Mary Clabaugh Wright

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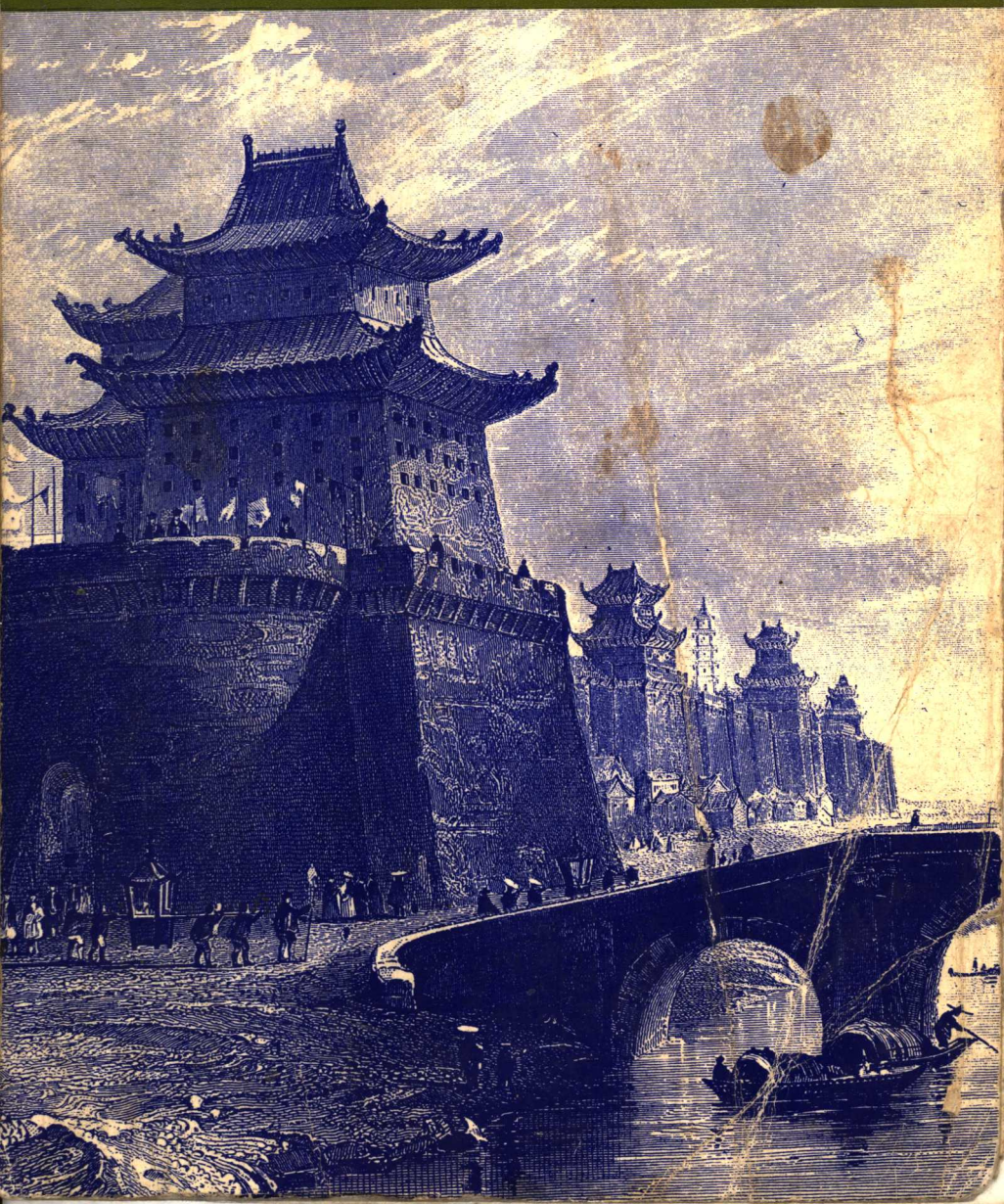

THE LAST STAND OF CHINESE CONSERVATISM

The T'ung-Chih Restoration, 1862–1874

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND PRINTING

In the years since this book was written, some dozen important studies of aspects of Ch'ing history have appeared. I have learned from them and from the reviews of my book; the major issues of interpretation that are involved have been the subject of lively seminar discussions and exchanges of correspondence. Accordingly, when Stanford University Press invited me to submit not only corrections but a new Preface for a new printing, I expected that I would use the Preface, at least in part, to warn readers against ideas in the text that I now found superficial or unsound. When I read the book again, however, I found, rather to my surprise, that its main ideas still seemed valid.

I have tried to correct typographical errors in the text and several errors of fact, e.g., the building in which the Palace Examinations were held, the date of Wen-hsiang's death. In locating these, I have had very generous help from Professor Ping-ti Ho, Professor Kwang-ching Liu, and Dr. E-tu Zen Sun, each of whom has rechecked the book with the meticulous care that a scholar normally reserves for his own writings. Mr. J. G. Bell, the Editor of Stanford University Press, has been exceptionally generous in his attention to both the substance and the details of this revised printing.

Mr. Ho, Mr. Liu, Mrs. Sun, and Mr. J. S. Gregory have been extremely helpful in calling my attention to points on which additional footnotes were needed to lead the reader to recent detailed studies of subjects that I had treated briefly. These added notes are keyed to the original text and notes by stars ☆. (There have been no additions to the Bibliography proper.) I have not attempted to decorate the new notes with references to the voluminous Chinese documentary collections published both on the Mainland and on Taiwan in recent years. Among the most important of these are the *Hai-fang tang* (Archives on Maritime Defense), Taipei, 1958, 9 vols., and *Yang-wu yün-tung* (The Westernization Movement), Shanghai, 1961, 8 vols. These are collections of prime importance, but, so far as I have been able to check, they do not alter the weight of evidence for or against the general theses of this book, because they contain documents of the same type—and sometimes the same documents—that I have used from the *Shih-lu,* the *Tung-hua lu,* the *I-wu shih-mo,* and the public and private papers of prominent Chinese of the time.

Some major questions have been raised in certain reviews and in discussion and correspondence since this book was first published in 1957. On the whole,

they seem to me to be answered in the original text, but perhaps not clearly enough. A brief discussion of the chief issues may be useful here.

The Taiping Rebellion. Several reviewers observe that there is a "demonstrable empathy for the imperial side" in my brief treatment of the Taiping Rebellion. I think that in a book about the imperial effort to rebuild China's social, cultural, and economic base, empathy for the subject is not only inevitable but desirable. I am charged on this account with "hostility toward the Chinese people." But however we may view the Taiping Rebellion today, the evidence is overwhelming that by the time of the Restoration, the Chinese people viewed it with alarm and loathing.

Foreign Relations. There is nothing to support the notion that the Cooperative Policy of the Western powers was an imperialist plot. New research has filled in the sketch without altering its dimensions, but with one change in shading. Whitehall accepted and supported a policy that was developed empirically by men like Bruce and Alcock; it did not formulate. No one familiar with British diplomatic history would have supposed that it did, but the role of the envoys to China was even more creative and important than I knew seven years ago. In the added notes, I have indicated my appreciation of the recent work of younger British scholars on this point.

The Economy. Recent research, using well-known sources in new ways and the primary sources newly published on the Mainland, has proved beyond doubt that the level of commercial activity in the Ch'ing period as a whole was higher than had been supposed. However, the thesis of this book—that the state consistently attempted, and with considerable success, to limit commerce on moral grounds—has been confirmed.

The Character of Restoration Leadership. My admiration for the high quality of Restoration leadership has been criticized. Tseng Kuo-fan, around whom much of the controversy centers, has been eponymized on the Chinese Mainland as "traitor and executioner," and at least one historian on Taiwan has given the diary of a personal enemy of Tseng greater weight than Tseng's well-documented record in public office, the esteem in which he was held by both his superiors and his subordinates, and the undoubtedly genuine praise of the foreigners who knew him. There is no doubt that he was unnecessarily harsh in his punishment of rebel leaders; I have said as much in the text. But I see no reason to change my appraisal of the man.

That my esteem for Restoration leadership has been transferred to the Kuomintang, as asserted in *Voprosy Istorii,* is demonstrably absurd.

The Examination System and Social Mobility. We know now that in spite of every effort, the approved channel of upward mobility through the examinations did not widen sufficiently to keep pace with the population explosion of the

early and middle Ch'ing periods. This fact is not directly relevant to the T'ung-chih period, which witnessed catastrophic loss of life and extensive *ad hoc* increases in the regional quotas for the various degrees. However, the number of official posts did not expand in proportion; moreover, there is increasing evidence that a substantial number of important members of the new armies—though *not* their leaders—lacked the discipline of the literary examinations. The end of the nineteenth century thus saw an increased number of restless literati out of office and an increased number of military men on whom regional civil power devolved as the leaders of the Restoration died.

Was There a Restoration? The major thesis of this book is that not only a dynasty but also a civilization which appeared to have collapsed was revived to last for another sixty years by the extraordinary efforts of extraordinary men in the 1860's. The course of later history demonstrated that the fundamental institutional changes which began in the Taiping period could not be stopped. It is obvious that after the Restoration failed, military and financial power passed from the crumbling center to the provinces. Far from proving that "the so-called T'ung-chih Restoration never occurred," however, the tortured history of Imperial China after 1870 underscores by contrast the great achievements of the Restoration decade. The T'ung-chih period was a tragedy in which the ultimate failure of high hopes and grand endeavor was already foreshadowed in the moment of triumph. The great men of the age saw the triumph amid lengthening shadows. That is what they meant by Restoration.

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Yale University
August 1962

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This whole book is a quite inadequate acknowledgment of my debt of gratitude to John King Fairbank, professor of history at Harvard University. First as a superb teacher and later as the most esteemed of colleagues, he has been unsparing of his time and energy in encouraging this study.

Many others have helped enormously in diverse ways. Arthur F. Wright and Chaoying Fang read the final manuscript with great care and offered valuable suggestions both on major points and on innumerable details; I am honored that the characters on the title page are in Mr. Fang's hand. Jesse G. Bell, Jr., of the Stanford University Press, not only edited the manuscript with rare thoroughness and perception but also helped clarify a dozen basic questions of substance.

As this work has proceeded over many years, I have benefited from discussions with scholars both here and abroad, a number of whom were kind enough to read and to comment with care on earlier versions of the manuscript. Among these were Masataka Banno, Knight Biggerstaff, Lienche Tu Fang, Chūzō Ichiko, Joseph Levenson, Marinus J. Meijer, Franz Michael, Benjamin Schwartz, Hellmut Wilhelm, and Lien-sheng Yang. I am especially indebted to Motonosuke Amano, Alexander Eckstein, and Bert F. Hoselitz for advice on the problems of economic history raised in Chapter VIII. I should also like to thank my colleagues on the staffs of the Chinese and Japanese Collections of the Hoover Library for their cheerful help whenever I have needed it, and in particular to express my appreciation to Marianna Olmstead for her patient assistance in the long and tiresome business of preparing the manuscript for the press.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

No one doubts that China was for millennia a remarkably stable and conservative country, and casual references to "Chinese conservatism" crop up in most discussions of recent and current Chinese affairs. One hears it said that this or that reform came to nothing because of the strength of "conservative forces"; that foreign powers, by supporting "conservative elements" with the aim of preserving order, have hindered progress and precipitated disorder; that superficial signs to the contrary, there remains in China a "latent conservatism" which could re-emerge with proper encouragement; and so forth.

"Chinese conservatism" is important not only to the study of modern China but also to the comparative study of politics, but the label is apt to be misleading. If "to conserve" means "to keep in safety from harm, decay or loss,"[1] then the series of stands taken by the officials and literati of the Chinese Empire to preserve the Confucian order in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is certainly conservatism. But it is instructively different from the conservatism of the modern West.

Our political term "conservative" was coined in the wake of the French Revolution by Burke's admirers, men who sought to preserve the Christian, antirationalist, aristocratic, and feudal strains of pre-Enlightenment European society. Chinese conservatism, on the other hand, which took shape quite independently a few decades later in the wake of the Taiping Rebellion, aimed at the preservation of the Confucian, rationalist, gentry, and nonfeudal strains of pre-Taiping and pre-Opium War Chinese society. Chinese conservatives, unlike Chinese radicals, have not been interested in Western political and philosophic ideas.[a] When they have been interested in the West at all, their interest has been solely in terms of the famous formula: "Chinese learning as the basis; Western learning for practical use."[b] They did not read Burke.

The hallmarks of Western conservatism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are belief in a divine intent that governs history; a sense of sin; distrust

[1] Numbers refer to Notes (pp. 315–96), primarily citations of sources and relevant collateral material. Footnotes are designated by letters.

[a] It is true that since 1912 Chinese conservatives, under extreme pressure, have occasionally searched for Western authorities to prove that Confucius was right. This pathetic and absurd device is quite different, however, from an interest in Western conservatism itself.

[b] This formula was first given wide currency in the 1890's in Chang Chih-tung's "Exhortation to Learning," and much of the twentieth-century Chinese debate on China's future has centered upon it. On the origin and significance of the idea, see Hellmut Wilhelm, "The Problem of Within and Without, a Confucian Attempt in Syncretism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XII, 1 (1951), 48–60.

of reason and faith in "prescription and sound prejudice"; belief in the sacredness of private property; affection for parochial ways and distrust of cosmopolitanism.[2] By contrast, Chinese conservatism is the defense of a rational, cosmopolitan order, and to a great extent of the very "radical illusions"[3] that are anathema to Western conservatives: the belief that human history is part of a harmonious and rational natural order; willingness to subordinate private property to group interests; belief in man's innate goodness and his perfectibility through moral training; the honoring of custom not as a brake on reason but as the embodiment of reason; and the persistent ideal of the universal state.

The great common ground between European and Chinese conservatism is thus only the intent to conserve. Both systems honor established ways of doing things; both discourage sweeping innovation and recommend making small improvements slowly, with due weight to custom and habit. To the Chinese conservative the Confucian social order, the Confucian political system, and the Confucian ethic are of enduring value, true and right for all men in all ages.[c] They are basic principles, capable of slight adjustment to meet new circumstances but never to be weakened or altered.[4]

Modern Chinese conservatism begins with the mid-nineteenth century. Confucianism, in one form or another, had dominated earlier Ch'ing political thought as it had most of Chinese history, but its supporters became what may properly be called conservatives only after they had to defend their position against the Taiping Rebellion and against Western influence. For the first time their fundamental propositions concerning the nature of human life and society were no longer accepted as self-evident. Increasingly they had to argue their theoretical case and to search for new ways to prove its merits in the practical affairs of government. In time there developed a cleavage between the true Confucian conservatives, who cherished the Confucian order for its inherent qualities, and a series of opportunists who used the Confucian heritage either as a spur to Chinese nationalism or as a veil for fascism. In opportunist hands Confucianism was a dull spur, a thin veil, and became a laughing stock. The true Confucian conservative position is quite different.[d]

Modern Confucianism rests on the Doctrine of the Rites—the *li,* the "principles of social usage."[e] The *li* provide both canonical and customary sanction for proper behavior in the Confucian scheme of things, a stable yet flexible hierarchy

[c] Historically, Confucianism includes a number of different and sometimes opposing strains. In this book, by Confucianism I mean the Confucianism of the eclectic Neo-Sung revival, which has been dominant since the mid-nineteenth century.

[d] Discussion of modern Chinese political thought has been confused by the indiscriminate lumping together of all the opponents of Western liberalism and Marxism, from Tseng Kuo-fan to Ch'en Li-fu. The differences among the Chinese opponents of modernization are as important as those among its proponents.

[e] See Chapter IV.

in which ideally every human being understands his duties and his privileges and accepts them as a part of a rational and universal natural order. For three generations the primary aim of Chinese conservatism has been to preserve the *li,* the primary aim of Chinese radicalism to destroy them. Throughout his life Ch'en Tu-hsiu recognized this doctrine as the first enemy: from his early years as an Enlightenment liberal, through his leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, to the last decade of his life after his split with the Comintern, he never wavered in his opposition to the *li.*[f]

A Confucian society is of necessity an agrarian society: trade, industry, economic development in any form, are its enemies.[g] History is viewed as a cyclical sequence of constant renewals and adjustments within a fundamentally stable order where basic conflicts cannot develop. The goal of perfect harmony is to be reached by settling minor conflicts through compromise and concession. The elite are the literati, who guide social life and help it maintain its own natural course; they do not force, create, or innovate. They are neither fanatic propagandists, political organizers, aristocrats, priests, men of wealth, nor specialists in any line. They are the *chün-tzu*—men of superior moral and intellectual capacity and training, humanists and conservatives. As a leading Chinese anthropologist puts it:

> A man who sees the world only through human relations is inclined to be conservative, because in human relations the end is always mutual adjustment. And an adjusted equilibrium can only be founded on a stable and unchanging relation between man and nature. On the other hand, from the purely technical point of view, there are hardly any limits to man's control of nature. In emphasizing technical progress, one plunges into a struggle in which man's control over nature becomes ever changing, ever more efficient. Yet these technical changes may lead to conflict between man and man. The Chinese intelligentsia viewed the world humanistically. Lacking technical knowledge, they could not appreciate technical progress. And they saw no reason to wish to change man's relation to man.[5]

The peasant had a considerably more important place in the society of Chinese conservatives than in the society of European conservatives. In the first place, Chinese conservative leaders knew what it meant to say that agriculture was the

[f] In the year before his death, Ch'en wrote that his opposition to the line of the Third International was comparable to his opposition to the line of Sung Confucianism: both were dogmatic, unscientific, superstitious (letter of Jan. 19, 1941, *Ch'en Tu-hsiu ti tsui-hou chien-chieh,* Hongkong, 1950, pp. 30–31). A word of caution is needed here. Although in China both Confucianism and Communism have opposed and been opposed by liberal individualism, it would be as misleading to press the comparison as it would be to group Coleridge and Marx together on the ground that they both despised the utilitarians. Confucianism is authoritarianism sanctioned by the laws of history, and its elite avowedly acts on behalf of the people, but comparisons with Marxism should stop there. Confucianism's laws of history were of a totally different type, its autocracy differently constituted, its elite of a different character and different means of operation; and its people, with their different values, had different interests.

[g] See Chapter VIII.

basis of the state. The substantive problems of agriculture—both economic and technical—were a main concern of all statesmen. Moreover, although these men were landlords attending to their own interests, they were trained to consider the peasant's affairs a part of those interests. Confucian statesmen could not, like so many of their Western counterparts, content themselves with sentimental platitudes about the bliss of agrarian life and the peasant's immemorial wisdom while occupying themselves with commerce, industry, urban life, and international affairs. In the second place, according to Chinese conservative doctrine, the peasant was a rational and perfectible human being. The precepts that guided his conduct along accepted lines were rational precepts, and the privileges of his superiors were grounded on rational propositions. His expressions of disapproval were felt—officers were perennially cautioned to watch their conduct lest they give the peasant soldiers an excuse to jeer and gossip; local officials were regularly ordered to stop the people's tongue-wagging by correcting this or that malpractice.

The Chinese peasant was held to be innately good, not originally sinful.[h] Perhaps for this reason, there is in Chinese conservatism little of the fear of mass education that has obsessed Western conservatism. The Confucian limitation on education was economic; the sons of peasants could seldom be spared from the fields. It was not imagined that if the peasant learned to read he would be led astray, but rather that he would understand the Confucian teaching better and help to propagate it. If he had superior ability, it was confidently expected that he would become an official and not an iconoclast. In theory, the second highest office on earth was always open to him if by chance he had the necessary individual capacity, and the throne itself was open if the reigning Emperor forfeited his right to rule by violating the rational moral principles on which that right was based.[i]

Chinese conservative ideas about private property show no trace of the cardinal principle of Western conservatives, the idea that property is somehow sacred and inviolable. The Chinese gentry certainly had vested interests in land and found wealth agreeable; and as in Europe private property and the decentralization of authority that goes with it were regarded as important checks on the whims of an imperial autocrat, who might be tempted to abuse his power if it were greater. But in the Chinese conservative view, private wealth was, like everything else, part of the web of social responsibility. It did not confer "inherent

[h] He was not, however, the peasant of European romanticism, untainted by corrupting civilization, and hence the wellspring of a folk revival. He was good as all men are good, potentially capable of contributing to universal Confucian thought, to the universal Confucian arts and learning. If fundamentally he was no worse than other men, he was no better either.

[i] See Chapter IV.

rights"; it was properly subject to confiscation the moment it threatened social stability by contributing to unemployment, a price rise, a food shortage, or popular disapproval.

The character of Chinese conservatism has not, of course, remained constant during the tumultuous century in which it has striven to preserve, adjust, and restore the essentials of the Confucian way of life. Conservatives of the first generation were serene; they were certain that Confucianism was universal truth, that it would survive and flourish not only in China but by degrees throughout the world. Domestic rebellion and foreign aggression compelled them to examine and restate their case with a sharpness seldom to be found in pre-Taiping writings, but it did not cause them to doubt themselves. Although they differed over the best method of reaching the goals they held in common, there was not one who was not animated by the traditional values of the universal Confucian society; not one who did not see in Confucianism both the common heritage and the common future of mankind.

Conservatives of the second generation, as Joseph Levenson has so admirably shown,[6] had no such serenity. Haunted by doubts and buffeted by circumstances, they sought long and hard for a way to reconcile the Confucian principles to which they were emotionally committed with fundamentally hostile European ideas whose efficacy they now had to recognize. In the third generation the ranks split wide open, and as certainty had earlier given way to doubt, doubt now gave way to panic as China's continued decline foreshadowed her extinction. What was the proper path to a strong new China? The radicals—few in number—were for jettisoning the whole Confucian system; the conservatives clung to their hope of a Confucian revival.[7]

Chinese conservatives of the first generation were more self-confident than European conservatives have ever been, and they were able to test their principles more fully than has ever been possible in the Western world. Chinese conservatives of the third generation have been more frightened and demoralized than European conservatives have ever been, and with reason. No other group has ever been compelled within a single lifetime to face the loss not only of livelihood and self-respect but of every moral and social value. For the Confucian principles that they had thought universal were not religious principles, to which the believer might cling in his heart, but social principles, which could be preserved only in social use. They withered beyond recognition when they were harbored in secret or cherished in exile.

In these circumstances it is scarcely surprising that the conservative cries of protest in our time have been shrill and foolish; that a great and complicated political and social heritage has been reduced to an anticommunist slogan. In the

twentieth-century West, creative vitality in the arts has been associated with social and political conservatism rather than with liberalism.[8] In China, by contrast, outstanding artists and writers have followed the liberal and radical political theorists in rejecting the mockery that has been made of Confucianism. And yet the break has not been complete; what has been so emphatically abjured is not wholly dead.

In all the social studies there is need for perennial vigilance in two directions: vigilance on the one hand against the "brick-by-brick" approach, against that default of the imagination which leads us to suppose that *all* phenomena are worth our attention, that sound research on *any* topic is a contribution to knowledge; that when the bricks are all assembled (some centuries hence), they will of themselves take the shape of a well-designed construction and not a rubble heap; and vigilance on the other hand against the "magic method" approach, against the conceit that we can concern ourselves solely with the formulation of general propositions and with debate over abstractions, that the specific phenomena are too numerous and tiresome for us to labor over, that the handling of specific data is something that is farmed out to helots, that our tentative sketch of the structure will suddenly take on substance when we blow it up by our special method.

This vigilance is particularly needed where studies of China are concerned. On the one hand, the field is so difficult, so fascinating, and so little known that any fragment we stumble across seems worth our attention. On the other hand, the field is so vast and the questions it raises are of such great theoretical and practical importance that it seems necessary to plunge quickly into the heart of the matter and to discuss *the* Chinese peasant, *the* Chinese mind, *the* Chinese business class, Chinese conservatism in general, the Chinese revolution in general, the modernization of China in general, Chinese society in general.

Academic works on China have generally gone to one or the other extreme. There are the proleptical remarks on one tiny facet of the history of one period, and there are the glittering one-package explanations of what makes China tick. Neither of these approaches can with safety be neglected, but for a great range of the most interesting problems, neither is practicable. Modern Chinese conservatism cannot be profitably discussed in purely general terms, for there is no escaping the tiresome necessity of finding out who the conservative leaders were, who supported them, what kind of society was their goal, what measures they took or advocated in every field of government, and with what result. Yet while these questions may seem limited and concrete, the answers to them, for any moment in time, ramify into a cross-section of the whole of Chinese society at that moment. The difficulties in getting at the character of Chinese conservatism at any moment are compounded when we come to the interpretation of modern Chinese conservatism as a whole. For these reasons I have chosen the T'ung-chih

Restoration of the 1860's[1] as a case study of more or less manageable proportions and yet one broad enough to illumine the general problem.

In 1860 the Chinese Empire and the traditional Chinese order seemed to be on the verge of collapse. The Imperial government appeared hopeless and demoralized in the face of domestic revolution and foreign invasion. For a decade the great Taiping Rebellion had disorganized the life of the richest and most populous provinces; in 1860, in a late renewal of vigor, it had swept up across the north China plain to threaten the capital itself. Simultaneously the British and French navies had brushed past the vaunted Taku defenses, and small foreign forces had defeated the Empire's finest troops under its most famed general, the Mongol Prince Seng-ko-lin-ch'in. Barbarian soldiers were roaming the streets of the capital, and the magnificent summer palace, the Yüan-ming yüan, lay in ruins. In an open confession of utter despair the Emperor and his court had fled to Jehol. He died there the following year, bringing to a fitting end one of the most melancholy decades in Chinese history.

There was a widespread feeling that the dynasty was toppling and that an age of anarchy was at hand. From a Chinese point of view this fate was not only inevitable but just, unless the Manchu ruling house and the Chinese governing class could between them perform a miracle: suppress revolution, check foreign aggression, and re-establish domestic order. What was required was not merely the restoration at the eleventh hour of effective government along traditional lines but the creation of new policies that could ward off *modern* domestic and foreign threats and yet preserve the Confucian society and its ideology.

In the 1860's the miracle seemed very nearly accomplished. The contrast between the Hsien-feng collapse of the 1850's and the T'ung-chih Restoration of the 1860's was striking. The upper classes, Chinese and Manchu, rallied around the lately discredited throne with virtually unanimous loyalty. Men of outstanding ability assumed the chief government posts. The recovery of the Taiping capital, Nanking, in 1864 marked the end of the only rebellion that threatened the existence of the state. By degrees the Nien, Moslem, and other less serious rebellions were also suppressed. The size of the army was progressively reduced, and its efficiency increased. The rate of the land tax was reduced but total govern-

[1] The T'ung-chih reign (1862–74) was officially classified as a restoration (*chung-hsing*). I have accepted the traditional term but not the exact traditional dates. The dates of the accession and death of the T'ung-chih Emperor do not precisely delimit the restoration phase of the historic process. The Restoration was marked in the beginning by the signature of the Conventions of Peking in 1860, by the rise to power of Prince Kung and the founding of the Tsungli-yamen in 1861; by the turn of the tide against the Taiping Rebellion with the fall of Anking later the same year; and by the emergence of new civil and military leaders in both the capital and the provinces. The end of the Restoration was marked by the Tientsin Massacre and the rejection of the Alcock Convention in 1870, and successively in the course of the next few years by the deaths of Tseng Kuo-fan and Wen-hsiang, the first losses of territory to Japan, and the growing power of the Empress Dowager Tz'u-hsi.

ment revenues were increased. New lands were opened to cultivation and vigorous efforts were made to rehabilitate the devastated areas. The standards of the civil service were re-established, and once again learning and scholarship flourished. Chinese merchants gained on foreign merchants in the competition to handle China's increasing foreign trade and outstripped them in the coastal trade. Foreign troops were withdrawn, and foreign pressure and interference were less than during any other period in the whole history of China's modern international relations. The statesmen of the Restoration succeeded in grafting a modern foreign office, the Tsungli-yamen, onto the ancient bureaucracy, and in a matter of months its members became accomplished diplomats, maneuvering successfully with treaty terms and international law to gain advantages for China. They recognized that henceforth China could neither remain isolated from modern Western countries nor absorb them into a tributary system based on the universal moral dominion of the Middle Kingdom. They began to read foreign books and world news and to establish schools for teaching Western languages and Western sciences. And, as it happened, the decade of restoration in China coincided with the high tide of anti-imperialism in the West. Western governments, sick of China incidents, were now ready to support and defend the Chinese government in its great effort at conservative reconstruction.

There are three main reasons[k] for making a case study of the T'ung-chih Restoration:

(1) Its importance to the general interpretation of modern Chinese history. This last of the great restorations of Chinese history was at the same time the first, and the most nearly successful, of a series of efforts to modify the Chinese state to a point where it could function effectively in the modern world without revolutionary changes in traditional Chinese values or in the institutions that embodied them. Yet in China the treatment of the period has been largely polemical, and in the West the subject is virtually unknown.

(2) The potential interest of the period for comparative political and social studies. The Restoration was perhaps the most elaborate, the most consistent, and the most fully documented conservative program in history; it suggests at every point useful comparisons with European conservative movements and ideologies.

(3) The light that understanding of the period may shed on twentieth-century problems. History does not repeat itself, and this book is not intended as a briefing document for policymakers. Yet as Ralph Linton once remarked, "The stream of history runs between banks"; it may shift its channel but it cannot

[k] There is in addition the still perfectly sound aim of traditional historical scholarship: to examine the records of a little-known era, in order to provide a fuller and more accurate account of what happened and why, and a more balanced appraisal of the place in history of a group of men who have been alternately pilloried and worshiped.