

China Perspectives

CONTEMPORARY STUDIES ON MODERN CHINESE HISTORY III

Edited by
Zeng Yeying



Contemporary Studies on Modern Chinese History III

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 three-volume set exhibits major achievements in the study of modern Chinese history and shows how the role of history has been in debate, transformation, and re-evaluation throughout this tortuous yet prosperous period. This volume investigates the critical movements, such as the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement and the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese aggression, that contribute to the establishment of the People's Republic of China. In addition, it includes valuable summaries of various perspectives in modern Chinese history studies, such as the translation of overseas studies, and pioneering topics that historians have examined between 2009 and 2019.

This book will benefit scholars and students of Chinese history, especially those who are interested in modern Chinese history.

Zeng Yeying is a researcher, professor and doctoral tutor at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. His professional research focuses on the history of the Republic of China. His representative works include *The History of the Republic of China, Vol. 1* (2nd edition).

China Perspectives

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Contemporary Studies on Modern Chinese History III

Edited by Zeng Yeying

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 Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

 中国社会科学出版社
CHINA SOCIAL SCIENCES PRESS

This book is published with financial support from the Chinese Fund for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

First published 2021

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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English Version by permission of China Social Sciences Press.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 978-1-138-48551-8 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-351-04906-1 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman

by Newgen Publishing UK

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The English version of this book was sponsored as a national translation project by the Chinese Fund for the Humanities and Social Sciences (15WZS015) and was undertaken by Li Wenzhong in collaboration with China Social Sciences Press. The translation was jointly done by Li Wenzhong (Zhejiang Gongshang University), Wu Jinshan (Henan Normal University), and Liu Bing (Henan Polytechnic University). The translators would like to give their thanks to Professor Zeng Yeying for his discussion and suggestions, Dr. Xia Xia and Liu Jiaqi of China Social Sciences Press for their co-ordination and support.

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Preface

More than twenty 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 50th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and also to help the researchers of modern Chinese history to learn from the past practice with discrimination and precaution in the coming 21st century, I once discussed with Huang Chunsheng and Xu Xiuli, the deputy editors, and decided on a special issue (the 5th issue of the year) with the theme of *Research on the History of Modern China in the Past 50 Years*. Then we 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, history of women, history of youth movements, history of workers' movements, history of Sino-foreign relations, history of the Republic of China, and history of the Communist Party of China, for which we invited a group of prominent historians on the mainland to write introductory articles for both retrospect and prospect, with a view to promoting healthy development of Chinese modern history studies. Subsequently, we received positive responses and support from many notable scholars. But it turned out the limited space made it impossible to accommodate all the contributions at one time. The original 5th issue had only 16 of them published. 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 abovementioned publications aroused widespread concern among historians, especially young students. Many readers wrote to the journal editorial department asking for mail orders, and almost all college history students had a copy, thus making the 5th 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 produced by Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House as an e-book for online reading by teachers and students of 100 “211 Project” universities, 400 universities of graduate programs, and another 1000 universities. In October and November 2008, during my visit to Taipei for historical materials, I was also informed by many of my friends in Taiwan that “the book also sells well here” and asked whether I was “interested in continuing to do it”. It seems that this book is 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* today, more than twenty years later.

This book is a revision with new additions of *Research on the History of Modern China in the Past 50 Years*. Except that I unified individual topics into chapters, the main changes lie in the fact that an “Overview” was added as an independent chapter and an introduction of research after 1999 or 2012 was added to each chapter while quite a lot of modifications and additions were done on previous reviews before 1999 in some chapters. The introduction of the research mainly adheres to the following principles: first, due to the limited space of this book, while it is not possible to introduce everything in detail, taken into account are only major events, important people, and the research that was well focused, adequately dealt with, well justified, and properly delivered. Second, an introduction has to be as impartial as it can be with regard to the representative viewpoints. For controversial issues, different views have to be given an equal consideration without being biased against or in favor of the viewpoints in terms of the author’s own likes and dislikes. Third, for some representative views that have a wider impact in academia and society, the main arguments and key factual evidence held by researchers are to be introduced appropriately. Fourth, practical review and prospects should be given as a summary of the past research. Of course, everything is easier said than done. Although it is done as well as possible, readers may still find it unsatisfactory, for which we feel obliged to ask for forgiveness.

Other aspects remain unchanged. Yet only 23 topics have been retained, as the chapter on “history of education” was removed with reluctance, because its original author Mr. Wang Bingzhao passed away, and other scholars found it inconvenient to revise it. Moreover, a few chapters such as “social history”, “history of Northern Warlords”, and “history of historiography” have changed or added 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 balance on the size of each chapter, necessary deletions, occasionally significant deletions, were made

to some specific chapters; some chapters were written while the majority of chapters were revised and modified in the light of historical facts. I, rather than the original authors, shall be independently responsible for such modifications. 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 some slight repetitions, they complement each other on account of their varied emphases and different ways of delivery. In addition, the sources of most of the works introduced in this book are carefully cited for further reference by readers. However, now that the important figures introduced in this book are limited in number and their discussions are relatively concentrated in several chapters, no index to personal names is presented 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 its permission to include the book in the large series of *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.

ZENG Yeying

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May 2019



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1 The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement

*XIA Chuntao*¹

The study of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom has lasted for nearly a century. On the eve of the 1911 Revolution, the revolutionaries evaluated the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom from the perspective of propagating the idea of promoting the Han nationality and opposing the Manchu, which differed greatly from the historical facts and cannot be considered as real academic research. After the founding of the Republic of China, Hong Xiuquan and others were honored as the pioneers of the national revolutionary movements, and the study of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom officially kicked off and entered the pioneering and initial stage. Its achievements were mainly reflected in the excavation of historical materials and the examination of historical events. Xiao Yishan, Guo Tingyi, Jian Youwen, Luo Ergang, and others were the first-generation scholars who had endured great hardships in the pioneering work and made outstanding achievements. However, it was not until the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 that the study of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom really entered a new stage of vigorous development.

1.1 Vigorous development

The 15 years from 1949 to 1964 could be considered as the vigorous development period of Taiping Heavenly Kingdom research. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, there appeared an important turn in the research on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in Mainland China. First, it was given unprecedented attention. Second, historical materialism became the guiding ideology for the research.

On January 11, 1951, *People's Daily* published an editorial written by Hu Sheng entitled "The 100th Anniversary of the Revolution of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom", which highly praised the glorious achievements of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in fighting against internal and external enemies and held that the revolution of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was the peak of the old-fashioned peasant war without the leadership of the progressive class. "The History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement" written by Fan Wenlan was a pioneering work on the study of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom from the perspective of historical materialism. This article was published in

early 1945, and after 1949 it was incorporated as Chapter 3 of the first volume of *The History of Modern China* which became a best seller and had been republished many times. So, this paper had been widely spread and produced a lasting influence. Fan Wenlan analyzed the subjective and objective causes of the defeat of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in detail and held that the subjective reason was the leadership's three kind of thoughts: sectarianism, conservatism, and hedonism, whose general root cause was the narrow, conservative, and selfish nature of the peasantry; its objective reason was that the domestic and foreign counter-revolutionary forces gradually merged and exceeded the revolutionary force. Moreover, at that time, China's progressive class was not yet born. Fan pointed out that completion of the three important works – *The Song of Jesus for Salvation (Yuan Dao Jiu Shi Ge)*, *The Teachings of Jesus for Awakening the World (Yuan Dao Xing Shi Xun)* and *The Teachings of Jesus for Rousing the People (Yuan Dao Jue Shi Xun)* – laid theoretical foundations for the Taiping Revolution. Fan fully affirmed the historical significance of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and argued that it changed the appearance of the old-fashioned peasant uprising, started China's old democratic revolution, and has been the first revolutionary movement in Chinese history proposing political, economic, ethnic, and gender equality.² In an article discussing the division of modern Chinese history in 1954, Hu Sheng proposed taking the performance of class struggles as the basis for the division of historical periods, and first expounded the concept of three revolutionary climaxes. Hu held that the revolutionary movement of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was the first climax of the revolutionary movements in modern Chinese history, which was characterized by the outbreak of conflicts between the landlord class and the peasant class.³

From the standpoint and view of Marxism, the above statements rejected some erroneous viewpoints concerning the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and clarified a number of major theoretical issues. Although some of these assertions were not accurate enough or were overfilled with words of excessive praise, they have established a correct theoretical orientation for the following research and attracted people's attention and interest in the study of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.

At the same time, academics began to compile and publish materials on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom on a massive scale. In 1952, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, one of the *Modern Chinese Historical Data Series* edited by the Association of Chinese Historians, was published by Shenzhou Guoguang Publishing House. From 1961 to 1963, under the auspices of Luo Ergang, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Historical Data Series* compiled by the Nanjing Taiping Heavenly Kingdom History Museum was published by the Zhonghua Book Company. During this period, Luo Ergang's series of works had also been published, among which *History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* was a general history written in the form of biography and was noted for its rich data and meticulous textual research. From 1955 to 1958, Luo Ergang's seven collections of papers: *Collection of Papers on the Correction of Mistakes in the*

History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, Examination of Historical Events of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, Collection of Papers on Identifying the Pseudographs in the Historical Data of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, The Calendar of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and Table of Comparison between the Calendar of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and the Traditional Chinese Calendar, Collection of Textual Criticism and Explanation of the Historical Data on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, Illustrations of the Historical Relics of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and Collection of Investigations into the Historical Sites of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom were successively published by SDX Joint Publishing Company. There are many pseudographs and mistakes in the historical materials on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the number of which is unique among all the monographic studies of modern Chinese history. In his study of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, Luo Ergang gave the most weight to distinguishing between truth and falsehood. While examining the pseudographs, he contrasted the content of the book with the systems and historical facts of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom to find out solid evidence of their falsehood and expose their tactics for forging. Luo Ergang applied this method to the textual research on the pseudograph entitled *Notes of the Jiangnan Chunmeng'an*. The above discussion has shown Luo Ergang's achievements in the textual research on the history of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, which has provided a key for following researchers and promoted the rise of new research forces.

During this time, historian circles also carried out discussions on many important issues concerning the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, focusing on the nature of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Revolution, which led to a wide and heated discussion.

Scholars' views could be summarized as three different ones. Scholars holding the first view were represented by Fan Wenlan and Hu Sheng who thought that the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Revolution was still a pure peasant war or peasant revolution. However, in 1957, Guo Yisheng published an article which proposed the second view asserting that *The Land Regulations of the Heavenly Kingdom* reflected the economic content contained in the revolution, which had made way for the development of capitalism, and thus was a completely peasants' anti-feudal land program of a bourgeois nature. Guo pointed out that, on the eve of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Revolution, the hired agricultural workers and hired laborers were already differentiated from the peasants by their non-feudal nature, and the burgeoning urban populace were the predecessor of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The hired agricultural workers, hired laborers, and the urban populace were the main and core forces of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, so the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Revolution had many features which were quite different from the previous pure peasant wars, such as the concept of equality put forward in its political program, and the thought of negating the feudal theocracy and autocracy, which were obviously of the bourgeois nature. It was thus evident that "the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Revolution is a peasant revolution of

the bourgeois nature”.⁴ Scholars holding the third view were represented by Zhang Kaiyuan who thought that the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Revolution was a pure peasant war with the character of bourgeois revolution. The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Revolution should be a bourgeois democratic revolution in terms of its social content, but in terms of its means of struggle, it should be a pure peasant war. Zhang also pointed out that the land policy and the policy of free trade of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the program of developing capitalism proposed in *New Treatise on Administration* and the political ideas of equality all subjectively reflected the “requirements of some capitalist development”.⁵

This debate had lasted for many years and become the most heated academic contention in the history of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom research. Through discussion, most scholars agreed with the opinion of “pure peasant war” and thought that the opinion of “peasant revolution of the bourgeois nature” over-estimated China’s social economy which had exceeded the objective stage of China’s social development at that time and exaggerated or even advanced the degree of the formation and development of Chinese capitalism; Capitalism could not develop from a society like a primitive commune which had no independent handicraft industry and commerce. Hence, even if *The Land Regulations of the Heavenly Kingdom* could be fully enforced, it would not promote the development of capitalism; suggestions of capitalist color in *New Treatise on Administration* were not the tradition of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, so they could not produce any practical effect. However, scholars still differed on whether or not the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom had the nature of bourgeois democratic revolution.

This discussion involved the origin, motive, program, task, goal etc. of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Revolution, which had fully reflected the great progress and achievements of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom research in the early days of the People’s of China in 1949, greatly enriched people’s understanding of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, and objectively deepened the research.

For example, in order to grasp the class relations and the nature of the political power in the areas ruled by the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, scholars have paid great attention to the study of the economic and political measures of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, and thus the land system and the grassroots political power in the rural areas have become the hotspot of research. With regard to the land system, scholars all agreed that *The Land Regulations of the Heavenly Kingdom* had not been put into practice, but they had different opinions on whether the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom had implemented the policy of “land to the tillers”. With the continuous discovery of new historical data and the deepening of the research, most scholars thought that the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom did not carry out this policy, but generally implemented the policy of “paying taxes as before”, which meant that the legality of land-owners’ possession of land was acknowledged; although because of tenant farmers’ spontaneous rent strikes and government’s limitations on the

amount of landowners' rents, peasants had gained some practical economic benefits, but the revolution had not changed the whole ownership system, and the old production relations had been preserved. The reasons for this situation were mainly summarized as follows: the ingrained private concept of the small farmers inevitably made the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom abandon the notions of public ownership and acknowledge the existing private ownership and land system; the work of re-compiling the registers of taxes and grains was difficult to carry out because of the war, so the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom had to maintain the previous tenancy system to solve problems like the army's wages. In the late period of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, a large number of landlords infiltrated into the local regimes and publicly protected the interests of their own class. Scholars also pointed out that the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom still attacked and restricted the landlords by means of direct confiscation of some landlords' land, strict military repression, deprivation of landlords' movable property, reducing the rents and so on.⁶

The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom once widely appointed countryside officials (*Xiang Guan*) in the rural grass-roots regimes. Academics had two different views concerning the class composition of the countryside officials. Some scholars thought that the countryside officials were mostly landlords both in the early and late period, but others thought that the majority of the countryside officials had always been the laboring people.⁷ After discussion, most scholars agreed that in the early period, the countryside officials were mainly working people, but in the late period the composition of local officials was complicated, varied from place to place and time to time and was not all the same, which reflected the peasantry's dispersion and the sharpness and complexity of the class struggle.

With regard to the origin of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Revolution, based on the materialist interpretation of history and historical facts, Dai Yi pointed out that "ascribing the outbreak of the revolution to the large population did not touch the essence of the problem"; though the God-Worshipping Society (*Bai Shang Di Hui*) emerged from Christianity and resembled Christianity to some extent, but their essence and functions were completely different. The reason why the revolutionary thought was produced and had the positive effect was that the thought itself was rooted in the objective reality of social struggles and social life. Dai Yi stressed that the reason for the outbreak of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Revolution was not the large population or religious power, and the most fundamental reason should be the exploitation and oppression of foreign invading forces and Chinese feudal forces. People's resistance would become more and more fierce along with the aggravation of the exploitation and oppression they suffered.⁸

Textual research on the historical facts had also made significant progress in this period, among which the textual research on the authenticity of Li Xiucheng's "self-statement" inspired the most concern. After Zeng Guofan executed Li Xiucheng in 1864, he published the abridged edition of "Li Xiucheng's confession", i.e., the *Jiu Ru Tang* edition, in Anqing. However,

Li Xiucheng's original handwritten edition had been kept secret. In 1944, Lv Jiyi, the Secretary of the Guangxi Bureau of History Compilation, found this secret edition in the former residence of Zeng Guofan in Xiangxiang. Lv proofread the Jiu Ru Tang edition according to this secret edition, added 5600-odd characters which had been deleted by Zeng Guofan and photographed 16 pages of it. In 1951, based on Lv's edition and four of Lv's pictures, Luo Ergang published *A Commentary on the Manuscript of Li Xiucheng's Autobiography* with the Kaiming Book Company, which became a great sensation of that time. In 1956, some scholars doubted that in terms of the contents, Li Xiucheng could not have begged to surrender; according to the legal medical expert, the handwriting of *The Manuscript of Li Xiucheng's Autography* and *Li Xiucheng's Personal Letter to Li Zhao to Offer His Birthday Congratulations* was different. In view of the above analyses, they declared that Li Xiucheng's "self-statement" was forged by Zeng Guofan.⁹ From then on, the historian circles started to argue over this issue. According to "the writing method for the eight strokes of Chinese Characters", Luo Ergang disassembled and compared all the characters of these two books one by one and determined that their handwriting was identical in fact though they looked different and claimed that Li Xiucheng's "self-statement" was indeed an authentic work.¹⁰ The rigorous textual research method and meticulous scholarship were very instructive. In 1962, the authentic work of Li Xiucheng's "self-statement" entitled *Manuscript of Li Xiucheng's Confession*, which had been secretly kept by Zeng Guofan's descendants, was photocopied and published by Taibei World Journal Book Store, the publication of which had proved Luo Ergang's judgment.

However, there was also deviation in the research of this period, mainly characterized by the tendency of simplification and dogmatism in the understanding and application of the materialist interpretation of history and the blind embellishment of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Some scholars had noticed this problem at that time and pointed out that in the study of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, especially in the discussion about its nature, some historians had misconstrued and garbled the classical works of Marx and Lenin and made strained interpretations to support their own preconceived ideas. This approach runs counter to the requirements of historical research guided by theories, and undoubtedly should be corrected in time.¹¹

Discussions on the *Baoren Paifang Bei* (memorial archway built to repay Li Xiucheng's kindness) in Changshu could demonstrate this deviation. This memorial archway was built in 1862, and the preface of its inscription said that "All the crops produce good harvests and people from all works of life live and work in peace. The rents and commissions are reasonable and the taxes are at a lower level. Every trade is thriving and a scene of prosperity spreads out before us. For this reason, we shall never forget the Loyal King Li Xiucheng's kindness". Some scholars cited these words as a proof of people's living and working in peace and contentment after the Taiping Army occupied the Southern part of Jiangsu Province. In 1957, based on the new historical

data like *Zi Yi Diary*, Qi Longwei proposed his doubt and pointed out that Changshu was then controlled by renegade generals like Qian Guiren and Luo Guozhong who were plotting rebellion and bleeding the peasants white with ruthless taxes and caused a mass impoverishment and social unrest. They set up a monument for Li Xiucheng just to conceal their conspiracy. The peaceful picture described in the inscription was nothing but a fictional illusion. Qi criticized the deviation existing in the current research work, namely, “all the data that are beneficial to the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, whether they are true or not, will be exaggerated and rendered as reliable evidence; all the data that are opposite to this point would be considered as ‘slanders of the landlord class’ and rejected”.¹² This article had caused another long debate in the historian circles. Though scholars had different understandings about the content of the monument, the theoretical problems revealed in this debate were undoubtedly important and timely.

Unfortunately, this good momentum in the process of exploration was quickly interrupted by a sudden political storm.

1.2 Zigzag development and retrogression

The research on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom from 1964 to 1976 was in the period of zigzag development and retrogression. In 1963, Qi Benyu published an article criticizing Li Xiucheng, asserting that the Loyal King was not “loyal”, and his “self-statement” was a “confession” which betrayed the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Revolution; with the support of Mao Zedong and under the banner of uncovering “traitors” and highlighting “moral integrity”, a political campaign to criticize Li Xiucheng had been initiated from 1964. This political storm in the academic circles caused great confusion and harm to the research on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, which were mainly manifested in the following aspects:

The first was to equate the academic issue with the political issue. It is quite common that different people have different opinions on the same academic issue, but in the campaign to criticize Li Xiucheng, scholars who had a positive attitude toward Li Xiucheng had been regarded as “taking up the wrong stance”, and a simple academic issue had been turned into a political one gratuitously, which had set a bad example to historical research in the People’s of China in 1949. In the first edition of *A Commentary on the Manuscript of Li Xiucheng’s Autobiography* published in 1951, Luo Ergang proposed a hypothesis that the Loyal King’s behavior was an imitation of Shu Han’s general Jiang Wei’s pretending to surrender to Zhonghui, and his real purpose was to restore the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. In the revised edition published in 1957, Luo revised his hypothesis slightly and thought that the Loyal King had two goals in making his “confession”, namely, “preserving the strength of the revolution” and “hoping the reactionary rulers to fight against foreign aggression together with the people”. In 1961, Yuan Shuyi also wrote that Li Xiucheng’s behavior was a manifestation of his loss of confidence in the

future of the revolution and having fantasies about the feudal forces, which was a “compromise and surrender” in nature, but this could not change the fact that his great contribution to the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom remained the mainstream of his life.¹³ However, Luo Ergang had been attacked because he insisted that Li Xiucheng’s “confession” was his stalling tactics; Yuan Shuyi, Mao Jiaqi, Qi Longwei and other scholars all had been suppressed and labeled as “the traitor Liu Xiucheng’s defender” because they disagreed with Qi Benyu’s view of completely negating Li Xiucheng. The relatively relaxed and free academic atmosphere had disappeared, and it had become impossible to carry out academic research in the real sense.

The second aspect was the unchecked spreading of the insinuation historical study. The essence of the insinuation historical study is to generalize and absolutize the individual cases or local phenomena in history, so as to meet the needs of the politics.

The third was that attaching political labels to figures had become a popular mode of research on historical figures. According to this model, Hong Xiuquan was portrayed as a perfect leader of peasant revolution and was taken as the criterion of right and wrong. Therefore, Yang Xiuqing was regarded as a “careerist”, Wei Changhui became a “class alien”, Shi Dakai became a “separatist”, and Li Xiu became a “traitor”. Simplified and stereotyped research had come to a climax, which had exerted a bad influence on the academic atmosphere.

All of the above-mentioned phenomena were the products of the “ultra-leftist” line. Qi Benyu, Liang Xiao and their like could hardly absolve themselves from the blame. However, a lot of researchers had written ingratiating articles for the occasion under the influence of the political climate at that time. In this regard, this is the tragedy of the whole era, and the lessons learned deserve our careful reflection and absorption.

In general, from 1964 to 1976, research on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom had undergone a period of twists and turns and even retrogression, and thus had become one of the most deeply affected areas of modern history. Newspapers and magazines had been filled with stereotyped articles. What lay behind the superficial prosperity was the real suffocation of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom research.

1.3 Maturity and harvest

The period from 1979 to 2009 can be said to be the maturity and harvest period of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom research, which had come to its climax in the early 1990s. Compared with the research of the previous 30 years, old research topics had been further deepened, and new topics had been opened up, which covered almost every aspect of the history of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom; at the same time, a large number of summary works had been published. The following is a brief review of some of the important works. It

should be noted that some works are of interdisciplinary nature and the classification below is mainly for the sake of narrative convenience.

1.3.1 The compilation, publication and related research of historical documents

Over the past 30 years, historical documents of more than 20 million words have been compiled and published. *Compilation of Documents of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* edited by the Historical Museum of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was published by Zhonghua Book Company in 1979, and *The Official Publications of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* was published by Jiangsu People's Publishing House in the same year. These two books, together with the above-mentioned *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Historical Data Series* formed the most basic historical data for the research on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Wang Qingcheng found two kinds of precious documents in the British Library that had not been noticed by Chinese scholars, to wit: *Heavenly Father's Imperial Edicts* and *Heavenly Brother's Imperial Edicts* (Heavenly Father and Heavenly Brother refer to Jehovah and Jesus respectively). Wang edited and annotated these two documents and got them published under the title of *Heavenly Father and Heavenly Brother's Imperial Edicts* by Liaoning People's Publishing House in 1986; they became an indispensable historical material for the study of the early history of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. As for the Qing government's records on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the 26-volume *Archive Materials on the Qing Government's Suppression of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* compiled by the First Historical Archives of China had been published by Social Sciences Academic Press in succession from 1990 to 2001 (the first two volume were published by Guangming Daily Press). In 2004, the 10-volume *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* edited by Luo Ergang and Wang Qingcheng, one of the *Continuation of the Modern Chinese Historical Data Series*, was published by Guangxi Normal University Press. This book was divided into three parts: "The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's Documents", "The Qing Government's Records" and "The Outsiders' Records", which gathered up all the published and unpublished materials over the past several decades.

In the long-term process of editing and compiling the historical data, research on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom has gradually formed a special branch – Philology of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, involving many aspects like discrimination, collation and annotation. The most important achievement of this branch should be Luo Ergang's *Annotations to the Manuscript of Li Xiucheng's Confession* published by Zhonghua Book Company in 1982. Luo started to annotate the manuscript of Li Xiucheng's confession in 1931 and had revised and enlarged his annotations time and again from then on. Some scholars exclaimed that "in China's academic history, there have been many famous experts on annotating historical works, such as Pei Songzhi and his

annotations to *The Records of Three Kingdoms* (*San Guo Zhi*), Hu Sanxing and his annotations to *History as a Mirror* (*Zi Zhi Tong Jian*). But there had been no other experts who encountered more twists and turns in terms of versions than Luo Ergang". In 1995, Luo published an enlarged edition of *Annotations to the Manuscript of Li Xiucheng's Confession* (Chinese Social Sciences Press), which glossed from 12 aspects, such as the system of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, tabooed characters, special appellations and so on, and revised the errors and supplemented the omissions in the original works from 10 aspects including the facts, dates and so on. Luo paid equal attention to the glossary and textual research and wrote about 700 masterly notes, which were four times the size of the original text.

Wang Qingcheng's *Documents and History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Research on the Publication and Historical Events of New Overseas Documents* (Social Sciences Academic Press, 1993) studied the related historical events based on new documents, examined the history of formation, oblivion, collection, compilation and publication of the documents about the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, discussed the evolution of the publishing system of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, and laid special stress on the system of "catalogue of the imperial decrees for publication". In his *Rare Historical Data of the Qing Dynasty and Related Textual Research* (Wuhan Publishing House, 1998), Wang examined and annotated 30 of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom documents collected in this book one by one and revised more than 50 textual errors in "Hong Rengan's Self-Statement", which were collected in *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Volume* of the "Modern Chinese Historical Data Series". Wang Qingcheng also compiled *12 Photocopied Documents of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* (Zhonghua Book Company, 2004), which photocopied eight books and four documents that had not been collected by the previous photocopies. In his *Introduction to the Historical Study of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* (Academy Press, 1989), Qi Longwei did textual research and concluded that *Lin Xue Cong Chao*, the notes taken by people of the Qing Dynasty, was a pseudograph written by modern people, and the 14 Dongyang documents collected in *Compilation of Documents of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* were local governments' documents of the Qing Dynasty, but not the documents of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. *Records of Books Published by the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* (Guangxi People's Publishing House, 1993) was a summary of Qi Longwei's research on the historical documents. This book has been the first to make detailed records and collation of the official publications of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom one by one. Qi also reviewed the documents of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom compiled by modern people. He adopted the method of "testifying the book with characters and testifying the characters with books" (*Yi Zi Zheng Jing, Yi Jing Zheng Zi*) to classify and interpret the special characters and words used by the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom; Qi also summarized three experiences of discriminating pseudographs, i.e., finding out all the flaws, looking for irrefutable evidences, and examining the evidences repeatedly.

1.3.2 Discussions on the nature of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom regime

Historians have had heated discussions on the nature of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom regime since 1979. On the whole, there are three different views:

The first view is a newly proposed one holding that it is a feudal regime. Shen Jiarong thought that the simple peasant movement could not change the ownership of the feudal land and overthrow the whole landlord class, so the new regime established after overthrowing the old one could only still be a feudal dynasty.¹⁴ Sun Zuomin pointed out that the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom basically followed the model of the feudal autocratic regime, placed the landlord class and its intellectuals on the dominant position of the country, and always carried out the land policy of acknowledging and protecting the landlords' ownership, allowing and encouraging landlords to collect their rent, so the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom regime was a new feudal regime.¹⁵ Duan Benluo also thought that the feudal production relations still existed firmly, the small-scale peasant economy was still in its integrity, and the regime established on such a social and economic basis could only be a feudal regime.¹⁶

The second view is a traditional one holding that it is a revolutionary regime of peasants. Sun Kefu and Guan Jie thought that regime meant the right to rule. During the fierce class struggles, peasants could establish a short-term and unstable dictatorship of the laborer for the needs of resistance; the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's *The Land Regulations of the Heavenly Kingdom* and revolutionary practices had shown that it was a revolutionary regime of peasants which had opposed to the feudal regime of the Qing Dynasty for more than ten years.¹⁷ Dong Caishi expounded and proved that the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was a revolutionary regime of peasants from five aspects: it destroyed the Qing Dynasty's local power system; it shouldered the anti-aggression task; the peasants had basically seized central and local political power; it gave a heavy blow to the landlord class in terms of economy; it had always been supported by the majority of laboring people.¹⁸

The third view asserts that it is a feudalized regime of peasants. Wang Tianjiang thought that, under the limitations of history and class, the anti-feudalism struggle of Hong Xiuquan and others remained at the stage of spontaneity rather than self-consciousness, which would inevitably bring some feudal factors to the peasant movement. The implementation of the policy of "paying taxes as before" was the symbol of the new regime's evolution toward a feudal regime. In the later period, this historical transformation had been basically completed.¹⁹ Su Shuangbi also held this view and later added that there was no essential difference between the peasants' regime and the feudal regime. We called a regime the peasants' regime only because it had represented peasants' interests more at a certain stage. The peasants' regime could only be distinguished from the landlords' regime.²⁰ A similar view held that the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom regime was a regime of a dual nature. Li Jinquan thought that peasants and landlords were the unity of opposites in

the feudal society, which could be reflected by the intertwined combination of revolution and feudalism, equalitarianism and feudal privileges in terms of their thoughts and claims, and the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom regime was a paradoxical regime with dual nature.²¹ Sun Zuomin disagreed with this view and argued that as a tool of one class to rule over other classes, the regime could only represent and maintain the interests of a certain class, and could not represent and maintain the interests of two antagonistic classes at the same time.²²

At the same time, there was a similar debate about whether the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom could be called a “revolution”. Some scholars stressed that the peasant revolts could not change the old mode of production and set up a new mode of production. Therefore, the peasant revolts, including the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, “could not be called the revolution, but only the peasant movement”.²³ Mou Anshi responded by saying that according to its general and conventional meaning, “revolution” was the use of violence to seize power. From this point of view, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was, of course, a revolution. Mou pointed out that it was not complete to define the “revolution” by whether or not it would change the way of production, because it skipped over the fundamental issue of revolution in the class society – the regime, and the fundamental means of revolution – the use of violence and armed struggle. The replacement of the mode of production was “the result of the revolution, but not the revolution itself”.²⁴

After several years, the discussion gradually subsided and scholars failed to reach a consensus. The main reason was that the two sides of the dispute were mainly confined to the dispute over concept, but did not conduct any empirical research, and there lacked in-depth research on issues like the members of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and their thought, attitudes, policies and behavior, which was also the reason why its promoting effect on the research was not as good as that of the debate in the 1950s.

Scholars have also made positive discussions on some specific historical facts, and the issue concerning the date of the Jintian Uprising was an example. Luo Ergang held that it took place on January 11, 1851, and he had two main arguments: one was Hong Rengan’s self-statement, the other was the 349th poem of *The Heavenly Father’s Poems*. Accordingly, Luo made a judgment that the Jintian Uprising and Hong Xiuquan’s birthday were on the same day, i.e., January 11, 1851. According to the saying that “we arrived at the Jintian military camp on October 1 by the lunar calendar” in *Tian Qing Dao Li Shu*, Rong Mengyuan and Mao Jiaqi *et al.* drew the conclusion that the Jintian Uprising took place on April 5, 1850. Wang Qingcheng thought that the Jintian Uprising was not an event taking place on a certain day, but a process made up by a series of events and struggles. But this did not mean that later generations could not choose a certain day as the Memorial Day for the Jintian Uprising.

According to the record of Hong Xiuquan’s “wearing the imperial robe” on April 5, 1850 in *Heavenly Brother’s Imperial Edicts*, Jiang Tao thought

that Hong had ascended the throne in secret before starting the uprising, and thus held that the broad-sense Jintian Uprising referred to the whole process of all the local uprising troops' marching toward the Jintian military camp in the autumn of 1850, which had lasted for several months; the narrow-sense Jintian Uprising took place on November 4, 1850.²⁵

1.3.3 Research on the historical figures

The most important feature of the study on the historical figures during this period was that it had abandoned the simple research mode of judging someone by his attitude toward a certain person and had made a major breakthrough in the monographic research on the core figures of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.

In 1979, Wang Qingcheng made a reappraisal of Hong Xiuquan's early thought by analyzing his early works and traces of actions and deeds. Wang concluded that Hong Xiuquan's early thought had experienced a developing process from seeking scholarly honor or official rank to reforming the world with moral sermons and aiming to oppose the Qing Dynasty. His conversion to God in 1843 was the beginning of the heresy of his thought, but not the symbol of his anti-Qing revolution. Hong Xiuquan did not take a firm stand on the anti-Qing revolution until after 1847. The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Revolution had roots in the class struggle, but not the religious doctrines. *Good Words (Quan Shi Liang Yan)* only turned Hong Xiuquan into a gospel propagator, and it was the class struggle which pushed him toward the political revolution of creating a new country. *The Song of Jesus for Salvation*, *The Teachings of Jesus for Awakening the World* and *The Teachings of Jesus for Rousing the People* were all religious propaganda, which did not contain the thought of political equality and economic equality at all. If we believe that Hong Xiuquan had put forward this thought of equality and made it the theoretical basis of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Revolution, it would be impossible for us to explain the history of Hong Xiuquan and the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, and also the 100-odd years of history after the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.²⁶ These views had evoked strong responses at that time and had been widely accepted by most scholars. Su Shuangbi wrote critical biographies of many historical figures like Li Xiucheng, Chen Yucheng, Shi Dakai and Hong Xiuquan, and his points were quite neutral. For example, with regard to Shi Dakai's Anqing Reform, he pointed out that Shi Dakai abandoned *The Land Regulations of the Heavenly Kingdom* – which was a utopian model – and carried out the policy of “paying taxes by acreage” (*An Mu Shu Qian Mi*), which helped the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom overcome its difficulties in finance and supply in the early days of its founding. The Anqing Reform was not a retrogression, nor a restoration, but a measure consistent with historical rules.²⁷

As an important figure in the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and even in the history of modern Chinese thought, great importance has been attached to the

research on Hong Rengan by academia. Xia Chuntao's *Hong Rengan: From a Teacher in the Private School, a Christian to the King* had made a detailed study of Hong Rengan's course of life and thought, including the similarities and differences between his and Hong Xiuquan's thoughts. He also put forward a new perspective on how to evaluate Li Xiucheng's performance after his captivity. Compared with Hong Rengan, Li Xiucheng had never revealed ideas such as "the Han nationality and Manchu nationality were different" on any occasion from his captivity to his death. It thus could be seen that the so-called saying that the Loyalty King followed the example of Jiang Wei in pretending to surrender so as to make mischief between Zeng Guofan and the Qing government had to be re-evaluated. Xia Chuntao also pointed out that Hong Rengan was the only person in the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom who had read *Li Xiucheng's Confession* and commented on it. In his refutation, Hong repeatedly referred to Li Xiucheng's "fickleness", "making decisions without authorization" and so on, which in fact was an implicit condemnation of Li Xiucheng's betrayal.²⁸

Although the research on historical figures has been very deep, there still exist some unclear points in almost every important figure's life. Researchers always had divided opinions on the evaluation of a certain figure, which mainly focused on some hot issues, such as the features of Hong Xiuquan's thought and his merits and faults in his later period; Yang Xiuqing, Wei Changhui and the infighting in Tianjing; Shi Dakai's departure from Tianjing and the fact of his captivity in the Dadu River Battle; and Hong Rengan and *New Treatise on Administration*, Li Xiucheng and his "confession" after captivity, and the inner corruption of the leadership.

The horizons of research on historical figures remain to be broadened. For example, most of the poems in *The Heavenly Father's Poems* were religious ethics poems written by Hong Xiuquan for his concubines, most of which involved people and events in the palace. In the 1950s, based on *The Heavenly Father's Poems*, Wu Liangzuo made a novel study of Hong Xiuquan's life in the palace from three aspects: titles of the Heavenly King's queen and concubines and female officers in the palace; the Heavenly King's family education and private life, and the Heavenly King's strict domestic discipline.²⁹ No other similar research has been carried out since then.

The study of the relationship between historical figures needs to be strengthened. Taking the relationship between Yang Xiuqing and Xiao Chaogui as an example, they had the power to represent the Heavenly Father and Heavenly Brother respectively and convey their holy orders, and both of them were important figures in the early Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. According to the analysis of *Heavenly Brother's Imperial Edicts* and *Tian Qing Dao Li Shu*, in the beginning, Heavenly Brother's descending surpassed Heavenly Father's descending obviously. When Heavenly Father and Heavenly Brother's descending co-existed, how did Yang and Xiao handle their relationship, especially when their opinions were different? Had they had any frictions in terms of power? Was the death of Xiao on the battlefield related to

this friction? This is a thought-provoking question that has not been explored carefully yet.

1.3.4 Research on the politics

In response to the traditional view asserting that the polity of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was “autocratic monarchy”, Luo Ergang cited historical materials like *The Land Regulations of the Heavenly Kingdom* and *The Heavenly King’s Gospel Witnessed by His Eldest Brother and Second Elder Brother* (*Wang Zhang Ci Xiong Di Qin Mu Qin Er Gong Zheng Fu Yin Shu*) and proposed a new view. Luo thought that the polity of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was “the responsibility system of the military counsellor” – the Heavenly King was the head of the state, who would reign but not govern; the military counsellor was the head of the government and assumed the real power – which not only contained the content of the peasant democracy but also followed the old system of feudalism. It was different from the traditional monarchy of our country and the cabinet system (constitutional monarchy) of the Western countries, and thus had its unique characteristics. Luo pointed out that this polity was inspired by *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*San Guo Zhi Tong Su Yan Yi*), *The Water Margin* (*Shui Hu Zhuan*) and the organization of the Heaven and Earth Society (*Tian Di Hui*) in modern times. The implementation of this polity in the early period of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom had carried forward the peasantry democracy, pushed forward the revolution greatly and brought prosperity to the country. After the Tianjing Incident, the responsibility system of the military counsellor was destroyed, and Hong Xiuquan started to enforce the autocratic monarchy strictly, which resulted in the serious decentralization of people’s minds and finally led to the fall of the kingdom.³⁰ Luo also re-evaluated Du Wenxiu, the leader of the uprising of the Hui people in Yunnan and proposed that the so-called “Muslim State of Dali” was fabricated by foreign invaders. The so-called “envoy from Dali” was Liu Daoheng’s shell game. He handed over a forged diplomatic correspondence of Du Wenxiu to Britain declaring Dali a vassal to Britain, which had nothing to do with Du Wenxiu.³¹

According to the records in *Heavenly Father’s Imperial Edicts* and *Heavenly Brother’s Imperial Edicts*, Wang Qingcheng corrected a number of errors in *The Record of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Revolt* which was narrated by Hong Rengan, written by Han Shanwen and translated by Jian Youwen. Wang also examined and analyzed some complicated and obscure historical facts in this book. For example, he pointed out that the dispute and split emerged in the “God-Worshipping Society” after Feng Yunshan was arrested was mainly caused by internal disturbances rather than external attack. At that time, besides Yang Xiuqing and Xiao Chaogui, there were also other members in the “God-Worshipping Society” who pretended to be possessed by the Spirit and gave orders in the name of the Spirit. Yang Xiuqing and Xiao Chaogui united with each other and defeated others or

other factions in the “God-Worshipping Society”; the acknowledgment of Heavenly Father and Heavenly Brother’s possession of Yang Xiuqing and Xiao Chaogui to convey their decrees had reduced the importance of Feng Yunshan and weakened Hong Xiuquan’s right to speak to a certain degree, but it played a positive role in the transformation of the “God-Worshipping Society” from a religious group to a political one which finally started the uprising.³²

Research on the anti-Qing uprisings of various ethnic groups during the period of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom has also made considerable progress, among which the study of Nian Uprising was the most in-depth one. Jiang Di had published two collected works: *Collected Essays on the History of the Nian Army* (People’s Publishing House, 1981) and *Study and Investigation of the History of the Nian Army* (Qilu Press, 1986). The former chronologically discussed the whole process of the formation, development and failure of the Nian Army, and the latter horizontally discussed the nature of the Nian Army, its periodization, investigation of its historical sites, and the collection of related data. Based on detailed analysis, Guo Yuming’s *History of the Nian Army* argued that the nature of the Nian Uprising was a peasant revolt rather than the so-called resistance movement of local separatists’ opposition to the central government of the Qing Dynasty.³³ Fang Shiming summarized two historical features of the Small Sword Society (*Xiao Dao Hui*) of Shanghai: first, it had a broad social basis. Besides the peasants, its members also included a large number of handicraft workers, shipping sailors, urban laboring people and business owners; second, it gave priority to the armed struggles in the cities, and the uprising troops had kept fighting for 17 months in the Shanghai County.³⁴ Since the early 21st century, much attention has been devoted to issues like the relationship between the uprising of the Small Sword Society in Shanghai and the immigrants and its influence on the modernization of Shanghai, reflecting the widening of the research horizons and the deepening of the research content. Luo Baoshan examined the collusion between the domestic and foreign rival forces during the uprising of the Heaven and Earth Society in Guangdong and thought that the armed forces of Britain, France and the United States, working in collaboration with the Guangdong authorities of the Qing Dynasty, destroyed the uprising army’s strategic deployment of attacking and seizing Guangzhou, and thus strangled its victory in Guangdong and played the shameful role of working jointly with the ruling authorities of the Qing Dynasty to strangle the Chinese people’s revolutionary movement.³⁵

1.3.5 Research on the opposite sides of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom

Research on the opposite sides of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom is a meaningful topic for understanding the ups and downs of this period of history and the external reasons for the rise and fall of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. But among the early studies, there were few related works, and most of them

were condemnations. From the early 1980s, more and more attention has been paid to this topic, and a number of important studies have been published.

Jia Shucun's *The Landlord Class in the Period of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* is a masterpiece systematically studying the opposite sides of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Jia divided the landlord class into two categories: the central government and the local forces. In terms of the military power, the former was divided into five major military groups, to wit: the Great Camp of Jiangnan (South of the Yangtze River), the Great Camp of Jiangbei (North of the Yangtze River), the Linhuai Army, the Army led by Sheng Bao and the Army led by Seng Ge Lin Qin; in terms of political power, the former was divided into three political groups: the Manchu Grandees Group, the Statecraft Group and the Westernization Group. The latter was divided into the Pro-Qing Group, the Group of Fence-Sitters, the Group of Pro-Foreign Powers, the Statecraft Group and the Westernization Group. Jia explored the performances of the representative and important figures of these groups one by one and assigned a special section for the Zeng Guofan Clan of the Statecraft Group, which involved more than a thousand people. Jia made summaries on these grounds and analyzed the reasons why the tottering Qing government was just shaken but not overthrown. He thought that it was mainly due to the stubbornness and reactionary nature of the feudal family. Under the attack of the peasant war, the landlord class had quickly carried out its metabolism and had been hardly differentiated. Few of them joined the peasant revolt army, but most of them rose up and resisted the revolts. Different groups united and implemented various effective countermeasures. For example, in terms of military, they formed Hu'nan Army and the Huai Army; in terms of economy, they implemented the Li Jin system in order to enrich the military supply; in terms of politics, they constantly adjusted their internal contradictions, and managed to ease the confrontation between the landlord class and the peasantry. At the same time, they made full use of the weaknesses of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and adjusted relationships with foreign powers to facilitate the collusion between the reactionary forces of China and the foreign countries, thus making themselves grow from weak to strong and turn defeat into victory, and finally defeated the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and achieved the so-called "Tongzhi Restoration".³⁶

Long Shengyun's *History of the Xiang Army* is a representative achievement of the research on the Xiang Army. From the perspective of political history, this book investigated the whole process of the Xiang Army from its creation, development and prosperity to its disintegration, including the internal reasons and external effects of the Xiang Army's emergence and development, the operation of the rear base in Hu'nan and Hubei, Zeng Guofan et al.'s summary of their experiences and lessons and adjustment of relationship with the Manchu grandees, the evolution of the Xiang Army's camp system and arms of the services, raising money for soldiers' pay, the generals and the staff, etc. It also discussed the Xiang Army's war history, which surpassed the previous works on the Xiang Army's system or war history only. Some

of its arguments were also quite insightful. When talking about the influence of the Xiang Army and Huai Army on the later generations, it pointed out that although Zeng Guofan and others had protected the Qing Dynasty, the situation that the army was owned by the General and Manchu landlords and Han landlords divided the power equally had brought hidden dangers to it. The highly centralized central power had been transferred into the hands of the leading military and government officials, and thus the central government performed practically no function and the local power was seized by the military warlords. "Precisely because of this, the Xiang Army Group, especially Zeng Guofan, had been touted even as a sage by the rulers for a long time".³⁷

From the perspective of interpersonal relations, Dong Caishi laid special emphasis on the intricate relations among Zeng Guofan, Hu Linyi, Zuo Zongtang, Li Hongzhang, Shen Baozhen and others, and developed a school of his own in the study of the political opponents during the period of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Taking the relationship between Zeng Guofan and Hu Linyi as an example, Dong divided it into three stages, that is, the stage from 1853 to 1856 when Hu took part in the Hu'nan Army and attached himself to Zeng Guofan, the stage from 1856 to 1860 when Zeng Guofan developed the Hu'nan Army with the support of Hu Linyi, and the stage of their cooperation in capturing Anqing in 1860. Dong Caishi held that in the development history of the Hu'nan Army and in process of suppressing the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, Zeng and Hu helped and complemented each other in both politics and military operations, and both of them were the deadly enemies of the peasant revolts army.³⁸ Several biographies have been published of Zeng Guofan, Hu Linyi, Zuo Zongtang and Li Hongzhang. Except for Dong Caishi and Wang Guoping's *Critical Biography of Hu Linyi* (Unity Press, 1990), Tao Haiyang's *Hu Linyi and the Hu'nan Army* (Guangling Bookstore, 2008), etc., all the rest of them involved a great deal of historical facts after the defeat of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.

Taking the organizational structure of Zeng Guofan's Mufu as the point of departure, Zhu Dong'an's *The Study of Zeng Guofan's Mufu* (Sichuan People's Publishing House, 1994) examined its establishment, function, effectiveness and the activities of its main members, including its development process and regular pattern of expansion and contraction, the relationship between Zeng Guofan and his staff and their mutual influence. From the perspective of history of the Mufu in China, Zhu's work also probed into the historical causes, status and the influence of Mufu on the political situation of the late Qing Dynasty, which further deepened the study of Zeng Guofan's Mufu. Zhu Dong'an pointed out that Zeng's Mufu was the largest and the most influential one whose staff spread all over different departments, and thus almost half of the best-known officials were Zeng Guofan's disciples. So, Zeng's personal stamp remained evident in the Manchu-Han political pattern, the national defense and diplomacy of the late Qing Dynasty, which affected the whole political situation of that time. Zhu Dong'an also published

a book entitled *The Zeng Guofan Group and the Political Situation of the Late Qing Dynasty* (Sino-Culture Press, 2003), which considered the Zeng Guofan Group as a whole, and explored the changes in the power pattern of the Qing Dynasty during the reign of Xianfeng and Tongzhi and their historical causes.

The above studies deepened people's understanding of the history of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and even the whole history of modern China. However, there still exist fierce controversies concerning the merits and demerits of Zeng Guofan et al.'s suppression of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. At the "International Symposium on Zeng Guofan" held in Shuangfeng of Hu'nan Province in December 2006, some scholars proposed that in terms of research method, we should jump out of the binary opposition between the revolutionary and modernization views of history, go beyond the limits of simple comparison of merits and demerits, and focus on the reason behind Zeng Guofan's success and failure and its inspirations to the present.

1.3.6 Research on the military, diplomacy, economy and culture

A number of monographs on the military affairs of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom have been published in succession. Li Chun's *A Summary of the Military History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* (Zhonghua Book Company, 1982) involved detailed textual research and gave a full account of the military history of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, but had the shortcomings that it only studied the history of war and its theoretical analysis was quite brief. Zhang Yiwen's *The Military History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* (Guangxi People's Publishing House, 1994) had two volumes. The first volume was about the battles, in which the author briefly described the strategic moves and major battles that affected or even determined the outcome of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. The second volume analyzed the Taiping Army's leadership structure, command structure, as well as its military discipline, training, weaponry, logistic support, tactical deployment of troops, method of operation, strategy, military thought, etc., whose content was comprehensive and whose overall analysis was quite enlightening. The Northern Expedition and the Western Expedition were two major successive strategic actions launched immediately after the establishment of the Heavenly Capital at Nanjing. Zhang Shouchang's *History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's Northern Expedition* and Zhu Zhefang's *History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's Western Expedition* (Guangxi People's Publishing House, 1957) have carried out detailed exploration and analysis of the specific processes of the two major campaigns respectively, including the gain and loss of their strategy and tactics. Zhang Shouchang pointed out that the decisive factor leading to the failure of the Northern Expedition of the Taiping Army was not the establishment of the Heavenly Capital at Nanjing and the Taiping Army's penetration into their enemy's territory in isolation, but the mistakes made by the Tianjing leadership in decision-making: first, they ordered Northern

Expeditionary Forces to march rapidly and directly toward Beijing and had no thought for eliminating enemy's effective strength, expanding their own forces and constructing their own power; second, they ordered the Northern Expeditionary Forces to "station at Tianjin first" before attacking Beijing. As a result, the Northern Expeditionary Forces stationed in Duliu and Jinghai and waited for reinforcement for more than three months, and thus gave up the initiative on the battlefield, which became the turning point of the Taiping Army's Northern Expedition from victory to failure.³⁹ *The Complete History of the War of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* (Nanjing University Press, 2002) edited by Cui Zhiqing was a monograph of high quality. Centering around the war, the core content of the military history, this book divided the ten-odd years of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's rise and fall into four stages: the rise of the Taiping Army, the strategic development, the strategic stalemate and the fall of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. It integrated the macro study (the course of the war) with the micro study (the specific campaigns and battles), and thus depicted the whole picture of this fluctuating peasant war in greater detail and more clearly. While affirming the justice of this peasant war, this book also touched upon its negative side and analyzed the negative effects of power struggle, alienation among the leadership and non-unified authority on the overall situation of the war of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Another feature of this book was its emphasis on the study of the dynamic aspects of the war, especially the study of the warring parties' military thought, strategic direction and application of tactics. Shen Weibin questioned the popular saying that the Taiping Army's Water Camp (the engineer battalion) was established in Yuezhou, and held that it was established in Wuhan.⁴⁰ Zhang Haipeng analyzed the Anqing Battle from the perspective of the Hu'nan Army and held that the reason for Hu'nan Army's victory was that they objectively assessed the military situation, correctly determined the strategic direction, summarized lessons from failures, flexibly used various tactical principles aiming at eliminating the enemy's effective strength, dispatched the troops in a unified manner and fought in coordination.⁴¹ Wang Jianhua investigated the battle in which the Taiping Army broke through the Great Camp of Jiangnan of the Qing Dynasty for the second time, and thought that the most direct reason for the defeat of the Jiangnan Camp was that the Qing government failed to pay soldiers on time; the reason why Li Xiucheng's scheme of "besieging Wei to save Zhao" could work had a close relationship with He Guiqing's blocking the action of the troops of the Jiangnan Camp to rescue Zhejiang on purpose on the consideration of contending for the territory in Zhejiang with Zeng Guofan.⁴² Zhang Tiebao first verified the exact location and scope of the Dibaocheng, which was an important fortress of Tianjing.⁴³

Diplomacy had been a weak spot of the early research on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Related works were mainly confined to its anti-imperialist struggle. During this period, this situation had been changed a lot.

Mao Jiaqi was the most fruitful scholar in this field. *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and the Big Powers* was the enlarged edition of Mao's previous work *History of Foreign Relations of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*. In this book, Mao elaborated on two arguments: the first one was that the main purpose of Britain's invasion of China at that time was to promote their commercial interests, including the opium trade and the trade of normal commodities, while the main purpose of Russia's invasion of China was to encroach on our territory; the second one was that the primary fault in the foreign policy of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was that they did not take advantage of the contradiction between the Qing Dynasty and the big powers to prevent them from colluding against the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, which could best be shown by the way they dealt with the Shanghai issue.⁴⁴ Wang Qingcheng has made in-depth analysis of the international perspective of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, and held that it had close relations with their religious and ethical conceptions, and thus had a special meaning. Wang pointed out that the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom had no concept of state sovereignty of modern times in terms of foreign relations. From the religious belief that "all under heaven are of one family", on one hand, they took a friendly attitude toward the Western countries and considered them as people having common goal in fighting against the Qing government; on the other hand, they still had the traditional thought of Celestial Empire and considered Hong Xiuquan as the "Universal God", which was difficult for Western countries to understand and accept. Wang argued that even if the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom had no defect in their international perspective, the big powers would not change their established opportunistic policy in diplomacy. The strong sense of mission of "recovering the whole territory and not abandoning even an inch of land" and "struggling for the whole territory of China" eventually directed the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom to achieve outstanding accomplishments in the anti-aggression struggle.⁴⁵

Continued progress has been made in the research on the economy of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Guo Yisheng's *Economic History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* has been the most representative work in this field, which is a revised and enlarged edition of his previous work *The Economic System of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*. This book analyzed the historical background of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's economic system and economic policies, Hong Xiuquan's thoughts on economy, the content and nature of *The Land Regulations of the Heavenly Kingdom* and *New Treatise on Administration*, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's "holy storage" system, the implementation of the policy of "paying taxes as before", two parallel land policies in its later period, the system of "taxing the tenants directly", land tax and the tax policy, the commercial policy, and the currency. The author expressed his own view on some controversial issues. For example, with regard to the system of "taxing the tenants directly", the author pointed out that this policy had been put into practice in the early period, and in the later period, it was widely carried out in many counties and towns of Jiangsu and Zhejiang, which was

a historical creation of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and an important characteristic differing from the land policies of the previous feudal dynasties. Since the tenants did not pay rent to landlords any more after paying the tax, and obtained the legal land ownership through the “land certificate”, this policy actually realized the goal of “giving land to the tillers” in a disguised form. Therefore, it brought about some destruction to the feudal landlordism.⁴⁶

As for the research on culture of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, scholars discarded the claim that the anti-Confucianism struggle of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was the herald of the movement to bring down Confucianism during the May 4th period. They gradually reached a consensus that Hong Xiuquan’s opposition to Confucianism was mainly motivated by his consideration of worshiping God exclusively and did not mean the deepening of his anti-feudal struggle. Wang Qingcheng has made a detailed analysis of the evolution of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom’s attitude toward Confucianism and its consequences, and argued that in the very beginning, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom did not deny and try to bring down Confucius. On the contrary, they were quite respectful to Confucius and Confucianism; after establishing the capital at Tianjing, Hong Xiuquan turned to negate Confucianism and repel the ancient sages, and began to oppose Confucianism in form rather than in content, which might have something to do with his personal psychological experience and his attempt to create an unprecedented situation under the banner of worshiping God exclusively. After being opposed by Yang Xiuqing, Hong Xiuquan was forced to order to stop burning and banning ancient books, and declared that people were still allowed to read the “Four Books” (*The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, The Confucian Analects, and The Works of Mencius*) and the “Five Classics” (*The Book of Songs, The Book of History, The Book of Changes, The Book of Rites and The Spring and Autumn Annals*) after they were revised officially. After Yang’s death, though Hong’s stance on banning Confucianism changed a little, he basically carried this policy through firmly to the end, which made it difficult for the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom to attract intellectuals and caused its lack of talent, which became an important reason for its failure. Based on Zeng Guofan’s letter to Liu Rong saying that “the Cantonese bandits (the Taiping Army) were not suppressed in the last winter, and they became more aggravated. I saw the ‘Four Books’ published by them, and send them to you”, some scholar made an assertion that the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom had published a revised version of the “Four Books”. Based on the fragments of Liu Rong’s deeds collected by the Hung On-To Memorial Library of the University of Hong Kong, Wang Qingcheng verified that “I saw the ‘Four Books’” should be “I bet you four books”, and the four books were the bet of Zeng and Liu while betting on the current situation, which had nothing to do with the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom’s publication of the “Four Books”. As a matter of fact, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom had never published the “Four Books” and the Five Classics.⁴⁷

1.3.7 Study on the laws and regulations of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom

The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom had a complete set of laws and regulations. Over the past 20 or 30 years, a great breakthrough has been made in related research. Li Chun's *Preliminary Exploration into the Laws and Regulations of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* (Zhonghua Book Company, 1989, the revised edition) discussed many issues including the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's economic measures, military and civil bureaucracy, system of countryside officials, tax system, the supply system, the system of education and examination, the urban organization and so on, which has been a pioneering work on the laws and regulations of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. However, it still had many omissions, especially in the research of the complicated bureaucratic system. Sheng Xun's *A Record of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's Officials* (Guangxi People's Publishing House, 1999) largely made up for this shortcoming. This book examined the origin, evolution, and influence of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's system of official titles and ranks, sorted out its officials, peerage, ranks and titles, and made a list of the official ranks and titles. By analyzing Chen Yucheng's promotion in rank, Hua Guoliang analyzed the regular pattern of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's official system, and concluded that in the early period, the hierarchy of its official system was concise and officials' promotion and transfer was institutionalized; in the late period, its official ranks became numerous and the promotion and transfer became disorganized; Hua verified that the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's official hierarchy in its late period was divided into five ranks and 24 grades. There appeared the vicious circle between the increase in the official ranks and redundancy in the officials, which led to increasingly serious bureaucracy and low efficiency.⁴⁸

Taboo on using the personal names of the emperors was not only an important ritual, but also a prevailing custom in the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. In the study of this subject, Wu Liangzuo has been the most accomplished scholar in this field. Adopting a comprehensive approach integrating historiography with linguistics and folklore, Wu's monograph *Research on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's System of Taboo on Using the Personal Names of Emperors* explored the formation, development and termination of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's taboo on using the personal names of the emperors, discussed its classification, methods and practical implementation, and expounded on its role in the proofreading, explanation, interpretation and verification of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's documents. The last chapter of this book listed more than 160 taboo words, which gave it the nature of a reference book. Wu held that the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's taboo system was inherited from the past dynasties, but also had some characteristics of its own. Its strong feudal character and backwardness were self-evident, but also dimly reflected the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's progressiveness in its cultural policy.⁴⁹ Shi Shi's *Research on the Proper Words and Expressions of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* (Guangxi People's Publishing House, 1993) discussed