China Unbound

Evolving perspectives on the Chinese past

Paul A. Cohen

China Unbound
Evolving perspectives on the Chinese past

Paul A. Cohen

For Elizabeth

Contents

Illustrations

Acknowledgments

When Routledge first invited me to put together a book of my writings for its new Critical Asian Scholarship series, I was both flattered and hesitant. Flattered, because the initial group of invitees was very small and (as I soon discovered) included such esteemed scholars as Patricia Ebrey and the late George Kahin. Hesitant, in part, because it would mean an interruption of the work I was then (and am still) engaged in on the problem of national humiliation in twentieth-century China, and also, in part, because preparing such a volume would inevitably mean confronting certain intellectual issues that had for some time been a nagging source of unease in my work. As I began to think about what to include in such a book and how, in an introductory essay, I might address and work through the issues just alluded to, the unease gradually abated and I became increasingly enthusiastic about the multiple challenges the project offered.

Two people who were particularly important in moving me forward in this process were Mark Selden and Elizabeth Sinn. Having had as a mentor in graduate school John Fairbank, whose gifts as a nurturer of successful manuscripts were legendary, I held Mark Selden, the editor of the Critical Asian Scholarship series, to an impossibly high standard. Mark, doing the impossible, met this standard at every step of the way. As an experienced volume editor, he exercised exceptionally good judgment in helping me decide what to include (and not include) in the book. His detailed comments on all of the chapters, save the three (Chapters 1, 2, and 7) that had been previously published in English and that I was unwilling to change except in regard to mechanical matters (such as converting the romanization of Chinese names and terms from Wade-Giles to *pinyin*), were unfailingly constructive, all the more remarkable because his specific interests and starting point for approaching history tend (with some exceptions) to be quite different from mine. Mark's comments covered everything from style and word choice to weaknesses or illogicalities in my argument to bibliographical lacunae. He pushed me especially hard on the introductory essay, which he rightly judged to be critical to the success of the volume as a whole. The finished piece benefited greatly from his many specific suggestions, insightfulness, and tireless prodding.

Elizabeth Sinn was at the outset a good deal more excited by the idea of this book than I was and did much to overcome my initial misgivings. Beyond this, she read through multiple versions of several of the chapters, pointing out ambiguities and infelicities in the writing, lapses in documentation, and places where the analysis was in clear need of sharpening. Knowing the author well, including his very considerable capacity for defensiveness, Elizabeth navigated with practiced adroitness the treacherous border area between criticism and encouragement, for which I thank her with warm affection.

Elizabeth Perry, who had recently compiled a book of her own writings, shared her experience concerning the nature of the process. John Ziemer drew on his years of work in publishing to guide me through the thickets of copyright practice, indicating when permission was required and when it was not. Lisa Cohen prepared most of the photographs and all of the digitized images for the book's illustrations. Craig Fowlie of Routledge responded promptly to my periodic queries and graciously offered the services of his office in applying for reprint permissions. My thanks to all of these individuals for their generous help.

Introduction

China unbound

Putting together a volume of my writings, spanning a publishing career now stretching to almost a half-century,[1] has been fascinating in a number of ways. For one thing, it has involved rereading things that in some cases I hadn't laid eyes on for decades, reminding myself, sometimes happily, sometimes not, of where I was intellectually at various points in my evolution as a historian. For another, it has afforded me the opportunity to play historian to myself, identifying some themes – my teacher Benjamin Schwartz referred to them as "underlying persistent preoccupations"[2] – that have endured from the beginning of my writing life right through to the present, although taking different forms at different times, and others that have emerged at one point or another but weren't there at the outset. In other words, the exercise has enabled me to gain a clearer picture of how my thinking has changed over time and, equally important, how it hasn't.

Although most of my scholarly work has focused on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and has therefore, almost inevitably, dealt in one way or another with the interactions between China and the West (or a Western-influenced Japan), an abiding concern throughout has been my determination to get inside China, to reconstruct Chinese history as far as possible as the Chinese themselves experienced it rather than in terms of what people in the West thought was important, natural, or normal. I wanted, in short, to move beyond approaches to the Chinese past that bore a heavy burden of Eurocentric or Western-centric preconceptions. An early example of this was my first book, *China and Christianity*, in the preface to which I explicitly distanced myself from the older approach to China missions, with its focus "on missions history, not on Chinese history." With the coming of age of Chinese studies in the postwar era, "the inadequacies of this old Western-centered approach" had become apparent and a new approach had been suggested – the pioneer here was another of my mentors, John Fairbank – that was "more concerned with understanding and evaluating the role played by Christian missions in Chinese history."[3] It was this approach that I adopted in the book.

This was a first step along what has turned out to be a long and tortuous path. In the final chapter of *China and Christianity* I adumbrated the next step: a critical look at the Western impact–Chinese response approach (also closely identified with Fairbank) that had played such an important part in American writing on nineteenth-century China in the immediate postwar decades. "Modern students of Chinese history," I wrote,

> have all too often focused on the process of Western impact and Chinese response, to the neglect of the reverse process of Chinese impact and Western response. The missionary who came to China found himself confronted with frustrations and hostilities which he could hardly have envisaged before coming and which transformed him, subtly but unmistakably, into a *foreign* missionary. His awareness (one might indeed say resentment) of this metamorphosis, together with his fundamental dissatisfaction with things as they were in China...greatly conditioned the missionary's response to the Chinese setting.[4]

The Western impact–Chinese response approach, in other words, oversimplified things by assuming that Chinese–Western interactions in the nineteenth century were a one-way street in which all of the traffic flowed from West to East.[5]

Several years later I wrote an essay in which I scrutinized the impact–response approach more systematically, attempting to identify some of the hidden premises on which it was based. Apart from the assumption of unidirectionality of influence just noted, I pointed to a number of problems inherent in the approach. One was "the tendency, when speaking of the 'Western impact,' to ignore the enigmatic and contradictory nature" of the West itself. This was a point that had been made with particular force by Benjamin Schwartz. Although most Western historians were properly humbled, Schwartz suggested, by the superficiality of their understanding of "non-Western" societies, they viewed the West as home ground, a known quantity. Yet, he cautioned,

> when we turn our attention back to the modern West itself, this deceptive clarity disappears. We are aware that the best minds of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been deeply divided in their agonizing efforts to grasp the inner meaning of modern Western development.... We undoubtedly "know" infinitely more about the West [than about any given non-Western society], but the West remains as problematic as ever.[6]

A related source of ambiguity was that the West, even in its modern guise, had changed greatly over time. The West that China encountered during

the Opium War and the West that exerted such great influence on Chinese intellectual and political life beginning in the last years of the nineteenth century were both the "modern West." But there were vast differences between the two – differences that Western historians of China regularly overlooked.

Other problems were that the impact–response approach tended to direct attention away from those aspects of nineteenth-century China that were unrelated, or only distantly related, to the Western impact; that it was inclined to assume uncritically that Western-related facets of Chinese history during this period were Chinese responses to the impact of the West when, in fact, they were often responses (however much Western-influenced) to indigenous forces; and, finally, perhaps because of its emphasis on "conscious responses," that the approach seemed to gravitate toward intellectual, cultural, and psychological forms of historical explanation, at the expense of social, political, and economic ones.[7] The upshot was that the impact–response framework, although a decided improvement over earlier approaches that ignored Chinese thought and action entirely, encouraged a picture of nineteenth-century China that was incomplete and suffered unnecessarily from imbalance and distortion.[8] (Other difficulties pertaining to the Western impact are discussed in connection with the thought of Joseph Levenson in Chapter 2.)

The impact–response approach had a built-in tendency to link whatever change was discerned in nineteenth-century China to the impact of the West. As such, it formed part of a broader European and American predisposition in the 1950s and 1960s, when looking at the more recent centuries of Chinese history, to deny the possibility of meaningful endogenous change.[9] Although it was not until the early 1980s that I undertook to examine this issue in a comprehensive way, it is clear to me in retrospect that I was already beginning to move in this direction a decade earlier in my intellectual biography of the late Qing reformer and pioneer journalist Wang Tao.[10] Since Wang Tao spent his entire adult life grappling with complicated questions relating to change, in the course of trying to figure him out I had to confront these questions myself. In the prologues to the four parts of the book, which form the bulk of Chapter 1 of this volume, I touched on a number of broad change-related issues as they pertained to Wang: the relationship between incremental change and revolution, the differences between generational and historical change, the virtue of measuring societal change by internal points of reference, the complex relationship between "tradition" and "modernity," differences between the actual historical past of China and "Chinese tradition," technological change versus value change, the geocultural sources of change in nineteenth- and twentieth-century China, and so on. In much of my discussion of these issues, it later became apparent to me, there was still a residual tendency – even as I was beginning to raise questions concerning it – to overstate the relative importance of Western influence as the key measure

of change in late Qing China.[11] The consequences of this, especially as they pertain to the final part of the Wang Tao book, are addressed in the preface to the paperback edition (1987), which is included in Chapter 1.

The gathering discomfort with certain Western-centric tendencies (my own included) that were prefigured in the study of Wang Tao led me in the late 1970s to begin working on a more thoroughgoing critique of the shaping role of these tendencies in postwar American scholarship. The first three chapters of the resulting book, which was entitled *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (1984), probed the Western-centric biases of three leading conceptual frameworks: the impact–response approach, the modernization (or tradition–modernity) approach, and the imperialism (or, perhaps more aptly, imperialism–revolution) approach. In the final chapter of the book I identified a new approach in American scholarship – it was really more a collection of discrete characteristics than a single, well-defined approach – which I labeled "China-centered." This approach had emerged around 1970 and, in my judgment, went a long way toward overcoming earlier Western-centric biases. Since the second chapter of *Discovering History in China* ("Moving Beyond 'Tradition and Modernity' ") is reproduced in this book (see Chapter 2), and the preface to the second paperback edition (1997), in which I respond to criticism of the original work, is reprinted in Chapter 7, I will not review the book's contents here. I do, however, want to raise a question that isn't dealt with in either of these chapters: the potential limits of the China-centered approach posed by several recent developments.

The core attribute of the China-centered approach is that its practitioners make a serious effort to understand Chinese history in its own terms – paying close attention to Chinese historical trajectories and Chinese perceptions of their own problems – rather than in terms of a set cf expectations derived from Western history. This does not mean that the approach gives short shrift to exogenous influences (see Chapter 7); nor, certainly, does it preclude – on the contrary, it warmly embraces – the application to Chinese realities of theoretical insights and methodological strategies of non-Chinese provenance (often developed in disciplines other than history), so long as these insights and strategies are sensitive to the perils of parochial (typically, Western-centric) bias.

I would not change any part of this formulation today. There are countless issues in Chinese history for the probing of which a China-centered approach remains, in my view, both appropriate and desirable.[12] There are other issues, however, where this is less plainly the case. I have in mind a number of areas of recent scholarly interest that, although unquestionably *relating to* Chinese history, are best identified in other ways, either because they pose questions (for instance in addressing world historical issues) that are broadly comparative in nature, or because they examine China as part of an East Asian or Asian regional system, or because even while dealing with the subject matter of Chinese history they are principally concerned

with matters that transcend it, or because they focus on the behavior and thinking (including self-perception) of non-Han ethnic groups within the Chinese realm, or because their paramount interest is in the migration of Chinese to other parts of the world. Each of these issues – and doubtless there are others – raises questions about the boundaries of "Chinese history" and, indeed, in some instances the very meaning of the word "China." Inevitably, therefore, each in its own way challenges the adequacy of the China-centered approach.

For historians of China (and surely others as well), the most interesting and deservedly influential exercise in comparative history in recent years has been the work of R. Bin Wong and Kenneth Pomeranz – I refer specifically to the former's *China Transformed* (1997) and the latter's *The Great Divergence* (2000) – grappling with the thorny issue of the West's ascendancy in the world during the past two centuries or so.[13] There are significant differences between Wong and Pomeranz. Pomeranz is more exclusively interested in questions pertaining to economic development, while Wong in addition devotes much space to issues of state formation and popular protest.[14] Pomeranz, moreover, as he himself notes, places greater emphasis on "global conjunctures and reciprocal influences and bring[s] more places besides Europe and China into the discussion,"[15] whereas Wong is more consistently and exclusively concerned with Europe–China comparisons. What the two scholars share is, however, far more important than what separates them. Most noteworthy in this regard is their agreement that in the past Westerners venturing comparisons between Europe and other parts of the world have posed the wrong sorts of questions. Tightly bound by the Eurocentrism of nineteenth-century social theory, they have assumed that the trajectories of change that occurred in Europe were the norm and that if something like the Industrial Revolution took place in Europe but not in, say, China the proper line of inquiry was to ask what went awry in the Chinese case.

Contesting this approach frontally, Wong and Pomeranz insist upon the need to engage in two-way comparison, Wong using the phrase "symmetric perspectives" to describe this process, Pomeranz, "reciprocal comparisons."[16] Freed of Eurocentric presuppositions about normative trajectories of change, both scholars, when they look at the economic situations of Europe and China (or, in Pomeranz's case, parts of Europe, parts of China, and parts of India and Japan) in the latter half of the eighteenth century, find a remarkable degree of parallelism. "In key ways," Wong states, "eighteenth-century Europe shared more with China of the same period than it did with the Europe of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries." And Pomeranz makes a similar point in more nuanced spatial terms, observing that in the middle of the eighteenth century

> various core regions scattered around the Old World – the Yangzi Delta, the Kantō plain, Britain and the Netherlands, Gujarat – shared

some crucial features with each other, which they did not share with the rest of the continent or subcontinent around them (e.g., relatively free markets, extensive handicraft industries, highly commercialized agriculture).[17]

Given the largely common economic circumstances prevailing between parts of Europe and parts of Asia at this time, the key question for both Wong and Pomeranz shifts from what went wrong in Asia to what made possible the radically discontinuous economic change that occurred in Europe after 1800 – first in England and then in other European core areas – and did not occur even in the most highly developed regions of the Asian continent. Although both scholars, in responding to this question, agree that technological innovation along with the shift to new sources of energy (coal) in England were of critical importance, Wong also emphasizes the liberating function of certain structural features of the evolving European political economy (states, for example, that stood in a competitive relationship with one another), while Pomeranz develops an explanation that lays greater stress on factors external to Europe, in particular its involvement in a new kind of trading system and the windfall the New World and its resources provided.[18]

Although Wong asserts at one point that his work "is primarily a book about Chinese history and secondarily a book about European history,"[19] and although when dealing with China he is exquisitely sensitive to the need to approach its history without blinders carried over from the history of Europe, my distinct sense is that "China" is not what the book is principally about. The supreme value of Wong's book, for me, is its careful construction and elaboration of a fresh and more even-handed way of doing comparative history, one that does not privilege the historical path followed in one part of the world over those followed in other parts and therefore frees us to ask questions of any part's history that are not, as it were, preloaded. In Pomeranz's study, the overall approach places less exclusive emphasis on comparison (even though the spatial *field* of comparison is wider than Wong's) and is more single-mindedly focused on the question of the divergent economic trajectories taken by Europe and East Asia after the mid-eighteenth century. Although seriously concerned with showing "how different Chinese development looks once we free it from its role as the presumed opposite of Europe and...how different European history looks once we see the *similarities* between its economy and one with which it has most often been contrasted,"[20] his paramount objective is to shed light on the substantive question of how the modern world economy came into being. Pomeranz too, therefore, like Wong, although devoting much space to China and caring a great deal about getting his China stories right, is ultimately interested in matters that transcend Chinese history.

Application of the designation "China-centered" to scholarship (such as that of Wong and Pomeranz) that so clearly pertains to world history

(regardless of whether this scholarship is primarily comparative or also pays serious notice to conjunctures and influences) seems obviously inappropriate. The same, moreover, may be argued with respect to studies that look at China as part of a broader regional system in Asia. Regions, as intermediate categories between individual states and the world, have their own historical dynamic and must therefore (we are told by those who study them) be scrutinized from a region-centered perspective. Takeshi Hamashita,[21] for example, wants us "to understand East Asia as a historically constituted region with its own hegemonic structure" – a region that "entered modern times not because of the coming of European powers but because of the dynamism inherent in the traditional, Sinocentric tributary system."[22] The tributary system, inaugurated by China many centuries ago, formed a loose system of political integration embracing East and Southeast Asia. More than just a relationship between two states, China and the tribute-bearing country, it also at times encompassed satellite tributary relationships – at various points, Vietnam required tribute from Laos, Korea while tributary to China also sent tribute missions to Japan, and the kings of the Liuqiu (Ryūkyū) Islands during the Qing/Tokugawa had tributary relations with both Edo and Beijing – thus forming a complex web of relationships throughout the region.

The other key feature of the Asian regional system, according to Hamashita, was economic. A network of commercial relations (often multilateral in nature), operating symbiotically with the tribute system, developed in East and Southeast Asia, closely intertwined with the commercial penetration of Chinese merchants into Southeast Asia and the commercial penetration there of workers from South China. "The relationship between tribute goods and 'gifts' was substantially one of selling and purchasing." Prices of commodities "were determined, albeit loosely, by market prices in Peking." In fact, from the late Ming on, Hamashita argues,

> it can be shown that the foundation for the whole complex tribute-trade formation was determined by the price structure of China and that the tribute-trade zone formed an integrated "silver zone" in which silver was used as the medium of trade settlement. The key to the functioning of the tribute trade as a system was the huge "demand" for commodities outside China and the difference between prices inside and outside China.[23]

(The importance Hamashita attaches to regional economic integration, it may be noted, is one of the more salient ways in which his analysis departs from earlier accounts of the "tributary system" by Fairbank and others.[24])

Although China is an absolutely fundamental part of Hamashita's region-centered perspective (indeed, he frequently uses the term "Sinocentric" to describe it), it should be evident from the foregoing paragraphs that a China-centered approach would be inadequate for

understanding the Asian regional system he elaborates.[25] This becomes even clearer in another part of his analysis, in which he advances the notion that the *sea* was as important a locus and determinant of historical activity as the *land* in Asia. Although we are accustomed to viewing the Asian region as a collection of landed territorial units, it may also be seen as a series of interconnected "maritime regions" stretching from Northeast Asia all the way to Oceania. Once we adopt this sea-centered geographical perspective, Hamashita shrewdly suggests, it is easier to understand why intra-Asian political relationships developed as they did over the centuries:

> The states, regions, and cities located along the periphery of each sea zone … [were] close enough to influence one another but too far apart to be assimilated into a larger entity. Autonomy in this sense formed a major condition for the establishment of the looser form of political integration known as the tributary system.[26]

The adequacy (or sufficiency) of the "China-centered" approach may also, in certain instances, be called into question in regard to scholarship that is far more directly and extensively concerned with Chinese history. A good illustration would be my most recent book, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (1997). Certainly, in large portions of this work I make a sustained effort to get inside the world of the Boxers and other Chinese inhabiting the North China plain in the spring and summer of 1900, and in this respect the approach may be viewed as China-centered. But I'm also interested, albeit to a much lesser degree, in the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of the non-Chinese participants in the events of the time and frequently point out commonalities between the Chinese and foreign sides, suggesting an approach that, at least at certain junctures, is more human-centered than China-centered. (I will return to this point later.)

Finally, and most importantly, as I make clear throughout, my main purpose in the book is to explore a wide range of issues pertaining to the writing of history, "the Boxers functioning as a kind of handmaiden to this larger enterprise."[27] This is rather different from the usual procedure in historical studies. It is not at all uncommon in such studies (not just in the Chinese field but in others as well) for authors to conclude by situating their findings in a broader frame of reference, in the hope of enhancing the significance and importance of their work. In *History in Three Keys*, I start right off with the broader question and never really let go of it. Although I use the Boxers as an extended case study, moreover, I make it clear, especially in the concluding chapter, that there is no necessary or exclusive connection between the Boxers and the larger points I am interested in exploring. Many other episodes of world history could serve equally well. The main object of the book is to say something not about Chinese history, but about the writing of history in general. And there's nothing

especially China-centered about that.[28] (For a more detailed discussion of the larger historical issues dealt with in the book, see Chapter 8.)

Research on non-Han ethnic groups[29] points to another arena of historical scholarship that is not especially well served by China-centered analysis. Such research has taken a variety of forms. A small but unusually talented coterie of historians have in recent years injected new life into the question of the Manchuness of the Qing empire, looking at such topics as the evolution over time of Manchu identity (cultural and/or ethnic), the special character of the Qing frontier, the multiform nature of Manchu rulership and its contributions to the functioning of the Qing imperium, important Manchu institutions (most notably the Eight Banners), the contribution of the Manchus to twentieth-century nationalism, and so on.[30] Often supplementing Chinese sources with those in the Manchu language and sharply contesting the old view that the Manchus were largely absorbed or assimilated into a "Chinese world order," these scholars are in broad agreement that, as one of them has phrased it, "the notion of Manchu difference mattered throughout the [Qing] dynasty."[31] Indeed, several of them have used such phrases as "Qing-centered" and "Manchu-centered" to highlight this very difference.[32] The argument is not that the Manchus weren't, in important ways, a part of Chinese history, but, rather, that Chinese history during the final centuries of the imperial era looks very different when seen through Manchu eyes. To view the parts taken by the Manchus in this history from a Han Chinese perspective – the conventional assimilation or sinicization model – is therefore to invite the same kinds of distortions that result when Chinese history is depicted in Eurocentric terms.

If Manchu difference mattered throughout the Qing, a major (although not the only) reason for its mattering was that the Qing was a conquest dynasty that brought China and eventually Inner Asia under the Manchu sway during this period. It was a quite different story in the case of other non-Han groups, such as (to cite one of the more important examples) Muslim Chinese. Muslims in China also raise questions concerning the aptness of the China-centered approach, but because their experience over the centuries has been very different from that of the Manchus the sorts of questions they raise also are different. One difference from the Manchus is that although Muslims at various points in time (above all, the Yuan dynasty) served as high officials they never ruled China as a group, in the sense that the Manchus (and Mongols) did. Another difference is that Muslims were (and continue to be) linked, albeit to varying degrees and in widely different ways, to a religion – Islam – that is of non-Chinese origin and worldwide embrace.

As both Dru Gladney and Jonathan Lipman have insisted,[33] Muslims in different parts of China (even in some instances within a single province) also tend to be very different from each other. Some Muslims, many of the Uyghurs, for example, in present-day Xinjiang (an area that

until its subjugation by the Qing in the eighteenth century had been situated outside the Chinese realm), although inhabiting a space that is politically China, do not speak Chinese and tend to identify culturally and religiously more closely with their counterparts in the Central Asian states to the north than with Han Chinese. Other Muslims, scattered in various places throughout the Chinese realm, are descended from families that have lived in China for generations, speak one or another form of Chinese, and are indistinguishable in many aspects of their lives from non-Muslim Chinese. In recent centuries, in short, individuals in China could be both Chinese and Muslim in a vast array of different ways, making it hard to claim (as was done in the People's Republic in the 1950s) a "unified 'ethnic consciousness'" for Sino-Muslims.[34]

Given the heterogeneous character of the Muslim population of China, the argument could be made, at least in theory, that while a China-centered approach would be clearly misguided if applied to the Turkic-speaking Uyghur population of Xinjiang,[35] it ought to be perfectly appropriate in the case of more acculturated Muslim Chinese. A key feature of the approach, after all, is that it seeks to cope with the immense variety and complexity of the Chinese world by breaking it down into smaller, more manageable spatial units, thereby facilitating close scrutiny of the whole range of local variation (including religious, ethnic, and social difference).[36] As it turns out, however, even in the case of Chinese-speaking Muslims, China-centered analysis can present problems. Lipman provides a fascinating illustration of the potential complications in his discussion of Muslims in a subprovincial part of Gansu in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The political center of Gansu and the center of Chinese-oriented economic life throughout this period was Lanzhou, the provincial capital. But Lanzhou, situated on the edges of two distinct Muslim spheres – one around Ningxia, the other centering on Hezhou – would from a Muslim perspective be considered a peripheral area. And, conversely, Hezhou, some sixty miles southwest of Lanzhou, although for Muslims (who constituted 50 per cent of its population in the nineteenth century) a major commercial and religious center, "would be the periphery of the periphery in any China-centered mapping." In other words, a China-centered mapping would be insufficiently sensitive to aspects of social, economic, and religious existence that were of vital importance to the Muslims of Gansu. Beyond this, moreover, it would more than likely have the drawback of presenting an undifferentiated picture of the province's Muslim community, flattening out its members' diversity, when, as Lipman clearly demonstrates, Muslims in different parts of the province – and how much more would this be the case nationwide – in fact occupied a wide range of different social and occupational niches (and took different parts *vis-à-vis* the state), sometimes engaged in violence against each other, and were anything but unified in the nature and degree of their religious commitments.[37]

The new work on Manchus and Muslims relates to a much broader scholarly concern in recent years with the whole *minzu* ("nationality" or "ethnic group") question in China. Energized in part by Han-minority tensions on China's peripheries, in part by growing interest in and sensitivity to multicultural and multiethnic issues globally, this concern has been discernible in writing on the Uyghurs, Mongols, Tibetans, Yi, and many other groups.[38] Insofar as it challenges the notion of a transparent, unproblematic "Chineseness," complicating this category and forcing us continually to rethink its meaning, it has understandably not been very hospitable to China-centered analysis.

If a China-centered approach is not especially well equipped to address the distinctive perspectives and experiences of non-Han communities within China, it also poses problems in regard to Han Chinese who have migrated to places outside the country – another phenomenon that has of late attracted growing interest in the scholarly world. Chinese migration abroad is an enormously complicated subject, which scholars are only now beginning to conceptualize anew.[39] Certain of its characteristic features derive from broader (and prior) patterns of migration within China, and insofar as the focus is on the "push" part of the process – the factors that favored decisions to migrate, whether internally or overseas, from a specific part of the country – the sensitivity of China-centered analysis to local particularity and variation is of potential value. But even at this stage we begin to encounter problems. Although local conditions of impoverishment or social unrest were fairly widespread in both North and South China in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, migration overseas originated largely from specific locales in the southern provinces of Fujian and Guangdong, rather than from the northern part of the country. A major reason for this had to do with the access these places had to highly developed Chinese networks in a few southern treaty ports and, above all, the British colony of Hong Kong. These "in-between places," to use Elizabeth Sinn's apt phrase, served as points of transit or hubs, enabling people, goods, remittances, and even the bones of the dead to move, in one direction or the other, between villages in South China and destinations all over the globe. Migration, using such networks, became for families in certain parts of the south – and even in some instances for entire villages and lineages – a prime economic strategy.[40] It was manifestly part of the regional and global systems discussed earlier.

At this point in the migration process, the utility of the China-centered approach as an exclusive – or even a primary – avenue to understanding becomes seriously diminished. The most obvious reason, of course, is the fact of important links with locales outside China. Once Chinese settled in Java or California or Lima or Pretoria, whether temporarily or permanently, even if they remained in important ways embedded in Chinese social and historical narratives, they also became integrated into Indonesian, American, Peruvian, and South African histories. Their adaptations to a

range of environments that varied not only from place to place but also over time – Philip Kuhn uses the phrase "historical ecology" to characterize the process – can hardly be comprehended in terms of a single national or cultural perspective.[41] But the complication created for China-centered analysis by the need to factor in multiple place-based understandings is only part of the problem. Beyond this, Adam McKeown argues persuasively, if we are to gain a fuller comprehension of Chinese migration, nation-based perspectives as such (China-centered or America-centered or Indonesia-centered or whatever) must be complemented by approaches that put special emphasis on mobility and dispersion, "drawing attention to global connections, networks, activities, and consciousness that bridge these more localized anchors of reference."[42] Migration, in other words, is not just a matter of push factors and pull factors, a sending place and a receiving place. It must also be understood as a *process* – a process that involves constant movement back and forth along well-established, highly articulated corridors and that, for this very reason, is profoundly subversive of conventional national boundaries.[43]

The research themes treated in the preceding pages all raise problems of one sort or another for the China-centered approach, requiring in some instances that it be abandoned, but more often that it be used in nuanced conjunction with a variety of other approaches. When, twenty years ago, I first described the China-centered approach – and I hasten to add that, from my perspective at the time, all I was doing was giving articulation to a set of research strategies that others had already begun to use and that seemed to me an appropriate and salutary direction for American China scholarship to be moving in – I expressly linked it to the study of the *Chinese* past. Indeed, the chapter in *Discovering History in China* in which I introduced the approach bore the title "Toward a China-Centered History of China." As long as the topics historians choose to study are centrally, and more or less unambiguously, situated within a Chinese context (political, social, economic, intellectual, cultural) – and despite the new scholarly developments of recent years this remains true of the preponderance of historical work on China – the China-centered approach remains, in my judgment, eminently useful. The difficulty arises when we move into research areas, such as the ones I've been discussing, that either decenter China by linking it to transnational processes (migration, the emergence of the modern world economy, the evolution of an Asian regional system) or general intellectual issues (multiple ways of addressing the past, the conduct of comparative history) or transform it from a physical space into something else (the currently fashionable word is deterritorialization)[44] or in some other way problematize its meaning (the self-perceptions of non-Han ethnic groups within China and of Han Chinese migrants abroad).[45]

Such research directions, although presenting problems for a narrowly conceived China-centered approach, make vitally important contributions

to the study of Chinese history more broadly considered. Among the several ways in which they do this are the following: they remove some of the artificial walls that have been erected around "China" over the centuries (as much by Chinese as by Westerners); they subvert parochial readings of the Chinese past (fostered, again, no less by Chinese than by Western historians); they complicate our understandings of what it has meant in different places and at various points in time to be "Chinese"; they enable more even-handed (less loaded) comparisons between China and other parts of the world; and in general they weaken our (the West's) longstanding perception of China as the quintessential other by breaking down arbitrary and misleading distinctions between "East" and "West" and making it possible to see China – its peoples and their cultures – less as prototypically exotic and more as plausibly human.

Let me elaborate on this last point, as it has become an increasingly important theme in my own work. I refer specifically to my skepticism concerning exaggerated Western claims of Chinese and Western cultural difference – claims frequently (though not invariably) rooted in Western-centric perspectives. I take culture seriously in almost everything that I've written and would not for a moment deny that there are important differences between the cultural traditions of China and the West. But, at the same time, I believe that historical approaches that place excessive emphasis on such differences are apt to generate unfortunate distortions, even caricatures, of one sort or another. One such distortion takes the form of cultural essentialization – the radical reduction of a culture to a particular set of values or traits that other cultures are believed incapable of experiencing. The stereotypes of the authoritarian East and the liberal and tolerant West, for example, do not readily allow for the possibility, brilliantly argued recently by Amartya Sen, that the histories of India or China might include traditions of tolerance or freedom, or that authoritarianism might be a significant strain in the West's own past. Yet the actual historical record flies right in the face of such conventional understandings. Indeed, "when it comes to liberty and tolerance," Sen suggests, it might make more sense, giving priority to the substance of ideas rather than to culture or region, "to classify Aristotle and Ashoka on one side, and, on the other, Plato, Augustine, and Kautilya."[46]

Overemphasis on Chinese–Western cultural contrast also – and this was generally true of American historical scholarship until a few decades ago – has had a tendency to desensitize Western historians to China's capacity for change and to encourage a timeless conception of the Chinese past (see Chapter 2). When I initially advanced the notion of a China-centered approach, I observed that one of the approach's more important concomitants was a gradual shift away from *culture* and toward *history* as the dominant mode of structuring problems of the recent Chinese past (by which I meant chiefly the nineteenth and twentieth centuries). During the 1950s and 1960s, when the impact–response and tradition–modernity

paradigms held sway in American scholarship, enormous explanatory power was invested in the *nature* of China's "traditional" society or culture – and, of course, in the ways in which this society–culture differed from that of the West (or Japan). Studies of clash between China and the West – Fairbank's *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast*, my own *China and Christianity* – although devoting much space to political, economic, social, institutional, and other factors, tended to view cultural difference and misunderstanding (as expressed, above all, in the realm of attitudes and values) as the ultimate ground of conflict.[47] Similarly, influential treatments of such themes as China's failure to industrialize in the late Qing (Feuerwerker), the ineffectiveness of China's response to the West as compared with Japan's (Fairbank, Reischauer, and Craig), the fruitless efforts of the Confucian state to modernize (Wright), and the inability of Chinese society to develop on its own into a "society with a scientific temper" (Levenson) all attached fundamental importance to the special nature of Chinese society and culture.[48]

This emphasis on the social or cultural factor was a natural by-product of intellectual paradigms that were built around the notion of sociocultural contrast and that sought to explain China principally in terms of its social and cultural differences from the West. The reason, I argued, why the China-centered approach, in contrast to this, lent itself to a structuring of the Chinese past more in historical than in cultural terms was that its locus of comparison was not the differences between one culture and another (China and the West) but the differences between earlier and later points in time within a single culture (China). The former kind of comparison, by drawing attention to the more stable, ongoing properties of a culture – a culture's "intrinsic nature" – encouraged a relatively static sense of the past. The latter, by stressing variation over time within one culture, fostered a more dynamic, more change-oriented sense of the past, one in which culture as an explanatory factor receded into the background and history – or a heightened sensitivity to historical process – moved to the fore.[49]

When historians seek to understand the people of another culture, an exaggerated attention to cultural difference – aside from making it more difficult to apprehend the complex, often contradictory elements in that culture's make-up or (as just argued) to appreciate the changes it has undergone over time – can also conceal from view aspects of the thought and behavior of its people that, reflecting transcultural, inherently human characteristics, overlap or resonate with the thought and behavior of people elsewhere in the world. This universal human dimension, I would argue, must be addressed, along with cultural difference, if we are to gain a fuller, more nuanced, less parochial understanding of the Chinese past.[50] Addressing it is also one of the more effective ways of traversing the boundaries that Western and Chinese historians both, albeit in different ways and for different reasons, have too often inscribed around China and its history.

Although I first touched on the notion of cultural convergence or resonance between China and the West and its possible reflection of basic human psychological proclivities in an essay on Wang Tao published in 1967,[51] I did not pursue the idea extensively until my work on the Boxer uprising. In *History in Three Keys*, in an effort to naturalize or "humanize" the thought and behavior of the Boxers I had frequent recourse to cross-cultural comparison, often in the process enlarging the scope of China's "other" to embrace Africa and other parts of the world, in addition to the West (see, in this volume, Chapter 3). An example is afforded by my discussion of the experience of rumor and mass hysteria in North China at the height of the Boxer crisis in the spring and summer of 1900. By far the most widely circulated rumor at the time was one that charged foreigners and Chinese Christians with contaminating the water supply by placing poison in village wells. The well-poisoning charge, according to a contemporary, was "practically universal" and "accounted for much of the insensate fury" directed by ordinary Chinese against Christians.[52]

An interesting question has to do with the content of the hysteria in this instance. Why mass poisoning? And why, in particular, the poisoning of public water sources? If one accepts the view that rumors convey messages and that rumor epidemics, in particular, supply important symbolic information concerning the collective worries of societies in crisis, one approach to answering such questions is to try to identify the match or fit between a rumor panic and its immediate context. In the case of kidnapping panics, which have a long history not only in China but in many other societies as well, the focus of collective concern is the safety of children, who (as the term *kidnap* seems to imply) are almost always seen as the primary victims. Rumors of mass poisoning, on the other hand, are far more appropriate as a symbolic response to a crisis, such as war or natural disaster or epidemic, in which *all* the members of society are potentially at risk.

A look at the experience of other societies amply confirms this supposition. Charges of well-poisoning and similar crimes were brought against the first Christians in Rome and the Jews in the Middle Ages at the time of the Black Plague (1348). During the cholera epidemic in Paris in 1832 a rumor circulated that poison powder had been scattered in the bread, vegetables, milk, and water of that city. In the early stages of World War I rumors were spread in all belligerent countries that enemy agents were busy poisoning the water supplies.[53] Within hours of the great Tokyo earthquake of September 1, 1923, which was accompanied by raging fires, rumors began to circulate charging ethnic Koreans and socialists not only with having set the fires but also with plotting rebellion and poisoning the wells.[54] Newspaper accounts in 1937, at the onset of the Sino-Japanese War, accused Chinese traitors of poisoning the drinking water of Shanghai.[55] And rumors of mass poisoning proliferated in Biafra during the Nigerian civil conflict of the late 1960s.[56]

In many of these instances the rumors targeted outsiders (or their internal agents), who were accused, symbolically if not literally, of seeking the annihilation of the society in which the rumors circulated. This, it turns out, closely approximates the situation prevailing in China at the time of the Boxer uprising. Like the charge that the Christians, by challenging the authority of China's gods, were the ones ultimately responsible for the drought in North China in the spring and summer of 1900 (see Chapters 3 and 4), rumors accusing foreigners and their native surrogates of poisoning North China's water supplies portrayed outsiders symbolically as depriving Chinese of what was most essential for the sustaining of life. The well-poisoning rumor epidemic thus spoke directly to the collective fear that was uppermost in the minds of ordinary people at the time: the fear of death (see Chapter 3).[57]

Let me conclude this discussion of problems created by excessive emphasis on cultural contrast by paraphrasing an argument I made in a talk on the Boxers in the summer of 2001. The talk had the unlikely (and, for a largely Western audience, somewhat provocative) title "Humanizing the Boxers."[58] The position I took in it was that culture, in addition to forming the prism through which communities express themselves in thought and action, also has the potential to distance one community from another, thereby facilitating processes of stereotyping, caricaturing, essentialization, and mythologization. In light of the unusual degree to which, throughout the twentieth century, the Boxers had been subjected to such processes in both China and the West, I made a special effort in the talk to focus on what the Boxers shared with, rather than what separated them from, human beings in comparable historical and cultural settings. My point was not to deny the Boxers their cultural particularity (nor, certainly, to portray them as angels); it was, rather, to rescue them from the aura of dehumanizing exceptionalism and distortion that had surrounded their history almost from the beginning. My firm conviction, which a number of the chapters in this book attempt to convey, is that the same point writ large is worth making about China, Chinese history, and the people who have made and experienced this history over the centuries.

The present volume embraces a wide spectrum of topics, including – in addition to Wang Tao, American China historiography, the writing of history in general, and the Boxers – nationalism (especially Chapter 6), reform (Chapters 1 and 5), popular religion (Chapters 3 and 4), and continuities across historical divides (Chapters 2, 5, and 6). Although the substantive themes vary, my effort throughout has been to identify and explore fresh approaches to the Chinese past, alternately interrogating Western historians, Chinese historians, and the history itself. My ultimate hope – a hope that I am confident most other Western students of China share – is to demystify Chinese history, to undermine parochial perspectives that continue to cordon it off in a realm by itself, so that it can be rendered intelligible, meaningful, and, yes, even important to people in the West.

Notes

1 My first article was published in 1957 when I was a graduate student at Harvard: "Missionary Approaches: Hudson Taylor and Timothy Richard," *Papers on China* 11 (1957): 29–62.
2 Benjamin I. Schwartz, "Introduction," in his *China and Other Matters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 1.
3 *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860–1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. vii. See also John K. Fairbank, "Patterns behind the Tientsin Massacre," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 20 (1957): 480–511.
4 Cohen, *China and Christianity*, pp. 264–5.
5 It was a very different matter, of course, in the eighteenth century (and in some respects earlier), when China's impact on the thought world, decorative arts, and economy of Europe was substantial, as has been generally recognized.
6 Cohen, "Ch'ing China: Confrontation with the West, 1850–1900," in James B. Crowley, ed., *Modern East Asia: Essays in Interpretation* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1970), pp. 29–30; the Schwartz quotation is from Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 1–2.
7 This was clearly seen in some of the more influential writings of Fairbank. See, especially, Ssu-yü Teng and John K. Fairbank, *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1839–1923* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), and the portions of Fairbank's *The United States and China*, 4th edn. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979) dealing with the nineteenth century.
8 Cohen, "Ch'ing China," pp. 29–61; and, as revised, in Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 9–55.
9 There are some, especially those who look at China from a global or regional perspective, who might be inclined to argue that, in an interconnected world, "endogenous" and "exogenous" cease to be viable as concepts. This is, of course, very different from the nineteenth-century Western view that all significant change in the "non-West" had to result from the Western impact and be modeled after Western precedents. Still, it is not, in my judgment, a tenable position. I am firmly convinced that, even as we begin to break down some of the artificial walls separating China from the rest of the world (a process that I applaud and directly address later on in this introduction) and acknowledge that influences from outside have shaped Chinese history from the beginning, it is both possible and desirable to identify certain kinds of changes as, in the main, internally generated. I would make the same claim, moreover, for other histories – that of the United States, for example – that have had (and continue to have) important links to other parts of the world.
10 *Between Tradition and Modernity: Wang T'ao and Reform in Late Ch'ing China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).
11 The resulting tension in the intellectual framework of the book is touched on in the preface to the original edition of *Discovering History in China*, p. xii.
12 Examples of books with a China-centered perspective that appeared in the latter half of the 1980s and the early 1990s (that is, after the publication of *Discovering History in China*) are supplied in Chapter 7.
13 R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). The work of Wong and Pomeranz is the focus of a recent forum in the *American*

Historical Review. See Kenneth Pomeranz, "Political Economy and Ecology on the Eve of Industrialization: Europe, China, and the Global Conjuncture," *American Historical Review* 107.2 (April 2002): 425–46; R. Bin Wong, "The Search for European Differences and Domination in the Early Modern World: A View from Asia," *ibid.*, pp. 447–69. For lengthy critiques of Pomeranz's book, see Philip C.C. Huang, "Development or Involution in Eighteenth-Century Britain and China? A Review of Kenneth Pomeranz's *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*," *Journal of Asian Studies* 61.2 (May 2002): 501–38; and Robert Brenner and Christopher Isett, "England's Divergence from China's Yangzi Delta: Property Relations, Microeconomics, and Patterns of Development," *ibid.*, pp. 609–62. Pomeranz responds to Huang in "Beyond the East–West Binary: Resituating Development Paths in the Eighteenth-Century World," *ibid.*, pp. 539–90.

14 Although I pass over these issues here, they constitute by far the larger portion of Wong's book and form an important part of the context for his analysis of economic developments in China and Europe over the centuries.

15 *The Great Divergence*, p. 8, n. 13.

16 *China Transformed*, p. 282; *The Great Divergence*, pp. 8–10.

17 *China Transformed*, p. 17; *The Great Divergence*, pp. 7–8 (see also pp. 70, 107, 112–3, 165). Pomeranz and Wong both discuss the resemblances between the economies of Asia and Europe on the eve of the Industrial Revolution mainly in the first two chapters of their studies.

18 This is a radically simplified characterization of the nuanced positions of the two scholars. Although both, for example, emphasize the importance of coal, Pomeranz makes much of the accident of geography that in Europe, in contrast to China, located some of the largest coal deposits – those in Britain – in close proximity to excellent water transport, a commercially vibrant economy, and a high concentration of skilled craftspeople. *The Great Divergence*, pp. 59–68. For an insightful review essay comparing Wong and Pomeranz and placing them in the context of earlier efforts to address similar "macrohistorical" issues – most famously, perhaps, Andre Gunder Frank's *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) – see Gale Stokes, "The Fates of Human Societies: A Review of Recent Macrohistories," *American Historical Review* 106.2 (April 2001): 508–25; also the same author's "Why the West? The Unsettled Question of Europe's Ascendancy," *Lingua Franca* 11.8 (November 2001): 30–8.

19 *China Transformed*, p. 8.

20 *The Great Divergence*, pp. 25–6.

21 Although I focus here on Hamashita, partly because of his wide-ranging and deeply grounded historical perspective, a number of other scholars, among them Mark Selden and Giovanni Arrighi, have also done (or are doing) work on the Asian region as a system.

22 Hamashita, "The Intra-regional System in East Asia in Modern Times," in Peter J. Katzenstein and Takashi Shiraishi, eds., *Network Power: Japan and Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 113.

23 Hamashita, "The Tribute Trade System and Modern Asia," in A. J. H. Latham and Heita Kawakatsu, eds., *Japanese Industrialization and the Asian Economy* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 92–7 (the quotations are from pp. 96–7).

24 Fairbank's understanding of the tribute (or tributary) system was developed in many of his writings. See, for example, the early article (jointly authored with S.Y. Teng), "On the Ch'ing Tributary System," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 6 (1941): 135–246, and the later edited volume, *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968). For an insightful critique of earlier understandings of the system,

see James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 9–15.

25 As I make explicit in *Discovering History in China* (p. 196), the China-centered approach is to be clearly distinguished from the concept of Sinocentrism, with its connotations of a world (or in Hamashita's case a region) centering on China.

26 Hamashita, "The Intra-regional System in East Asia in Modern Times," p. 115. Hamashita develops other aspects of his sea-centered understanding of the Asian regional system in "Overseas Chinese Networks in the Asian Historical Regional System, 1700–1900," in Zhang Qixiong [Chi-hsiung Chang], ed., *Ershi shiji de Zhongguo yu shijie: Lunwen xuanji* [China and the world in the twentieth century: Selected essays], 2 vols. (Taibei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 2001), 1: 143–64.

27 *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. xiv.

28 Given my effort to talk about historical issues without being confined to Chinese history, some of the responses of non-China historians have been especially gratifying. "He wants," one such historian commented, "to find a way in which historians cross the boundaries of their topical histories":

His constant message is that historians can and should be polyglot. Asianists can talk with medievalists, Americanists with Europeanists. His book is full of examples of how time and culture aren't confining to any historian trying to understand and explain the past.
Greg Dening, "Enigma Variations on *History in Three Keys*: A Conversational Essay," *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History* 39.2 (May 2000): 210

See also the comments of Peter Burke, "History of Events and the Revival of Narrative," in Peter Burke, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, 2nd edn. (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), p. 295.

29 This is not the place to get into an involved discussion of the problems posed by the term "Han" as an ethnonym. Although "Han," according to one recent effort at clarification, is "the label that was used during the Qing to distinguish the Chinese culturally and ethnically from the non-Han Other," " 'Han Chinese' is the modern ethnic label used to describe the majority of people in China, as distinct from the approximately three-score 'minority nationalities' as defined by the present Chinese state." Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 383–4, n. 75.

30 Jonathan Spence, Joseph Fletcher, and Beatrice Bartlett were among the first scholars to show the way to a new understanding of the Manchu experience in China during the Qing. A sampling of the more important studies in English that have been published over the past decade and a half might include: Pamela Kyle Crossley, *Orphan Warriors: Three Manchu Generations and the End of the Qing World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), and the same author's *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Elliott, *The Manchu Way*; James A. Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759–1864* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Evelyn S. Rawski, *The Last Emperors: A Social History of Qing Imperial Institutions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Edward J.M. Rhoads,

Manchus and Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861–1928 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000). Two stimulating review essays covering four of the most recent of these studies (those by Elliott, Rawski, and Rhoads, and Crossley's *The Translucent Mirror*) are R. Kent Guy, "Who Were the Manchus? A Review Essay," *Journal of Asian Studies* 61.1 (February 2002): 151–64, and Sudipta Sen, "The New Frontiers of Manchu China and the Historiography of Asian Empires: A Review Essay," *ibid.*, pp. 165–77. See also Evelyn Rawski's reconceptualization of the significance of the Qing dynasty in her "Reenvisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History," *ibid.*, 55.4 (November 1996): 829–50, and the response of Ping-ti Ho in his "'In Defense of Sinicization: A Rebuttal of Evelyn Rawski's 'Reenvisioning the Qing,'" *ibid.*, 57.1 (February 1998): 123–55.

31 Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, p. 34.

32 Rawski, "Reenvisioning the Qing," pp. 832–3; Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, pp. 28, 34; Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, pp. 13–15.

33 Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1996); Jonathan N. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).

34 Jonathan N. Lipman, "Hyphenated Chinese: Sino-Muslim Identity in Modern China," in Gail Hershatter *et al.*, eds., *Remapping China: Fissures in Historical Terrain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 109; also p. 100. Lipman uses the term Sino-Muslim in his book (cited above) as well as in this article.

35 The Uyghurs were the second largest Muslim minority in China, as of the 1990 census, numbering at that time some 7.2 million. Unlike the largest Muslim minority, the Hui, who are to be found throughout the country, almost 100 per cent of Uyghurs live in the Uyghur autonomous region of Xinjiang. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese*, pp. 20, 29.

36 Cohen, *Discovering History in China*, pp. 161–72.

37 Lipman, "Hyphenated Chinese," pp. 100–2 (the quotation is from p. 101). The difference that serious attention to ethnic difference makes in core–periphery mapping is also suggested in Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, pp. 10–12. With respect to violence among Muslim communities, Gladney observes that it "continues to be intra-factional and intra-ethnic, rather than along Muslim/non-Muslim religious lines." *Muslim Chinese*, p. viii.

38 From this burgeoning literature, a few examples may be cited: Stevan Harrell, ed., *Perspectives on the Yi of Southwest China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic in Southwest China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Uradyn E. Bulag, *Nationalism and Hybridity in Mongolia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), especially chaps. 6, 8; Bulag, *The Mongols at China's Edge: History and the Politics of National Unity* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002); Melvyn C. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913–51: The Demise of the Lamaist State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Goldstein, "The Dragon and the Snow Lion: The Tibet Question in the 20th Century," in Anthony J. Kane, ed., *China Briefing 1990* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 129–67; Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet Since 1947* (London: Pimlico, 1999); Gardner Bovingdon, "The History of the History of Xinjiang," *Twentieth-Century China* 26.2 (April 2001): 95–139.

39 There is a very large literature, which I make no pretense to having mastered. For my discussion here, I have drawn much stimulation from Adam McKeown, "Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas, 1842–1949," *Journal of Asian Studies* 58.2 (May 1999): 306–37; Philip Kuhn, "Toward an Historical Ecology of

Chinese Migration," unpublished conference paper (2001); and the work of, and ongoing conversation with, Elizabeth Sinn, especially in regard to the key role of Hong Kong in the Chinese diaspora.

40 Sinn, "In-Between Places: The Key Role of Localities of Transit in Chinese Migration," paper presented at the Association for Asian Studies annual meeting, Washington D.C., April 6, 2002; see also McKeown, "Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas," pp. 314–15, 319–21.

41 Kuhn, "Toward an Historical Ecology of Chinese Migration." For an interesting discussion of the variety of pasts available to people of Chinese descent in Southeast Asia for the fashioning of new identities, see Wang Gungwu, "Ethnic Chinese: The Past in Their Future," paper presented at conference on "International Relations and Cultural Transformation of Ethnic Chinese," Manila, November 26–28, 1998.

42 McKeown, "Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas," p. 307; see also *ibid.*, p. 331.

43 The Chinese diaspora is, of course, only one of several such large-scale migratory movements of recent centuries; others include the Indian, African, and Armenian diasporas.

44 The Chinese diaspora involves various forms of deterritorialization. A specific instance is the notion of "cultural China," as advanced by Wei-ming Tu. Substantively, cultural China refers to a cluster of values, behavior patterns, ideas, and traditions that people agree to define as in some objective sense "Chinese," and to which, speaking more subjectively, those who identify themselves as "Chinese" feel themselves to belong. Strategically, the idea of cultural China affords Chinese living in the diaspora a way of talking about, shaping the meaning of, and even defining China and Chineseness without inhabiting the geographical or political space known as Zhongguo. See Wei-ming Tu, "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center," *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 120.2 (Spring 1991): 1–32; Paul A. Cohen, "Cultural China: Some Definitional Issues," *Philosophy East and West* 43.3 (July 1993): 557–63.

45 A Uyghur in Xinjiang or a Tibetan in Qinghai, while incontestably (although not necessarily uncontestedly) part of political China, might well object to being considered Chinese culturally. Conversely, a recent Chinese migrant to California, while no longer inhabiting a political space called China, would more than likely continue to view him/herself as part of China culturally.

46 Sen, although not using the phrase "cultural essentialization," contests the claims of cultural boundary, cultural disharmony, and cultural specificity in his "East and West: The Reach of Reason," *The New York Review of Books* 47 (July 20, 2000): 33–8 (the quotation is from p. 36).

47 Fairbank begins his book by placing China's response to the West in the context of prior Chinese experience with and attitudes toward barbarians. *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842–1854* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), chap. 1. In my book I explicitly characterize the political problem created for Chinese officials by missionaries as "derivative in nature. Underlying it was the much larger issue of Sino-Western cultural conflict." *China and Christianity*, p. 264.

48 Albert Feuerwerker, *China's Early Industrialization: Sheng Hsuan-huai (1844–1916) and Mandarin Enterprise* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958); John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer, and Albert Craig, *East Asia: The Modern Transformation* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1965); Mary C. Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-chih Restoration, 1862–1874*, rev. edn. (New York: Atheneum, 1965); Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*: Vol. 1, *The Problem of Intellectual Continuity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), 1: 3.