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KEY ECONOMIC AREAS IN CHINESE HISTORY

Ch'ao-ting Chi



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(120 周年纪念版)

出版说明

商务印书馆自 1897 年始创,以“昌明教育,开启民智”为宗旨,于建馆翌年便出版了《马氏文通》,这部学术经典既是中国学术现代化的标志之一,也开启了商务印书馆百年学术出版的序幕。

其后,商务印书馆一直与中华现代学术相伴而行,出版了大批具有鲜明原创精神并富于学术建树的经典著作,诸多开山之著、奠基之作都是在本馆首次问世。这些学术经典的出版,使本馆得以引领现代学术发展,激动社会思想潮流,参与民族新文化的构筑,也分享中国学界的历史荣光。

1949 年以后,本馆虽以译译世界学术名著、编纂中外辞书为侧重,但原创学术著作的出版从未止步。2009 年起,我馆陆续出版“中华现代学术名著丛书”,全面整理中华现代学术成果,深入探寻现代中国的百年学脉。

丛书收录上自晚清下至 1980 年代末中国原创学术名著(包括外文著作),以人文社会科学为主,涵盖文学、历史学、哲学、法学、政治学、经济学、社会学、教育学、地理学、心理学、科学史等众多学科。意在辨章学术,考镜源流,收录各学科学派的名家名作,展现传统文化的新变,追溯现代文化的根基。丛书立足于精选、精编、精校,冀望无论多少年,皆能傲立于书架,更与“汉译世界学术名著丛书”共相辉映,昭示中华学术与世界学术于思想性和独创性上皆可等量齐观,为中国乃至东方学术在世界范围内赢得应有的地位。

2017 年 2 月 11 日,商务印书馆迎来了 120 岁的生日。为纪念本馆与中华现代学术风雨同行的这段历程,我们整体推出“中华现代学术名

著丛书”120 周年纪念版(200 种),既有益于文化积累,也便于研读查考,同时向长期支持丛书出版的诸位学界通人致以感激和敬意。

“新故相推,日生不滞。”两个甲子后的今天,商务印书馆又站在了一个新的历史节点上。传承前辈的出版精神,迎接时代的新使命,且行且思,我们责无旁贷。

商务印书馆编辑部

2017 年 11 月

凡 例

一、“中华现代学术名著丛书”收录晚清以迄 20 世纪 80 年代末,为中华学人所著,成就斐然、泽被学林之学术著作。入选著作以名著为主,酌量选录名篇合集。

二、入选著作内容、编次一仍其旧,唯各书卷首冠以作者照片、手迹等。卷末附作者学术年表和题解文章,诚邀专家学者撰写而成,意在介绍作者学术成就,著作成书背景、学术价值及版本流变等情况。

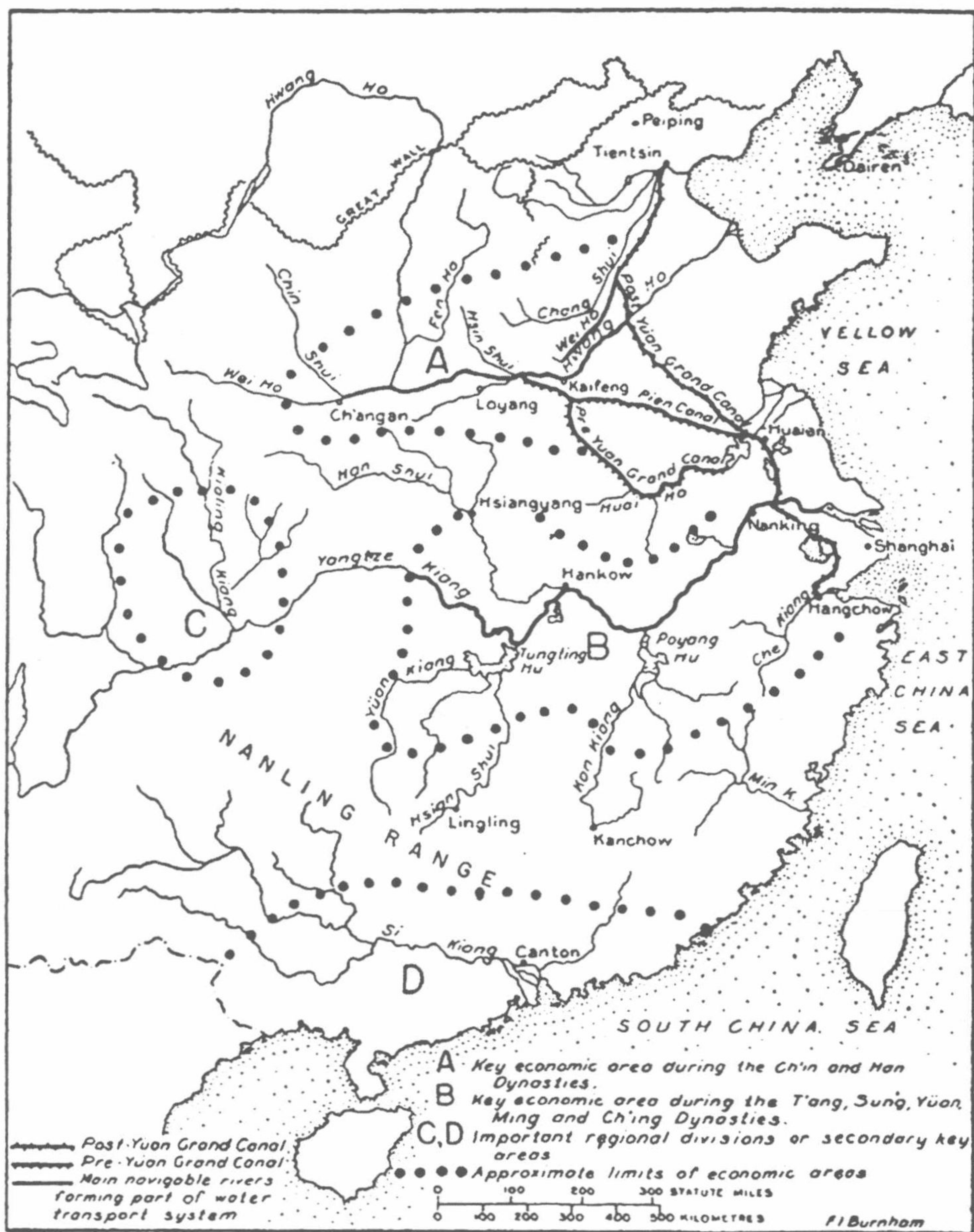
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Map showing the location of the Key Economic Area during the various periods of Chinese History

TO
HARRIET
WITH
LOVE, RESPECT AND GRATITUDE

PREFACE

THE present work offers the conception of the dynamics of the Key Economic Area as an aid to the understanding of Chinese economic history. By tracing the development of the Key Economic Area through an historical study of the construction of irrigation and flood-control works and transport canals, it aims to show the function of the Key Economic Area as an instrument of control of subordinate areas and as a weapon of political struggle, to indicate how it shifts, to reveal its dynamic relation to the problem of unity and division in Chinese history, and to give, on the basis of this approach, a concrete and historical-descriptive analysis of one phase of the economic development of China. The book does not purport to give a new interpretation of Chinese history as a whole. However, if the concept of the Key Economic Area proves helpful to the solution of one of the fundamental problems in Chinese history, it cannot but affect the understanding and interpretation of the whole process of Chinese historical development. In order to place this theory in its proper perspective and to indicate its possible extension and further application, it is perhaps better at this point for the author to state his general approach to historical economic studies in China.

Man makes his own history, not only under conditions which history hands down to him, but also through the rewriting of past history. This is because history itself is historical and can only be understood by each epoch, and be of service to it, in the light of its own experience. New experience gives rise to new historical insight, and in the light

of new understanding, new problems can be formulated, old and new evidence resifted, and significant facts selected out of a multitude of seemingly meaningless data. Thus history must be continually rewritten in order to answer the need of man in each specific epoch. The rewriting of history is part of man's efforts to harness the forces of history, and this task becomes particularly urgent at each turning point in the historical process.

Ever since the "opening of China" in the middle of the nineteenth century, the problem of rewriting Chinese history has loomed large on the intellectual horizon not only of China, but of the whole world. Capitalist foreign trade and investment, through its exploitation of the world market, has created an interdependent world economy and has thrown the unevenly and differently developed socio-economic set-ups of various peoples into one turbulent current of world history. Chinese history is no longer the history of just one country, but it has merged into the stream of world history. "Western" institutions have made serious inroads into Chinese life, which, in turn, has become an important factor in the life of the "West." The far-reaching consequences of the situation were epitomized in the Great Revolution of 1925-1927 and its subsequent developments, which brought to the fore, for the first time in centuries, the most fundamental problems of the dynamics of Chinese society.

Economic history, or dialectical economics, recognizes the fact that fundamental problems of China to-day cannot be understood merely by studying contemporary conditions, but must be approached historically through attempts to solve the basic questions

of Chinese history raised by the demands of our epoch, and to discover the dominant tendencies which govern the development of Chinese economy. The main objective of such a study, of course, is historical and socio-economic synthesis.

But synthesis and analysis are two phases of the same process and cannot be mechanically separated. Synthesis signifies building up or organization, while analysis means breaking down or separation. But, since both exclude chaos and wanton behaviour, it is clear that building up is impossible without first having broken down and understood the meaning of the parts, and it is equally true that taking apart is impossible without first having an idea of how the parts are put together. Applying this principle to historical writing, it means that synthesis involves the systematic merging of leading ideas which result from analytical study of special problems, while analysis cannot be fruitful without a general approach to guide its labours in working through a maze of otherwise meaningless data. The apparent contradiction between the two concepts is really a reflection of their dialectical relationship; both represent necessary phases of the same process of scientific investigation. A book may be primarily a work of synthesis or of analysis, but an investigation can be fruitful only when the intimate connection between the two concepts is expressly or tacitly recognized.

Although the final purpose of the author's study of economic history is synthesis, the present book is primarily a work of analysis. It began as an attempt to trace the development of irrigation and flood-control in Chinese history through an analytical study of the immense amount of untouched source material on the

subject hidden in the gazetteers (local historical geographies), special Chinese works on "water benefits," and the dynastic histories. The general direction of the author's researches naturally has been determined by his preconceptions and general method of approach, specifically by his realization of the importance of irrigation and water transportation in Chinese history. But it was only after a close examination of most of the available material in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., that the belief in the importance of water-control to Chinese history was confirmed and the conception of the Key Economic Area and its relation to unity and division in Chinese history developed in the author's mind. This book as it stands, which, except for minor changes, was completed in the middle of April 1934, represents the author's preliminary effort to define the concept, to study the geographical basis for water-control and economic regionalization in China, and to trace briefly the shifting of the Key Economic Area in Chinese history.

Thus the analytical study of source material on the history of water-control gave birth to a new concept which has in turn been used as a device to define the course of development of water-control. But a concept is like a lamp—once lit it does not illuminate merely one corner of the room. The concept of the Key Economic Area throws light on every fundamental problem in Chinese history. It emphasizes the local and regional character of Chinese economy. The First Emperor, Ch'in Shih Huang Ti (221-210 B.C.), successfully battered down the feudal barriers between the warring states, but the unity he achieved was a loose unity. It was not bound together by economic ties like those in a modern state, but was held together

by military and bureaucratic domination through the instrumentality of the control of the Key Economic Area. Such a unity cannot be enduring, and as soon as the supremacy of the Key Economic Area was challenged, the ruling power lost its place of mooring and source of supply. Division and chaos then became the order of the day until a new power rooted itself in a Key Economic Area and successfully used it as a weapon for re-establishing unity. This is the true meaning behind the classical Chinese saying that "A long period of unity must eventuate in division; a long period of division must eventuate in unity." It is an iron law describing accurately one of the fundamental movements in the semi-feudal phase of China's history, from the first Emperor to the breakdown of China's isolation in the last century.

The existence of the Key Economic Area motivated the geographical differentiation in the land system and methods of taxation, and accentuated the natural tendency toward uneven development of the different regions. It also affected the distribution of merchant capital and created varied conditions for its development. Differences in the land system, taxation and the degree of development of commercial and usurious capital meant differences in the social characteristics and power of the local ruling groups, differences in the degree of exploitation, and differences in the conditions of the life and work of the peasants, the overwhelming majority of the population. While these differences were never of such a nature as to alter the picture of an essentially homogeneous structure of society in the wide territory of China, they were sufficiently important to influence materially the development of the multifarious phases of the class

struggle, especially the peasant wars. Furthermore, although the theory of the Key Economic Area does not explain the persistent tendency to latifundia, the growth of merchant capital and forces retarding its development, the antagonisms between the bureaucracy, the landowners, the merchants, and the peasants, and the periodic decline and breakdown of internal economy—in a word, although this theory does not explain the class struggle, it does reveal one of the important influences shaping the course of development of that struggle.

Let us consider for a moment the influence of the Key Economic Area on the peasant wars, which have always been the culmination and sharpest expression of China's social crises, and, therefore, deserve to be studied as the corner-stones of Chinese history. When a socio-economic cycle, which usually coincided with a dynastic period, drew to a close, when exploitation of the peasants increased and production declined, when extravagance and corruption weakened the ruling power, and when bankruptcy faced the government and starvation confronted the pauperized population, the peasants usually took the road of rebellion, refusing to pay rent, taxes and debts, harassing and expropriating the rich and sacking centres of political power and administration. Such a movement usually started with a series of rebellions in various localities. Owing to the locally self-sufficient economy of the country, consolidation of the scattered forces of the peasants was difficult and speedy conclusion of any such struggle was well-nigh impossible. In the course of the protracted struggle, geographical and economic conditions of the localities limited the growth of certain groups and favoured the development of others. The struggle

was one against the government as well as a painful process of elimination among rival groups. Usually the group most favoured by geographical and economic advantages and able leadership emerged from the struggle as the master of the situation. The importance of the geographical locus is considered here not so much from the point of view of strategy as from the point of view of economics. When the problem is studied concretely, in a history of the peasant wars, which the author plans to do, it will be seen that the theory of the Key Economic Area will help an understanding of many hitherto unexplained or misunderstood events.

Thus, despite the fact that the question of regional relations is not the central question in Chinese history and the concept of the Key Economic Area cannot be the ruling idea in the interpretation of Chinese history as a whole, it is important to realize that under conditions of regional natural economy the theory has a special significance, advances considerably our understanding of the whole process of Chinese history, and provides a background for a study of the effects of the impact of imperialism and the problems of contemporary China. Before the full import of the idea can be realized, many articles and monographs dealing with specific phases of its application will have to be written. On the question of the history of water-control alone, the author has collected much more material than he has been able to use. The present volume can only be considered a beginning. Its ruling concept remains to be tested, to be related to other prevailing tendencies in Chinese history, and its manifold implications as outlined in the two foregoing paragraphs still have to be worked out. On the basis of these possibilities