

Hao Ping

大學

PEKING UNIVERSITY
AND THE ORIGINS OF
HIGHER EDUCATION IN CHINA



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Peking University and the Origins of Higher Education in China

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Text Translation by Shen Yuping



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Hao Ping, Vice Minister of Education in P. R. China, once was Vice President of Peking University, President of Beijing Foreign Studies University. He is committed in the teaching and research of the modern history of China, history of Sino-US relations, and history of higher education in China. His works include *Sun Yat-sen's Revolution and the US* and *Unfortunate Ending: John Leighton Stuart and China*.

Foreword

Anyone who is abreast of the happenings in Peking University would know that Dr. Hao Ping is one of the busiest persons among the staff and faculty members of the University. Since Beida enjoys unique status and prestige both in China and the rest of the world, numerous prestigious educational and research institutions have set up various cooperative and exchange programmes with Beida; heads of state of foreign countries or governments, and foreign scholars that are authorities in different disciplines all find it a life-time honour for them to come and visit Beida and deliver speeches here, as if they, sharing the feelings of those who visit China that they would not be a hero if they failed to visit the Great Wall, would not have the heroic feel unless they have been to Beida; indeed more visitors, of diversified kinds and of various types, come in an endless stream.

The department that carries the brunt of receiving these visitors, under the leadership of the Party committee and the President of the University, is the Office of International Relations and the head of the Office is no other person than the very author of this book, Hao Ping. As I have observed and personally experienced, this Office has a calendar that differs from others': they have neither two-day weekends, nor holidays, nor winter and summer vacations; they are busy day in day out, receiving and seeing off people, working non-stop like a Chinese trotting horse lamp hanging over the Yan Yuan (the Garden of Yan) campus with Hao Ping shining in the centre and a group of young men and women of the Office surrounding him as the characters in the paintings on the lamp.

So it was utterly out of my expectation that a person as busy as Hao Ping would one day come to me with manuscripts on the history concerning the pioneering days of Beida. Writing a history is nothing like writing a novel or a poem, which calls for inspiration only. Here inspiration is not the key factor that is essential; what is needed is diligence, hard, careful work in collecting information and facts, and painstaking efforts to collect anything useful, or as the Chinese saying goes, to drain the pond to get each and every fish. Hao Ping told me that he had started to collect materials when he was studying overseas and that, after he returned home and became the trotting-horse-lamp figure, he has continued to work with perseverance on his research, while others are taking a siesta at noon or sleeping at night. Work took the place of his sleeping time all year round until he fell ill and was hospitalised for an

operation. However, his perseverance grew even greater since then, urging him on to finish the first draft of the book. Who would not be filled with esteem after hearing a story like this?

To tell the truth, I was deeply touched indeed. Among the young staff members of Beida, there are those who spare no effort in pursuing the learning, but that is by no means to say that there are not those who would not read or feel motivated to read, or have their attention distracted elsewhere. Now with Hao Ping as a mirror in front, everyone can and must make his own choice and decide on what path to follow. This would be where my hope, as well as my faith, lies.

This has carried the topic a little too far; now let me come back to dwell more upon Hao Ping's *History*. For the reason that the book focuses on the history of Beida during its pioneering period, I titled it, to the author's consent, *Peking University and the Origins of Higher Education in China*. Hao's introduction to the book tells about the major theses, from which, for the sake of precision, I would like to simply copy a section as follows:

The Daxuetang (of Peking) was established not only as a product of the Hundred Days' Reform, but fundamentally it was deeply rooted in the Opium War between China and the UK in 1840. The defeat suffered by the Qing imperial court prompted people with high ideals like Lin Zexu, Wei Yuan, Gong Zizhen, among others, to think and to start a nationwide reform and westernisation movement. The *Tongwenguan* (the TWG) was created in that period. The complete defeat of the Beiyang Navy in the Sino-Japanese war in 1894 also stimulated strong appeals for political reforms from the progressive forces, represented by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao. The Daxuetang of Peking (the DXT) was not only a product of the reforms, but also a symbol of the highest demand of people for a pursuit of national salvation for the 50 years after the Opium War. These are the two sides of the same historical process that cannot be separated from one another.

This brief description by Hao Ping has been based on large quantities of reliable source materials and archives, which shall not be repeated here because they are already included in this book.

Thanks to his painstaking efforts to collect the materials, Hao has had an exhaustive collection of them before he made detailed and careful analyses, which, together with the originality accompanying his analyses, often would spark off my desire to drink to his honour. While the materials hit no one in the eye, let alone be used, they are an indispensable first step for Hao Ping in his studies of the history of Beida and in his tracking down the issues around the establishment of Peking University. He has uncovered what his

forerunners have not by expressing his original views of Beida's development from the Tongwenguan to the Daxuetang. I would like to say that because of his sound justification, his views stand to reason.

For me, however, that is just one of the theories around the establishment of Peking University, but by no means the only one. Furthermore, let us not forget the fact that the Daxuetang was not established after the abolition of the Tongwenguan; instead, it was established some time before the Tongwenguan was removed and merged with it. The TWG was a special-purpose educational institution set up by the Qing government for handling foreign affairs in the westernisation effort and for training interpretation and translation personnel who were to be well versed in foreign languages before dealing with foreigners. Courses other than foreign languages were gradually added only later on. The Tongwenguan was directly affiliated under the *Zongli Yamen*, which was a proof of the function of the TWG. An earlier example can be traced back to the *Siyiguan*. (the Foreign Languages Bureau) of the Ming dynasty; and a more recent example can be found in Beijing Foreign Languages Institute (the predecessor of the now Beijing Foreign Studies University) which used to be affiliated under the Foreign Ministry of China. I have not worked on the history of Beida myself, but over the years I have had an idea weighing on my mind, which I have voiced at many symposia and colloquia and have discussed with people. Many agreed to it and none has aired opposition at least so far. A recent issue of the *Peking University Journal* carried an article about Professor Xiao Chaoran answering students' questions by saying that Mr. Feng Youlan shared the view too and had even written about it, although I have neither read the article nor have I heard with my own ears what Mr. Feng said. Hao Ping says in his book that Mr. Hu Shi, the late President of Beida, said exactly the same thing. Now I think I may boldly say something that may sound self-important: Great minds think alike.

What on earth is the view after so much verbiage? Well, that is that the history of Beida should be traced far back to the *Taixue*. (the Imperial School) of the Han dynasty. China is quite unique among the world's numerous nations. In the first place, China respects history more than any nation in the universe; secondly, China respects education. In the past thousand years education in China has been "walking on two legs": officially-run and privately-run. Those which were privately-run had the *Shuyuan*. (the Academy of Classical Learning) of various types as their representatives, whereas there were officially-run *Shuyuan*. and those of course were walking on the other "leg." So far as education administration is concerned, many dynasties had institutions at the central, provincial, prefectural and county levels—but it must be pointed out that the institutions at these levels had different terms for them. In the Chinese history there has

legitimacy and honour of the highest institution of learning for Beida. The quality of a university does not depend on the length of its history, for universities with a long history do not necessarily fare well, and universities with a short history do not have to be poorly run. Countless facts have proved this, and indisputably. I count myself as one who is engaged in scientific research and so I cannot do anything but tell about things as they actually are.

According to the prevailing way of calculation, 2008 is the year when Beida is to celebrate her 100th anniversary. This is without doubt a major event for the University, and perhaps so for the whole nation. It is in the days of happy celebrations that Dr. Hao Ping presents to the University, to its staff and faculty members and students, and to the alumni of Beida who are scattered in different fields of work the world over and who have made contributions to different degrees, his book, which is condensed with his painstaking efforts which can be said of as affixing beautiful flowers to a brocade, or adding brilliance to the splendour of Beida. I believe that the book will come to the warm acclaim of the reader.

I would also like to add something which is by no means “superfluous.” I have said this on many occasions: Chinese intellectuals are among the best in the world because they feature a very prominent quality—patriotism. We do not have to go far to find examples. They exist in the “tradition of learning” which I mentioned above, and in the distant “predecessors” of Beida’s. The students of the *Taixue* in the Eastern Han dynasty opposed the degenerating ruling, which is clearly recorded in history and which is by no means make-believe. This tradition has been passed on down the history until the Ming dynasty when the renowned scholar Gu Yanwu had a summary of it in his *Ri Zhi Lu* (Notes on the Daily Increment of Knowledge): “Protecting the nation from falling is everyone’s responsibility, however humble he may be,” which later was condensed into a popular maxim, “The rise and fall of the nation are everyone’s responsibility.” In the one hundred years since Beida was founded, whenever China was at a politically or culturally critical moment, the teachers and students of Beida, along with those from other universities, would stand up for the salvation of the nation. The May 4 Movement best proved this. Even after the founding of the People’s Republic of China—which period accounts for the best half of Beida’s one-hundred-year history—the patriotic heart has not faded in the least, for which even heaven would be happy to produce a testimonial and which calls for no unnecessary words here.

Now only four months lie ahead before Beida celebrates her 100th anniversary. It is said that, this year, the number of the alumni who are planning to return for the anniversary of their alma mater will be unprecedented. Their love for their alma mater perfectly matches and corresponds to their love for their nation. The feelings displayed through all this, in the same vein, echoed and corresponded to the patriotic tradition of

the Chinese intellectuals (including the *Shi*, or the scholar, of ancient China) of the past two thousand years. It foretells the brilliance and glory of the future of our great motherland.

Two books are now available for the teachers, students and alumni of Beida, and for friends all over the country and around the world who care for Beida: *Peking University and the Origins of Higher Education in China* by Hao Ping and *Lofty as Beida and Shining as Stars* by Professor Xiao Chaoran. Hao's book tells people about the hardships during the pioneering stages of Beida, whereas Xiao's focuses on the shining stars over the long, long road Beida has followed in the past one hundred years. The former paves the way for the latter; there can be no latter book without the former, and without the latter the former would be a futile effort. The two books form a united whole, with either one supplementing the other. Together they provide boundless beneficence to the public, not only because they will add immense cheer to the joyous celebrations of the anniversary of the University, but also because they impart reliable and solid knowledge to those who wish to know more about Beida.

In two years' time, a new century and a new millennium will fall on us. I believe that all the colleagues and students of Beida will be encouraged by the anniversary celebrations and will, with the millennium in their hearts and the Beida's brilliance of one hundred years in their mind, forge ahead and further on with greater determination, braving all kinds of difficulties, and make new contributions to the construction of our great motherland.

Ji Xianlin
January 2, 1998

Preface to the English Edition

Peking University is my alma mater, and it is my great pleasure to share its history with you. It was only when I was studying overseas that I fully realized its position in my heart and mind.

In the spring of 1991, I was dispatched by the university to further my studies at the East-West Center at the University of Hawaii. After admission into Beida (an abbreviated, affectionate term for my alma mater) in 1978, graduation in 1982, and staying on to join the faculty members on campus, this was the first time I went so far away from the motherland.

The Hawaiian Islands looked like beautiful pearls scattered in the Pacific Ocean. The blue seas and azure sky, sandy beaches and palm trees, and the year-round spring—all this attracts millions of tourists, who invariably linger on, oblivious of home.

However, charming as the scenery was and delightful as the sight was, it was nothing to stop me from missing my alma mater. During the four plus years of my study there, whenever Peking University was mentioned, be it in newspapers, over the radio, on TV, or in other media, my heart would tremble with emotion. My care and concern for the university led me to realize that the moment I entered the university, a connection between us was made. Wherever I am, my alma mater fills me with pride because of its perfect image; whenever I return to it, it embraces me and accepts me.

While abroad, I found myself thinking that I should do something for my alma mater.

I was not sure if I would write a book like this, but I did begin to take notice of any information and materials related to Beida and even made special trips to the libraries of some of the prestigious universities in the United States, like the University of California at Berkeley, the Harvard-Yenching Institute of Harvard University, and Columbia University, among others.

I was visiting the library of the University of Chicago when I stumbled upon a collection of commemorative articles marking the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of Beida. Published in 1948, with the preface written by then university president Mr. Hu Shih, the book is composed of articles written by world-renowned alumni of Beida. From different perspectives, the authors express their heartfelt feelings by recalling Beida's history, not only of the previous fifty years, but also the part of its history dating back to the Tongwenguan (TWG).

As if discovering the most precious treasure, I emptied my pockets of the few dozen dollars I had on me to acquire the book.

It was at that moment that it occurred to me that I could write a book for my alma mater.

It is well known that before the Xinhai Revolution, Peking University bore the name of the Imperial University of Peking, as it was the first highest national institution of learning and, at the same time, functioned as the highest educational administrative department in modern China. The founding of the Imperial University symbolized the complete collapse of the imperial examination system of over one thousand years and the birth of the new-style educational system. Peking University was the provenance of the New Culture movement, the center of the May 4 movement; it was also the center for the spreading of democracy, scientific thought, and Marxism-Leninism in China. What, then, was the fundamental reason underpinning the founding of such a university so closely related to the modern history of China? What was the direct cause? What was its relationship with two other early institutions of learning, the Taixue and the Guozijian? Did the Imperial University have a predecessor at all? Why was the officially run new-style institution of learning, the Tongwenguan (TWG), merged into the Imperial University? Why did Empress Dowager Cixi, who would always raise high the killer's sword at the reformists of the time, show such lenience to the Imperial University, displaying great and unusual care instead of outlawing it? Why did the Imperial University, in the initial years of its founding, issue three statutes in a row and how were the three statutes connected to Emperor Guangxu and Empress Dowager Cixi, the highest rulers of the time?

Those questions, closely tied to the early history of Peking University, prompted me to think now and again. Going through the materials at hand over and over, I found myself trying to find answers to these questions that would be at least partly satisfactory.

I returned to Beida in early 1996, just in time for the preparations for the celebrations of the one-hundredth anniversary of the founding of Beida, which further fired my enthusiasm to delve into these questions. My thinking was that if I were able to find the answers through my own research, consolidating and publishing them would be the best return that I could offer in return for the love and care I received from my alma mater during the past years.

From then on, I devoted myself wholeheartedly to research and writing, despite my hectic work schedule. I wanted to present my research as a humble gift for my alma mater for its one-hundredth birthday. Though I knew the task at hand was not an easy one, I did believe that, so long as even one of the aforementioned questions was answered, I would be able to regard myself as living up to the name of a member of Beida. The proceeding pages contain my findings, and I leave it to you, the reader, to decide whether or not I have

satisfactorily answered these questions.

After its successful first printing just in time for the centennial, and later a second edition, I am delighted to now share Beida's illustrious history with English readers around the world. Being the first university in China, it has played a pivotal role in the evolution of Chinese higher education as we know it.

Quite a number of Chinese universities have now celebrated their centenaries. In the past one hundred years, universities of China have had eventful and remarkable histories, and the question as to which university was China's first has been difficult to answer indeed. Though judging which institution was first is not an end in itself, I provide substantial research and documentation which humbly confirms Beida as the first of its kind, proving it the vanguard of and foundation for higher education in China.

As the author, I would like to provide a general framework of Beida's history by drawing the reader's attention to key people, events, and important historical facts concerning the founding of the University:

First, the 1894 Jiawu or Sino-Japanese War ended with the annihilation of the Beiyang Navy of the Qing government, which motivated many insightful men to begin supporting the reform movement, focused on education and government. In 1895, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and others set up the Society for National Strengthening (Qiangxuehui), a political organization dedicated to furthering the reform movement by organizing lectures and discussions, printing progressive books, purchasing scientific instruments, and engaging in other useful activities. Due to repression from the conservatives, however, the Society for National Strengthening had to be changed to the Official Publishing Bureau (the Guanshuju), on which the Imperial University (the Jingshi Daxuetang, literally, "Capital Grand School") was to be based. Mr. Liang Qichao later emphasized that the Society for National Strengthening was the predecessor of the Imperial University.

Secondly, in 1898, Emperor Guangxu issued the "Edict on New National Policies" on Tiananmen Square (the Gate of Heavenly Peace), thus starting the Hundred Days' Reform. The establishment of the Imperial University of Peking was one of the major steps taken in the reform movement. The "Statutes of the Imperial University of Peking," drafted by Liang Qichao, revised by Kang Youwei, and presented to the emperor by the Zongli Yamen (the Office in Charge of the Affairs of All Nations), is a reflection of the prevailing ideas of reform of the time. The Imperial University, as the first national university in modern China, undertook the function of the state's organ for educational administration. Its establishment proved to be an usher of China's modern and contemporary education.

Third, the Jingshi Tongwenguan (literally, "Capital Translation House," which will be referred hereinafter as the Tongwenguan or the TWG),

established in 1862, was the first educational institution in modern China to teach multiple foreign languages. In addition to languages such as English, French, German, Russian, and Japanese, the TWG also offered subjects like astronomy, mathematics, physics, and medicine. With over one hundred faculty members and nearly one thousand students, the TWG cultivated large numbers of foreign affairs personnel for the Qing government. In 1902, the TWG was merged into the Imperial University of Peking, which explains why the TWG has been described as a significant precursor of the Imperial University.

Fourth, before the Imperial University, the Guozijian (the Imperial Academy) was the highest institution of learning to evolve under the two-thousand-year imperial examination system, from the Taixue (the Imperial School). The year 1905 saw the abolition of the imperial examinations, the establishment of the modern educational institution, and the abolition of the Guozijian. The functions of the Guozijian educational administration were combined with those of the Imperial University of Peking to form the Board of Education (Xuebu) which functioned similarly to the ministry of education today. The teaching sector of the Guozijian was also merged into the Imperial University. In a sense, the Imperial University inherited and further developed the traditional Chinese educational system, which can be seen in the writings of Mr. Hu Shih, Mr. Ji Xianlin, and others.

Fifth, it is worth noting that the Jingshi Imperial University was translated into "Imperial University" in English, and the Jinshi Tongwenguan, the "Imperial College." The word "imperial" in both English names obviously indicates the importance of the two institutions at that time.

Lastly, after the Xinhai Revolution which led to the end of the Qing dynasty in 1912, the Imperial University of Peking was renamed the National Peking University.

It is the author's sincere hope that readers concern themselves with the six points mentioned above when they settle down to the studies of the history of universities of modern China. May you enjoy the historical journey through the wars and political upheaval in which new ideas and educational systems were first forged, and the cast of characters who were their smiths.

Hao Ping

Introduction

The Imperial University of Peking (Jingshi Daxuetang)^① was officially launched in 1898, but as far back as 1896, preparations for its establishment were already underway. After China's defeat in the 1895 Sino-Japanese War, Emperor Guangxu, embracing the idea of "encouraging education for the cultivation of talents" proposed by both officials and ordinary people, decided China must learn modern modes of education from the Europeans, Americans, and Japanese, and establish new-style educational institutions^② and an institution of higher learning—the Imperial University of Peking. To accomplish this, he entrusted Sun Jianai, the minister in charge of publishing affairs, with the preparations for the launch on the basis of the Official Publishing Bureau (Guanshujū).

In 1898 the Hundred Days' Reform, also known as the Wuxu Reforms, inadvertently provided a very good opportunity for the launch of the Imperial University of Peking. Emperor Guangxu hoped that his ambitions could be realized through the Statutes of the Imperial University of Peking, drafted by Liang Qichao and revised by Kang Youwei, and through making the University a first-class modern university of the world that would "serve as a role model for all provinces, be admired by all nations, be of a grand scale, and be well and soundly organized."^③ This statute reflects the mind-set of the open-minded late Qing rulers to salvage the nation through education and science. We must recognize that it took a lot of thinking and contemplation by people with broad vision, as well as the open-minded emperor himself, to arrive at the idea of the cultivation of well-rounded talents by launching new-style universities and saving the nation through science and technology.

On the other hand, the Hundred Days' Reform proved to be not only an historical summary of the above-mentioned perception but also a practice of it. Where did this perception actually come from? The answer lies only in the Opium War, when the awakening of the nation began.

① Later known as Peking University, Beijing University, or Beida.

② Editor's note: New-style education was a movement to incorporate Western learning, such as foreign languages, math, and science, into the Chinese educational structure.

③ Edict by Emperor Guangxu.

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Chapter I

Catalysts for Education: The Opium War, the Trend of Reformist Thinking, and the Westernization Movement

The Qing dynasty, after flourishing for 130 years under the reigns of Emperors Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong, had begun to sink into decline when it came under the reigns of Emperors Jiaqing and Daoguang. Inside the Qing government, the official management system was corrupt, and embezzlement and bribery were the order of the day. The country's policies of seclusion from the outside world adopted by the Qing rulers had gravely hindered social progress. In the meantime, the United Kingdom, France, the United States, and other countries had caught up to and surpassed China after a long period of exploration through the dark medieval ages and had begun to enter the stage of capitalist development. China was not able to meet the challenges posed by the rising force of capitalism, the colonialist characteristics of which included the plundering of raw material producers and commodity markets. With the rise of capitalism, thus, the feudal civilization that had lasted for over two thousand years finally started to wane.

British merchants had started the opium trade in China as far back as the early eighteenth century, at which time the United Kingdom annually exported 200 boxes of opium to China; every year between 1780 and 1816 (the forty-fifth year of the Qianlong reign to the twenty-first year of the Jiaqing reign), it exported 4,000 to 5,000 boxes. This number skyrocketed to an astonishing 21,785 boxes between 1816 and 1834 (the fourteenth year of the Daoguang reign). After that, propelled by the desire for exorbitant profits, the import of opium steadily increased. In the year 1837, the United Kingdom exported 39,000 boxes of opium into the Chinese territory; in 1838, 40,200 boxes were exported. Approximately one-tenth of the British government's revenue came from opium trade with China.

The large quantity of opium flooding into China resulted in its uncontrollable and large-scale abuse. From officials of the imperial court to

ordinary people, opium users were countless. In 1729 (the seventh year of the Yongzheng reign), the first order to ban opium use was issued by the Qing government, and similar bans soon followed in the one hundred or so years after that.

However, the opium import and the corrupt rule of the Qing government were two sides of the same coin: the British merchants were playing duplicitous games by overtly following the order but covertly continuing with opium transportation, while corrupt Qing officials were similarly showing two faces, ostensibly rejecting opium but secretly accepting it. The result was that opium was far from being banned; on the contrary, its importation was in fact growing with the enforcement of the opium ban.

The unchecked spread of opium in China not only seriously damaged the physical and mental health of the Chinese people and their productivity, but it also drained the national treasury to such an extent that the Qing government was sinking into a serious financial mire; this posed a direct threat to the rule of the Qing imperial power.

In 1838 (the eighteenth year of the Daoguang reign), Huang Juezi, the minister of Honglusi^① for protocol and ritual music, took the lead to submit a memorial to the emperor that stated both officials and ordinary people should be strictly prohibited from smoking opium in order to resist its influx into the country. He proposed that a one-year time limit should be imposed for opium addicts to quit completely, and anyone who violated the order should be executed if he were an ordinary person without rank or title, or criminalized with tough punishments if he were an official.

Soon after, Lin Zexu followed suit by submitting a memorial to the imperial court for a ban on opium use. He thought that with opium “spreading baneful poison everywhere under the sun and inflicting untold harm, stricter laws should be put in place. If a laissez-faire attitude is adopted toward it, then in about a few dozen years time, there will be neither military reserve forces to resist the enemy with, nor financial reserves to fund the army and pay the soldiers from.”^② Emperor Daoguang, who felt it was high time to prohibit opium, approved of Lin’s memorial and put him in charge of the ban.

On March 10, 1839 (the nineteenth year of the Daoguang reign), Lin Zexu arrived in Guangzhou as an imperial commissioner for the preparations for the enforcement of the ban. On March 18, Lin convened a meeting with representatives from foreign firms, including Wu Shaorong from the Yihe

① Editor’s note: The Honglusi is also known as the Court of State Ceremonials, the Bureau for the Reception of Foreign Embassies, and the Historiography Institute. Its responsibilities included performing government ritual, receiving foreign ambassadors, and managing foreign affairs, as well as other duties.

② Lin Zexu, *Lin Zexu Collected Works—Memorials*, vol. 1, ed. Department of History, Sun Yatsen University (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1965), 624.