

problems occur and have new infinite changes, and correspondingly there should also be new infinite solutions. This is the living vitality of Marxism. This is what I mean by "think like" in learning Marxism. It is nothing but pseudo-Marxism and dogmatism to regard Marx's phraseology as a panacea, and to limit oneself to some abstract formula by applying them indiscriminately with no careful consideration of time, context and conditions.

What Fan Wenlan said of "think like" here simply means learning and understanding the very spiritual essence of Marxism, while the so-called

“look like” means dogmatically copying discrete statements regardless of the specific historical conditions. It is totally undesirable to do so.<sup>3</sup> In 1961, Fan published in *Historical Research* “Opposing firing empty shots” specifically dealing with the situation in which some historians during the “Great Leap Forward” of 1958 took on a boastful manner and made groundless remarks. He criticized those who simply invented formula and law and wove them into lengthy articles before doing any serious investigation and research. He also pointed out that to write a good research article or book,

one must begin with close investigation into the historical event in question, then go ahead reading various references for a systematic and detailed understanding of the matter, and analyze the causes of such an occurrence as well as the various factors, positive or negative, contributing to its development for a determination of its tendency by applying the perspectives and methodology of Marx, Lenin, and Mao Zedong’s thought.

“One must adhere to the honest attitude of ‘being determined to seek truth from facts, but not to seek popularity by producing shocking statements’. Never try to collect data in a grab-and-use manner.” Here he was not only talking of the genuine attitude, but also proper research method.<sup>4</sup>

Guo Moruo, Fan Wenlan, Jian Bozan and a number of respected senior historians repeatedly corrected the wrong tendencies in the critical moments for modern Chinese history study and pointed to the right direction, which always provoked great repercussions in the academic community. It is their irreplaceable guiding role that promoted the development of modern Chinese history study in this initial stage.

## 1.2 Critical setbacks

Now that great importance was placed on the study of modern Chinese history, and that people had unprecedentedly high motivation for learning and studying it which resulted from the victory of the Chinese revolution, then modern Chinese history research should have been able to embark on a smooth sustainable development. But that was not the case. The momentum of development in the early 1950s was soon suspended by the anti-rightist campaign of 1957 that was to be dramatically expanded.

From then on, the whole country headed into a period of comprehensively “putting politics in command,” and the central tasks of the various units and departments had to make way for oncoming political movements one after the other. The vast majority of intellectuals, young and old, old and new, had invariably been identified as bourgeois intellectuals and must be ideologically transformed and take the so-called “red and expert” (socialist-minded and professionally competent) path. They could find no way to be engaged in research until their bourgeois world outlook was transformed. However,

the best way to such transformation was to “turn intellectuals into laborers,” namely sending them to factories and rural areas for labor training. In 1958, all colleges and universities began to fully implement the policy of combining education with production labor, with production labor being listed as a compulsory course.<sup>5</sup> In 1963, the Institute of Philosophy and Social Sciences of the Chinese Academy of Sciences also began to implement, for all the newly assigned university graduates in all its research sections, the so-called rigid “labor practice” system providing that each was to be sent to labor for the first-year in the rural areas. In 1965, Chen Boda, as a vice president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, notoriously known as a “Marxist theorist,” “formally proposed twice to the Chinese Academy of Sciences that all the research sections of the Institute of Philosophy and Social Sciences be abolished and all researchers be dismissed.” In January 1966, the “theorist” Kang Sheng, who had not published any single piece of theoretical work, wrote a lengthy comment on a *Briefing* of the Institute of Philosophy and Social Sciences, saying that

the social science researchers, before a proper transformation of their bourgeois world outlook, have no right to do any research work, nor do they have the right to serve the farmers. The only one thing they can do is to go to labor in the countryside.<sup>6</sup>

Even more common were the political learning activities for the purpose of raising the so-called “ideological consciousness” of researchers, or the urgent mobilization to fight off the so-called bourgeois ideological attack. The so-called “red and expert” was merely another name for being only “red” but not “expert.” Researchers so frequently separated from their research practice, with most of their time and energy wasted in such endless transformations, would of course find it hard to continue modern Chinese history research.

There were far more problems than that. After the Anti-rightist Movement in 1957, began to foster the so-called “sharpening of the class struggle in socialist society”; and the struggle against the bourgeois ideology became more frequent and more intense. As the consequence of a series of critical standpoints such as “pulling the white flag (capitalist ideology) and planting the red flag (socialist ideology)” in all the universities in 1958, new biases emerged in such major issues as research direction and approach, in addition to the existent dogmatic use of the general principle of Marxism in place of specific problem analysis as mentioned above.

The first was the absolute, simplistic and formulaic conception of class struggle, which was caused by one-sided understanding of Marxist theory of class and class struggle. It was a common practice in modern history studies that only class struggle was stressed while ignoring the fact that a class society is the unity of opposites of different classes, that only peasant wars, such as the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, and their role in promoting history were overstressed while ignoring the fact that some regulatory policies

of the feudal ruling class also functioned to promote social production, and that people were more critical than accepting even toward such bourgeois reform and revolutionary movements as the Reform Movement of 1898, and the Revolution of 1911. In short, all the ideas and activities of the exploited classes were positive, progressive and revolutionary; all the ideas and activities of the exploiting classes were always negative, backward, and reactionary. Black or white, everything was all clear-cut. Moreover, even the academic title “History of foreign relations” in the history departments in some universities was criticized as manifesting a loss of the proletarian position, and it was “required to be renamed as the ‘history of imperialist invasion of China’, and later changed into the ‘history of Chinese people fighting against imperialism’.”<sup>7</sup> A requirement was that historical research should be in the service of political reality. At first it was merely a requirement for finding out the historical basis for justifying certain policies and making some historical comments. With the so-called sharpening of the class struggle of the socialist society being intensified, even such kinds of “studies” seemed to be far from enough. In 1965, Qi Benyu published “Studying history for the revolution” on *Historical Research*, requiring that historical research should be entirely carried out for current political needs, namely the needs of the class struggle, and directly make historical research a part of the current political struggle. It seemed that there was no need to care about whether such research conforms to the truth of history, or whether it is really beneficial to the progress of society and to the development of modern Chinese history research. Finally, there was a serious neglect of basic research, opposing the so-called “tedious textual research” while advocating “theory guiding history.” One typical instance was the question whether Hong Xiuquan (of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom) had a beard or not. It was often used as a target of ridicule and criticism for being “tedious textual research,” saying that such textual research was utterly meaningless. In fact, even this criticism may not be without biases. People might need to know whether Hong Xiuquan had a beard or not when they wanted to make a portrait of him, or impersonate him on the stage. In such an example, is research still unnecessary and meaningless? All these biases were but factors that seriously affected the sustainable development of modern Chinese history research.

However, the study of the modern Chinese history was not totally terminated and researchers in general could undertake their research in an on-and-off manner, even though they had to spend most of their time and energy on the transformation of their “bourgeois world outlook.” In 1961, the Central Committee reiterated the policy of “letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend.” A number of respected historians as mentioned above, such as Guo Moruo, Fan Wenlan and Jian Bozan, had the courage to uphold truth and continued to voice their disagreement and criticisms of the biases regardless of the increasingly erroneous idea of “turning left rather than right.” There was even a period when the academic atmosphere was moderately restored. Therefore, modern Chinese

history research was able to maintain a slow development, as was manifest not only in more or less inertial progress on the basis of the previous more profound research, but also in some newly-opened fields characterized by social investigation such as “four histories,” namely that of families, villages, Communes (the People’s Communes) and factories, with some initial results being achieved.

However, even this unsatisfactory situation did not last long. The period from 1966 to 1976, ever since then modern Chinese history research, like other social sciences, had suffered severe damage and even destruction for ten years imposed by Jiang Qing and Lin Biao cliques. They first announced the closure of all levels of institutions, including universities, scientific research institutes, and the termination of all the research organizations and academic groups; all journals like *Historical Research* immediately ceased to work, and quite a number of accomplished historians were labeled as “three anti’s members,” namely anti-party, anti-socialism, and anti-Mao Zedong thought, or “reactionary academic authorities,” having thus completely negated the achievements of historical research in the 17 years since the founding of the PRC and forced the scientific research of modern Chinese history to a prolonged standstill.

But does this mean that the Jiang Qing and Lin Biao Cliques intended to completely abolish historical research, including the study of modern Chinese history? Of course not. On the contrary, they attached great importance to the study of history. The reason they vigorously slashed historical research at this time was to abolish all scientific historical research, and to replace it with the historical research they needed. Therefore, very soon after they forced historical science to a standstill, they quickly restored the “Special column” of the *Guangming Daily* and deployed some researchers respectively from the Institute of Modern History and the Institute of History, Chinese Academy of Sciences and formed the “Group of peasant war history,” specializing in peasant war history research. Despite the fact that the research group was soon closed down due to the fall of Qi Benyu, without causing any adverse consequences, it was still enough to show that those cliques did not actually neglect historical research. After the collapse of the Lin Biao Clique, the Jiang Qing Clique was particularly infatuated with historical research and in 1974 restored the journal *Historical Research*. In order to prevent Zhou Enlai, who was in charge of the Central Committee’s work at that time, from taking measures to eliminate the negative effects of the period from 1966 to 1976 and maintain a healthy state, the Jiang Qing Clique set about as a political conspiracy “overthrowing everything” and usurping the Party and seizing power by recruiting some historical researchers to form a writing team and create public opinion, in the name of “Liang Xiao” and “Luo Siding” or under the banner of the “theory group” of the workers, peasants and soldiers, that Chinese history, from the Spring-Autumn and Warring State period on, was just a history of “Confucianism-Legalism struggles.” They also advocated that “the struggle between Confucianism and Legalism continues

to the present, and will affect the future,” and that “there still is a Confucian in China even today, the biggest one at that,” which was meant to target at Zhou Enlai.<sup>8</sup> The whole ten-year period was a nightmare for the modern Chinese history research, with nothing left except painful lessons.

What are these painful lessons then? And which of them is worth forever remembering? In my personal opinion, the following three aspects are worth our particular attention:

First, we cannot simply turn historical research directly into a part of politics and use academic research as a means of political struggle. Such a tendency, as previously mentioned, began to emerge before 1966 when Jiang Qing and Lin Biao began the purpose of consolidating the “dictatorship of the proletariat,” and to serve the current political requirement that historical researchers should consider that their only divine task was accommodating and meeting immediate political needs. In other words, it is precisely “putting politics in command.” Just because they advocated all this under the banner of “proletarian headquarters,” no one dared to say a word, which had led to rampant spreading of such a tendency.

Admittedly, as Emperor Taizong of Tang said, with history as a mirror, you can understand the rise and fall of a state, meaning that historical research enables us to have a comprehensive knowledge of the past and present, to discriminate between rights and wrongs, to evaluate gains and losses, and to push society forward. People never study history without a realistic value orientation or just for the sake of research itself. Otherwise, history studies would not have such long-term vitality and should have already been expelled from social sciences. In this sense, indeed “all history is contemporary history.” However, the Jiang Qing and Lin Biao Cliques had demanded that historical researchers should take to “serving the real political struggle,” that is, “serving the political struggle of the proletariat,” as the sole and divine task. This is more harmful than improper.

First of all, the slogan itself is imperfect. While imposing one-sided emphasis on serving politics by science, it completely ignores the fact that politics also serves science. As a matter of fact, if politics does not serve science, and fails to provide the necessary conditions for the very existence of science, such as “letting a hundred flowers blossom, and letting a hundred schools of thought contend,” science will not survive, let alone serve proletarian politics. Second, as far as the social function of historical research is concerned, the slogan is too narrow. Do history studies only serve proletarian politics, but not the proletarian economy, culture and education?<sup>9</sup> Moreover, everything is changing and developing, even political reality, which can never stay for the same demand. If we follow closely in our research the instantaneous demand for so-called “consolidating the proletarian dictatorship” and “serving the real political struggle,” we will have to frequently adapt history to such political demands, which can vary to a great extent over the course of time, resulting in great confusion, and being far removed from any historical truth. Is this not the true case of the *Concise Course Book of the History of the*

*Soviet Communist Party?* It was one thing when Stalin was alive, but turned into another when Khrushchev took office, and still another when Brezhnev came to power, making people utterly at a loss which is true, and having thus ultimately lost the people's trust. Finally, such a slogan is extremely harmful to both social development and historical research itself, being susceptible to misinterpretation and utilization. This has been fully verified by what the Jiang Qing and Lin Biao Cliques did during the period between 1966 and 1976. A well-known fact is that the cliques, in order to usurp the Party and seize power, and by throwing out the deterrent slogan, knew there was no stop to arbitrarily distorting and tampering with history, having made Chinese history a foul mess beyond recognition. Of course, any slogan can only be made a general call, and may be misinterpreted and used. However, as Li Shu said, the question is,

this slogan does not make any requirement specific to the characteristics of history studies itself, nor does it answer the question what the task is of history as a science. In fact, the founders of Marxist historical science have long before made a clear exposition on the issue, and pointed out that its fundamental task is to reveal the law of historical development.<sup>10</sup>

To reveal the law of historical development, we must stick to historical truth, and never allow any distortion and tampering. Otherwise, it will turn into, rather than the law of history, the "law of foolery" with no factual basis and contributing nothing to social progress. This is the inevitable result of limiting the task of historical research to the scope of "serving the reality of political struggles."

It can be seen that any kind of research, be it either the open malpractice characterizing the Jiang Qing and Lin Biao Cliques, or other hidden ones turning historical research directly into a part of political struggles, can hardly promote the normal development of historical research if it attempts to utilize academic research as a means of political struggle, and therefore should be resolutely opposed and abandoned.

Second, there should be no mechanical application of a ready-made model. Human history has always been complex and full of variations. Yet far from being a miscellany of inextricable mess in any sense, its development has a law to follow. Meanwhile it definitely does not follow a rigid route in accordance with a fixed uniform pattern. Therefore, the study of modern Chinese history must proceed from the reality of history, rather than blindly copy a stringent model.

Take the history of the struggle between Confucianism and Legalism as an example. Jiang Qing claimed that, as her new discovery, the struggle between the two served as a new clue to explaining Chinese history. Such a discovery was further supplemented and elaborated by her followers before a series of rigid models was fabricated. According to such models, for instance, all the Legalists were the oppressed, rising from the grassroots, patriotic and

people-loving, whereas all the Confucians were completely the opposite; the followers of Legalism must necessarily be against Confucianism, and the opposite is also true. Following this line of argument, those who advocate unity or contribute to unity will be Legalists, and those who advocate separation or separatism will be Confucians, and so on. Applying these rigid models, Jiang Qing and her followers simply classified and labeled, in the field of modern Chinese history, Hong Xiuquan, Kang Youwei, Zhang Taiyan and others as Legalists, and Yang Xiuqing, Shi Dakai, and Chiang Kai-shek as Confucians. It was believed that the power struggle between Hong Xiuquan and Yang Xiuqing was a struggle between “anti-Confucianism” and “Confucianism”; whereas the guilt at the capital city was the so-called Confucians’ usurping of power and so on.

In fact, these rigid models were fabrications themselves by the Jiang Qing Group for their own political needs, and thus were utterly groundless. It is even more ridiculous to use them as a model to explain China’s modern history. The reason why Hong Xiuquan was anti-Confucianism was mainly because he was the organizer and leader of the peasant uprising. He discovered from a foreign missionary that there was a god that could be used to call the masses, but at the same time he must try his best to get rid of Confucius, who had always been respected as the “Greatest Sage” by the Chinese people. Otherwise, he would not be able to make his god gain faith in the masses. It can be said that it has nothing to do with “Anti-Confucianism and following Legalism.” Kang Youwei and Zhang Taiyan were the representative figures in the rise of the Chinese bourgeois revolutionary movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Confucian ideas were placed in serious crisis under the impact of the bourgeois sociology and natural science introduced from the West, each with a different orientation: the former being a famous Confucian scholar of the Ancient Classics School, and the latter a famous Confucian scholar of the New Classics School. Both were bourgeois scholars, rather than Legalists. As for Chiang Kai-shek, he participated in the anti-Qing revolution and overthrew the rule of the Northern Warlords, while it was also a fact that he also brutally suppressed the Communists and the revolutionary masses, but was he not patriotic, despite participating in the anti-Qing revolution and overthrowing the rule of the Northern Warlords, and uniting with the Communist Party to resist the Japanese invasion for a victory in the anti-Fascist war, and upholding the “one China” policy in Taiwan. Should he not be regarded as a “legalist,” since he once proclaimed that he was maintaining unity. How could he become a so-called “Confucian”? Was this not a self-denial of the standard of Confucianism proposed by themselves?

Facts have proved that in the study of human history, with regard to various historical models thus constructed for different people, the first thing we need to do is to test whether these models conform to the reality of Chinese history, and to examine the true intentions behind them, rather than blindly applying them indiscriminately, thinking they are something precious. Otherwise, such

misdoing, besides being ridiculous, would eventually distort history, and it is not a trivial matter.

Third, we must not violate the scientific spirit. Since the study of modern Chinese history is scientific research, it must be treated in accordance with the scientific law itself, which means that the scientific spirit must be adhered to. This is a necessary condition for the study of modern Chinese history to achieve greater success.

However, from 1966 to 1976, the Jiang Qing and Lin Biao Groups, who held heavy powers, had not only failed to make claims in accordance with such scientific principles, but had forced a series of measures against it from outside, having thus pushed the study of modern Chinese history into an abyss of destruction. Moreover, they set up various restrictions on what should be researched and what should not. For instance, research could only be allowed on the history of the peasant war, imperialist aggression against China, the people's anti-imperialist struggles, and the history of the Communist Party of China. Even in the study of the history of the Chinese Communist Party, only research could be allowed on the theory and practice of the great leader Mao Zedong, nobody else or nothing else, the least possible being research on persons and events that had opposed or been unfavorable to the great leader. If there were any research in such areas, it could only expose the crimes of those persons and events. Such malpractice had simply turned a colorful modern Chinese history into a lifeless singular account, just like an old crone walking alone in the cold wind, with little flesh and blood. In fact, human history is far from being so narrow, and with various phenomena closely interconnected. One phenomenon would not be able to be adequately, comprehensively, and thoroughly explained without giving a full account of another. Therefore, Marx and Engels have always believed that history is an all-encompassing science, and never advocated limiting its scope of research, nor stipulating what may or may not be studied.

As for research methodology, although the Jiang Qing and Lin Biao Groups talked about class analysis, they went to such an extreme as to turn it into a highly simplistic and absolute label that could be arbitrarily placed. In an article "Patriotism or traitorism: on *A Secret History of the Qing Royal Court*" published in 1966, the author Qi Benyu extolled the Boxers to the skies and described the Reform of 1898 as a crime. What was actually running through was an extremely simple model: everything about the working people was good, whereas nothing was good about the exploiting class; one should be affirmative about the violent struggles under any circumstance, and negative about political reforms in all situations. This is the downright fact-ignoring subjectivism and pragmatism. While the Boxer Movement is a spontaneous struggle of the peasants and it is by nature revolutionary for its anti-imperialism and patriotism, it is at the same time indiscriminately exclusive, opposes everything foreign, and is in addition characterized by strong peasant backwardness and feudal ignorance, thus being in no sense of the same importance as the Reform of 1898. Being a bourgeois democratic reform

movement, the Reform of 1898 represents the political ideal of transforming feudalism into capitalism and a pathway to save the country. No matter how incomplete or unrealistic it is, it still has an epoch-making significance, since no single peasant movement had ever, or even possibly ever, brought forward such an ideal in the past few thousand years.

To different academic views, the Jiang Qing and Lin Biao Groups openly announced the implementation of a comprehensive dictatorship in the field of art and science, having thus ignored Mao Zedong's "double-hundred" policy of developing art and science, and his repeated requests that the controversies in art and science be settled through free discussions and in actual practice, rather than by forced promoting or prohibiting, simply using political power, certain style or school. What they approved were no more than eight "model works" in literature and art, and in history studies only two groups of authors, Liang Xiao and Luo Siding, who were in their own interest rigidly engaged in "service for practical political struggle," got their approval, having thus completely blocked the pathway of modern history research. Historical research is a scientific undertaking, not political propaganda, and a scientific undertaking has its own developmental characteristic that is completely different from political propaganda. Since the fundamental task of historical research is to reveal the essence of history and the law of its internal development, it is necessarily a tortuous and complicated process full of errors and failures, and it is not all accomplished in a single hit. In such process, errors or error correction are a necessary link to knowledge of truth. Every time one corrects an error, one comes one step closer to the truth. It is therefore wrong to stick to a ready-made conclusion and reject further research. Accordingly, we must try our best to avoid the interference of administrative forces and allow for free discussions of different opinions.

In short, what should never be ignored is adherence to the scientific spirit, which is the lifeline of all scientific undertakings, including the study of modern Chinese history.

It should be pointed out that the Jiang Qing and Lin Biao Groups were not hiding the truth from the masses all the time and on any issue. In June 1972, Zhou Enlai personally instructed the "May 7th Cadre School" in Henan Province to be moved to the Minggang military camp, and all the research institutes of the Philosophy and Social Sciences Department of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, which had been under inspection for so-called "May 16th Counterrevolutionary Conspiratorial Group" for over a year, to return to Beijing and be back at work. Such instruction by Zhou Enlai brought two rare highlights to the study of modern Chinese history between 1966 and 1976.

The first highlight is that it greatly promoted the study of the history of Russia's invasion of China, of which research was forbidden by the PRC in order to maintain friendly relations between the two powers. In spite of the fact that such restriction was later lifted due to the breakdown of Sino-Soviet relations, and a group of scholars were still studying the history of Russian's relentless invasion of China even during the friendly period between China

and the Soviet Union, very little had been done because of endless political turbulence. And thanks to Zhou Enlai's instruction, scholars were regrouped in the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, to set up a research group for the *History of Russian Invasion of China*, and as a result, a remarkable accomplishment was achieved. From 1974 to 1975, they successively published "A refutation of liars—several issues on the Sino-Soviet boundary," "Historical truth shall not be distorted—several issues on the *Sino-Russian Treaty of Nerchinsk*" and other articles; and in March 1976 the first volume of the *History of Russian Invasion of China* was completed before publication in October by the People's Press. These historical writings, though not without the imprint of that era in wording, are basically serious academic works with full deference to historical facts and can stand the test of time.

The second highlight is that it opened up a new field of research on the history of the Republic of China. In September 1972, the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Sciences set up a research group of 40 scholars on the history of the Republic of China as well as a working plan of one book, namely *History of the Republic of China*, and three compilations, namely *The Republic of China Memorabilia*, *The Biographies of Eminent Chinese in the Republic of China* and *The Politics, Economy and Culture of the Republic of China* (Special Collection), thus opening the prelude to the study of the history of the Republic of China in the PRC. Such an endeavor served to make a start and lay an initial foundation for later development, despite the fact that very little was actually achieved since it was still in the period of 1966 to 1976 when most of the researchers were seriously traumatized and their research work practically retarded, and that their limited achievement bore the imprint of that time. These two highlights can be said to be fortunate in an otherwise hopeless period.

### 1.3 Unprecedented prosperity

In October 1976, the Jiang Qing Group also collapsed following the downfall of the Lin Biao Group. With the advent of the new era of national reform and opening up and socialist modernization, the study of modern Chinese history has also begun a new page, going from setbacks into an era of unprecedented prosperity, of which the main characteristics can be summarized as follows:

First, the era has witnessed a rapid growth of research teams and improvement of their quality. In May 1977, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China approved the transformation of the Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences of the Chinese Academy of Sciences into the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, which was upgraded to a ministerial level department as a parallel to the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Followed by all the provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions where scholars in different fields had been grouped, each had its own academy of social sciences established. This was once again a strong indicator of the high value placed

on the social sciences by both the central government and local governments at all levels. At the same time, in many universities of science and engineering, such as Tsinghua University at Beijing, Huazhong University of Science and Technology at Wuhan (formerly Huazhong Institute of Technology), Donghua University at Shanghai (formerly Huadong Textile Institute) and other universities history departments were either restored or newly set up, which, taking into account a large number of new teaching and research staff, had far outnumbered researchers of modern Chinese history before 1966. Take the Institute of Modern History at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences as an example. Before 1966, there was a maximum of 165 staff members. By the 1980s, staff numbers had reached 250. After that numbers decreased annually due to retirement, and even dropped to 140 by the end of 1999.<sup>11</sup> However, as far as the whole country is concerned, and as institutes of history or history departments were newly established in many local social science academies and universities, it is beyond doubt that the number of people involved in modern Chinese history research increased.

More importantly, with generations of younger scholars constantly joining in, the new generation of scholars cultivated after 1976 has gradually become the main force and backbone of modern history research. Having received systematic fundamental training in history, and many having trained abroad, this new generation of researchers are generally of better quality. And this is also an indisputable fact. In this regard, it becomes even more obvious considering the ever increasing qualification requirements for candidates applying for jobs in many historical research institutes and history departments in many key universities. Before the mid-1980s, a university graduate with a bachelor's degree was regarded by society as "the heavenly favored one," and an undergraduate qualification was enough. However, from the late 1980s, with the growing number of postgraduates, the bachelor's degree gradually lost favor. In the 1990s, especially in the mid- and late 1990s, when a large number of doctoral graduates embarked on job hunting, the requirement for university employment was once again raised, so that only candidates with doctorates could apply. Yet after entering the twenty-first century, even a doctorate is no longer a guarantee of university employment. A candidate needs to have postdoctoral research experience or a doctorate obtained "overseas" to qualify. Such changes in employment requirements are to some extent true reflections of an overall improvement in the quality of researchers in modern Chinese history.

Second, there was a big increase in the number of academic groups and academic journals, and academic seminars were frequently held. In addition to the restoration of the Chinese History Society and history societies established before 1966 and the historical societies in all provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, a large number of new history organizations have emerged, initiated and organized by researchers themselves. To illustrate this, there are a dozen associations devoted to the study of modern Chinese history: The Historical Association of the Chinese Revolution of 1911 in

Central South China, The Historical Association of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom at Beijing, The Historical Association of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom at Nanjing, The Historical Association of the Boxer Movement, The Sun Yat-sen Research Society, The Southwest Warlord History Research Association, and The Society of Modern Chinese Historical Materials, The Research Association of the New Fourth Army and the Huazhong Anti-Japanese Base Areas, The Historical Association of the Chinese Anti-Japanese War, and The Modern Chinese History Society. In addition, many other historical associations also undertake the study of modern Chinese history, such as The Chinese Society for Historians of China's Foreign Relations (shortened as CSHCFR), The Chinese Society for the History of Sino-Japanese Relations, The Chinese Society of Modern Culture, The Chinese Society for the History of Sino-Russian Relations, The Chinese Society for Business History Studies, and The Tianjin History Research Association, to name only a few.

There used to be only a limited number of journals, such as the *Historical Research*, *Journal of Historical Science*, *History Teaching*, *Journal of Literature, History and Philosophy*, *Modern History Materials* and a few other journals and university journals covering modern Chinese history. Up to the present, in addition to the *Journal of Modern History Research*, which is devoted to the publication of modern Chinese history research, more journals were established, including *Modern Chinese History Research Abroad* (which was discontinued after 1995 due to lack of funds), *Republic Archives*, *Republican Annals*, *Studies on Republican China*, *The Journal of Studies of China's War of Resistance Against Japan*, *CPC History Studies*, *Literature of the Chinese Communist Party*, *Archival Materials of Beijing*, *Historical Research of Enemy-occupied Northeast China*, *Historical Archives*, and *Archives and History*, which are exclusively or mainly devoted to publishing research on modern Chinese history.

Moreover, academic seminars were held one after another, unprecedented in terms of both frequency and scale. Take the history study of the Chinese Revolution of 1911 as an example. In the 27 years before 1976, only one national academic seminar was held in Wuhan in 1961. Whereas after 1976, frequent seminars were held in provinces and cities such as Hunan, Guangdong, Zhejiang, Wuhan, and Shanghai that are closely related to the 1911 revolution, and in addition, the Chinese History Society also hosts international conferences with more than 100 participants every ten years, having held five conferences up to the present, including the 2011 Centennial Conference. Besides, a great number of seminars were held dealing with branches of modern Chinese history and major historical events, such as modern Chinese economic history, modern Chinese secret societies, the history of the Republic of China, the modern history of China, the history of the national revolutionary bases, the history of the War of Resistance Against Japan, the social history of modern China, the history of modern Chinese culture, the history of the Sino-Japanese War 1894–1895, the history of the Westernization

Movement, the history of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the history of the Sino-French War, the history of the Southwestern warlords, the history of the Boxer Movement, the history of the National Protection Movement, the “First Congress” of the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang), the Zunyi Meeting, and the September 18 Incident. There were also seminars on famous historical figures, such as Sun Yat-sen, Lin Zexu, Zuo Zongtang, Cai E, Hu Hanmin, and Zhang Xueliang. Even some lesser-known historical figures, such as Huang Yuansheng and Wang Jinfan, had repeated special seminars in their name. What is even more worth noting is that these seminars share one thing in common. They have never lacked active thinking and heated discussions, and usually diverse or even opposing voices were presented on the same issue, reflecting the atmosphere of true free discussion.

Third, many new research fields have been opened up, having greatly expanded the realm of modern Chinese history. Mao Zedong pointed out as early as 1941 that modern Chinese history “analysis must first of all be conducted on economic history, political history, military history, and cultural history before any possible comprehensive research.” Soon after the foundation of the PRC, some scholars reminded modern Chinese history researchers of the fact that “political history takes up too large a proportion, while the account of social life, economic life and culture is very much limited and thus has yet to have a proper position in the study.”<sup>12</sup> However, previous studies on modern Chinese history had not been able to do away with this predicament. Even in political history research which was more comprehensive than any of the rest, research was still limited to a very small frame of historical account, namely what was later referred to as two processes, three climaxes, and eight major events. Starting from this time (1976), remarkable changes have taken place, with political history being further expanded, the frontiers of modern history pushed farther back, and the serious imbalance between political history study and the “historical account of social life, economic life and culture” forever broken.

The first is the revival and reconstruction of modern Chinese social history and cultural history as two branch disciplines. Being independent branch disciplines themselves, and each having its own distinctive objectives, areas and approaches, they also have several things in common: first, they all attach importance to the study of so-called “lower level,” that is, the study of the ordinary people. Second, they both emphasize the study of public life, while the only difference between them lies in their focus on spiritual life and material life respectively. Third, both stress the study of major social issues; because there are different social issues in urban and rural areas, the study has accordingly given rise to modern urban history. So it is these studies that have made up for the inadequacies and shortcomings of previous studies of modern Chinese history.

Second, there have been new breakthroughs in the research fields that had received much attention in the past. The long-term neglected topics, such as the Westernization Movement in the history of politics, the New Deal in

the Qing Dynasty, the history of the Northern Warlords, and the history of the Southwestern warlords, began to attract researchers. As a result, their research has produced a series of publications, such as *The Associations and Activities of the New Intellectuals in the Late Qing Dynasty*, *Research of Education Departments in Late Qing Dynasty*, *Biography of Yuan Shikai*, *The History of Warlords in North China*, and *The History of Warlords in the Southwest China*. Another example is the history of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Although it had been highly valued before, the research was still restricted on the peasant side, while research on the landlord class served only as the background or contrast. In the new era, some scholars not only called for the study of the landlord class, but engaged themselves in it. Consequently, a battery of valuable works has been published, including *The Landlord Class of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, *A History of the Hunan Army*, *Biography of Zeng Guofan*, and *Research on Zeng Guofan's Shogunate*. Yet another example is the history of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, which is no longer limited to the study of CPC-led guerrilla warfare behind enemy lines, but extended to extensive and in-depth research on the frontal battlefields and guerrilla warfare of the Kuomintang, representing more accurately the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. In the new era, as the whole country has embraced centered on economic construction, scholars have proposed that the study of modern Chinese history should start from and find a breakthrough in modern economic history that is “the weakest, most difficult and most important.”<sup>13</sup> As expected, more new fields have been opened up and more achievements turned out in the field of economic history. Some areas, which were hardly touched upon in the past, such as industrialization, enterprise management, economic laws and regulations, and modern customs, have been brought to the attention of researchers. Moreover, the history of modern customs has even become a hot research area and in which remarkable progress has been made, with the Late Qing section and the Republic of China section of the *History of Modern Chinese Customs* being successively published. New developments have also arisen in some previous study areas, a series of publications marking remarkable achievements such as: *A History of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce*, *Dual Variations of Tradition and Modern Times: A Case Study of Suzhou Chamber of Commerce in the Late Qing Dynasty*, *The Chamber of Commerce and Early Modernization of China*, and *Archives Series of Suzhou Chamber of Commerce. (1905–1949)*, and the *Tianjin Chamber of Commerce Archives Collection (1903–1950)*.

Finally, and most importantly, extensive and in-depth research has been carried out on specific historical events in various areas, and many of the results are in line with or close to historical facts. All the research achievements, involving different events of varied significance and impacts, share one common feature, namely, all reflecting the requirements of historical materialism: to clear the ideological misinterpretation of history, and “to return the content of history to history.”

Here are just a few examples. The first is the question of who was the leader of the anti-British struggle of the Sanyuanli people in Guangzhou in May 1841. Previously, based on a word-of-mouth survey after the founding of the PRC, and the words of a descendant of the vegetable farmer Wei Shaoguang, the conclusion was that it was Wei Shaoguang the vegetable farmer who led the struggle. In a moderate seminal discussion after opening and reform, such a conclusion was far from being tenable. The real organizer and leader of the struggle was found to be the patriotic landlord He Yucheng. The second example is about the historical figures of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. It was previously believed that there was a female chief leader of the Women's Army of Taiping Army named Hong Xuanjiao, who was said to be Hong Xiuquan's sister. Based on such a story some scholars even assumed that Hong Xuanjiao's marriage to Xiao Chaogui was a political arrangement as Hong Xiuquan's means of restraining Yang Xiuqing. But after close examination, this was proved wrong: there was such a person named Hong Xuanjiao, and she was not Hong Xiuquan's sister. It was actually Yang Xuanjiao, an ordinary farmer in the Zijing Mountain area in Guiping, Guangxi province, and she was not a chief leader of the Women's Army in the Taiping Army. The third example is how the Futian Incident should be evaluated. In early December 1930, Li Shaojiu, then the secretary-general of the General Political Department and the Director of the Committee of Elimination of Counter-revolutionaries of the First Front Red Army, led his company, at the order of Mao Zedong, the Secretary of the General Front Committee, to go to Futian in Ji'an, where the Jiangxi Provincial Action Committee was located, to arrest members of the AB (Anti-Bolshevik) group. Liu Di, the political commissar of the 20th Red Army Regiment, believing that those Li Shaojiu arrested were not members of the AB group and that if the arrest went on like this, he himself would possibly be in great danger, decided to lead his troops to rescue the arrested, having killed nearly 100 cadres and ordinary people who had supported Mao Zedong, and put forward the slogans such as "Down with Mao Zedong, and Support Zhu (De), Peng (Dehuai), Huang (Gonglue)." Subsequently, the former Jiangxi Provincial Action Committee and Liu Di and others who participated in the incident, as well as all the cadres above platoon commanders of the 20th Red Army were executed successively. The incident at Futian had always been identified as a counter-revolutionary incident initiated by the anti-communist AB group hidden inside Chinese Communist areas.<sup>14</sup> After many years of in-depth investigation and research by scholars, it has been confirmed that the so-called "Futian Incident" was completely made up out of thin air and an unjust, false and erroneous case. Such a conclusion has been adopted in the *History of the Communist Party of China* (Vol. 1) written by the Party History Research Office of CCCPC (Party History Research Center of the CPC Central Committee) and published by the People Press in July 1991, and later in the *History of the Communist Party of China (1921–1949)* written by the same office but published by the Communist Party History Press in September 2002. In the book it was also pointed out

that the struggle to eliminate the “AB group” and the “Social Democratic Party” was a product of high speculation and forced confessions, having thus mistaken their own men for the enemy, and produced many unjust, false and erroneous cases.

It is worth mentioning that such research results are by no means individual but numerous in the study of the history of the Communist Party of China. As Yang Kuisong said, “Since the reform and opening up, the most outstanding achievement in the study of the history of the Communist Party of China has been remarkable discoveries of many basic historical facts...,” including the composition of the early Communist group, the Russian Communist Party representative Vjinsky coming to China and his activities, the date of holding and the number of representatives of the First Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Communist International representative Malin’s work in China and the process in which the proposal for the Kuomintang-Communist Party’s “intra-party cooperation” policy was brought up, the Soviet Union consultant Borodin’s coming to China and his relationship with the Kuomintang and Communist Party, the holding time and course of the first National Labor Conference, the full story of the “March 20 Incident,” the processes of the three armed uprisings of workers in Shanghai, the impact of the resolutions of the seventh Expanded Conference of the Executive Committee of the Communist International on the Chinese revolution, the so-called siege of Changsha city by 100,000 peasant troops, the “August 7 Conference,” the emergency meeting in November, the Nanchang Uprising, the Autumn Harvest Uprising, the Guangzhou Uprising, the Conference at South Jiangxi, the time and content of the Ningdu Conference, and the time of the Zunyi Conference and what was conveyed after the conference... Almost all the important historical facts in the history of the CPC were basically clarified in about 10 years after the reform and opening up. In any case, the word “fruitful” cannot be an overstatement when used to describe the achievements of the study of the history of the CPC in the past 40 years since reform and opening up.

It is also important to point out that the booming accomplishment presented above is not limited to the study of the history of the CPC. The same is also true regarding the study of the history of the Republic of China and it is a common phenomenon of the study of modern Chinese history in general, which can be proven by the publication of detailed books such as *The History of the Republic of China* (Vols. 1–12), *The Chronicle of Historical Events of the Republic of China* (Vols. 1–12), and *Biographies of the Historical Figures of the Republic of China* (Vols. 1–2) by the Zhonghua Book Company on the eve of the 100th anniversary of the 1911 Revolution.

But why has such remarkable progress been achieved in the study of modern Chinese history, and why has it become so prosperous since the reform and opening up? The main contributing reason is that the researchers have demonstrated unprecedented enthusiasm and high creativity on account of the fact that as China has shifted its work focus to economic construction,

history research has returned to practical specific research from the so-called world outlook transformation and empty political talk of year-by-year repetition. And in addition to that, I personally believe, there are also three important reasons as follows:

One is the great emancipation of the mind. The discussion on the criterion of truth in 1978 and the determination of the policy of ideological emancipation at the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China broke the shackles of modern superstition, dogmatism and pragmatism that the researchers of modern Chinese history had been unable to overcome for a long time, having thus much enhanced understanding of theoretical issues such as the Marxist guiding ideology and research methodology. The previous simplified and absolute metaphysical methods were abandoned, and the practical and realistic working style dealing with specific problems was restored. It is well-accepted that the primary requirement of Marxist historiography is to clarify historical facts. Only when the historical facts are made clear can we discover the essence and laws of the historical process and have a correct understanding of history. In order to meet this requirement, we must have at our disposal all available materials, explore internal relations and laws of historical events, and narrate the real historical process with a scientific attitude. This is the fundamental moving force for the development of modern Chinese history research in the period.

Second, academic exchanges between both sides of the Taiwan Straits and between China and foreign countries have become normalized. As an ancient saying goes, listening to different voices makes a discriminating mind and partial belief makes one muddleheaded. Academic exchange is undoubtedly the most direct and effective place and way of “listening to different voices” for history researchers that regard seeking historical truth as the primary requirement. However, it goes without saying that for a long time, due to their different ideologies, academic exchanges between the Chinese historians and those outside had not been open and free, but obstructed. Both sides of the Taiwan Straits belong to one China, but they were artificially separated. The only access to Western historians, whether British or American, was through the book series *Selected Translation of Works on Modern Chinese History by Reactionary Historians of Capitalist Countries*,<sup>15</sup> which was of very limited scope. Although occasionally a few academic exchanges between China and foreign countries were held, either in China or abroad, they were accessible only to a handful of privileged people, and not to the majority of historians. And it was even harder to imagine any ordinary historian going to the Western countries for face-to-face communication. Now, it is all over. In April 1982, the American Society for Asian Studies held a special symposium at its annual conference in Chicago, to which the historians of modern China from both sides of the Taiwan Straits were invited. It was the first time that scholars from both sides of the Taiwan Straits discussed the history of the 1911 Revolution after their separation in 1949. Ever since then, various academic exchanges have been frequently held in China with the participation of historians from

Taiwan and from foreign countries. In the beginning, the exchanges were still being trapped by ideologies. Historians from both sides of the Taiwan Straits seemed rather overcautious when they gathered in Chicago for the first time.<sup>16</sup> And in the academic exchanges held in China, the participants from both sides were often housed in different hotel buildings. In spite of such situations, the lock gate of academic exchange was lifted after all, and is becoming increasingly wide, or completely normalized by now. A large number of overseas writings on modern Chinese history began to be published and distributed in China, as well as various theories and methods. The academic exchanges among scholars from both sides of the Straits have become more frequent and convenient. Exchange of information and materials, and exchange of views have become a common practice.

While such a situation reflects the progress of Chinese society, it has promoted the development of modern Chinese history research. As an example, on October 17, 1984, Wang Qingcheng illustrated in the *Guangming Daily* many historical events of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom that used to be least known, such as the establishment of Yang Xiuqing and Xiao Chaogui, and the changes in the attitude of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom to the Confucian classics before the Jintian Uprising, and the intensification of internal contradictions of the leading group before the Tianjing Incident. Why was he able to bring up with these new ideas? He had obviously benefited from academic exchanges between China and foreign countries. These new insights came out in the Spring of 1984, when he discovered two prints of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, *The Heavenly Father's Word* and *The Heavenly Brother's Word*, in the British Library during his academic visit to Britain.

Third, there is the disclosure and publication of a large amount of new historical material. The basic method of historical research, as Marx said, "has to appropriate the material in detail, to analyze its different forms of development, to trace out their inner connection. Only after this work is done, can the actual movement be adequately described."<sup>17</sup> The core requirement of this method is that historical research should not tailor historical material to some presupposed model, but to "appropriate the material in detail" and proceed entirely from the facts. "To appropriate the material in detail" is not only the starting point of historical research, but also the premise and guarantee for its further development. As mentioned before, the PRC attached great importance to the extraction and collation of modern Chinese historical materials. Since the reform and opening up, this work has not only been quickly resumed, but also got greatly expanded in its scope. The historical material of the CPC, especially the archives, had always been kept in secret rooms, and never opened to general scholars below a certain administrative "level," let alone collate and publish them. However, after the reform and opening up, not only were the archives of the CPC Central Committee and of all the provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions made accessible on a wider scale, a great quantity of comprehensive, as well as special, and original documentaries were also published such as *Selected Documents*

of the CPC Central Committee (Vols. 1–18), and a *Reference Material of* (Vols. 1–18), *The Historical Material of the CPC*, *The Historical Material of the CPC at Jiangxi*, *Selected Historical Material of the Communist International and the Chinese Revolution (1919–1924)*, and *Communist International, the Federal Communist Party (Bolshevik) and the Chinese Revolution Archives Series*. Moreover, there was also a booming publication of historical material of the Republic of China. A large number of materials and books emerged. Among them are the *Collection of Historical Archives of the Republic of China*, *The Northern Warlords*, *Feng Yuxiang's Diary*, *The War of Resistance Against Japan*, *The Kuomintang Army's Secret Diaries in Military Operations during the War of Resistance Against Japan*, *The Interrogation Records of Chinese Traitors of Wang Jingwei and his Followers*, and *Zhou Fohai's Diary*. A large number of old newspapers and periodicals of the Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China were reprinted and published, such as *Shun Pao*, *Ta Kung Pao*, *Shun Tian Times*, *Sheng Jing Daily*, *Republic of China Daily* and *Central Daily*. It is the disclosure and publication of these new materials that have facilitated the study of the history of the Communist Party of China, the history of the Republic of China and modern Chinese social history, and greatly promoted the development of the study of modern Chinese history.

Of course, things always advance and develop in various contradictions. And the study of modern Chinese history is no exception. The great prosperity and great development also gave rise to some tendencies that need to be cautioned. In recent years, these issues have been under discussion by a number of scholars who are not without some very insightful opinions, and they are also examined and discussed in various chapters of this book. They are not repeated here. But based on the previous discussion, some relevant views are put forward for everyone to discuss.

The first tendency that manifests itself among scholars and is worthy of attention is seeking personal fame and gain. As mentioned above, before the reform and opening up, popular among the historians of modern Chinese used to be “placing politics in command,” with everything serving politics. Although no one has publicly advocated “placing economy in command,” yet there are indications that this is an indisputable fact. Some people seem to study modern Chinese history not to pursue the truth, nor to enhance people’s scientific historical knowledge for a better understanding of the past, a better understanding of today, and greater insight into the future, nor to promote social progress, but merely for self-interest. Otherwise, there would not have been so many so-called experts and scholars who are so flighty and impatient that they will produce nothing but low-quality repetitions, nor would there have been so many scandals of plagiarism, nor would there have been so many overt and covert struggles in the reviews for granting various honors and funds for social sciences. Some may argue by quoting Du Fu the poet of the Tang Dynasty, “If only I had an old friend to provide rice from his salary, what more beyond that would I seek for myself?,” complaining that it was all caused by the unreasonable scholarship assessment system and by the various

frustrations of living such as high housing prices, and that it was purely “forcing young girls of good families to prostitute themselves.” Frankly speaking, such arguments are only partially true, and to which I do not fully agree. Why? My argument is that in the same situation, is there not a large number of scholars who have dedicated themselves to the study of modern Chinese history while regarding it as a lofty cause? They do not seek to be promoted, nor do they strive to make a fortune. They concentrate on their own research and have achieved considerable success and won appreciation from all walks of life. Why could they do that, but not us? Whoever in this world would not want to live a rich and decent life? There is nothing wrong with it, but it must be done in a fair and worthy way. It simply will not work to shift from the undesirable “placing politics in command” to “placing economy in command” that is equally undesirable, and unscrupulously pursue personal fame and gain. Therefore, as a responsible researcher one cannot and should not shirk his or her responsibility.

To put the argument further, perhaps this is also a question worthy of further consideration and research by historical researchers. Looking back into the history of thousands of years, are there not many tragedies that are closely related to personal worship? Those who are high above in the royal court would control their subordinates by means of giving them rewards or punishments. And those who are below often manage to climb up complying with their superiors with no care for right or wrong. Is this not conscious and unconscious conspiracy of the superiors and subordinates that has given rise to one historical tragedy after another? So it can be seen that research should be carried out not only on what and how those high above do, but also on those of lower status, and even on their personalities and qualifications. Social progress would not be able to be effectively promoted without doing research in this manner.

The second tendency that warrants attention is the use of double standards. Historical research is inseparable from people’s critical judgment, and evaluation of historical events. And human history is always advancing the contradictions and struggles between the forces representing respectively the advanced and backward, the conservative and innovative, the revolutionary and reactionary, and forward and backward. In recent years, everyone has said that it is necessary to treat history objectively and fairly. This raises the question of what standard and how it is to be applied. Is it a well-recognized unified standard, or are there different standards discriminately applied to historical persons and events in accordance with one’s own attitudinal preference? The correct approach is of course the former. Otherwise, it would be hard to be truly “objective and fair.” What is worse is that it would even be dismissed as a propaganda slogan.

One young scholar discovered that there has been a “historical motto of high citation rate” for many years, namely so-called “sympathy of understanding” put forward by Chen Yinke. It should be noted that such an observation is accurate. Since the reform and opening up, there have indeed

been many people, especially young people who have highly favored this statement by Chen Yinke, who believes that “in any case, the attitude of ‘sympathy of understanding’ is worthy of advocating”; and accordingly he himself has “demonstrated a kind of ‘sympathy of understanding’” to whatever he approaches.<sup>18</sup> So, what is Chen Yinke’s original intention in saying this? Is he really asking historical researchers to “demonstrate an attitude of ‘sympathy of understanding’” to any historical issue? Or is he asking them to take it as a “method” of historical analysis? I personally believe that Chen Yinke’s words have been largely misinterpreted. Let me first cite his original words:

Whoever writes the history of ancient Chinese philosophy is well advised to have a sympathy of understanding towards the theories of the ancients before writing anything down. This is due to the fact that whatever the ancients wrote and put forward arose out of their own inspiration and experience. It follows that their theories could hardly be properly analyzed without a full knowledge of their circumstance and background.

What is manifest here is a “methodological” issue, that is, before criticizing any of the theories of the ancients, one has to fully understand the author’s “circumstances and background.” First, when Chen Yinke was trying to explain the meaning of “a full knowledge,” in his other word “true understanding,” he said something like “in wandering meditation one stays in the same state as the ancient scholar and then develops some sympathy for his ideas, which he had got from contemplation, before having such ideas scrutinized without misunderstanding and being superficial.” Yet immediately following the statement was a negative elaboration that

this kind of sympathetic attitude is most likely to give strained interpretations and draw far-fetched analogies, because the ancient materials as seen today are either single existences from losses or ambiguous and difficult to understand, no history of philosophy would be possible without giving them full account.<sup>19</sup>

It is clear that what Chen Yinke means by his “sympathy of understanding” is apply it as a historical analysis “method” rather than as an indiscriminate attitude. It is something like Lenin’s proposal in 1914 of “placing the problem within a certain historical range”<sup>20</sup> in Marxist analysis of any social problem. And “method” and “attitudes” are actually two different concepts. A “method” can either be applicable or non-applicable, whereas it would be to no avail when it is transformed into an “attitude” toward history, because one can scarcely remain “objective” while keeping “sympathetic” in historical research. Being “sympathetic” moves away from “objectivity,” and being “objective” does not have to be “sympathetic.” This will explain why some scholars of historical figures have been criticized for the fact that “they tend to love whomever they study” in their research since the reform and opening up.

In short, even if Chen Yinke really asks historical researchers to treat historical issues with an attitude of “sympathy of understanding,” such an attitude should be equally applied as a unified standard to all the parties of contradictions and struggles in historical movements. Otherwise, how can objectivity and impartiality be achieved? However, it is not difficult to find out that, if we pay attention to years of the research practice of modern Chinese history, this is not entirely the case. While a large majority of researchers remained impartial and avoided using double standards when dealing with different parties of contradiction and struggles, a few researchers simply failed to do so and tended to favor one more than the other. They tried their best to invariably “demonstrate ‘a sympathy of understanding’” to the Qing Imperial Court, the Northern Warlords Government and the Nanjing National Government, but showed no “sympathy of understanding” to all to other parties, such as the Old Democratic Revolution led by Sun Yat-sen and the New Democratic Revolution led by the Communist Party of China, in their “finding problems” and revealing “truth” to their best, having thus fully manifested their implementation of double standards that runs counter to objectivity and fairness.

It should be noted that I am not opposed to “finding problems” or “revealing the truth.” But I insist that the standard should be consistent and impartially applied, as the saying goes, “a bowl of water never spills when it is held evenly.” Otherwise, we would never be able “to return the historical content to history.” Even worse, we would also create greater confusion of history. Does such malpractice not violate the original intention of our historical study?

The third tendency deserving attention is the weakening of political history studies. Previous historical studies have focused too heavily on political history, simply attributing the complicated social history to a history of class struggle, and denouncing the rich and colorful social life as “advocating the decadent lifestyle of the exploiting class.” In the early 1980s, a few scholars began to “actively advocate ‘the revival and strengthening of the study of social life history’,” believing that it was a “practical way” to get out of the so-called “historical study crisis.” Since then, there has been a tendency to weaken the study of political history. Many researchers have consciously or unconsciously turned to the historical study of human civilization, social life, and social customs and habits. Many subjects such as basic necessities of life, sacrifice, etiquette, temple fairs, tea houses, clans, gentries and so on have become the fashions pursued by researchers, while political history has been apparently ignored. Some even proposed that the two world wars should be removed from history teaching in high schools.

In fact, it is understandable and justifiable to shift focus from political history in the new historical period in view of the fact that previous historical studies had overemphasized political history. Moreover, as mentioned before, restoring the study of social history is not only justified, but contributory to the progress of the study of modern Chinese history. This is because history

is rich and colorful, and political history is not the whole of history, but only a part of it. Besides, how a historian chooses his or her research orientation is down to his or her own personal freedom. However, it is quite a different matter if political history is placed as the opposite to the rest of historical studies, putting them on a binary opposition to each other with one being favored, promoted and respected while the other discarded, and intending to remove political history from history itself so that people are made to mistakenly believe that there is no need to do any such research.

First, political history actually exists, and it is to be obliterated by no one. Second, honestly speaking, while it is true that politics belongs to superstructure and does not play a decisive role in social development as that of economic basis, yet facts have already proved that it has a significant reaction to social development, and under certain conditions it even plays a key role. To illustrate the point, which era of social change is not closely related to politics? Or is it not the product of tremendous political changes? Take fashion as an example. Before the 1911 Revolution, everyone used wear their hair in a braid; and was it only made possible at the time of the Wuchang Uprising for that braid to be cut off? Another example is the “Mao-style” cadre suit which was monotonous in color and style and worn by everyone regardless of age or sex. Was it not until after the reform and opening up that people completely changed their style of dress? Without the reform and opening up and its impact after 1978, there would be no colorful, fashionable and pleasing dressing styles in both the cities and the countryside. It can be seen that significant political change is an important condition for a rapid and thorough change in social life. There is no reason to neglect, and much less reason to downplay, the study of political history.

#### 1.4 New trends

The study of modern Chinese history has entered a new period of development since 2000. Remarkable achievements have been made in the study of the history of the Republic of China, which has gradually become an “prominent subject” in China since 1976. As mentioned before, a list of publications came out in 2011, as follows: *The History of the Republic of China* (Vols. 1–12) and *Major Historical Events of the Republic of China* (Vols. 1–12), and *Biographies of the People of the Republic of China* (Vols. 1–12), all compiled by the Historical Research Department of the Republic of China, Institute of Modern History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, presenting a great gift to the centennial of the 1911 Revolution. The same achievements have also been made in such well-studied subjects as the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the Reform Movement of 1898, and Chinese foreign relations, on which a number of influential works have been published. For example, there was *General History of Modern China* in general history, edited by Zhang Haipeng, a researcher at the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and the fulfillment of the long-cherished plan of generations

of researchers. And in research on special topics, there were *Historical Events of the Reform Movement of 1898* and *From 1894 to 1898: An Annotated Edition of Kang Youwei's "My History"* by Mao Haijian, a professor at the Department of History of East China Normal University, *Party Members, Party Power and Party Struggle: The Organizational Form of Kuomintang of China from 1924 to 1949* by Wang Qisheng, a former researcher at the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (currently a professor of the Department of History of Peking University), and *Kuomintang's "Uniting Communists" and "Anti-Communists"* by Yang Kuisong, a professor in the Department of History at East China Normal University. With the opening and publication of various works on Chiang Kai-shek, Hu Hanmin, Zhang Xueliang and the Communist International, many breakthroughs have been made in the reconstruction of historical facts, such as the Change of Banner in Northeast China in the 1920s, the Zhongdong Railway Incident (the Sino-Soviet Conflict of 1929), the factional politics within the Kuomintang in the 1930s, the relationship between Mao Zedong and the Communist International in the 1940s, and the political situation in the Northeast of China after the War of Resistance, for which many historical facts have gradually been unveiled. In view of the fact that the related researchers have their own deep understanding of the specific subjects, there is no need to elaborate their views here, and here I just present a brief introduction to the new trends in the field of modern Chinese history research in this period based on my personal observation.

The first new trend is that a coolheaded and rational attitude has been developed and established from what used to be the much emotionally biased "either-one-or-the-other" dogma. Before the reform and opening up, the history academia had been generally plagued by dogmatism and the absolute class struggle. But after the reform and opening up, China's modern history, like other areas of Chinese history research, also experienced an unusually comprehensive and profound reflection, having thoroughly cleaned up the over-simplification and one-sidedness. For example, some questioned the previous excessive exaggeration of the revolutionary nature of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's "Land System of the Heavenly Kingdom"; some conducted a realistic investigation and analysis of the unequal treaties imposed on the Chinese people by the imperialist powers over the past 100 years, and proposed some more convincingly objective and scientific criteria to have ruled out those false or even wrong determinations; some criticized the bias of "judging a person by his attitude toward someone else" in the evaluation of historical figures, and reexamined the so-called "recognized" historical events before having restored in an objective and justified manner what many historical figures really were. It should be said that this is very necessary and its effect is good, and plays an important role in keeping the study of modern Chinese history on a normal scientific track.

However, things are often complicated in one way or another. In the process of reflection, people find that some "reflections" seem not as objective

as are self-asserted by those who do. Apart from the fact that they are more often than not groundless and yet to be justified by further study and discussion, there exists in modern Chinese history study some emotionally biased tendency, conscious or unconscious, of new simplification and one-sidedness, which is very harmful and historical researchers are not supposed to have in their pursuit of historical truth in the new predicament of simplification and one-sidedness. For example, some people only blamed the Boxer Movement for its ignorance and backwardness, but would give no word of praise to its anti-imperialist patriotism; some tended not to mention the profound social crisis that triggered revolutionary movements in history, but went all out to emphasize the “losses” and “destruction”<sup>21</sup> they incurred to the society; some tried to utterly isolate the military aggression of China by imperialist powers from politics, economy and culture, believing that despite its negative impact on China, the military aggression of China by the imperialist powers served to have introduced “new social factors” to and “carried out reforms” in China as part of its “many efforts” for the modernization of China in the fields of economy, politics, culture and education. They even further argued that beside those fields mentioned, “even the military wars had produced positive impact on China.” Taking the Opium Wars as an example, they argued that

it was not only a war of aggression by the Western colonialists against a sovereign country in the East, but also a war by rising capitalism against the old feudal dynasty in its declining years, which was of progressive significance. From this point of view, some people even concluded that if the Opium Wars had come earlier, China would not have been as backward and humiliated as it was later.<sup>22</sup>

Such emotional reflections are contrary to the facts, but deceptive as well. Not even being the mainstream opinion of the majority, they would inevitably produce adverse effects on the study of history and the public as well if they were allowed to be excessive. So it is much justified for the researchers to be not only warned against readopting the malpractice of “either-one-or-the-other” prevailing in the past, but to uphold the principle of reason and be practical and realistic in the study the modern history of China, rejecting altogether the old and new dogmatism, simplification and one-sidedness. It is necessary to actively reunite all those self-composed and rational researchers and encourage them to contribute to a healthy and long-term development of modern history research. Moreover, a large majority of scholars have devoted themselves to their own research implementing this principle and have achieved considerable results.

The second new trend is a shift from simple copying of Western historiography and methodology to a study that combines it with the realities of Chinese history. For a period of time since the beginning of the reform and opening up, for understandable reasons, a handful of Western historical theories and methods had been promiscuously introduced into modern

Chinese history research, among them were the so-called “modernization paradigm,” “Skinner’s model,” comparative historiography, econometric history, and field investigations, to name only a few. This is understandable with a view to developing our national culture through learning from foreign advanced culture. However, it is undeniable that each country has its own national conditions. Western historical theories and methods are cultivated in the soil of the West, and they work well as they are duly used to explain the history of the corresponding Western countries on account of their shared cultural background and way of thinking. But if rigidly copied to China and arbitrarily applied to explaining modern Chinese history, such theories and methods would inevitably be out of place and disappointing because of their incompatibility with Chinese cultural background and way of thinking, and of their limited knowledge of China. Moreover, some so-called theories and methods are not real new inventions today, comparative historiography and econometric history having been widely adopted in Chinese historiography, and “field investigation” being another name for “social investigation” that was adopted in the past. They fail to serve as something new to compensate for existent inadequacies. For this reason, the discussion on how to draw on the theories and methods of Western historiography has continued for many years in the academia of modern Chinese history in particular and that of Chinese history as a whole.

Taking the “modernization paradigm” as an example, it has been pointed out by many scholars that it is not a new theory either. As early as the 1930s and 1940s, Jiang Tingfu put forward similar concepts following Western theory, having formed the earliest opposition against the so-called “paradigm of revolutionary history” brought forth by Fan Wenlan, which states that the modern history of China is a history of the invasion of imperialism transforming China into a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country, and that of Chinese people’s anti-imperialist and anti-feudal activities. But most of today’s advocates of the “modernization paradigm,” being fundamentally different from Jiang Tingfu, whose purpose then was to withstand the “Communist Revolution,” mainly hope to provide reference for the proposal of making economic construction the central task. However, the basic requirement of historical research is to proceed from reality, and no research deviating from historical facts can play a real role of reference. It is clear to all that are familiar with the development process of modern Chinese history that the people’s revolution, being aimed at overthrowing the three great mountains of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism, is not only the objective fact not to be transferred by any human will, but also the most magnificent chapter and the strongest voice in modern Chinese history. However, some researchers are quite unwilling to face up to this objective fact. Instead, they are blind, consciously and unconsciously advocating the “modernization paradigm” in the hope of replacing or transforming the “paradigm of revolutionary history.” Being of different wording, both are equally biased. Many scholars, speaking from their own research experience, point out that while it

is true that a perspective of “modernization paradigm” to modern Chinese history brings some insight, since “it enables readers to see the history of modern China from another perspective,” “such observation and research will fail to present a complete picture of modern Chinese history.” And replacing the “paradigm of revolutionary history” with the “modernization paradigm” will remove the magnificent revolutionary chapters that exist objectively from modern Chinese history, and thus far from being “correct substitution.” Even for its inclusion of the “paradigm of revolutionary history,” the “modernization paradigm” remains an inadequate theory. It is mainly because the two fundamental tasks of modern China, namely striving for national “independence” and for “prosperity and strength,” “are not on an equal footing,” and “in modern China the theme is still seeking China’s independence and equality. And it is this theme that restricts the development of modern Chinese history and the direction of China’s modernization.” For this reason, it is believed that the more advisable way is to respect the historical reality, and center on the “paradigm of revolutionary history,” while absorbing the strengths of the “modernization paradigm” to make up for weaknesses. Only in this way can we fully reflect the true face of modern Chinese history.<sup>23</sup>

Look again at “Skinner’s model.” In 1998 the Chinese Social Sciences Press translated and published the papers by G. William Skinner from 1964 to 1965, an American anthropologist and Asian research expert, on modern Chinese social and economic history, and in which he put forward a new analytical model for China’s market system, that is, the structural-functional analysis model. Since then, it has aroused extensive attention from Chinese historical researchers. The “Skinner’s model” is indeed a new theory for Chinese modern historians. It is contributory and reasonable in that it affirms the great significance of the market system to farmers, and opens up a new situation for the study of rural markets. But does it fully comply with the historical reality of China’s rural market? Are there any limitations and where are they? To what extent can it be applied to the study of China’s rural market? Wang Qingcheng, a researcher at the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, with an attitude of seeking truth and respecting facts, making use of the local chronicles of dozens of prefectures and counties in North China, particularly the rich information in the materials that appeared in the early period of the Emperor Guangxu’s Reigning (1875–1908), such as *Qingxian Village Maps* and *Shenzhou Village Maps*, has closely examined the different markets and market rings in North China in the late Qing Dynasty. In his study he found that the fairs are not evenly distributed, and the number of fairs varies to a great extent from county to county in North China, and there is no regular ratio between the number of fairs and the population size, the number of villages and land area of the counties and prefectures. It is also found that the market rings, defined as the spatial composition of markets and marketing villages, vary significantly in size, with the largest involving as many as 100 villages, and the smallest two to three villages or even one village. Such findings are neither able to match Skinner’s so-called “hexagonal marketing

area pattern,” nor to comply with his theory that local marketing communities, rather than villages, shape rural social organizations in China, and these marketing spatial areas are the farmers’ actual social spaces in China, thus bringing the theory to further examination. Just as Wang Qingcheng said,

more than half a century ago, Chinese sociologist Fei Xiaotong put forward that “the units of Chinese local communities are villages, which can vary in size from three households to thousands of them.” At present, I would rather accept this view as more feasible—so long as there still lacks of solid evidence for the theory that the markets are the basic communities of farmers.<sup>24</sup>

Of course, there are also some scholars who believe that “from a methodological point of view, Skinner’s model is still an effective resource for us to use for reference in the study of modern Chinese history.” Such a belief is a normal phenomenon in academic research and is therefore not surprising at all. However, these scholars also acknowledge that “Western scholars may find it difficult to understand China, and even more so to have a comprehensive knowledge of China.” They argue that there is nothing wrong “to evaluate a theoretical framework in the light of facts, and that it is a due reflection to criticize a theory from a third-person perspective, both being an attempt to promote the development of knowledge.”<sup>25</sup> From the arguments above it can be seen that even this group of scholars does not oppose testing Western historical theories and methodology “using practical experience and research.” That is enough. When all are devoted to pursuit of truth, there will be no unsolvable problem.

It can be seen that scholars, being increasingly dissatisfied with simply copying Western historical theories and methods, have begun to engage themselves in the research to combine them with Chinese historical reality. They successfully demonstrate through their own research practice that only through such combination can Western historical theories and methods be confirmed, revised, expounded and innovated, and to us researchers of modern Chinese history, can we decide which theories and methods are desirable, or only partly desirable, and which are not, or only partly not. This is the only advisable attitude toward Western historical theories and methods. Although relatively speaking, the scholars who have participated in this kind of research so far are still limited both in number and their achievement, yet it can be foreseen that as long as efforts are made, there will be a bright future. This is because as early as the period of China’s democratic revolution, Mao Zedong had demonstrated such endeavor for us with his great practice and success.

The third new trend is the shift from research that focuses mostly on historical details to research that takes into account both microscopic and macroscopic historical perspectives. For a period of time since the beginning of reform and opening up, in order to redress the one-sidedness of previous

modern Chinese history study in the past and to “restore” history as much as possible, many scholars, while carefully reviewing the previous research, began to explore a number of new areas that had never been touched upon. The research of that period, if classified using the criterion in terms of microscopic and macroscopic research, seems to be basically microscopic studies or studies of details regardless of which area is in focus, on account of the fact that most of the conclusions are either answers as “positive” or “negative” and “correct” or “incorrect” to the questions about specific historical facts, or descriptions of specific historical processes, with little reflection on overall historical development. Of course, there was some macroscopic historical research, but relatively limited. By way of contrast, remarkable achievement was made in microscopic historical research and well acknowledged. As Mao Haijian said, “of many historical events we have today a fresh understanding, better knowledge, and more pertinent conclusions, not because there are big breakthroughs in ideas or methodologies, but probably because some of the key historical details have been clarified.”<sup>26</sup> Now that research on historical details has such a great role, of course there is no reason not to continue to do so.

However, the ultimate goal of historical research, after all, is not only to evaluate the merits and demerits of the ancients, but also to explore the path of China today. For the fate of Chinese nation and even the whole of mankind today, and for the progress of the future society, we cannot do without macroscopic historical research, or “historical perspective”; we must not exclusively use microscopes to observe the details of history, but without telescopes that can be used to foresee the future of history. We do need them both. While studying the details of history, we should also reflect on history in a long-term and all-round way so as to find out the thread and law of historical development. Even when we try to comment on a historical person, we are able to do this not only through observation of all the “details” of the person in terms of how he or she behaves in one event, at one time, in one place and in one way, but also by way of an all-round comprehensive investigation into the people and things around him or her, such as his or her family, opponents, friends, superiors and subordinates, those who are indifferent, the public opinions he or she faces, and what he or she hears and sees. Therefore, while fully affirming the necessity of studying “historical details,” many scholars have proposed a broad “historical perspective” to the study of modern Chinese history, advocating that the periodization of modern history should first be vertically “re-united,” revoking the division around 1919 into early modern and modern stages, so as to study the history of 1840–1949 as a whole. In July 1997, Hu Sheng said in his congratulations on the 100th issue of *Modern History Studies*,

I would like to reiterate my suggestion that the 80 years before and the 30 years after 1919 be regarded as a whole, and that it is more appropriate to call it generally “modern Chinese history,” which, in this way,

has become a complete history of semi-colonial and semi-feudal China, with its beginning and end.<sup>27</sup>

Second, what should be horizontally “re-united” is that “historical perspective” is applied to the study of such aspects as politics, economy, ideology, culture, and social life, and even in association with the history of the surrounding countries. Luo Zhitian, a professor at the Department of History, Peking University, said in reflecting on the 30-year study of modern Chinese history since the reform and opening up,

to study modern China, we should not only have a deep understanding of the so-called “early modern” China, but also refer at least to three external histories, namely, that of the West, Japan and all the colonies since the nineteenth century (as well as their subsequent studies).

Only through a thorough and solid understanding of the West and Japan since the nineteenth century, especially their development and changes, can we truly understand many unprecedented changes in modern China. But few past studies have really done this, the least so in linking Japan and China (more often than not they are just comparisons between the two countries on the success or failure of the reforms).<sup>28</sup>

It is gratifying that many scholars, with a dedication to the pursuit of truth, have embarked on the exploration into such fields of history without fear of difficulty. Although more efforts have yet to be made, their research represents a new trend worthy of affirmation, and there seems to be no doubt about it.

Over the past 60 years, the study of modern Chinese history has gone through a tortuous path, not without development, setbacks, and prosperity, from which both experience and lessons can be drawn. Today, China has entered a new era, in which the whole country is striving for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. With still a lot to expect, the study of modern Chinese history will definitely have a much more brilliant and beautiful prospect.

## Notes

- 1 Cited in Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji, (eds.), *Biography of Mao Zedong (1949–1976)* (Vol. 1), Beijing: Central Party Literature Press, 2008, p.486, 492.
- 2 Liu Dalian, “Fan Wenlan and historical research,” In Liu Dalian, *Selected Papers of History Studies by Liu Dalian*, Beijing: The People’s Press, 1987, pp.535–537.
- 3 Cai Meibiao, “Four recollections of Fan Wenlan on learning,” In *Notes on the Past Academia*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2012, p.198.
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- 5 I have in my personal possession a table of academic record of history majors between 1958 and 1963 of a university. It shows that of the five years except in the

academic year of 1961–1962 there was no arrangement of “labor” course because the students were not in good health as China was in an economically difficult situation, whereas in all the four years there were records of “labor.” Moreover, the importance of the course can be shown by the fact that only five courses were opened up in the academic year of 1958–1959, including Philosophy, the Russian Language, the Ancient Chinese Language, Physical Education and “Labor.” The so-called “labor” course was a weekly arrangement of land tilling on the university-owned farm.

- 6 Li Shu, “Thirty years of Chinese social sciences,” In Li Shu, *Self-selected Essays of Li Shu*, Guangzhou: Guangdong People’s Press, 1998, p.99.
- 7 Li Shu, “Marxism and Chinese historiography” In *Self-selected Essays of Li Shu*, p.140.
- 8 Li Shu, “‘The Gang of Four’ and their devastation of Chinese history studies: On the hoax of so-called history of Confucianism and Legalism struggle,” In *Self-selected Essays of Li Shu*, p.62; Liu Danian, “Fan Wenlan and historical research,” In *Selected Essays of Historical Research by Liu Danian*, p.544.
- 9 Li Shu, “Chinese history studies of 1979,” In *Self-selected Essays of Li Shu*, p.118.
- 10 Li Shu, “The history studies of 1979,” In *Self-selected Essays of Li Shu*, p.119.
- 11 Zhang Haipeng, “Foreword,” In *Research Catalogue of Researchers of the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (1950–2000)*, published by the Research Institute of the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 2000, p.1.
- 12 Hu Sheng, On the periodization of modern Chinese History, *Historical Research*, 1954 (1).
- 13 Liu Danian, Where is the breakthrough in the study of modern Chinese history? *Guangming Daily*, February 17, 1981.
- 14 In *The Selected Works of Mao Zedong* (People’s Publishing House, 1991), this AB group was mentioned many times, saying that the AB group had a great influence on the masses in Futian and Donggu areas, which led to the opposition between the masses and the Red Army. It is more clearly stated in the notes that the AB group was a counter-revolutionary secret service organization of the Kuomintang hidden in the Red Regions at that time (see pages 204, 211 and 236 of the book).
- 15 See the Compilation and Translation Group of the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (compiled and translated), *How Foreign Bourgeois Viewed China’s History—Selected Translation of Works on Modern Chinese History by the Reactionary Historians of Capitalist Countries*, (Vol. 1), Commercial Press, 1961, pp.10–14.
- 16 According to Li Zongyi, a Beijing scholar, and Zhang Yufa, a Taipei scholar, who attended the meeting, they later told each other that apart from expressing different academic opinions at the meeting, they had no personal contact at the meeting. They both seemed overcautious, merely looking at each other from a distance making sure which one was from Taipei and which from Beijing.
- 17 Karl Marx, “*Capital*,” (Vol. 1, Afterwords to the second German edition) In *Selected Works of Marx and Engels*, (Vol. 2). Beijing: The People’s Press, 1972, p.217.
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- 28 Luo Zhitian, The variation and non-variation of modern Chinese history research in the past thirty years—some unsystematic reflections. *Social Sciences Research*, 2008 (6), cited in Bu Ping, Reform and opening-up and modern Chinese history research, *Modern History Studies*, 2009 (5).

## 2 Theories and methods

ZHANG Haipeng

### 2.1 The periodization of modern Chinese history in the 1950s

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, great progress has been made in the study of modern Chinese history. There has been development unparalleled in the past in all such aspects as the research institutions, research teams, research results, or the depth and breadth of the study. However, I believe that the most important progress is in the conception of history and in the theories and methods for the study of modern Chinese history.

In 1954, Hu Sheng published his article "On the periodization of modern Chinese history" in the inaugural issue of *Historical Research*, which aroused strong concern and heated discussion among modern historians. In 1957, the editorial department of *Historical Research* brought together the articles of discussion by scholars for publication. It was a precious record of Chinese modern historians seeking to establish a Marxist historiography system in the field of Chinese modern history research by way of studying historical materialism. How to periodize modern Chinese history seems to be a specific problem in compiling modern history textbooks. But what criteria are to be applied in periodization involves more complicated issues such as historical outlooks, the theories and methods, the main task, and the basic clue to studying modern Chinese history, the main task of describing and studying modern Chinese history. Hu Sheng, considering it quite insufficient and inconsiderable to have modern Chinese history described in some textbooks before 1949 in terms of the "Daoguang Era," "Xianfeng Era," "Tongzhi Era," or "Age of Weakness," "Age of Political Change" and "Republican Age," because they "failed to reflect the essence of social and historical development."<sup>1</sup> He went further to point out that some textbooks, including those attempting to account for history in the light of Marxist class analysis, abandoned historical periodization and tried to present history in terms of major events. Their presentation of history, adopting "recording major events from beginning to end," inevitably "distorted many of the historical events that are originally interconnected, and blurred the basic clue in the development of history."<sup>2</sup> In his discussion on the criterion of periodization, Hu Sheng criticized the

periodization solely in accordance with imperialist aggression as considerably biased, since it “only focused on aggression, but not on people’s resistance against aggression, which is one of the main shortcomings of the modern historical works with a bourgeois viewpoint throughout.”<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, he also criticized the periodization merely based on changes of social and economic life, arguing that it will deviate and go to the standing of economic materialism. He insisted on the periodization of modern Chinese history in the light of a comprehensive examination of both the economic foundation and superstructure of the society at the time, while changes of the latter do not necessarily follow that of the former in a step-by-step manner. On the basis of Marxist historical materialism and Mao Zedong’s statement of modern Chinese history, Hu Sheng put forward an important opinion that “the criterion of periodization is basically the expression of class struggle.” He also pointed out that the Marxist requirement for the study of modern Chinese history is not to simply label events and figures with the marks of this or that class, progressive or revolutionary. If a modern history book is but repetition of bourgeois views, except that there are some additional labels, that will not be the completion of the task of Marxist research.

To make historical research truly permeated with the Marxist ideological power, we must be good at revealing, through economic, political and cultural phenomena, the appearance and essence of various social forces on the stage of modern Chinese history, their origins, their interrelations and mutual struggles, as well as their development trends.<sup>4</sup>

It should be noted that this is the first time that the task of using Marxism to study modern Chinese history, and the important viewpoint of making historical research truly permeated with Marxist ideological power were put forward in academic circles. According to this point of view, Hu Sheng also put forward the concept of “the upsurge of three revolutionary movements in modern Chinese history” (which has later been commonly referred to as “three revolutionary climaxes”) and his own views on the periodization of modern Chinese history from 1840 to 1919.

Hu’s article received strong responses from scholars. By 1957, when the Xinhua News Agency announced that “the discussion on the periodization of modern Chinese history has come to an end,” a total of 24 papers had been published. In the three years between 1954 and 1957, historians like Sun Shouren, Huang Yiliang, Jin Chongji, Fan Wenlan, Dai Yi, Rong Mengyuan, Li Xin, Lai Xinxia, Wang Renchen, and Zhang Kaiyuan all put forward their own views in their articles. And newspapers also reported discussions on the periodization of modern Chinese history at the Department of History of Tianjin Normal University, the Sixth Seminar on Science at the Renmin University of China and the seminal meeting on the syllabus of history teaching for higher education. While many people agreed or basically went along with Hu Sheng’s view on the criterion of periodization, several

different criteria were proffered, one being that the development of the main contradictions and changes in their nature in modern Chinese society should be taken as the criterion.<sup>5</sup> Another criterion was that “the principles of historical materialism must be strictly followed, and Chinese people should be established as historical heroes in China,”<sup>6</sup> Another one was that “the periodization criterion should be a combination of the representation of the class struggle with that of the social economy (mode of production),”<sup>7</sup> and another was that “the economic and political oppression by imperialism as well as its lackeys and the national democratic revolution of the Chinese people have become the fundamental contradiction throughout the modern historical period, and a clue running through all events,”<sup>8</sup> to mention only a few. Many different proposals came into formation due to different understandings or interpretations of the periodization criterion.

For a review of the discussion, I believe that it is not about the unification of the understanding of the criteria for periodization, nor how much progress has been made in the specific area, but rather an important opportunity in which historians of (but not limited to) modern Chinese history have conscientiously studied Marxism and historical materialism since the founding of the PRC in conjunction with the study of periodization, while eliminating the feudal and bourgeois views of history from old China. And it is through the discussion that it has been clarified that the theory and method of Marxism and historical materialism must be adopted in the study of modern Chinese history. The discussants all agreed that Mao Zedong’s statement that “the history of China’s transformation into a semi-colony and colony by imperialism in collusion with Chinese feudalism is at the same time a history of struggle by the Chinese people against imperialism and its lackeys,” expressed in principle the basic content of Chinese modern history. Therefore, the struggles of the Chinese people against imperialism and feudalism and their development should be considered as the basic clue to modern Chinese history. At the same time, there were many discussions among historians on the periodization of ancient Chinese history, slavery and feudalism in China, the land ownership system in China, the formation of the Han nationality, and the germination of capitalism in China. All these discussions can be regarded as the great learning of Marxism that took place in the 1950s, and a rare contention among various ideas, having thus promoted the formation of a strong atmosphere of theoretical learning, especially of learning historical materialism in the field of history, enabled a large number of scholars from old China and young scholars in the field of history to be educated in Marxism, and to learn to observe and study Chinese history, particularly modern Chinese history, by applying the fundamental Marxist viewpoints and historical materialism, and as a result promoted the construction of the discipline of modern Chinese history and the study of some important theoretical and practical issues in the field of modern Chinese history. Looking back on the discussion, we still feel justified to say that the current prosperous situation of modern Chinese history,

and the historians' current high level of thought, should all be attributed to the discussions in the 1950s.

After the discussions of the 1950s, the modern historians have generally reached a consensus on modern Chinese history study for its scientific and revolutionary aspects, its guiding ideology, and its basic clue to modern Chinese history. The three textbooks of modern Chinese history published thereafter were but a reflection of the discussion. Two of them were published in 1962, one being the fourth volume of the *History of China*, with Guo Moruo as the chief editor and Liu Danian as the leading editor coordinating researchers of the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, another being the fourth volume of *An Outline of Chinese History*, with Jian Bozan as the chief editor and Shao Xunzheng and Chen Qinghua as the editors. The third book edited by Hu Sheng, *From the Opium Wars to the May 4th Movement*, was published in 1981 as another result of the discussion. While former two books are textbooks for college majors in history, the latter is intended as a reader of modern Chinese history for cadres at large.

Previous books on modern Chinese history, including Fan Wenlan's *Modern Chinese History*, which has a large readership, are generally characterized by separate accounting of major events and an overemphasis of their content on political history. Such practice is justifiable for the time, but needs improvement, which is manifest in the fourth volume of the *History of China* in which the authors have made great efforts to make changes. According to Liu Danian, the 80-year history of modern China from 1840 to 1919 is clearly manifested in three different periods: from the Opium Wars to the defeat of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, from 1864 to the Reform Movement of 1898 and the failure of the Boxer Movement, and from 1901 to the outbreak of the May 4th Movement. During those periods, imperialism and all classes of Chinese society had their own characteristics in their interrelationship as well as their contradictions and struggles. In them social and economic conditions, class struggle and ideology are integrated and unified. Therefore, new works are required to account for events in the chronological sequence of historical evolution, not only recounting political events, but also economic basis and ideology; not only narrating the history of the Han nationality regions, but also the connections and interrelations between the various nationalities and the whole country in their struggles. And it is in this manner that the fourth volume of the *History of China* has summarized, with generalization and sublimation, the theoretical and research achievements of modern Chinese history since the founding of the PRC, setting up a new frame for modern Chinese history. It was a designated textbook for higher institutions, with large print. The book was commended as the most influential piece of historical writing in the 1960s in a seminar held for scholars of modern history in 1982 in Chengde, illustrating how popular the book once was at that time. This comment points out the popularity of the book over a period of time. The third book, Hu Sheng's, being both comprehensive and full of detail in its analysis, and magnificent in its discussion, has reflected to a certain extent

Marxist ideological power that the author intentionally pursues, and has thus made a far-reaching impact on teaching and research as well as patriotic education for the masses.

Although scholars may have different opinions on some specific issues regarding these three books mentioned above, they have basically determined the stylistic rules and framework for writing of textbooks on modern Chinese history, confirmed the adoption of class analysis for the examination of historical process, identified modern Chinese society as a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, and confirmed that the basic task of modern China is to fight against imperialism and feudalism. Specifically and generally accepted is the conception of three revolutionary climaxes. Hundreds of textbooks and popular books on modern Chinese history published since the mid-1980s are basically in accordance with such a framework, indicating its acceptance among scholars.

## **2.2 Discussions on the basic clues of modern Chinese history in the 1980s**

Since 1980, discussions arose once again on China's modern historiography and the basic clues of modern Chinese history. Some scholars began to demand the rectification of the one-sidedness and simplistic tendencies in historical study and rethinking the actual situation of the modern history studies, having thus brought up suspicion and refutation on the division of historical periods in terms of class struggles and the concept of the three revolutionary climaxes, which were originally proposed by Hu Sheng and supported by quite a lot of scholars. Li Shiyue first published a paper on the first issue in the 1980 edition of *Historical Study* entitled "From Westernization, Reformation to Bourgeois Revolution," which caused a new round of discussions on the basic clues of modern Chinese history. This discussion also touched upon the periodization of modern history. But unlike the discussions in the 1950s, instead of attaching such a major theoretical issue as the basic clue of modern history to its periodization, it was raised directly as an issue in its own right.

After Li Shiyue's article was published, a wave of contending was formed in the mid-1980s, and extended to the 1990s when related articles were still published. Compared with the 1950s, the issues under discussion were more widely raised, with more updated perspectives, more in-depth research, and more conspicuous disagreements. In summary, there are three main points of view. One is represented by Li Shiyue. Li Shiyue proposed that "The modern history of China from 1840 to 1919 has experienced four stages: the peasant wars, the Westernization Movement, the Reform Movement, and the bourgeois revolution."

They have reflected the dramatic changes in modern Chinese society and the rapid development of the political consciousness of the modern

Chinese people. And they are therefore the indicators of the basic clues of the progress of modern Chinese history.<sup>9</sup>

He suggested that attention should be focused on the significance of the development of the capitalist economy in modern history, and the bourgeois political movement should be given credit for its proper political status.<sup>10</sup> He also emphasized that the “Westernization Movement, the Reform Movement and bourgeois revolution” should be regarded as the progressive trend or basic clues of modern Chinese history. Some scholars have summarized this formulation as a “three-step” theory, which Li Shiyue himself thought was inaccurate, having reformulated it in an article as the “four-step” theory in which the peasant wars of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom were supposedly included. It is argued that there are actually two trends rather than one in the development of modern Chinese society: one is the transformation from an independent state to a semi-colonial (semi-independent) one and evolving toward a colonial state; another is the transformation from a feudal society to a semi-feudal (semi-capitalist) one and evolving toward capitalist society. While the former is a downward trend, the latter is a trend of upward development. Supporting explicitly the use of class struggles as historical clues, Li Shiyue claimed that his “four-step” theory was not fundamentally opposed to the “three climaxes” theory, but only a partially revised and supplemented version of it, since the “three climaxes” theory had inadequacies, which lay in the fact that “the class struggle has not been closely linked with the social economy, so that historical materialism has not been carried through to the end.”<sup>11</sup> In the discussion of the basic clues of modern Chinese history, some scholars believed that Mao Zedong’s “two processes” theory failed to outline “all the content” of modern Chinese history, and was thus a “misunderstanding” of Mao Zedong’s original meaning, thus calling for “getting rid of” the “binding” of the “two processes” theory and re-learning Marxist theory, in which it was expected to “get some new enlightenment, and build our research on the basis of scientific theory.”<sup>12</sup> Some suggested that in modern Chinese society “striving for independence and progress has always been the historical theme, whereas learning from the West and developing capitalism is the fundamental road for modern China to achieve the goal.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, in modern times,

the Chinese people are faced with the two fundamental tasks of striving for national independence (against imperialism) and seeking social progress (development of capitalism). These two tasks are consistent throughout the modern history of China, and all struggles, including political, economic, ideological and cultural struggles are all carried out around these two fundamental tasks. They constitute the basic clues of modern Chinese history.<sup>14</sup>

Such a theory takes the capitalist movement (involving economic and political aspects) as the main clue to investigate the process of modern Chinese

history development, and views the Westernization Movement, the Reform Movement and the Revolution of 1911 as “reflecting the rapid development of modern Chinese people’s political consciousness, marking the basic context of the progress of modern Chinese history.”<sup>15</sup> They held that under the social and historical conditions of modern times, that in order to strive for national independence and social progress, China must learn from the advanced Western capitalist countries, eliminate poverty and backwardness, and bring into being modernization.

Another group generally adheres to Hu Sheng’s original point of view. In the preface of *From the Opium Wars to the May 4th Movement* and the preface of its reprint in 1997 as well as other articles, Hu Sheng still maintained his theory of three revolutionary climaxes, and argued that the views formerly introduced have obliterated the role of the peasant revolution in modern Chinese history. Scholars such as Su Shuangbi,<sup>16</sup> Yuan Shuyi,<sup>17</sup> Zhang Haipeng,<sup>18</sup> Rong Mengyuan<sup>19</sup> and others also published contending articles. They believed that the development clue to modern Chinese history should be conditioned by the nature of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society of China. The central task of the Chinese people was to abolish imperialism and feudalism, including the establishment China’s own national industry and developing capitalism in China. This process constitutes the main clue to the development of modern Chinese history. They believed that Mao Zedong’s “two processes” of modern Chinese history have correctly summarized the basic clues of modern Chinese history; at the same time they disagreed with the proposal that “learning from the West and developing capitalism” should be taken as “the fundamental road for modern China to strive for independence and progress,” believing that only through democratic revolution and overthrowing the rule of imperialism and feudalism could China develop capitalism. Compared with the former group, this group is opposed to simply regarding the Westernization Movement as a progressive movement, and excluding the Boxer Movement from the basic clue.

The opinions of the third group are comparatively complex, being basically somewhere in the middle of the aforementioned two opinions, but occasionally coming up with some new ideas. Zhang Kaiyuan, in his article “National movement and basic clues of modern Chinese history” (*Historical Research*, 1984 (3)), tried to clarify the basic clues of modern Chinese history from the perspective of national movement. He held that the Opium Wars were the beginning of the national movement in modern China, and that modern Chinese history of nearly 80 years, with the year 1900 as the landmark, is summarized as “two stages, three upsurges,” that is, the first stage covers the two upsurges of the national movements with the 1898 Reform and the Boxer Movement after the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and the war of 1895; the second stage covers the upsurge of the national movement with the revolution of 1911, which is of greater modern characteristics. He also claimed that the three upsurges of the national movements represent a development trend that actually exists in modern Chinese history, and is thus an embodiment of

the basic clue and development law of modern Chinese history. According to Zhang Kaiyuan, the “Westernization- Reform-Revolution” is a simple framework, which is the important social context of farmers and land issues is very likely ignored. Since China is a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, advice has been against mechanically copying modern history, and the ready-made formulaic history of the emergence, development and decline of capitalism. He also suggested that it is better not to use the term “three revolutionary climaxes,” because the term “revolution” has both broad and narrow interpretations, and in addition it is not only likely to cause ambiguity in conceptual understanding, but also easy to create association with the term of three domestic revolutionary wars in the history of new democratic revolution, which would result in a lack of coordination in stylistic representations concerning the new and old democratic history as an integral part of the whole modern history of China. He also pointed out that Mao Zedong’s “two processes” theory can serve as the base point for further exploring the basic clues of modern Chinese history. To say that the development of modern Chinese history is a national movement does not mean to replace the “two processes” with another set of clues. The “two processes” is an objective historical reality and the backbone of the whole process of modern Chinese history, and it is naturally understood as the basic clue throughout. From this point of view, although the third group criticizes the first two groups, the essence of its proposition is relatively close to Hu Sheng’s opinion.

Qi Qizhang has another view. He claimed that to say the “two processes” theory as the basic clue to modern Chinese history is groundless. In his opinion, when considering the basic clues, it is not appropriate to talk about “the manifestation of class struggle” in an empty way. The anti-imperialist struggle certainly cannot embody the basic clues, even the anti-feudal struggle may not always embody the basic clues. “The basic clues should be the domestic class struggle that can reflect the future of modern China’s social development ... only the domestic class struggle that promotes social change can embody the basic clue to modern Chinese history.” He proposed that in modern Chinese history only the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the Reform Movement and the Revolution of 1911 could embody the basic clues, whereas the Westernization Movement and the Boxer Movement could not be counted as the basic clues. In this way, “the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom-the Reform Movement-the Revolution of 1911” constitute the three steps of the development of modern Chinese history.<sup>20</sup>

These are the main views arising in the debate on the basic clues of modern Chinese history in the mid-1980s. They are mostly based on China’s historical process from 1840 to 1919 as the historical facts. There are many things in common among the three groups, that is, they all admit that the manifestations of class struggle should be taken as indicators to determine the basic clues of modern Chinese history. Their theoretical differences are manifested in the following: some emphasize that class struggle should be associated with the development of social economy. They require that the significance of the

development of capitalism and the political status of the bourgeoisie should be taken into account, proposing that learning from the West and developing capitalism is the fundamental gateway for modern China to strive for independence and progress. They therefore highly value the historical status of the Westernization Movement but belittled the role of the Boxer Movement. Others emphasize that class struggle should be associated with social changes reflecting the future of modern Chinese social development, and thought that the Westernization Movement and Boxer Movement could not be included in the basic clue. However, the latter hold that the “two processes” of modern Chinese history and anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism are not supposed to be regarded as the basic clues of modern Chinese history, which is obviously contrary to their proposition that “the basic clues of modern Chinese history can only be reflected in the domestic class struggles that have promoted social change.” Such a theory is far from being rigorous. The three groups also have specific differences, of which the biggest lies in how to evaluate the Westernization Movement and the Boxer Movement. As far as the Westernization Movement is concerned, the first group believe that it gives rise to Chinese capitalism and is therefore a progressive movement. Wang Jingyu, an expert in economic history, having studied the Westernization enterprises and the development and under-development of modern Chinese capitalism, suggested that the modern Chinese capitalist enterprises arose from civil activities with businessmen as the main body preceding the official activities with Westernization bureaucrats as the main body. The first people who came into contact with capitalism and practiced it in China were the new businessmen who had contact with the invading foreign capitalism. Although the business enterprises run or supervised by the Westernization faction of officials later occupied a leading position in the production process of modern capitalist enterprises in China, the Westernization faction failed to be a positive force in supporting of the development of Chinese capitalism, as the bureaucrats of the Westernization faction were not on the side of promoting the development of Chinese capitalism.<sup>21</sup> Wang Jingyu came to the conclusion that “the Westernization bureaucrats involved in modern enterprises failed to undertake the historical task of developing Chinese capitalism”<sup>22</sup> in his study of the enterprises run by private businessmen but supervised by the Westernization officials. When Jiang Duo, an expert in economic history, discussed the nature of Westernization enterprises, he suggested that the Westernization enterprises were in the nature of early bureaucratic capital, characterized by compradores and feudalism, “the monopolistic and exclusive tendency of the Westernization enterprises restrained to certain extent the free development of private capital, which was also an objective existence and should not be denied.”<sup>23</sup> It was also pointed out that

there are several capitalist movements of different natures in modern China. Only national capitalism is conducive to the development of Chinese history and the liberation of the Chinese people, and is therefore

progressive, whereas bureaucratic capitalism and colonialism are but the fundamental factors having caused China's poverty and backwardness, and are therefore reactionary. China has not been burdened with national capitalism, but with feudalism, bureaucratic capitalism and imperialism. Compared with the enterprises run by bureaucratic capitalism and imperialism in China, the national capitalist enterprises are very weak. Therefore, it is difficult to accept the proposition that the capitalist movement is taken as the main clue in an investigation into the development of modern Chinese history without rigorous analysis, and the indistinct claim that the Westernization Movement reflects the rapid development of the modern Chinese people's political consciousness and represents the direction of the times.<sup>24</sup>

Opinions differ on the Boxer Uprising, yet all seem to agree that the Boxer Uprising was a spontaneous anti-imperialist patriotic movement of peasants in the north. The problem is that Hu Sheng did not take the Boxer Uprising as the only indicator when he first defined the second revolutionary upsurge, but instead affirmed that "it is partially true to regard the Boxer Uprising from 1899 to 1900 as the second revolutionary upsurge," intending himself to regard the "Reform Movement of 1898" and the Boxer Uprising together as the indicators of the second revolutionary movement upsurge. He pointed out that

although both of them existed during the upsurge of the second revolution, they were completely unrelated. The reformist movement in pursuit of capitalist ideals resulted in the short-lived Reform Movement of 1898, whereas the spontaneous struggles with the peasants as the major force ended up as a distorted finale in the tragic failure of the Boxer Movement.<sup>25</sup>

In his *From the Opium Wars to the May 4th Movement*, in addition to giving a positive narration of the Westernization Movement and the Boxer Movement, Hu Sheng also emphasized in the foreword of the first edition that "we think it is not justifiable in any sense to discuss the historical progressive trend in modern China in terms of 'the Westernization Movement-the Reform of 1898-the Revolution of 1911'"; and that

in a full consideration of the Boxer Movement and its role in the anti-imperialist struggle, we have to be aware of its serious weakness at the same time. And of course we must not erase its historical position simply because the Boxer Movement could not in any possibility to evolve into a healthy anti-imperialist struggle under the historical conditions at that time.

Hu Sheng's evaluation of the Boxer Movement is clearly measured and appropriate in his thorough adherence to the three revolutionary climaxes theory.

Hu Sheng was justified for his emphasis on the combination of class struggle with social and economic development, as it was his very intention as he brought up the issue for discussion. According to Hu Sheng, the fundamental task of studying modern Chinese history is to explain, through analysis of specific historical facts, how new classes have emerged in Chinese society, what changes have taken place in the relations between different classes, and how the class struggle has developed under foreign imperialist invasion of China.<sup>26</sup> According to the Marxist concept of political economy, the so-called classes refer to the groups in different positions in a given social production system and in a given social economic structure. The so-called class struggle is the struggle between the groups of fundamental conflicting economic interests. Raising the question in what way a new class has emerged within Chinese society is asking in what way a new social and economic structure has emerged in the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, and thereby a new class structure and class struggles have emerged. To study the new class, the relationship between different classes and the situation of class struggles, is arguably to study the new socio-economic structure, and to combine the study of class struggles with socio-economic structure. In 1980, coming up with the question “where does modern Chinese history break through?,” Liu Dajian emphasized the importance of studying modern Chinese economic history, advocating applying the Materialistic historical outlook to the study of modern Chinese history, for which he had the same intention as Hu Sheng. It should be pointed out that after the 1950s, the understanding and application of the clues of modern Chinese history and the three revolutionary climaxes theory became increasingly simplified and formulaic, and the understanding of the class struggles was becoming dogmatic and singular. As a result, many textbooks of modern Chinese history were repetitious and not very different from each other and readers grew dissatisfied and frustrated, after having stirred up a lot of reflection and discussion. This is understandable. Such reflections and discussions are of great benefit to re-learning and understanding Marxism, to more deeply understanding historical materialism, to acquiring an in-depth knowledge of the complex process of modern Chinese history, and to exploring modern Chinese history from multiple perspectives, multiple aspects and in a thorough-going manner.

The discussion of the basic clues of modern Chinese history has made new progress since the late 1980s. Owing to their dissatisfaction with the previous discussions within the limit of the periodization of modern Chinese history from 1840 to 1919, an increasing number of scholars began to back up the proposal that the lower limit of modern Chinese history should be extended to 1949. In the third issue of *Historical Research* in 1988, Chen Xulu in his article “Reflections on the clue to modern Chinese history” attempted to examine the 110 years from 1840 to 1949 as a complete historical period. Chen Xulu wrote that

the so-called complete historical period means that the 110 years are different from any historical Dynasty since the Qin and Han Dynasties,

but a special historical social form, that is, a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society as a result of a collapsing feudal society drawn into a capitalist world. The period is supposed to be approached with a full consideration of such a special and complete social form and its rich connotation.

Starting from this point of view, Chen Xulu defined the revolution climaxes in terms of its original motivations. He believed that there were three revolutionary climaxes in modern Chinese history, but they were not the ones advocated by Hu Sheng and accepted by most scholars. He thought that in the middle and late nineteenth century, even though China had experienced the climax of peasant uprising, the climax of reform and the anti-imperialist movement, which all promoted or reflected the metabolic historical process in different ways and degrees, yet failed to reach the high-level climaxes of an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution which was to happen later. It was only in the twentieth century that revolutions in full swing and of complete significance took place and reached a climax. He therefore asserted that the three climaxes are: the Revolution of 1911 overthrowing the Qing government in 1912, the Revolution of 1927 overthrowing the Northern Warlord government, and in 1949 the liberation war led by the Communist Party of China overthrew the rule of the Kuomintang and won national victory. He stressed that in modern Chinese history, there are only three climaxes of revolution. Without these three climaxes, imperialism could not have been driven away and feudal forces defeated. Xia Dongyuan also presented his understanding of the basic clues of modern Chinese history based on 110 years of modern Chinese history, proposing that “one main line” (i.e. the clue to inception, emergence and development of capitalism) and “two processes” (i.e. the process of imperialism being joined with Chinese feudalism to have turned China into a semi-colony and a colony, which is also the process of the Chinese people’s resistance to imperialism and its supporters) are combined to clarify the historical law of modern China in the 110-year period. So I neither agree with the view “three upsurges of revolution,” nor accept as appropriate the “four steps” theory.<sup>27</sup> Xia took capitalism as the main line, and tended to regard the Westernization Movement, the Reform of 1898 and the Revolution of 1911 as three progressive movements, which was a restatement of a view brought up 40 or 50 years ago. Having re-examined and re-interpreted the view, Xia was able to notice the pattern of the development of capitalism, but still failed to link up the 110-year history. And it is not appropriate to completely align the Westernization Movement, the Reform of 1898 and the Revolution of 1911, since the Westernization Movement was against the core issue of capitalism—democratic political reform. Therefore, Xia was convinced that the combination of the inception, emergence and development of capitalism and the “two processes,” with the realization of democracy or the anti-realization of democracy determining the development of capitalism or the failure of its smooth development as the basic clues, should be used to divide modern Chinese history of 110 years into two phases around

the demarcation line of the Reform of 1898. Such a division, according to Xia, was more capable of fully reflecting the law of historical development.<sup>28</sup> In 1997, Zhang Haipeng continued to comment on this issue. According to Zhang Haipeng, since the 1950s, the study of modern Chinese history, having adopted the theory prior to the founding of the PRC, is divided into two periods: Pre-Modern Chinese history (1840–1919) and Modern Chinese history (1919–1949). Until now, the universities have set up teaching and research sections and taught courses in terms of the above division. In his view, such a division is not good for historical understanding and discipline construction. It more than 50 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China. With regard to the period of Chinese history traced back from 1949 to 1840, we have now understood it more clearly and should be more clearly explained and appreciate. Generally speaking, Zhang believed that the study of Chinese history should center on the period 1840 to 1949, which would be of great advantage to the study of modern Chinese history, modern Chinese history after 1949, the history of the Chinese revolution and the history of the Communist Party of China. He also thought that Li Shiyue was quite innovative in proposing in the past few years that the semi-colony was “historical falling” and semi-feudalism or semi-capitalism was “historical rising.”<sup>29</sup> But at the same time Zhang was not convinced with Li Shiyue's view that the semi-colonial and semi-feudal China had been falling and rising at the same time, which Li Shiyue rebutted. “If modern China only has historical falling, then ‘where would such historical falling’ stop? Would there be any end to the long dark night?”<sup>30</sup> Being inspired by the statement, Zhang Haipeng then proposed that for the 110-year history of semi-colonial and semi-feudal China, modern Chinese history is coterminous with the beginning of the twentieth century (roughly from 1901 to 1915) with the fall of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society to the bottom of the valley. In 1901, the Peace Protocol of 1901 was signed. And 1915 was the year in which Japan forced 21 demands upon China, Yuan Shikai proclaimed himself emperor, and Chen Duxiu founded *New Youth*. These major events greatly stimulated Chinese society by growing new social class forces, promoting their awakening, and the awakening of the whole Chinese nation. Since then, the internal development of Chinese society began to show an upward trend, of which the development of the new cultural movement and the outbreak of the May 4th anti-imperialist patriotic movement are all clear indicators. And ever since then, the forces of the bourgeoisie and its political representatives, and those of the proletariat and its political representatives have grown rapidly and have finally replaced the old forces to become the leading forces in social development.<sup>31</sup>

Zhang Haipeng also believed that Hu Sheng's theory of three revolutionary climaxes is very important in modern Chinese history. From the perspective of political history or revolutionary history, this concept reflects the reality of history. Of course, from the perspective of economic history, ideological history, cultural history or the history of modernization, some different concepts could be put forward based on the needs of each relevant specialty reflecting

its historical reality. However, in an overall consideration of modern Chinese history, the theory of three revolutionary climaxes must have its dominating and balancing role. If it were completely discarded, historical reality could hardly be fully accounted for.

However, when Hu Sheng first proposed this theory, he dealt with the first half of China's modern history, that is, from 1840 to 1919. Having pushed the lower limit of China's modern history to September 1949, it has become obvious that Hu Sheng's theory of the three revolution climaxes is not in line with the historical reality of modern Chinese history. Therefore the criticism of the theory is completely justified from the perspective of new periodization. Accordingly, from an overall consideration of China's modern history, it is necessary to reconsider the issue of the revolutionary climaxes in modern Chinese history.

Hu Sheng's original intention of proposing the theory of revolutionary climax was to explain the basic clue to the development of modern Chinese history, and to "reveal through economic, political and cultural phenomena both the appearance and essence of various social forces on the stage of modern Chinese history, including their origins, their mutual relations and struggles, and their development trend," and to understand "the upsurge of the revolutionary movement is a period of time in which various newly-facilitated social forces manifest themselves in full swing through fierce class struggles."<sup>32</sup> From the observation above, we know that Hu did not define "the upsurge of the three revolutionary movements" in terms of the original meaning of revolution. And his starting point in putting forward such a theory is understandable. It is very important for us to understand the basic clues and characteristics of the development of modern Chinese history from a political perspective. Moreover, the upsurge of several revolutionary movements in the nineteenth century (such as the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom movement, the Reform Movement of 1898, the Boxer Uprising) made serious preparations and provided ideological materials for the arrival of the real revolutionary movement thereafter, and it was an indispensable preparatory stage in the transition from the old democratic revolution to the new democratic revolution. Without these, we would lack the necessary links to understand the basic clues and summarize the development rules of modern Chinese history. From this understanding, the revolutionary climaxes of modern Chinese history should still include several revolutionary movements in the nineteenth century, and of course, they do not have to be three times only. On an overall scale, there should be seven climaxes. They are the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom revolutionary movement, the Reform of 1898 and the Boxer Movement, the Revolution of 1911, the new cultural movement and the May 4th Movement, the Revolution of 1927, the Anti-Japanese War of 1937–1945, the victory of the Liberation War and the founding of the People's Republic of China. The aforementioned seven revolutionary movements or climaxes have basically determined the political trend of modern China, including all major stages from the old democratic revolution to the new democratic revolution, and

including the basic content of the national democratic revolution. This is the basic clue to the development of modern Chinese history.<sup>33</sup>

Although fewer articles have been published in recent years on the basic clue to modern Chinese history, scholars continue their thinking. I hope and believe that our discussion will not stop there. It is important to maintain a good momentum of contention. We need to have more than one voice. Under the guidance of Marxism, we can form many schools and put forward many different frameworks to promote the real prosperity of the study of modern Chinese history.

It must be emphasized that to study the basic clue to modern Chinese history is to explore a methodology of observing modern Chinese history, so as to use it to discover the basic law of the development of modern Chinese history. The basic law of modern Chinese history is not the same as the basic clue to modern Chinese history. And the historical facts represented in modern Chinese history are the basic content of modern Chinese history, though not in any sense the whole content, which is much richer and more complicated than represented. There are abundant historical phenomena. They are like piles of copper coins in the old era. These basic clues are like string, which can link up scattered copper coins, making it more convenient for people to count the coins. If we have a clear understanding of the basic clues to modern Chinese history, we will have a much more orderly understanding of all modern Chinese history, and we will find it easier to grasp the development and law of modern Chinese history.

The above knowledge about the stages and the basic clues of modern Chinese history, as well as the general consensus having been thus achieved are the major achievements of modern Chinese history in the past 60 years. Thanks to these achievements, the whole face of modern Chinese history has become clearer. And the status modern Chinese history as an independent discipline is attributed to these achievements to some extent. It is within such an overall framework of understanding that rich and colorful research results have been accomplished in the field of modern Chinese history.

### **2.3 The “falling” and “rising” of modern Chinese history**

The “falling” and “rising” of modern Chinese history is closely related to the development trend of modern Chinese history, and an interesting issue as well of how to view the development orientation of modern Chinese history.

The development trend of modern Chinese history in general used to be recounted as “falling” to the “abyss” of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society.<sup>34</sup> In the early 1980s, Li Shiyue came up with the view that there are actually two trends rather than one in the development of modern Chinese society. One is the development from an independent country to a semi-colonial country (semi-independent) and evolving into a colonial country; the other from a feudal society to semi-feudal (semi-capitalist) one and evolving into capitalist society. The former is a downward trend, while the latter is an

upward trend. Semi-capitalism is a historical progression to a feudal society, so its existence is an upward “rising.” Therefore, in the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society there is not only “falling” but also “rising.” They coexist at the same time. This is another interpretation of modern Chinese history by historians. It is quite a novel interpretation and has a great influence on modern historiography. In his review of the statement, Wang Jingyu put forward that “according to the author’s argument, people could come to the conclusion that modern Chinese society is either semi-colonial and semi-feudal or semi-colonial and semi-capitalist, since semi-feudalism is equal to semi-capitalism.”<sup>35</sup> Obviously, Wang Jingyu disagreed with this view, but did not discuss it in depth, apart from which no other special discussion was found.

Li Shiyue presented the above views in the framework of modern Chinese history with the year 1919 as the lower limit. Within this framework, several points in the new interpretation of the development trend of modern Chinese history fail to be properly accounted for. First, prior to 1919, China suffered a great blow from the great powers, as it was severely constrained by a series of treaties, such as the Treaty of Nanjing, the Treaty of Beijing, the Treaty of Shimonoseki, the Peace Protocol of 1901, and the Treaty of 1915, having been repeatedly forced to cede territory and pay indemnities, to yield to the stationing of foreign troops, to lease concessions and territory, and to accept the agreement tariff and the consular jurisdiction. By the fact that Chinese economic life was actually under the control of foreign economic forces, it basically conforms to historical facts to say that China fell to the “abyss” of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. It makes no sense to say that during that period of time there also coexisted “rising” in China. Second, after the Westernization Movement, the capitalist mode of production played a very insignificant part in China’s economic life, and the national capitalism being formed in the late nineteenth century was still very weak. It is obviously not appropriate to say that the other half of China’s semi-feudalism was semi-capitalism. Third, from an academic perspective the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society is generally interpreted as a societal form, and the so-called societal form is a Marxist concept, which is a transitional societal form between capitalism and socialism. There is some truth in saying that the expression semi-colony is used in terms of national status, and semi-feudalism in terms of semi-capitalism. However, it is neither scientific to cut apart a societal form, nor is it theoretically valid.

When we take modern Chinese history to be from 1840 to 1949, and comprehensively observe historical development during a period of 110 years, the situation becomes significantly different, and our vision is greatly broadened, then the whole process of “falling” and “rising” of modern China reveals itself. Having engaged myself in thinking for more than ten years, I have been able to write an article on the “falling” and “rising” of modern China as a discussion with Li Shiyue. Based on a close examination of the 110 years of modern China, I have come up with the view of “falling,” “valley bottom” and “rising.” In my opinion, from 1840 to 1900, the development trend of Chinese

history was mainly manifested as “falling,” but accompanied occasionally by “rising,” which was quite a minor factor. From 1901 to 1920, Chinese history was manifested as a period of “falling” to the “valley bottom.” The so-called “valley bottom” period was actually a transitional period from “falling” to “rising,” a transitional period from darkness to dawn. And it is a period in which China had its most difficult time after the signing of the Peace Protocol of 1901, with the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society having come into complete formation. It is the most serious period of “falling.” And it is during this period the Revolution of 1911 and the May 4th Movement took place, which demonstrated that the “rising” factor in China had risen to counteract with the “falling” manifestations. Having got through the “valley bottom” period, China was mainly on a “rising” trend in its historical development.<sup>36</sup>

As far as I know, several scholars have commented on my view. Most people think the “valley bottom” theory is quite innovative. Chen Tiejun remarked that the viewpoint “represents the author’s creative academic exploration” and “tentatively puts forward a new theoretical framework of modern Chinese history.”<sup>37</sup> Yuan Chengyi believed that the article “on the periodization of modern Chinese history and the issues of ‘sinking’ and ‘rising’” “is a valuable contribution to reconstructing the disciplinary system of modern Chinese history,” and that “the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society being on the ‘valley bottom’ of the abyss is an important academic issue worthy of further discussion.”<sup>38</sup> Zhang Huateng also suggested that

the theory of the “valley bottom” regarding China’s semi-colonial and semi-feudal society together with the theory of “falling” and “rising” regarding modern Chinese society have enabled us to have a better and a more visualized vision of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, and thus to have come closer to the reality of history. While historical development is tortuous, it moves forward after all, as is the case of modern China. This will give people confidence and strength. In particular, we observe from the development of modern society that, despite the efforts made by various classes and groups in modern times to avoid the “falling” of society, it is the proletariat that has finally prevented China from a continued “falling” into a colony, and won independence and liberation for the Chinese nation, ... Zhang has made a great contribution to the systematic account of modern Chinese history.<sup>39</sup>

“I fully agree with Mr. Zhang’s description of China’s modern social development track, especially his ‘valley bottom theory’, which is a completely novel proposal.”

Zhang Haipeng’s valley bottom theory and his description of the development of modern Chinese society is a most vivid and scientific explanation of modern social development. Zhang’s description makes people clearly see the track of modern Chinese social development, not only the

humiliations and disasters confronting modern society, but also its power and direction in its progress; accordingly people could have a scientific understanding of modern society. This is a great contribution Zhang has made to the macro research of modern Chinese history.<sup>40</sup>

As for at what stage should the “valley bottom” of modern China’s “falling” be identified, there were different views. Some believed that it should be somewhere between the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 and the signing of the Peace Protocol of 1901;<sup>41</sup> some argued that it should be during the Japanese invasion of China between 1931 and 1945.<sup>42</sup>

There were also scholars who questioned the “valley bottom theory.” They argued that “the ‘valley bottom theory’ is only partially correct, due to the fact that it has completely denied or underestimated the victory and success of the Revolution of 1911 and its historical significance as a epoch-making milestone.”<sup>43</sup>

It seems that it is of great significance to continue discussion on the “falling” and “rising” as well as the “valley bottom” of modern China in order to understand its historical development track or trend and what essentially characterizes modern Chinese history. It is therefore necessary and worth advocating further academic contention and exploration.

## **2.4 The nature of Chinese society and the issue of “farewell to revolution”**

It is a Marxist proposition to judge the social nature of a certain stage in human history. Lenin was the first to have put forward a view on the nature of modern Chinese society. Lenin put forward the theory of colony and semi-colony according to the characteristics of imperialism.<sup>44</sup> As early as 1912 and 1919, Lenin mentioned in his articles that China was a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country. But Lenin talked of the two “semis” in the light of the transitional society, making no further argument. It was accepted in China after the founding of the Communist Party of China.<sup>45</sup> In July 1922, the word “semi-colony” began to appear in the “Resolutions on ‘the International Imperialism and China and the Communist Party of China’” and “Resolutions on the Parliamentary Action” adopted at the Second National Congress of the Communist Party of China. In September of the same year, Cai Hesen clearly used the concepts of “semi-colony” and “semi-feudalism” in his accounting for the nature of Chinese society in his articles such as “Unification, debt borrowing and Kuomintang” and “Unification by force and inter-provincial autonomy: warlord dictatorship and warlord separatism.” Around this period of time, Chen Duxiu, Cai Hesen, Deng Zhongxia, Xiao Chunü, Li Dazhao, Luo Yinong and others all clearly recognized China as a semi-colonial society. In 1926, Cai Hesen mentioned “semi-colonial and semi-feudal China” and “semi-feudal and semi-colonial country” in his “The development of the history of the Communist Party of China (an outline),” which is the earliest

complete expression that has so far been found to have combined the two “semi’s” concepts. It was in February of 1929 that the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China formally put forward the complete concept of semi-colony and semi-feudalism in its own document as the “No. 28 Notice of the Central Committee: The strategies of the peasant movement,” which was issued after the Sixth National Congress of the Communist Party of China.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, there was a big debate on the nature of Chinese society. The School of New Thoughts, representing theorists under the guidance of Marxism and Leninism, has engaged itself in a long-term theoretical struggle against the Power School of Chinese Trotskyists and the New Life School of Kuomintang scholars, having seriously examined and theorized about the nature of Chinese society and revolution. From 1938 to 1940, Mao Zedong, having successively published guiding works such as “The War and strategic issues,” “The Chinese revolution and the Communist Party of China,” and “On the New Democracy,” has provided a systematic, scientific and correct account for the nature of Chinese society. He has pointed out that “since the Opium Wars of 1840, China has gradually become a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society,”

when imperialist powers invaded China, on the one hand, this led to the disintegration of China’s feudal society and the occurrence of capitalist factors, transforming a feudal society into a semi-feudal society; on the other hand, they were ruling China cruelly, transforming an independent China into a semi-colonial and colonial China.<sup>47</sup>

The characteristics of China are: it is not an independent democratic country, but a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country; there is no democratic system with in, but it is oppressed by the feudal system; there is no national independence on the outside, but it is oppressed by imperialism.<sup>48</sup>

This is the most classical expression of the social nature of modern China. Mao Zedong stressed more than once that only by recognizing the nature of Chinese society can we recognize the object, the task, the driving force, and the nature of the Chinese revolution, as well as its future and transformation. In a word, only by recognizing the social nature of China can the basic law of the development of modern Chinese history be solved. Since then, the theoretical workers of the Communist Party of China, as well as the historiographers willing to accept the guidance of Marxism under the promotion of the success of the Chinese revolution, have all agreed that modern China is a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society in terms of its social nature.<sup>49</sup>

The view above was not without questioning and challenging. It was held by some that imperialism “destroyed China’s national sovereignty and territorial integrity, but did not and could not change China’s social nature.” Therefore, China had still been a feudal society before the Revolution of 1911, and thereafter, China became a semi-feudal or semi-capitalist society (some also held that it was a capitalist society). Before and after the Revolution

of 1911, China was not a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society in any case. Therefore, it seemed necessary to re-examine whether the term “semi-colonial and semi-feudal society” is an appropriate one. There were also people who directly questioned and refuted the theory of “two semis’.” They thought that the theory of “two semi’s” was a “mistake” and “thus delayed the completion of our historical task of anti-feudalism.”<sup>50</sup> A researcher, when asked by a reporter in an interview “Do you mean that we should deny the theoretical generalization of semi-colonial and semi-feudal society and put forward a new generalization to break through the existing framework of modern history and explore a new framework?” answered “obviously, there is such an intention. To re-examine the formulation of ‘semi-colonial and semi-feudal’ is to find a theoretical foundation for designing a new framework of modern history.”<sup>51</sup> Such being the case, the issue has been raised to the point of severe acuteness.

The skeptics said that they meant to “find the theoretical foundation for designing a new framework of modern history.” But what is it that they want to design? Have they found the theoretical foundation to support it? Nothing has come out. However, we have become confused as in what way the theory of “semi-colonial and semi-feudal” has “delayed” the completion of the historical task of anti-feudalism. It has been pointed out before that in the revolution, with a clear understanding of the nature of Chinese society, we can also appreciate the task and object of the Chinese revolution. It is to fight against imperialism and feudalism, which is determined by the nature of semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. Does the frequently-referred-to “overthrowing the three mountains” not mean having completed the revolutionary task of anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism? We would like to ask that if we abandon the theoretical formulation of the “semi-colonial and semi-feudalism,” can we correctly adhere to the view of anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism in the study of modern Chinese history?

In the discussion of semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, one difference deserves attention. The semi-colonial and semi-feudal society as a social form and a good fit for modern Chinese society is a transitional social form, and appropriately reflects the political, economic and cultural conditions of modern Chinese society. As a social form, it is inseparable. Another view is that semi-colonial and semi-feudal are not complementary but opposite to each other, as the former is formulated in terms of the national status and latter in terms of semi-capitalism. This difference is very big. In the light of such views any party of difference may come to a distinct conclusion about modern Chinese history.

Different approaches can be adopted in analysis of the issue of the semi-colony and semi-feudalism in modern China from the perspective of either theoretical formulation or historical practice. Yet any theoretical analysis must only be based on historical practice. Any analysis removed from historical practice is but a pedantic view and thus unreliable. What is the historical practice of the new democratic revolution in modern China? It is based

precisely on the correct understanding and analysis of the nature of China's society that the strategies and tactics of the new democratic revolution are formulated, and that its revolutionary object, force and future are clearly defined. The founding of the People's Republic of China and the choice of the socialist road are all results of this historical practice. If removed from this historical practice, how can all those conjectured theories be consistent with historical practice? Historical research is an exploration based on historical facts. Without historical facts, it is impossible to achieve anything except by speculation.

Since the 1950s, there have been many debates on revolutions and reforms in modern Chinese history. The debate in the 1980s mainly touched upon how to evaluate the reformists or reformism correctly. The debate at that time was generally positive about the roles of the revolutions. The question was how to evaluate the historical role of reformists, which mainly involved the evaluation of the Reform Movement of 1898 and the roles of the constitutionalist movement, the constitutionalists, the Council and the Consultative Bureau in the late Qing Dynasty. In the early stage, the evaluation of reformists was relatively negative. But since the 1980s, the evaluation of reformists has become increasingly simple and truth-seeking. I talked about the issue in the first volume of the *General History of Modern China*.

Looking back on history, we can see that reforms and revolutions are different choices of the modern Chinese in their endeavors to transform China. Although their historical destinies in modern China are different, their progressive roles in promoting modern Chinese history shall not be obliterated.

Of course, this does not mean that reforms and revolutions should be treated as equal. One view tends to see the revolution and reform as the two wheels to drive modern Chinese history. Such a view needs to be placed under examination. What are the two wheels? Two wheels rolling forward at the same time drive the cart forward. Is it true that the revolution and reform are such two wheels promoting modern Chinese history at the same time? We need to make a specific analysis based on facts and theories.

What is the relationship between revolution and reform? In terms of the progress of social history, both revolution and reform are the driving force for its advancement. While reform is normal, revolution is abnormal. Every country, or every era, is always in a state of reformation. Otherwise, society would stagnate and be unable to move forward. So reform often exists. But it is not the case for social revolution, which does not always exist, as a society could not always be in the state of revolution. If so, the society would be sick.

It is true that revolution is not the only driving force for the advancement of social history. Revolution takes place under certain conditions, and it is not made to happen at will. Social reform, in contrast, is a common form of social development. When the class contradiction is not intensified, the solution to the conflict of social class interests is often obtained through class compromise and reconciliation, whereas the solution to the conflict of social political interests is often obtained through various social reforms. While class

reconciliations and social reforms can also promote social development, they only operate in the same social system. If the old system is to be overthrown and a new system established, class reconciliation and social reforms are of no avail, and can only give way to revolutionary means. Only by revolution can social development change qualitatively. Therefore, revolution is the fundamental driving force of social development, if it is not the only one. It is obviously an anti-historicist attitude to deny revolution and to sing the praise of social reform without principle.

Since revolution is the fundamental driving force of social development, it can promote the historical development in qualitative changes, whereas reform is not aimed at overthrowing a social system. It is carried out within the scope permitted by the social system. In today's words, it is carried out within the system. Therefore, a real revolutionist does not refuse to reform, but a reformist often refuses revolution. It is also often the case that revolution may break out when a society cannot continue its reform, or when the society does not allow any reform. From this point of view, reform prepares conditions and accumulates energy for revolution. In this case, the people who carry out reform and the people who carry out revolution are often not in the same group.<sup>52</sup>

These words, in general, sum up the common knowledge having thus been acquired in many debates. In today's view, it seems fair to draw such a conclusion.

However, in the 1990s, there was once a view of "farewell to revolution." Such a theory had existed in Western society for a long time before it began to appear in China in the mid-1990s. It seems that Li Zehou was the first advocate. In 1994, Li Zehou said in a conversation:

the Revolution of 1911 was a mess, a result of radicalism. ... Following the Revolution of 1911, revolutions arose one after another: the Second Revolution (1913), the Movement to Protect the Nation and Constitution (1917–1922), the Great Revolution (1924–1927), and finally the revolution of 1949. After that, Mao Zedong would still continue to carry out revolution ... nowadays we should reverse this concept clearly: "revolution" is not necessarily a good thing in China.<sup>53</sup>

In 1995, Li Zehou and Liu Zaifu published a book entitled *Farewell to Revolution* in Hong Kong China when they were "looking back at China in the twentieth century." The book denies almost all the revolutions in history, and certainly all the revolutions in modern China. They declared that reform is better than revolution. This little book is a record of conversations. It presents no theoretical basis or argument, but reflects the speakers' aversion to revolution. This is not a misunderstanding of theory or academic direction, but a wrong political standing.

I have once pointed out in a comment: what is behind "farewell to revolution"? To oppose the French Revolution is to oppose the October Revolution;

to oppose the Revolution of 1911 is to oppose the New Democratic Revolution of the Communist Party of China. Such is their purpose in their attempt to “reflect on the whole modern history of China.” They wanted to make some changes in their anti-Communist and anti-socialist strategies, for which they tried to “give up the radical social/political critical discourse and to adopt the cultural conservative discourse,” “a metaphorization of some ideological intention.” This is not clear enough. In the foreword of *Farewell to Revolution* the purpose of the statement is fully stated: “this set of thoughts is exactly the most effective way and form to deconstruct the revolutionary theory and the deeply rooted orthodox ideology of this century.” So it is. The revolutionary history of modern China would thus be denied, the revolutionary theories of the twentieth century deconstructed, the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal consequently unjustified, and the founding of the People’s Republic of China would lose its rationality. In this way, would socialism with Chinese characteristics and the socialist market economy not lose all their validity?<sup>54</sup>

The view in *Farewell to Revolution* is a manifestation of historical nihilism, which has a wide influence in the field of ideology and culture, and thus warrants our caution.

It needs to be pointed out here that historical research is supposed to seek truth from historical facts, that is, to make objective observations on existing facts, events, people and their behavior in history, in an attempt to propose understanding and specify historical reference for future generations. Revolutions and reforms are events that took place in history. The task of historians is to study the origin and development of revolutions and reforms, and to evaluate their impact on the historical development of the present time and later generations.

## **2.5 The late Qing history and its relationship with modern Chinese history and some understanding of the “New Qing History”**

The study of the late Qing Dynasty is not only a basic component of the historical study of the Qing Dynasty, but also a basic component of modern Chinese history study. There is no doubt about it today. But such a viewpoint was not made clear until Jiang Tao published his study of the political history of the late Qing Dynasty in 1999 (the fifth issue of *Modern History Study*). When people talked about the history of the Qing Dynasty, they actually did not include the 20 years after Daoguang’s reign. When people talked about the modern history of China, they often referred to the history of China after 1840. It seems that the history of the late Qing Dynasty is not within the scope of the study of Qing history. When the national project of the Qing history compilation was about to start, I attended a symposium. A renowned scholar of Qing history presented a reference list of Qing history works, which were all before Jiaqing’s reign (1796–1820). I asked whether the period of time after that should be included in Qing history, to which the historian gave no answer.

At that time, a scholar who is now undertaking an important task in the compilation of Qing history said that he was not suitable for the post in the Qing history project. The basic reason was that his major was in modern Chinese history. It can be seen that at that time, there was a barrier between modern Chinese history and Qing history, and there was a boundary as well in the minds of researchers.

From the perspective of disciplinary division, there is a certain distinction between the history of Qing Dynasty and modern Chinese history. Such a distinction manifests itself mainly since 1949, when modern Chinese history has been formed as an independent discipline, when the Research Institute of Modern History in the newly established Chinese Academy of Sciences was first set up, and when modern Chinese history is generally taught in various universities as an independent course. In the universities, history before Jiaqing's reign is taught as ancient Chinese history, and history after Daoguang's reign is taught as modern Chinese history. The distinction between late Qing Dynasty history and modern Chinese history is naturally formed among scholars. No one particularly has yet discussed the distinction between late Qing Dynasty history and modern Chinese history, and no administrative department has ever expressed views on it. This is a natural course of discipline growth.

The research object of modern Chinese history has experienced a process of evolution. For a long time, most scholars regarded Chinese history from 1840 to 1919 as modern Chinese history. In the past 20 years, most scholars regarded Chinese history from 1840 to 1949 as the modern history of China. No matter how the research object of modern Chinese history evolves, the late Qing history from the Opium Wars to the overthrow of the Qing emperor is included in the scope of modern Chinese history. In other words, the history of the late Qing Dynasty belongs to the modern history of China.

Observing the history of the late Qing Dynasty from the perspective of modern Chinese history, from the beginning of the Opium Wars in 1840 China witnessed a turbulent change that had not been seen for thousands of years, namely the invasion by Western forces, the eastward spread of Western thought, the decline of Confucianism, the change in social nature, the unsettling of thought among all personages from the grassroots to high-ranking officials, and a society seriously disturbed. Along with foreign aggression, there were incessant foreign and domestic wars. From the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and Westernization Movement, through the Reform Movement of 1898, the Boxer Movement, to the revolution advocated and promoted by the Chinese T'ung-meng Hui (China Alliance Committee), and to the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China, Chinese society had changed from "falling" to "rising." When Western machines and capitalist production technologies were transplanted to China, production modes in China began to change, and new class forces and new knowledge groups, such as the working class, the bourgeoisie, and the new intellectual groups different from those conceived by traditional scholars

emerged gradually in China from the Reform Movement of 1898. Meanwhile all kinds of social groups were in full swing for China's reform and revolution. These new social forces were different from the traditional ones. This is also an important sign of the transformation of Chinese society from "falling" to "rising."

If we look at late Qing history from the perspective of Qing history, the picture may be slightly different. From the beginning of the Opium Wars in the twentieth year of the Daoguang reign, China witnessed turbulent change which has been described above. High-ranking officials and dignitaries having lost in their luxurious life and self-enjoyment, concentrated only on how to retain the imperial court and how to keep their official positions. They often turned a blind eye to the voice of the people to reform the government, but instead adopted a policy of repression for peasant uprisings or revolutionary actions. From the perspective of the Qing government, Chinese society was in a state of "falling." High above in the court there was no serious reflection, no countermeasures, no enterprise, no sense of crisis, and opportunities for development were missed so many times.

The so-called development opportunity has three meanings. First, it had to develop. Second, there must be international comparison. Third, the opportunities must be seized. The so-called seizure of opportunity refers to the conscious understanding and practice of the decision-makers. There was no lack of development opportunities for late Qing society. Owing to the fact that the decision-makers at that time failed to understand the necessity of developing themselves rapidly to catch up with the advanced countries in the world, and even failed to grasp the opportunity when it came, the late Qing Dynasty was to suffer a series of tragedies and episodes of being beaten due to its backwardness. This is a painful lesson from history.

Although the Opium Wars brought a blow to China, the rulers did not understand the seriousness of the situation. The imperial court was still ignorant of world affairs. Even after the Nanjing Treaty was signed, Emperor Daoguang still had no idea of where and how far Britain was. Although Lin Zexu and Wei Yuan acquired a correct understanding of "learning from the advantages of foreigners to counteract them," and they also wrote the book *Records and Maps of the World States* which introduced the history and geography of foreign countries, the book caused a sensation in Japan but received no reaction in China. It was not until the peasant uprising of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom that the Taiping army became invincible with its forces active in most of China. Meanwhile Britain and France started the second Opium War and attacked Beijing city. When Emperor Xianfeng had to flee to Rehe with the excuse of "hunting in the north," the Qing government began to feel the "strong ships and powerful armaments" of foreign countries. However, the highest ruling personages still thought that these were simply "troubles of limbs," and what really mattered as "troubles closest to heart" was the peasant uprising. After the peasant uprising of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was completely suppressed, there followed more than 20 years of

relative peace in China. With the upper ruling class being more aware of the development gap between China and foreign countries, and the regime being relatively stable, new possibilities of development could have arisen had the imperial government grasped the opportunity of self-development. It was at this time that Japan laid the foundation for the development of capitalism through the Meiji Restoration. Some of the high-ranking officials in China, such as Yi Xin, the Minister of Military Affairs, Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang, all governors, initiated the new deal of Westernization, engaging in building ships and cannons and developing military industries, which were followed by a few non-military ones both state and privately owned under governmental supervision. These people tried to make some changes only in terms of instrument, but not in terms of ideology and social system to seek the prosperity of the people and the country. Even such partial changes failed to have reached the consensus of the ruling class as a whole. They were confronted with opposition from many diehards, opposing groups, and many others from the highest to the lowest in the whole country. The Dowager Empress Cixi, the supreme ruler, was in the middle, and had no definite opinion. This was contrary to what happened to the Japanese ruling class after the Meiji Restoration. A chance to develop was thus missed. In the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, the whole Beiyang navy was annihilated, together with the shattering of the dream of seeking wealth and strength embraced by the leaders of Westernization.

The second opportunity for development in the late Qing era came during the Reform Movement of 1898. The intellectuals were stimulated and enlightened by the national crisis after the Sino-Japanese War before their entry into official careers. By delivering lectures and running newspapers, organizing meetings and forming associations, they gathered strength, and at the same time, gave publicity to and indoctrinated the masses with new knowledge, hoping to change the government and ideology and develop capitalism in the country from bottom to top and then from top to bottom. Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao were representatives of these people. It happened that the young Emperor Guangxu wanted to consolidate his position of being in charge of the government and get rid of the dowager empress together with those old and important officials, which is why he joined up with Kang and Liang in launching the Reform Movement of 1898. However, the reform lasted only 100 days. Cixi and her group launched a palace coup, imprisoned Guangxu and executed the Six Gentlemen of 1898, having aborted the prospect of reform and made China once again lose the opportunity of development. The emperor still could not control the real power of the court. Those scholars who were in exile called on each other in the name of protecting the emperor, but came to no avail.

On the tenth day of the twelfth month of Chinese calendar in the twenty-sixth year of Guangxu's reign (1900), the Qing government issued an edict of reform in the name of Guangxu emperor, in which it was specially pointed out that

Her Majesty's instruction thought that taking the advantages of foreign countries could make up for the shortcomings of China, and punishing the losses of the past could serve as a guide for the future. Since the years of Dingchou and Wuyin (1877–1878), false debates have prevailed and led to preposterous division of old and new. The calamity brought about by Kang the insubordinate is even worse than that of the Boxers. Now that they fled overseas, they still attempted to seduce people on rebellion. Moreover, they plotted to sow discord in the royal court by spreading the evil words of protecting the emperor and Chinese races. The people need to know that Kang's talk about the new law is but chaotic, not reform in any sense. ... In fact, the Dowager Empress's intention is to eliminate treason while allowing for renovation.<sup>55</sup>

That is to say, Dowager Empress Cixi was not opposed to taking the advantages of foreign countries to make up for the shortcomings of China. After having cut off the "rebellion" of Kang and Liang, she did agree to reform and renovation. This is Dowager Empress Cixi's self-defense in the new situation. This shows that she was not against political reform, but reluctant to have Emperor Guangxu, Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao presiding over the reform. She would carry out the reform according to her own will and grab it in her own hand. What was essentially meant was to carry out reform on the premise of maintaining imperial power.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, China came across its third development opportunity. A complex situation arose about who would take the opportunity. The rulers at court and the revolutionaries and constitutionalists out of office all wanted to seize this opportunity, all having performed their own different tragicomedies. The invasion of China by the allied forces of the eight powers left a profound lesson for the rulers of the Qing Dynasty. They realized that it was difficult to maintain their rule in the old way and were determined to implement the new deal. From 1901 to 1911, the Qing government did have considerable action in implementing the new deal. Very little opposition to the implementation of the new deal was seen from the ministers at court, and almost no faction against the reform existed. This is fundamentally different from the two previous new deals. The Qing government not only sent five ministers to Eastern and Western countries to investigate politics (this was an indicator of admitting that its own politics was inferior to that of others), but also made great strides in the reform of politics, military affairs, the economy, education and the legal system, having issued a large number of policies, decrees, rules and regulations. Some measures had shaken the root of the Qing Dynasty's rule, such as announcing the preparation of a constitution, setting up an advisory council in the central government and a consultative bureau in each province, expanding the expression of public opinions, and making some innovations to the official system; encouraging the capitalists to invest in industrial and commercial enterprises, encouraging the development of capitalists, promoting the current organization of capitalists due to

general development of the chambers of commerce, abolishing the imperial examination in education, establishing a new school system by founding primary and secondary schools to the formation of a new talent training mechanism, and conducting legal system reform in which the traditional mix of politics with law, and confusion of legislation with justice were overwhelmed. All these contrasted to a great extent with the previous two new deals. Had such a new deal been implemented 40 years earlier, China's development path might have been different, and a Chinese style Meiji Restoration would not have been impossible. However, the new deal was carried out under the historical conditions in which new class forces were rising in China. Being more conscious of the widening gap between China and foreign countries in their development, the new intellectual group demanded greater reform. However, the supreme ruler had a firm will to defend the imperial power, and would not allow its Grand Council, a most powerful governing body that embodied imperial power, to be affected by any reform, having delayed for too long a time the preparation of the constitution. At the same time, the royal nobles and their relations stepped up their control of political power, especially the newly trained army, which offended the constitutionalists who were keen on constitutional monarchy, and aggravated the conflict between the Manchu and the Han people. With the Qing government being totally opposed to the revolutionaries, and the reform being aimed at consolidating imperial power and preventing revolution, it was finally regarded as a failure under the joint attack of the revolutionaries and the constitutionalists, having made the Qing government lose its last chance of development through reform. But this time, the loss of a development opportunity was fatal to the Qing Dynasty. Under the joint attack of revolutionaries and constitutionalists, it lost the legitimacy of its rule and was finally forced to collapse.

Observed from the perspective of the history of the Qing Dynasty, the late Qing period is a history of "falling," a history of decline.

On the whole, there are both distinctions and connections between the late Qing period and modern Chinese history. In terms of their distinction, the late Qing period is only a part rather than the whole of modern Chinese history. Their connection is very clear and basic. Observed either from the history of the Qing Dynasty or from the modern Chinese history, the late Qing is the same historical period and the basic research object. From this point of view, we too should be absolute about the distinction.

American scholars of the Qing Dynasty put forward the idea of a "new history of the Qing Dynasty," which is said have aroused profound debate in American academia. In recent years, the so-called "New Qing History" school has also attracted attention and reviews in China. In my knowledge Chinese scholars are quite skeptical or even not in favor of the so-called "New Qing History."

I have read no more than a few comments on and introductions to the works of the "New Qing History." In the study of the "New Qing History," it advocates the study of the Manchu as the dominant nationality in China by

using Manchu files and other nationalities' writings, while emphasizing the contribution of the Manchu in the establishment of Qing Dynasty China, and the study of the "Manchu character" of Qing Dynasty rulers. Though such advocates are positive to some extent for the study of Qing history, their significance should not be overestimated, rather, the basic academic tendency of the "New Qing History" is questionable. Some review comments that they are "extraordinary" and "challenging" are quite unrealistic. The major problem with the "New Qing History" lies in its view that the Manchurian Empire was not equal to China, and that China was only a part of the Manchurian Empire. Such a statement is a castle in the air that is supported by no historical evidence. It is a made-up illusion and a reflection of the Western world's outlook on the study of Chinese history. It is not praiseworthy. The comments of He Bingdi, a Chinese American historian, are worthy of attention. Chinese scholars Liu Xiaomeng and Huang Xingtao also gave their academic comments successively.<sup>56</sup> Liu Fengyun and Liu Wenpeng edited *National Identity of the Qing Dynasty: Research and Contending on the "New Qing History,"* a collection of debates of American scholars on the "New Qing History" and the responses of Chinese scholars.<sup>57</sup> And in 2009 the Institute of Qing History of Renmin University in China held an international seminar on the "New Qing History." The proceedings of the conference were entitled *Political and National Identity of the Qing Dynasty*, which was a collection of many scholars' opinions.<sup>58</sup>

Some scholars began to apply the view of "New Qing History" to the study of the Qing history. A review article on the *Translation and Collation of the Manchu-Language Archives in Qianlong's Reign* (referred to as the *Manchu-Language Archives* hereinafter) analyzed and introduced the historical value of the book. It is doubtful whether the research has reached expectations as the author intended to introduce the book with the viewpoint and method of "New Qing History." According to the author, the *Manchu-Language Archives* is a collection of "important files of records and copies of the emperor's edicts on letters at the Grand Council of the Qing, for which there are no replica copies in Chinese, so their value is beyond any doubt." The author believes that "the New Qing History is undoubtedly a great challenge, which needs to be verified and dealt with after an in-depth study of Qing history, especially Manchu archives."<sup>59</sup> The article suggests that the Manchu letters of the Qianlong Reign reflect the political, military, national, diplomatic and many other historical facts of the northwest frontiers and the northeast, especially the ethnic affairs of the frontiers, as well as the relations between the frontier areas and foreign countries. In the absence of their corresponding Chinese copies, they are of great significance to the study of the historical materials of the Qing Dynasty. The author also points out, citing other researchers of "New Qing History," that "Manchu archives play an important role in reconstructing more complete pictures of politics, society, economy and culture on different levels in the Qing Dynasty." Such being indeed the view of the so-called "New Qing History" school, it is equivalent to saying nothing.

It is clear that no matter in China or in the United States, the study of Qing history needs to pay attention to Manchu archives, which has never been doubted. Have the scholars of the Qing Dynasty ever doubted this? Never. It has always been the aim of the Qing history researchers to explore Manchu archives and work on their arrangement, editing and translation.<sup>60</sup>

According to the viewpoint of “New Qing History” quoted in the *Manchu-Language Archives*, “the New Qing History” thinks that Manchu people had never lost the idea that they were a special group in Qing society. The reason why they could maintain minority rule is mainly because they were able to take advantage of the Chinese political tradition on the one hand and maintain their unique identity on the other. But to the historians of Qing history, there is nothing new in such a view. The Manchu provided the rulers throughout the Qing Dynasty, and during the period there was no lack of contradictions between Manchu and Han people in Chinese society. Even till 1909, when the three-year-old Xuantong succeeded to the throne, his father, Zaifeng, as the Regent still rejected the Han ministers. The so-called responsible cabinet established in May 1911 was actually the “Imperial Cabinet” or the “Imperial Noble Cabinet” which excluded the Han ministers. This is a strong indicator of the Manchu people maintaining their unique identity while ruling. Of course, it is also the what had accelerated the collapse of the Manchu Dynasty.

In the section title “The research value of the New Qing History in the Manchu-Language Archives of the Qianlong Reign,” the author points out several facts: first, the letters in the archives did not use the words *Zhongguo* or *Zhonghua* (China, Chinese), but instead used “the Great Qing Empire.” The author believes that “referring itself to the ‘Great Qing Empire’ does not mean that it does not represent China, which is similar to other self-referring expressions such as the ‘Great Ming’ in place of China.” It should be said that the “Great Qing” is just like the “Great Tang,” the “Great Song,” the “Great Yuan” and “Great Ming,” all having inherited the naming tradition after the change of dynasties in China. Second, “in the external account in the Manchu-Language Archives, the word ‘*Tianchao*’ (the Heavenly Kingdom) occurs in large numbers.” The author points out that

since the word *Tianchao* is a Chinese word, and traditionally represents China, it continues to retain its usage and meaning of China. It is hard for us to come to the conclusion that *Tianchao* here refers to the “Great Qing” instead of China.

The above two points serve to demonstrate the “China identity” of the Manchu rulers. And at this crucial point, we cannot see any unique Manchu characteristics deviating from such an identity. According to Huang Xingtao’s research, the inscription contained in Volume 143 of the *True Record of the Kangxi Emperor of the Qing Dynasty* shows that in Kangxi’s Reign the word the “Great Qing” had been used in exactly the same sense as in China. There

is no doubt that “Manchuria” became a sign of ethnic identity of the Manchu people after they entered the Shanhai Pass, and it is fundamentally different from its self-referring *Zhongguo* (China) as the national identity.<sup>61</sup>

While it is acknowledged in *The Manchu-Language Archives* that Manchu was the national language of the Qing Dynasty, and Manchu and Mongolian officials who were responsible for the Eight Banners affairs and the ethnic minorities in the border areas generally wrote official documents in Manchu, and they were not allowed to use Chinese without permission, and that Manchu was also used in official documents concerning imperial edicts, decrees, letters and the writings of various departments, it has been indicated that “the Sinicization of Manchu is also an obvious fact.” The conclusion of the section refutes the viewpoint of “New Qing History” in every aspect. It is therefore quite revealing that the view of “New Qing History” is inadequately justified.

The “New Qing History” is a proposition put forward by some young scholars of Qing history in the United States, and it has also aroused controversies in the United States. In my opinion, “New Qing History” is nothing new as it seems to suggest. It is not necessarily accurate to say that “its emergence has posed a challenge to the study of Qing history to some extent.”<sup>62</sup> The researchers of “New Qing History” only emphasized the history of the early Qing Dynasty, but failed to observe the history of the late Qing. Looking at the history of the Qing Dynasty, the defects of “New Qing History” are evident. The “New Qing History” paid close attention to the study of the development of the border areas in the early Qing Dynasty, and it is partially justified to transfer the study of Qing history from the Central Plains to the border areas. But the border areas in the late Qing Dynasty were the very object of the invasion of capitalist powers. How would this be accounted for in the “New Qing History”? If the “New Qing History” is referred to as a school, it should have a consistent interpretation system for all Qing history. In fact, such a system can never be found. From an objective academic standpoint, it is not necessary to overemphasize either Han chauvinism or Manchu chauvinism in the study of Qing history. In opposition to Han chauvinism, it is not necessary to deny the Sinicization of Manchu, which is a slow and long-term process. The so-called Sinicization mainly refers to the overall absorption and promotion of Han culture by the Manchu ruling class, and the gradual disappearance of Manchu as a language and in texts from political and daily life. Such an emphasis does not mean that “the Manchu characteristics” of the Manchu ruling class have disappeared. As the ruling class of the Qing Dynasty, the Manchu people have always been wary of the Han people and restricted them politically. The establishment of a “Royal Cabinet” is an obvious sign. Meanwhile, it is not necessary to avoid the Sinicization of the Manchu when concentrating on the Manchu nationality. In the long-term historical development, the Han people have maintained a significantly higher level of economic and cultural development than the ethnic minorities. And in the development of Chinese history, there have been conflicts, collisions

and integration of various ethnic groups for thousands of years. In such a process, the Han people have certainly learned and absorbed many cultural components from other ethnic groups. But on the whole, the highly developed Han culture has become the main target for other ethnic groups to learn and absorb. It is just like capitalism having reached its maturity. It is the economic culture that is obviously higher than that of pre-capitalism. Under the promotion of gunboat policy, the economic culture of capitalism has influenced all nations in the world. The Han economic culture, as highly developed as it is claimed, is also affected, and the Manchu culture is no exception.

At the International Symposium on “Politics and National Identity during the Qing Dynasty” held by the Institute of Qing History of Renmin University in China in 2009, Mark C. Elliott, a professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilization at Harvard University and a representative scholar of the school of the New Qing History, said that the “New Qing History” is hardly a school, but a vision or trend of thought. His personal research only emphasizes that Manchu people’s success was not only due to Sinicization, but also because of their maintaining strong Manchu characteristics. Talking about the debate between He Bingdi and Luo Youzhi more than ten years ago, he was much convinced by the former’s point of view. In his view, Qing history is indeed a part of Chinese history, and the Qing Dynasty and China are inseparable.<sup>63</sup> This impromptu speech almost subverted the basic idea of the “New Qing History” school, and made the research return to the right track of Qing history study.

It may be people’s instinct in the pursuit of knowledge to go after the new at the expense of the old. However, analysis and judgment need to be made on anything new. Some studies are just new wine in old bottles. Some have poison in their “newness,” and some are even real innovations. In the study of political history of the late Qing Dynasty, we need to innovate and have new research perspectives and new theories and methods. Yet it is not genuinely advisable to seek everything that is claimed as new theory in foreign countries while discarding all the old. The study of political history of the late Qing Dynasty should not follow the trend, nor be blinded by the so-called “New Qing History.” Chinese scholars should have academic confidence.

## Notes

- 1 Hu Sheng, The periodization problem of Modern Chinese history, in *Collected Discussions on the Periodization Problem of Modern Chinese History*. The SDX Joint Publishing Company, 1957, p.2. Here, Hu Sheng refers to Li Taifen’s *A New Century History of China*, 1924; Meng Shijie’s *The Recent History of China*, 1926.
- 2 Ibid. Hu Sheng here refers to Hua Gang’s *History of China’s National Liberation Movement (Revised Edition)*, 1951, and Fan Wenlan’s *Modern History of China (Vol.I)*, 1947, both attempting to account for history in the light of Marxist class analysis.
- 3 Ibid, p.4.

- 4 Ibid., p.7.
- 5 Sun Shouren, Discussion on the periodization of modern Chinese history, in *Collected Discussions on the Periodization Problem of Modern Chinese History*, p. 15.
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- 8 Fan Wenlan, The periodization of modern Chinese history, in *Collected Discussions on the Periodization Problem of Modern Chinese History*, p.98.
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- 13 The research on the bourgeoisie in modern China in the field of domestic historiography, *Historical Research*, 1983 (4). According to the citation notes in the article, this text segment was written by Li Shiyue and Hu bin in their article "On the Westernization Movement," which was published in the *People's Daily* on March 12, 1981. The passage quoted in the above materials is different from the original text, but it does not violate the author's original meaning, nor can it be regarded as a summary of the author's original meaning.
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- 25 Hu Sheng, On the periodization of modern Chinese history, in *Collected Discussions on the Periodization Problem of Modern Chinese History*, pp.8–9.
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