MODERN CHINESE LEARNING

VILLAGE AND TOWN LIFE IN CHINA

Y.K.Leong L.K.Tao

SINCE1897 商務印書館 The Commercial Press

SELECTED WORKS OF MODERN CHINESE LEARNING

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L. K. Tao

(1887—1960)

Editorial Note

One hundred years ago, Zhang Zhidong tried to advocate Chinese learning by saying: "The course of a nation, be it bright or gloomy, the pool of talents, be it large or small, are about governance on the surface, and about learning at the root." At that time, the imperialist powers cast menacing eyes on our country, and the domestic situation was deteriorating. The quick infiltration of Western learning made the long-standing Chinese tradition come under heavy challenge. In those days, Chinese learning and Western learning stood side by side. Literature, history and philosophy split up, while many new branches of learning such as economics, politics and sociology were flourishing, which made many Chinese dazed. However, there appeared a vital and vigorous learning climate out of the confusing situation. It was at this critical moment that modern Chinese scholarship made the transition—by exchanging views, basing on profound contemplation and even with confrontation of idea and clash of views, the scholarship made continuous progress, bringing up a large number of persons of academic distinction and creating numerous innovative works. Changes in scholarship and in general modes of thinking made transition in all aspects of the society possible, thus laying a solid foundation for revitalizing China.

It's over a century since the journey of modern Chinese learning started, during which various schools of thought stood in great numbers, causing heated discussions. The journey sees schools of thought as well as relevant arguments rising and

falling, waxing and waning instantly, leaving complicated puzzles to followers. By studying and reviewing the selected works, one may gain new insights into that journey; and it is the editor's sincere hope that readers would ponder over the future by recalling the past. That's why we have compiled "Selected Works of Modern Chinese Learning". The effort includes masterpieces of celebrated scholars from diverse fields of study and different schools of thought. By tracing back to the source and searching for the basis of modern Chinese learning, we wish to present the dynamics between thought and time.

The series of "Selected Works of Modern Chinese Learning" includes works (both in Chinese and in foreign languages) of scholars from China—mainland, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan—and from overseas. These works are mostly on humanities and cover all fields of subjects, such as literary theory, linguistics, history, philosophy, politics, economics, jurisprudence, sociology, to name a few.

It has been a long-cherished wish of the Commercial Press to compile a series of "Selected Works of Modern Chinese Learning". Since its foundation in 1897, the Commercial Press has been privileged to have published numerous pioneering works and masterpieces of modern Chinese learning under the motto of "promoting education and enlightening people". The press has participated in and witnessed the establishment and development of modern Chinese learning. The series of "Selected Works of Modern Chinese Learning" is fruit of an effort to relay the editorial legacy and the cultural propositions of our senior generations. This series, sponsored by National Publication Foundation, would not be possible if there were no careful planning of the press itself. Neither would it be possible without extensive collaboration among talents of the academic circle. It is our deeply cherished hope that titles of this series

will keep their place on the bookshelves even after a long time. Moreover, we wish that this series and "Chinese Translations of World Classics" will become double jade in Chinese publishing history as well as in the history of the Commercial Press itself. With such great aspirations in mind, fearing that it is beyond our ability to realize them, we cordially invite both scholars and readers to extend your assistance.

Editorial Department of the Commercial Press

December 2010

PREFACE

MANY books have been written about China by Europeans. The present volume is a book about China by two Chinese. They are, moreover, Chinese who have had considerable opportunities of studying other forms of civilization than their own, having lived in England as students for some years. Mr. Tao obtained the B.Sc. degree in Economics at the University of London in 1913, and is now lecturing on Sociology in the University of Pekin. Mr. Leong took the same degree in 1914, and is still a student in the Sociological Department at the London School of Economics. Both have interested themselves especially in social philosophy and the comparative study of institutions, so that if they justly regard their own institutions with the feelings of patriotic Chinese, they are able equally to see them in relation to the customs of other peoples, and to review their merits and defects with a certain detachment. No doubt their point of view is not always that of the English reader. But, on the other hand, the point of view of Europeans who write on China is not that of Chinese, and for the full understanding of a great Empire, which,

politically and commercially, is becoming year by year a matter of greater importance to the West, the Chinese point of view is essential. No one is better fitted to give it to us than the Chinese student, educated in English ways, and particularly in English social thought, and yet remaining heart and soul a Chinese.

The book falls into two parts. Mr. Leong describes village life, the family, the clan, and the village society.[1] Mr. Tao deals more particularly with town administration and social life, and with the popular side of Chinese Buddhism. There is inevitably a little repetition here and there, because the pattern of Chinese society is strikingly uniform, and the town is nothing more than an enlarged village or agglomeration of villages, while the village itself is a state in miniature. In both the family as a great undying corporate unity, embracing the ancestors, the whole body of the living kindred, the unborn members who are to maintain its honour and perpetuate the memory of the forefathers, reveals itself as the heart of the Chinese social structure. Neither writer can get far from the family for long, whatever topic he is discussing, for all Chinese custom, all literature, ethics, art, religion, and government itself, start from the family life and end in it again. The central government, which has for centuries had a tribe of

[1] In Mr. Leong's chapters, a few passages have been included (by kind permisson of the Editor) from an article by Mr. Tao in the *Sociological Review* (1913), on "The Family in China."

barbarian invaders at its head, and is now, since the Revolution, hovering between despotism and disorder, falls in their account to the secondary place which is its due. The China that European statesmen know is the China of the official hierarchy, and how under such a hierarchy peace and civilization have maintained themselves through thousands of years, in a population as great as that of Europe, might well have puzzled diplomatists, if diplomatists ever concerned themselves with questions of intellectual or social interest. But the real China is not a centralized despotism, whether monarchical or republican in form, but a great aggregate of democratic communities, ordering their affairs peacefully and happily in the main, through the government of the heads of families. To the European observer the Chinese family is apt to appear mainly as an archaic structure, which may have served its turn in the past but is now an obstacle to progress. Its cult of ancestors figures as a variant on the primitive belief in ghosts; the authority of the father is held to imply the degradation of women, and the solidarity of the whole the repression of individual enterprise. Our writers give us the other side of the shield. They dwell on the ethical value of the family life, the spirit of personal self-sacrifice, derided in modern Europe, on which it rests; the provision for the aged, the poor, or the helpless which it affords; the colour and life that it gives even to foreign religions such

as Buddhism. They present the position of the Chinese woman in a new light, as enjoying a reality of authority and power, qualified only, in their view, by a technical inferiority of position. They show how family feeling is the great restraint on misconduct and crime, the stimulus to public service or literary distinction. They point out that if the family union has retarded commercial advance, it has hitherto saved China from our "social problem."

That the Chinese social order is destined to great modification by the inrush of Western ideas, they are aware. Commercial industrialism is the doom of the modern world. Japan has succumbed, and China will not escape. The intelligent Chinese patriot of the present day is doing his utmost to qualify himself for the guidance of his country in its new perils. In the past China has absorbed many waves of barbarism, and, like captive Greece, has taken captive its wild conqueror. It has now the harder task of absorbing an immigrant civilization, stronger materially than itself, wielding the arms of applied science, and approaching it with the *finesse* of diplomacy, the subtle encroachments of financial "assistance" and capitalistic exploitation. Thoughtful Chinese are aware of the insufficiency of the Confucian teaching to meet the intellectual demands of the new China. They know that it is the centre of this teaching, the soul of the family which is menaced. They seek to learn alike from

the successes and failures of the West, to interpret Europe to China and China to Europe; and among European lands they come first and foremost to England. English is becoming for them the language of education.[1] There is, it would seem to me from my own small experience, a certain affinity which makes it very easy for English and Chinese to understand one another and get on together, in spite of all the differences which the development of thousands of years engender. They recognize a certain honesty of intention in the English foreign policy, and look on England as the classical home of the political and social experiments which are to be forced upon them. These chapters will serve their authors' purpose if they help Englishmen to see the life of China as the Chinese see it, and therefore to appreciate something of the anxieties and the needs of a people whose fabric of life is shaken by novel and overwhelming forces, and who have upon them the heavy task of remodelling without destroying that which has conserved from an immemorial past, along with much that is rude and obsolete, certain elements of a simple and spontaneous harmony, that have long been lost and are not yet replaced in the Western World.

L. T. HOBHOUSE.

[1] Chinese and Japanese students, I find, habitually converse in English, and Chinese even use English in writing to one another. The teaching at the Pekin University is partly conducted in English.

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PART I

THE INTERNAL WORKING OF A CHINESE VILLAGE

VILLAGE AND TOWN LIFE IN CHINA

CHAPTER I

THE POLITICAL POSITION OF THE VILLAGE WITHIN THE EMPIRE

POLITICALLY China is governed in a hierarchical order with the central government at the top. Under the old regime the Emperor was the supreme ruler. His will was law. All State officials were responsible to him. There was no restriction whatever upon his power. He was answerable only to heaven. Beneath this central government are the provincial governments. Within the province the Viceroy or the Governor is invested with supreme authority. He has full control over finance, the army, and the administration of justice. The province is divided into circuits, called "Taos," each administered by a Taotai. Under the Tao are prefectures of various degrees and importance: "Fus," "Chows," and "Tings"—each controlled by an official who is a Chi-Fu, or Chi-Chow, or Chi-Ting, as the case may be. Chi-Fu literally means one who knows or manages the "Fu." The prefectures in turn are