

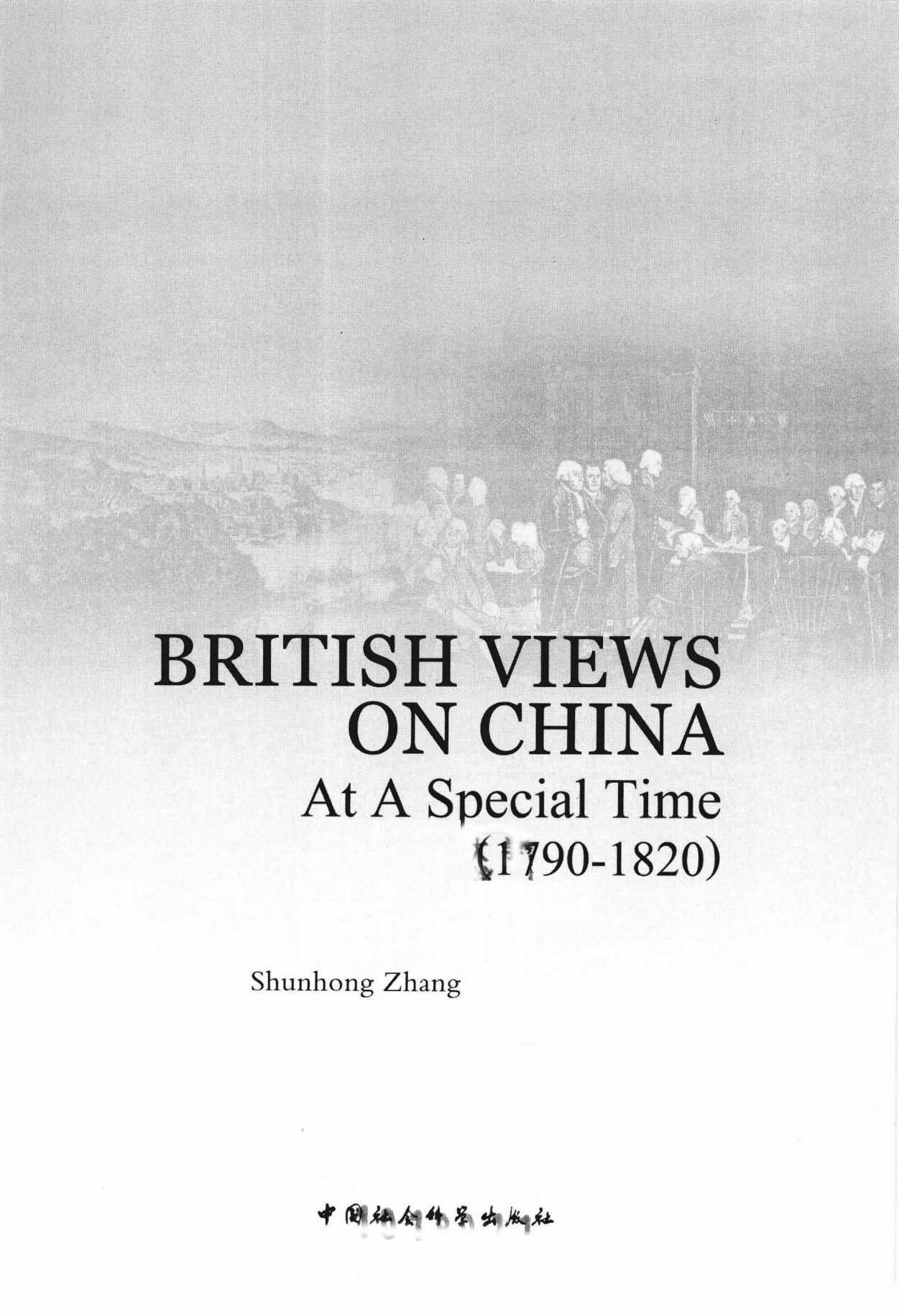


# BRITISH VIEWS ON CHINA

At A Special Time  
(1790-1820)

Shunhong Zhang

中国社会科学出版社



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# 中文自序

本书是我的博士论文。1985年9月，我受教育部派遣，赴英国留学，在伦敦大学伯克贝克学院历史系学习，攻读历史学硕士、博士学位。当时是中国改革开放初期，西方世界非常关注中国的发展变化。中国留学生也怀着极强的好奇心观察西方世界。西方人如何看中国，是当时留学生比较关心的一个话题。在攻读硕士学位期间，我就很关注英国人如何看待中国。硕士毕业后，我继续留在伯克贝克学院历史系学习，攻读博士学位，导师是英帝国史专家詹姆斯·斯特吉斯。在他的指导下，我从英帝国史的角度来考察英国对中国的评价，选题是英国马戛尔尼使团和阿美士德使团来华时期的英人评华，时间大约是从1790年到1820年。这个时期是我国乾嘉之际。当时的学习条件是优厚的。作为国家公派留学生，我们既不愁学费，也不愁生活费，能够集中精力从事学习和研究工作。根据伦敦大学的规定，博士生不须进修课程，除参加专题研讨外，主要是自己查阅资料写论文。在攻读博士学位的三年多时间里，我几乎每天都去图书馆查阅资料，很多时候是从早上开门到晚上关门。我就读的伯克贝克学院毗邻伦敦大学图书馆，离大英图书馆步行也只需几分钟，查阅各种资料非常方便。在撰

写博士论文过程中，我查阅了大量的第一手资料，包括档案材料、手稿、书信等，也包括 18 世纪末 19 世纪初出版的著作和杂志；许多著作和杂志属于珍稀出版物，只能在大英图书馆的北馆阅读。1989 年底，我顺利通过了博士论文答辩。

回国工作后，曾考虑过出版博士论文。20 世纪 90 年代中期，与一家伦敦出版公司联系过；该出版公司有兴趣出版我的论文，但要求提供一定的出版资助。由于当时的经济条件限制，没有出版。之后多年忙于其他研究工作，特别是忙于比较紧迫的课题任务，无暇考虑博士论文出版之事。尽管未出版，但这些年来我的博士论文仍受到学术界的一定关注，为一些中外学者与研究生查阅和引用；还有读者与我联系索要论文。学术界的关注也促使我考虑出版博士论文。今天，重读 20 年前的博士论文，当时艰辛攻书的情景历历在目；也感到论文写得还是比较扎实的。除措辞上进行了少许修改外，补充了一些新内容。补充的内容主要是对近年学术界出版的有关新作的介绍和引述。对论文的结构稍做调整，将论文的结论分为两个部分：第七章和结论；在结论的最后部分增补了近年来研究工作中的一些体会。

本书主要考察 1790 年至 1820 年间英国人对中国的评价。这个时期是中英关系的一个特殊时期，英国派遣两个使团来到中国。而此后直到鸦片战争，英国再未派使团来华。这也是英国人观察、了解、评价中国的一个特殊时期。这个时期是英国汉学产生与发展的初期，是英人评华发生重大转折的阶段。在 17、18 世纪，欧洲曾经长期流行“中国热”，许多欧洲学者如莱布尼兹、伏尔泰等对中国做过高度的评价，而进入 19 世纪中国在欧洲受到的批评和贬斥却越来越多。本书考察的英人评华的时间正处于这个西方人看中国的大转折时期。第一章考察英国来华的两位大使马戛尔尼和阿美士德及当时英国政界的两位代表人物亨利·邓达斯和卡斯尔雷勋爵对中国的看法。第二至四章分别考察两个使团的其他成员、英国其他有关作者、传教士以及著名的评论杂志等对中国的评价。第五章分析了英人评华中存在差异和分歧的原因。在这约 30 年间，英国对中国的评价发生了明显变化，总体上讲，评价越来越低，批评和贬斥之声越来越高。第六章则考察和分析了英人评华发生这种变化的原因。第七章做了三个方面的简单比较：一是



与当时英国人对日本的评价进行比较；二是与 1820 年至鸦片战争前夕的英人评华进行比较；三是与今天历史学家对当时中国的看法进行比较。

西方人评价中国是中西历史学家关注的一个热点学术问题。长期以来已有不少研究成果问世，其中主要研究成果在本书的前言中做了介绍；我的博士论文完成以来，中西方学术界有一些新的研究成果问世，本书也做了一定的介绍。本书的特点是，比较深入广泛地考察了一个特殊时期英国人对中国的评价。而且，不是只考察几个著名人物的看法，而是考察了能够查阅到的几乎所有有关作者的看法。因此，本书能够做到比较全面地揭示当时英国人对中国的评价。本书的考察揭示了英人评华时存在明显的不同看法，揭示了英国对中国评价的发展变化状况。这是不能通过简单考察几个著名人物的对华评价所能够发现或揭示的。

英国人在评价中国时，有意识或无意识地运用了自身的标准。这有两层含义，一是每位作者评华时有自己的标准，二是英国人总体上讲运用了英国或者说西方的标准。英国的对华评价之所以在这 30 年间发生了变化，重要原因也是英人评华的标准发生了变化；之所以同一个时期的英国人对中国有不同的看法，也是因为很大程度上运用了不同的标准。因而，在博士论文中，我提出了一个概念，叫做“自我标准”（‘self-criterion’）。可以说英人评华时运用的是“自我标准”。当然，这并不是说每位作者都一定具有“欧洲中心论”观念或“东方学”倾向。实际上，不管是赞扬还是贬斥中国，都可能运用“自我标准”。

在研究英人评华的过程当中，我逐渐意识到英人评华中的差异和矛盾，可以说是一种文明冲突的体现。这一体会在后来发表的有关论文中有所阐发。在我看来，在人类历史发展长河中，文明冲突是一种客观存在。各种文明都是人类劳动的成果，是人类智慧的结晶，文明本身是“无辜的”。但不同文明具有不同的语言文字、风俗习惯、宗教信仰等文化因素，因而相互之间存在差异，在接触和交流时，就会有矛盾、产生冲突。从某种意义上讲，这是一种纯文化意义上的文明冲突。这种纯文化意义上的文明冲突随着不同文明之间的相互交流、相互融合和共同进步将会逐步消失。但是，人类社会中的文明冲突，主

要不是纯粹文化意义上的文明冲突，而是具有不同文化认同的国家、民族、社会、群体之间的利益冲突。这种冲突可能表现为经济、政治、宗教甚至军事上的。它们体现出文明冲突的表象，但实质上是利益冲突。美国学者塞缪尔·亨廷顿的文明冲突论，比较清晰地揭示了文明冲突的表象，却掩盖了文明冲突的实质。

这样的文明冲突是直接的、显性的。在人类社会的历史发展长河中，还存在着间接的、隐性的文明冲突。这种间接的、隐性的文明冲突，不是存在于具有不同文化认同的国家、民族、社会、群体之间，而是存在于具有相同文化认同的国家、民族、社会、群体之内。这种冲突表现为一个国家、一个民族、一个社会、一个群体内部的矛盾和斗争。但这种内部的矛盾和斗争是与外部的文明存在分不开的，在一定程度上也是由外在文明引起的或激化、强化的。我把这样的文明冲突称作“间接文明冲突”。这个时期英人评华中的差异和分歧在一定程度上或从一定意义上讲，正是间接文明冲突的一种表现。中国这个文明存在可以说在一定程度上会影响到英国人对自身社会的态度和看法。显而易见，当时一些英国人试图用中国的例子来批评英国现实社会，用赞扬中国的方式来影射英国社会，或者通过批评和贬斥中国来赞扬和肯定英国现实。从这种意义上讲，中国这个文明存在或多或少对英国社会内部的矛盾与冲突产生了影响。这样的“间接文明冲突”尚不为学术界所重视，其规律和表现形式还需要进行深入的探讨。加强对间接文明冲突的研究将有利于我们认识人类社会演变规律。

一个国家对另一个国家的评价会影响其对另一个国家的政策。所以，从一个国家对另一个国家的评价中可以窥知或预感到这个国家对另一个国家的态度和政策的发展变化走向。本著所考察的时期是英国在东方进行大规模殖民扩张的时期，也是英国试图用外交方式打开中国大门达到其殖民扩张目的的时期。在这一时期，英国先后派遣了两个使团到中国。当通过外交手段不能达到目的时，英国人则考虑用武力方式打开中国大门。这一点从英人评华的发展变化中是可以看出来的。

值得注意的是当时在英人评华中已经出现了“妖魔化”中国的现象，一些人用极端贬斥的语言来评论和描述中国社会和中国人。这种“妖魔化”现象是殖民主义意识形态的一种表现，对中国进行“妖魔

化”是为当时英国殖民主义服务的。当今世界霸权主义者也是在用“妖魔化”他国的方式为其实现霸权主义目的服务。

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张顺洪

2010 年 10 月于北京



## PREFACE

**T**his work is my PhD thesis which I completed in the late 1980s at the Department of History, Birkbeck College, University of London under the supervision of Dr. James Sturges. I have occasionally considered publishing it, but have been unable to do so due to one reason or another; chiefly, I have long been very much preoccupied with undertaking other research work. However, the thesis has not been ignored by the academic circles. It has been consulted and quoted by both foreign and domestic researchers and appeared in the bibliographies of a number of publications and theses. On some occasions, I was even asked by the readers to provide a copy of it to them. This is of course a great encouragement for me to make up my mind to publish it twenty years after it was written. Furthermore, I am able, in the end, to find some time to make certain revisions and add new information.

The work makes a detailed survey of British views and perceptions of China during the period roughly from the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first two decades of the nineteenth century. This is a special period in the history of both Sino-British re-

lations and British estimation of China. During the period, two British missions, the Macartney and Amherst embassies, were sent to China and a number of publications were brought out by the members of the embassies, and roused among the British public great interest in China. The members of the embassies, especially those of the Macartney embassy, played a crucial role in the formation and transition of British images of China. This is also indeed a crucial period within an era of European re-estimation of China which had long been highly praised by many celebrated European writers. This re-estimation in general took place in the second half of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century; China was going down in European estimation. The first British mission, the Macartney embassy, did play an important role in this transition of European views on China.

Western views on China have long been an attractive theme of academic inquiry and still attractive to researchers. When I was writing my PhD thesis, there had been already many writings concerning Western views on China and since then, there have been some new publications. Most of them are examined or mentioned in this work. None of these publications, however, have surveyed in detail the British views on China during the time of the two British embassies to China. Some of them did touch British views of this period on China, usually through a brief survey or discussion of the observations or comments on China left by a few well-known figures. This work, however, made an extensive examination of British views on China at the time. While preparing my PhD thesis, I consulted extensively British writings of the period on China published or unpublished which I could find then, including those written by both famous figures and the ordinary ones who can be little known to today's historians and general readers. Based on wide investigations, this work makes a detailed comparison of the different views among British writers on China and reveals the changes of British perceptions of China within the period. Reasons for the disparities and changes in British views on China are analyzed in the context of British social changes and imperial expansion. This kind of extensive survey of the British views on China has indeed ena-

bled me to find something in history which could be hardly recognized through a brief scan at some of the materials or only the writings of a few figures.

In writing my thesis, I was most indebted to my supervisor, Dr. James Sturgis and I have been grateful for his constant and attentive supervision. I particularly thank him for his patience in marking the several drafts of my thesis. I would also like to thank Professor T. B. Barrett and Dr. David M. Anderson for their valued suggestions. To Robert Bickers and Paul Molley I am grateful for reading my draft thesis and for their criticism. I should, as well, thank Douglas M. Peers with whom I had very useful discussions when he was writing a PhD thesis in London. I should also express my great gratitude to Dr. Ng Chin-keong who was then teaching at the Department of History, National University of Singapore, for his kind instruction and advice on my research during his academic visit to London.

The three abbreviations appearing in this work are IOLR (India Office Library and Records), NLI (National Library of Ireland), PROL (Public Record Office Library, London). The Chinese names and terms in this work are generally rendered in Pinyin romanization, with the exception of only a few words such as Macao, which have become established English usages. But in quotations and book titles, original spellings are maintained whatever they appeared to be.

**Shunhong Zhang**

October, 2010

## INTRODUCTION

**T**he Chinese have not hitherto had very fair play in Europe. The first missionaries, from the natural propensity of all discoverers to magnify the importance of their discovery, gave a most exaggerated account of their merits and attainments; and then came a set of philosophers, who, from their natural love of paradox, and laudable zeal to depreciate that part of their species with which they were best acquainted, eagerly took up and improved upon the legends of the holy fathers, till they had not only exalted those remote Asiatics above all European competition, but had transformed them into a sort of biped Houyhnhnms—the creatures of pure reason and enlightened beneficence. This extravagance, of course, provoked an opposite extravagance; and . . . others, not contented with denying the virtues and sciences of the Chinese, called equally in question their numbers, their antiquity, and their manual dexterity; and represented them as among the most contemptible and debased of the barbarians, to whom all but Europe seemed to have been allotted in perpetuity. More moderate and rational opinions at length suc-

ceeded; and, when our embassy entered the country in 1793, the intelligent men who composed it were as little inclined, we believe, to extol the Chinese, from childish admiration, or out of witty malice, as to detract from their real merits, because they appeared under an outlandish aspect, or had been overpraised by some of their predecessors.<sup>1</sup>

This remark was made by the *Edinburgh Review* in 1810 when it reviewed *Ta Tsing Leu Lee*, or *The Penal Code of China* translated by George Thomas Staunton. Here the reviewer pointed out concisely both the changes and the reasons for such changes in European views on China before the Macartney embassy (1792 – 1794). This thesis concentrates on an examination of the ‘more moderate and rational’ views of British writers on China during the period of the Macartney and Amherst embassies from the 1790s to the early 1820s.

From the quotation, it can be seen that the reviewer strongly derided the Jesuits and philosophes for their ‘childish admiration’ of China. In their reassessment of China during the time of the two embassies, many British writers indeed rejected the favourable opinions of the Jesuits and the Enlightenment writers, although the sources provided by the missionaries were still often quoted by them. For instance, the tendency of John Barrow’s *Travels in China* was to ‘correct the extravagant exaggerations contained in the writings of the missionaries (Jesuits), and adopted by some of the greatest philosophers of the Continent’.<sup>2</sup> In his *History of British India*, James Mill condemned the Jesuits for being eager to propagate ‘the most hyperbolical ideas’ of the arts, sciences and institutions of China, and Voltaire for making the Chinese an object of ‘the loudest and most unqualified praise’.<sup>3</sup> In the opinion of the *Quarterly Review*, the Jesuits had told the readers in Europe only what they read in Chinese books, but concealed the facts daily appearing before them; they had revealed to Europe the theory of Chinese government but not its practice, and the ideas of morality, not the conduct of the people. Yet China was a country where theory and practice were more at variance than anywhere else.<sup>4</sup>

This period was an important stage in the British cultural investigation of China. Not only were more direct observations made by British travellers in the interior parts of China, but the study of the Chinese language and the translation of Chinese works were undertaken by some individuals. Before the Macartney embassy, as the *Quarterly Review* asserted, Britain cared little about China so long as 'Bohea and Souchong', two sorts of tea, were sufficiently supplied from that country.<sup>5</sup> But in 1822 the *Monthly Review* could state that during the last thirty years, 'an extraordinary degree of light has been thrown on the history, the government, and the manners of China'.<sup>6</sup> William Jones once remarked that it was to France that Britain was indebted for 'almost every effort that has been made to elucidate the language and literature of China', whereas by 1814 the *Quarterly Review* could boast that within the past twenty years Britain had paid off with interest the literary debt of two centuries.<sup>7</sup> At the same time the *Quarterly Review* claimed that in England 'we have reason to believe the Chinese language and literature have already made much greater progress than on the continent'.<sup>8</sup> When Macartney left England for China nobody in Britain understood Chinese. But afterwards a number of individuals took up the learning of the language and some of them, such as Robert Morrison, Joshua Marshman, George T. Staunton, F. K. Davis and Stephen Weston, gradually mastered it. A few works on the Chinese language were published; the most prominent of them were perhaps Morrison's *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language*, one volume of which came out in 1815, and Marshman's *Clavis Sinica* (1814). The study of a language 'was not to be undertaken simply from the etymological point of view, but in the context of what was known about the stages of human development'.<sup>9</sup> During this period some writers indeed considered the language and the stage of civilization of a nation as closely related. For instance, George T. Staunton believed that the great multitude of characters of the Chinese language was a sign of the high achievement of Chinese civilization whereas John Barrow assumed that the immutability of the language of China had had the effect of retarding the progress of the society. At the same time several Chinese works were translated in-



to English, such as *The Penal Code of China* (by G. T. Staunton in 1810) and 'An Heir in his Old Age' : *A Chinese Drama* (by F. K. Davis, 1817).

Despite such progress in the study of Chinese language and literature, British sinology of this period could be said to be still at a very early stage. This was well recognized by the *Monthly Review* when it remarked in 1822 that 'the attempt to naturalize the literature of China is only in its first beginnings; and we look forwards with sanguine hopes to the discovery and display of treasures, that have been for ages hidden from Europe by the thick veil of a language' which it was once ignorantly supposed by Europeans that they could never understand.<sup>10</sup> In 1820 the *Indo-Chinese Gleaner* even lamented that in Britain neither national colleges nor private institutions had any student of the Chinese language.<sup>11</sup>

This period of the two embassies was also a time when some British writers were trying to trace the origin of the Chinese people who were once considered by John Webb to be the descendants of Noah.<sup>12</sup> The Jesuits thought that the Chinese came from the same stock as the Hebrews and Arabs while M. Pauw, a continental Orientalist, stated that the Chinese were 'originally Tartars descending in wild clans from the steeps of Imaus'.<sup>13</sup> In the view of William Jones, Hindus, Chinese and Japanese were from the same stem which might be traced to Iran, a common centre, probably from where all these three nations as well as the Arabs and the Tartars 'diverged in various directions about four thousand years ago'.<sup>14</sup> John Barrow, however, took the view that the Chinese were of a Tartar breed, distinct both from the Hindus and the Egyptians.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile many British writers were also endeavouring to assess the state of Chinese civilization. For instance, John Barrow declared that one of the purposes of his *Travels in China* was to put China into a proper rank of civilization. The result of James Mill's philosophical inquiry of China was that it was little advanced beyond the infancy of an agricultural society.<sup>16</sup> A more common view among British writers was that Chinese civilization was more advanced than those of other Asian nations, but less so than that of Europe. This was well brought out by the *Quarterly Review* in 1821

when it wrote that the Chinese were ‘a shrewd, an industrious, and an ingenious people, far superior to all other oriental nations, whether Pagan or Mahometan, however low we may be pleased to place them on our scale of civilization’.<sup>17</sup>

During this period there existed a general incentive for publishing works on China. It arose from a widespread curiosity concerning China among the British public, and an increase in the contact, especially commercial, between the two countries. Encouraged by the Macartney embassy, more writers became interested in investigating the culture of this distant oriental society. As the advertisement of William Winterbotham’s *View of China* pointed out, ‘the Embassy has given rise to a laudable spirit of inquiry with respect to the Chinese empire, which we have no doubt will ultimately prove advantageous to British commerce’.<sup>18</sup> The advertisement went on to say that the volume had been compiled in order to aid the inquirers in their pursuit and provide the public with the means of obtaining a general knowledge of China. To some writers, such as William Jones and Frederic Shoberl, to write on China was only a part of their researches. For instance, Frederic Shoberl edited *The World in Miniature*, only two volumes of which were on China. In his *History of British India*, James Mill made comments on China merely to compare it with India in support of his arguments on the latter. It should be mentioned that to write about China was a way for some writers to develop or prove their ideas, philosophical, political, social and so on.

Furthermore, this was a period in which Britain and China started to have diplomatic contacts, but the relations between the two countries generally deteriorated. Such a change in relationship played an integral part in British views on China. As early as 1787 Colonel Charles Cathcart was sent as Ambassador to China, but he failed to arrive due to his death in the course of his voyage. George Macartney and William Pitt Amherst went to China as Ambassadors respectively in the years 1792 to 1794 and 1816 to 1817; the former had an audience with the Emperor of China while the latter was rejected and immediately left Beijing. They both failed to achieve the objectives of establishing a diplomatic relation with China and

improving trading conditions. The contacts between the two countries were still basically confined to trade at Guangzhou (Canton) where the East India Company had its factory and its representative, the Select Committee, who could be said to be 'unpaid diplomats' of the British government.<sup>19</sup> The Company's monopoly of the China trade was renewed in 1793. The trade at Canton was of great importance to Britain in general and to the East India Company in particular; tea from China provided about ten percent of the total revenue of England and the whole profit of the Company itself.<sup>20</sup> However, the balance of trade was still in favour of China.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile British merchants, whether private traders or those of the Company, could trade only with the Hong merchants. There were constant complaints among British merchants against the restricted condition of trade at Guangzhou, and quarrels between the Chinese and the British took place now and then. In addition, except for the two embassies, British visitors, whether missionaries or other individual travellers, were prevented from penetrating into the interior of the country. The embassies themselves travelled in the country only along certain guided roads. These restrictions on travel and trade, together with diplomatic failure, had a tendency to fuel British observers' criticism of China. In 1805 when it reviewed Barrow's *Travels in China*, the *Eclectic Review* pointed out that from the time the Chinese refused to enter a commercial treaty with the British, the author 'could see scarcely anything wise, or great, or good, in the whole empire' of China.<sup>22</sup>

There have been in modern times a number of publications which consider Western views in general, or British views in particular, on China, such as Adolf Reichwein's *China and Europe: Intellectual and Artistic Contacts in the Eighteenth Century* (translated into English in 1925), G. F. Hudson's *Europe and China: A Survey of their Relations from the Earliest Times to 1800* (1931), V. G. Kiernan's *The Lords of Human Kind: European Attitudes towards the Outside World in the Imperial Age* (1969) and Nigel Cameron's *Barbarians and Mandarins: Thirteen Centuries of Western Travellers in China* (1970). Another historian, Raymond Dawson, has investigated in his *Chinese Chameleon* (1967) the changing Western