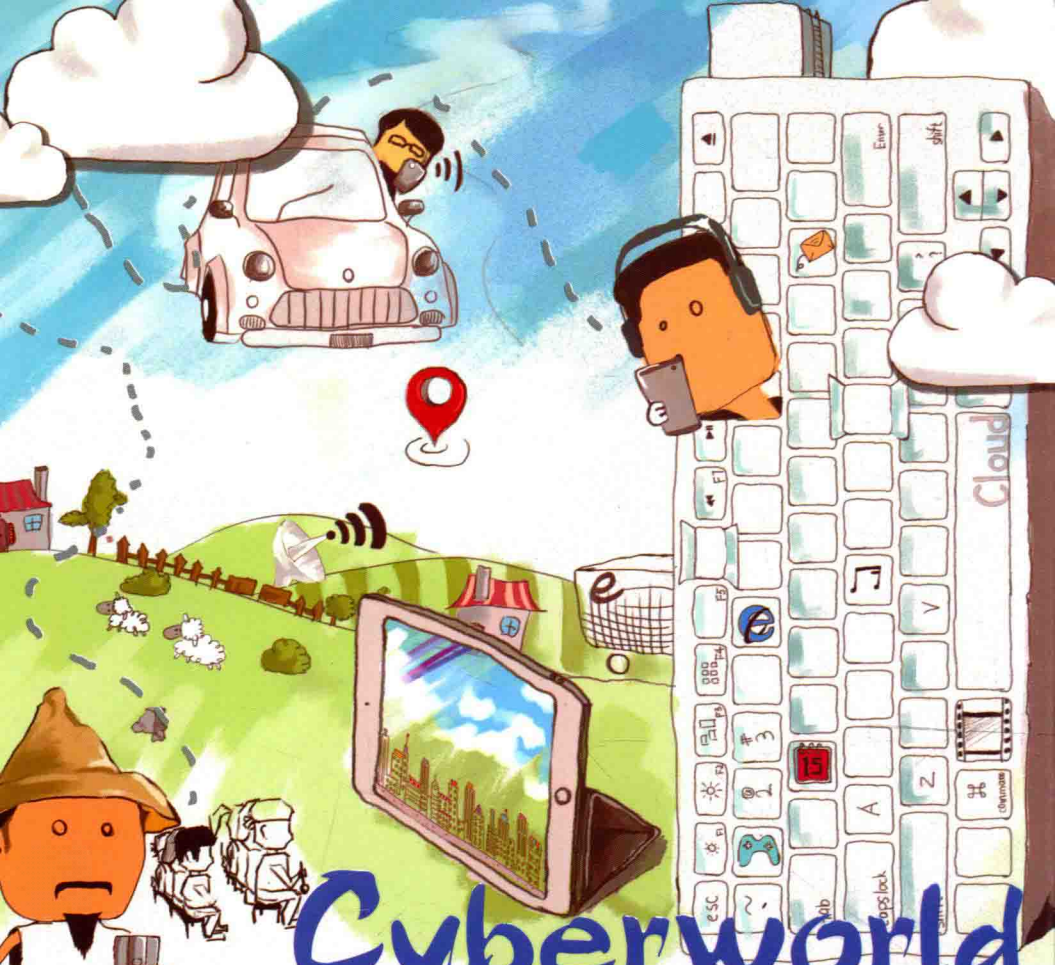

Cyberworld Chin@ Embraces the Internet

Li Jun

China Intercontinental Press

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William Ding (Ding Lei), former CEO of NetEase, one of the leading Chinese Internet portals, 1 April 2002.

Wang Zhidong, the president of Dianji Technology Co., Ltd (the former CEO and president of Sina.com), in Beijing, August, 2007.

Charles Zhang (Zhang Chaoyang), Chairman and President of Sohu.com, during TV talk show Boss Town in Shanghai, 31 July 2007.

Jack Ma (Ma Yun), Chairman of Alibaba Group, speaks during a meeting at the Taobao City, the new office park of Alibaba, in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, 27 May 2014.

Robin Li (Li Yanhong), Chairman and CEO of Baidu, is pictured at a press conference during the Second Session of the 12th National Committee of the CPPCC (Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference) in Beijing, China.

Pony Ma (Ma Huateng), the CEO of Tencent was receiving an exclusive interview in Shenzhen head office, 9 June 2011.

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Chen Tianqiao, the president of Shanda Corporation, ranked the 10th place in China Rich List.

Shi Yuzhu, the CEO of Giant Interactive Group Inc. in Guangzhou, 23 July 2005.

Fang Xingdong, president of China's first blog site Bokee.com during Zhejiang Business Leaders Forum in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, 18 April 2007.

Lei Jun, founder and CEO of Xiaomi Technology, speaks during the Global Mobile Internet Conference 2013 in Beijing, China, 7 May 2013.

Liu Qiangdong, CEO of JD.com, holds a metallic version of the company's mascot, Joy, during the IPO for his company at the Nasdaq MarketSite, in New York, 22 May 2014.

"Wage Emperor" Tang Jun gave an excellent speech and signed copies of his book in China (Wuhan) Periodical Fair, 15 September 2013. In picture Tang was receiving an exclusive interview.

Gong Haiyan, founder and former CEO of online dating and matchmaking site Jiayuan.com, smiles during an interview at her office in Beijing, China, 4 February 2013.

Introduction

On September 19, 2014, the Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba officially landed in the New York Stock Exchange with total financing of $25.03 billion and became the world's largest ever IPO, which changed the global Internet landscape - two of the three world's most valuable Internet companies are from China - Alibaba and Tencent, ranking only after Google.

In 2014 many journalists and editors have left traditional media or publishers where they have worked for years and defected to the Internet industry.

November 11, which is originally known as "Singles' Day", has now become an annual feast for online shopping. On November 11, 2013, the total sales of "double 11" on Taobao reached 35.018 billion yuan, 4.5 times that of 110 key business service enterprises in Beijing, 40 times that of 9 major shopping malls in Guangzhou and nearly 100 times that of 9 shopping malls in Chengdu during the National Day Golden Week in 2013.

The Internet has created countless legends in both China and the rest of the world. It whips up surging waves devastatingly and quietly. In future mobile shops will be opened on mobile phones. You may accomplish nothing if you underestimate it - Jack Ma's words appear to be a joke but reveal the profound mystery of the Internet. It is led and supported by young and free men. Like sunshine, autumn rain and the air you breathe, you cannot leave it, forget it and live without it. The Internet has revolutionized our way of living and thinking. Where the Internet will lead us in a number of years?

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Chapter I

The Beginning of Chinese Internet

Cyberworld
– China Embraces the Internet

I The Past and Present Internet

Personal computers (PC), known as the "third wave", sprang up in 1960s in the United States. It has profoundly changed the way people think and live. Traditional PC was self-sufficient. Users used to buy software from software companies in Silicon Valley and install them on their hard drives. Computers were used as personal tools for work and entertainment. While the isolated state did not last long before people found out its greater value and potential.

Joseph Carl Robnett Licklider, an American computer scientist and a previous psychologist, came up with "thinking centers of computers" as early as in 1960, "Networks formed by such centers will emerge. They will be interconnected by broadband communication lines and connected to individual users through telephone lines." He described the Internet before it was born. In his view, PC served only an access to global information Internet. ARPANET, the ancestor of the Internet, was born in October 1969. Initially it was just a research tool funded by the U.S. Department of Defense. Soon users found that connecting several personal

computers made their research and communication more convenient and efficient and the storage of information more abundant and much faster. Then they connected computers of some higher educational institutes to expand the scope of application of the ARPANET. People were surprised to find the ARPANET soon became an active research and social platform with higher efficiency. Subsequently its scope of application was further expanded to discuss wine, science fictions and diverse topics. The commercial Internet was born. It is through people's daily application and communication that the Internet achieved great progress. CompuServe was the first company to provide ordinary computer users with e-mail service in 1979 and it broke new ground again in 1980 as the first to offer real-time online chat. By 1996 countries around the world had been connected to the global Internet.

Now the Internet has increasingly become the core of the whole human society. For instance, everyday it helps companies, regardless of sizes, transfer money through banks; it helps international trade of trillions of dollars and it also controls the power grid. People depend so much on it that once it was destroyed the order of the whole world will be paralyzed. All sorts of new things, new vocabulary and new services emerge on the Internet every year to meet our traditional demand and bring us unimaginable new needs. Over the last 20 years, Internet has been developing rapidly in China. According to the latest figures, China has more than 3.5 million websites. Three of the world's top ten Internet companies are from China and the number of Chinese netizens has exceeded 600 million, ranking first in the world. This book will show you the 20-year history of the Chinese

Internet and how the Internet has changed the way people live and communicate. It will continue changing and probably will make something revolutionary happen.

II The First Year of Chinese Commercial Internet

Insiders usually call 1995 the first year of Chinese commercial Internet, because in January of this year China Telecom opened two Internet nodes in Beijing and Shanghai, which was just a response to the Sino-US ministerial talks to strengthen the mutual opening of the two countries. Thus, the significant beginning of Chinese Internet started in such a casual way.

Before that China had interconnected twice with the Internet, which, however, did not lead a national trend because they served only part of elites like scientists and professors. Nevertheless, the two Internet nodes unveiled the mysterious Internet and provided the public with an effective way to meet their needs on the Internet.

Another reason why 1995 was recognized as the first year of Chinese Internet is China Telecom began to reform in this year. In March 1995, the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MPT) had applied an independent trademark for China Telecom even though it had not been spun off from the MPT. While inside the China Telecom, especially in those data branches newly established in local subsidiaries of China Telecom, there were a lot of young men who were creative, passionate and had a strong desire to start a business. They are remembered as the driving force of the Chinese Internet. Their cities, Shenzhen, Hangzhou and Guangzhou, are not

only forerunners in early stage but also frontrunners today in Chinese Internet industry.

1995 is also the beginning year for start-ups of Chinese Internet. Generally we call those who risked their fortune in business the third wave of entrepreneurs since reform and opening up. The first wave found "no way out"; the second wave were encouraged to go into business by the speech given by Deng Xiaoping during his south China tour; while most of the third wave possessed solid foundation of expert knowledge and social relations. Most of them were returnees and naturally tended to go into the entirely new ground - the Internet. It was in this year that Jack Ma (Ma Yun), the then English teacher in college, and William Ding (Ding Lei), the then staff in China Telecom (Ningbo), ventured into this field. It was also in this year that Zhang Shuxin, Wan Guoping began the ISP (Internet Service Provider) business. Since this year a force to change the landscape of Chinese business started to germinate. Since this year the Chinese Internet entrepreneurs never stopped their steps to connect with and catch up with the world.

III The Growth of the Internet in China

As the opening of the two Internet nodes in Beijing and Shanghai, the first Internet service providers made their debuts, putting a show of glory, dispute and failure.

Even though a large number of Internet elites such as William Ding, Jack Ma and Pony Ma (Ma Huateng) plunged into Internet business in 1995, they did not set the course of Chinese Internet

but a group of Internet pioneers.

Among those pioneers the most representative are Tian Suning and Ding Jian, the two founders of AsiaInfo. Different from the geek William Ding and e-businessman Jack Ma, they are returnees. Tian studied environmental protection at Texas Tech University in the United States in 1988. He turned from an environmentalist to an Internet believer because of a speech from Al Gore, the then Senator and later Vice President of the United States. Gore said the information highway would change the whole country once it became a national policy. Tian was inspired. He knew a little about the Internet in Texas Tech University and realized it would be a potentially good opportunity to narrow the gap between China and America. So he adjusted his academic vision to help China establish its information highway. He published a long paper, "US Programme for 'Information Superhighway' and Its Inspirations", on *Guangming Daily* in 1993, which was the first introduction on the Internet in China. His idea was very simple: the Internet would change the world and if China seized this opportunity, it might keep pace with the world. Tian established the AsiaInfo together with Ding, who studied in the United States and shared the same obsession with Internet technology. Tian was a super agitator while Ding, much skilled in technology. They were perfect match. They ambitiously wanted to "take the Internet technology back to China" and aimed at "popularize the Internet all over China", which sounded ridiculous at the time, but later they really made it.

They purchased a set of network devices, modulated Cisco routers, connected with America, Beijing and Shanghai via satellites,

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