CHINA

Tradition & Transformation

FAIRBANK·REISCHAUER

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Preface

This book is a slight reworking of the materials on China in the 1978 revised edition of *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation,* by the two authors of this volume together with Albert M. Craig. Half of Chapter 1 in this book and all of Chapters 2–6 are by E. O. Reischauer, while the other half of Chapter 1 and the other nine chapters are by J. K. Fairbank. Both authors, however, contributed advice, criticism, and at times revisions to each other's sections.

In writing a history of a quarter of mankind during a period of more than three milleniums, we have naturally relied on the work of a host of other scholars, both Asian and Western. Some have given us personal help and advice; far more have aided us through their writings. We are deeply grateful to all of them, but it would be impractical to attempt to list even the more important of these colleagues in our effort. Nor is it feasible to offer here a bibliography on this vast subject; any bibliography small enough to be included in this volume would have to be absurdly sketchy and soon would be quite out of date. Here we limit ourselves to expressing our special thanks to the late Professor Edward A. Kracke for help on Chapters 5 and 6 and Wilma Fairbank for aid in selecting the illustrations.

The Romanization system used in this book for Chinese names and words is that of Wade-Giles, generally considered standard in the English-speaking world for historical purposes. Common geographic names, however, are normally given according to the old Chinese Post Office system, which often followed southern Chinese pronunciations and not the Peking pronunciation of standard Northern Chinese. For example, the city that has been the capital of China for most of the past five and a half centuries is usually Romanized Peking and pronounced accordingly in the West, but the Wade-Giles Romanization of the name would be Pei-ching, and the real pronunciation is something like Bay-jing.

The Wade-Giles romanization differs considerably from the *Pin-yin* system used by the People's Republic of China and also from what the sounds seem to be to the ears of English-speaking persons. In both Romanization systems the basic vowels and diphthongs are transcribed similarly for the most part and are in general pronounced as they would be in Italian, Spanish, or German. Examples are:

a as in f*a*ther
e as in *e*nd or the *u* in *lung* (the *-ien* combination of Wade-Giles appears as *-ian* in *Pin-yin*)
i as in *e*qual (except that the *ih* of Wade-Giles has no English equivalent, though some English speakers try to approximate it by the *ir* sound in *stir;* it is transcribed simply as *i* in *Pin-yin*)
o as in *o*ld (except in some cases when it sounds like and is transcribed in *Pin-yin* as *e* and in other cases as *uo*)
u as in r*u*de (except after *ss, tz,* or *tz'* or corresponding *Pin-yin* forms, when there is hardly any vowel sound; it should also be noted that the *-ung* combination of Wade-Giles appears as *-ong* in *Pin-yin*)
ü as German *ü* or French *u*
ai as in *tie*
ao as in *cow*
ei as in w*ay*
ou as in *o*bey
ui, uei (or *wei*) as in *way*

Many of the initial consonants sound to the ears of English speakers much unlike their Wade-Giles Romanizations, and they are transcribed quite differently in *Pin-yin.* The following chart shows the major examples of these differences:

Wade-Giles	Pin-yin	Approximate Sounds in English
ch	*j, zh*	*j*
ch'	*q*	*ch*
hs	*x*	*sh*
j	*r*	*r*
k	*g*	*g*
k'	*k*	*k*
p	*b*	*b*
p'	*p*	*p*
t	*d*	*d*
t'	*t*	*t*
ts	*z*	*z*
ts'	*c*	*ts*
tz'	*c*	*ts*

J.K.F.
E.O.R.

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1. The Setting of Chinese History

For the people of the West the most important facts about China are, first, the vast numbers of people who live there; second, their very different ways of life, which have throughout history distinguished them culturally from Westerners; and third, the rapid growth and change that they are experiencing. In population and power, ancient China was the equal of the Roman Empire. Today China holds between one-quarter and one-fifth of the human race—some 900 or more million people. In the last few decades it has become clear that, in a rapidly shrinking world, relations with this vast segment of humanity can deeply affect the lives of Westerners. Three wars since 1941 in and around China have made this quite evident to Americans.

Mutual understanding between Westerners and Chinese is needed to form a basis for harmonious relations. But understanding must be based on a knowledge and appreciation of the other peoples' different customs, attitudes, ideals, and forms of self-expression. These are not easy to grasp from a distance. The cultural gap is enormous. Rapidly growing contacts during the past century have tended to lessen the cultural gap, but other factors have widened the gulf: first, a great upsurge of Chinese national consciousness and patriotic pride; second, a discrepancy in material standards of living between them and most Westerners; and third, a different experience of war and revolution. In part because of accidents of history and geography, Westerners have achieved a far more favorable balance between population and natural resources than has been the case in China, and this economic gap perpetuates and sometimes heightens the cultural differences. Americans in particular have not suffered warfare in their homeland as Chinese have, and

the great changes in their lives have been evolutionary, not revolutionary. Not only their inherited culture but also their experience in modern times have set them apart from the Chinese.

The quest for peace is not the only reason for learning more about China. For the humanist interested in art, literature, philosophy, and religion, China's traditional society holds up a mirror to Western culture. It demonstrates alternate systems of value and belief, different traditions of aesthetic experience, and different forms of literary expression. For the social scientist, whether in anthropology, sociology, economics, political science, or history, the human record in China, in certain periods and in certain fields, is far fuller than that of the West.

China can best be understood through its history for a number of reasons. One is that the Chinese, more than the people of the rest of the world, see themselves in historical perspective. They are strongly aware of their heritage. To approach them through their history is to look at them as they see themselves. Secondly, their distinctive aesthetic, intellectual, and institutional achievements can best be studied as they evolved. They should be looked at separately from contemporary China. Only as one looks at the long flow of Chinese history can one perceive the direction of motion and have some understanding of what is happening in China now.

The essence of the present ferment in China is the interaction between new forces, many of which were derived from the West, and traditional habits and modes of thinking. Our story divides naturally into two major phases: the evolution of traditional Chinese civilization in relative isolation over three thousand years, and the upheavals and transformation of that civilization in recent times partly in response to contact with the modern Western world.

The Land, Peoples, and Languages of East Asia

China is the ancient source and today the central bulk of one of the great areas of civilization, which in recent years we have come to call East Asia. When Europeans first traveled far to the east to reach Cathay, Japan, and the Indies, they naturally gave these distant regions the general name "Far East." Americans who came westward across the Pacific might, with equal logic, have called it the "Far West." For the people who live there, however, it is neither "East" nor "West" and certainly not "Far." A better term for the area is "East Asia," which does not imply the outdated notion that Europe is the center of civilization.

China is so large a part of East Asia and was for so long so dominant in the region that any study of China involves some consideration of the whole East Asian area. In the remainder of this chapter we shall first discuss the

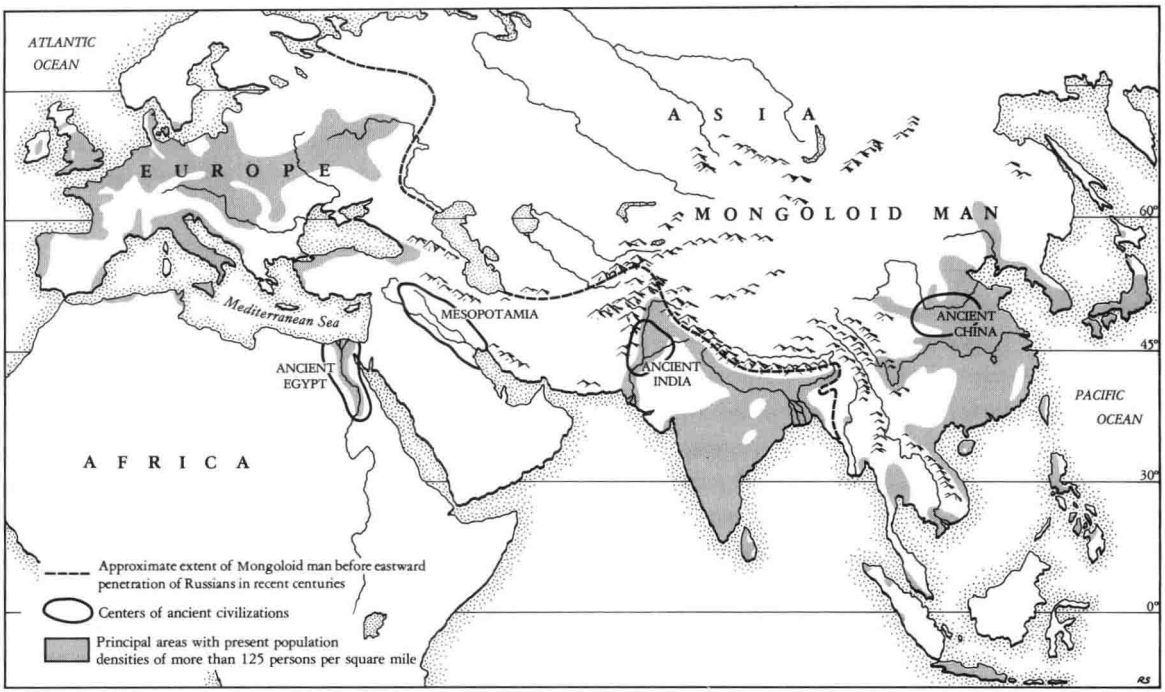
broader East Asian setting of China and then proceed to a closer examination of China's geography and its traditional economy and society.

East Asia can be defined in three ways: in geographic terms as the area east of the great mountain and desert barrier that bisects Asia; in racial terms as the habitat of Mongoloid man (except for the Eskimo and American Indian branches of that race); and in cultural terms as the domain of a civilization rooted in that of ancient China. The last is the most restricted definition of the term, for it covers in addition to China itself only Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. It does not include two other large areas which are east of the great barrier and basically Mongoloid in population. One is Inner Asia, particularly Mongolia, Sinkiang (Chinese Turkestan), and Tibet. The nomadic peoples of these regions have seen their histories interwoven with that of China through commerce, war, and conquest. In the other area, Southeast Asia, much of the higher culture stemmed more from India than from China. In recent centuries, however, this region too has become increasingly linked with the rest of East Asia, economically, culturally, and strategically.

The Natural Environment. One determining influence on East Asian civilization has been its relative isolation from the other great civilizations of mankind. Separated by great distances and formidable mountains and deserts, it developed distinctive cultural patterns that have been retained in large part until today. For example, the modern writing systems of all the rest of the world derive ultimately from a single series of inventions made in West Asia. Only in East Asia is there a writing system—the Chinese—which is based on entirely different principles.

Western civilization grew up in closely connected areas such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Greece. Only after it had spread to include most of Europe, North Africa, and Western Asia did it divide into its two present halves, Western Christian civilization and Islamic civilization. The Indus Valley in Northwest India (now a part of Pakistan) was the second great center of early civilization. Alexander's invasion of the Indus Valley in 327 B.C. is but one example of the close early contact between the ancient West and India.

The home of early East Asian civilization in North China was very much more isolated than were these other early centers. On one side stretched the seemingly boundless Pacific. On the other side rose the tremendous central massif of Asia—the Himalayas, the Tibetan Plateau, more than ten thousand feet high, and the huge mountain chains that radiate from this roof of the world. North of this massif lie the vast deserts and steppes of Central Asia—cold, inhospitable, and all but impassable for early man until he domesticated the horse and camel. South of the massif the rugged mountains and jungles of Southwest China and Southeast Asia are an even more formidable barrier. In ancient times this tremendous impediment of terrain and climate stretching



EURASIA

from the arctic wastes of Siberia to the jungles of Malaysia inhibited the free movement of men. Even today this barrier is crossed by only two railway lines and only a very few roads.

Climate also contributed to East Asia's cultural distinctiveness. Europe and West Asia have their weather determined largely by the Atlantic Ocean and receive the bulk of their rainfall in the cooler months. North Europe has relatively little sunshine, while the Mediterranean areas and West Asia receive relatively little rainfall. As a result the soils in Europe and West Asia are for the most part not cultivated very intensively. Usually only one crop can be grown each year.

The climate of East Asia, like that of India, is determined largely by the great land mass of Asia. In winter the air over Central Asia, far removed from the ameliorating influence of water, becomes very cold and heavy, flowing outward and bringing cool, dry weather to the southern and eastern fringes of the continent. In the summer the reverse takes place. The air over Central Asia warms up and rises, and moist oceanic air rushes in to take its place, dropping a heavy load of water on the continental fringes. As a result of these monsoon winds, most of East Asia and much of India have ample rainfall during the best growing months. This abundant water supply combined with the hot sunshine customary at these latitudes, far to the south of

Europe, permit intensive cultivation and, in many places, two crops per year.

This distinctive climate gave East Asia an agricultural pattern quite different from that of the West. Many of the principal crops and animals of East Asia, notably rice, the soy bean, the chicken, the water buffalo, and the pig, seem to have come from hot and humid Southeast Asia. In the West, cattle raising and sheep herding became a fundamental part of the economy, but in the more intensive agriculture of East Asia domesticated animals were used less and manpower more. The chief cereal of the West has been wheat, while that of most of East Asia and much of India has been rice, which grows best in flooded fields and is well adapted to the hot, wet summers of this area. Producing a much larger yield per acre than wheat, rice supports a heavier population on the land. Thus, right from the start of agriculture, there seems to have been a significant difference in the ratio between people and land in East Asia and India on the one hand, and in West Asia and Europe on the other. Even in recent times, when industrialization had added so heavily to the population of Europe, largely preindustrial East Asia and India continued to have greater densities of population.

The Peoples. The area from the great Asian barrier eastward is for the most part the domain of Mongoloid man, while the area west of the barrier, including the greater part of India, most of the area of Islamic civilization, and the full zone of Western civilization, is the home of white or Caucasoid man. Negroid man, the third major racial type, occupies a discontinuous band of southerly areas in Africa, spots along the southern edges of Asia, and on the islands of Melanesia.

The origin of the races of mankind is still an unknown story. One of the predecessors of modern man in East Asia is Peking Man, whose skeletal remains were discovered in a cave near Peking in 1927. Living about 400,000 years B.C., he had tools, used fire, and was a hunter. He also had certain physical features that are more characteristic of Mongoloid man than of the other modern races. More recently a still earlier precursor of Mongoloid man, dating back some 600,000 years, has been found at a site in Lan-t'ien, near Sian in northwest China.

When the curtain rises on the first act of recorded history in East Asia, we find the Mongoloids already in a solid block covering almost the whole area. Their relative shortness of limb, which facilitates the retention of body heat, and their fleshy, narrow eyelids, which protect the eyes from snow glare, are thought by some to be the result of an original cold habitat in Northeast Asia. The range of skin color among Mongoloids, from very light in the North to dark brown in southern areas such as Indonesia, is clearly a product of environment, as is the comparable color range in the so-called white race. The other distinctive features of Mongoloid man are straight black hair, relatively flat faces, and dark eyes.

Mongoloids are not limited to East Asia. Some Mongoloids spilled westward north of the great barrier. The Eskimos represent a relatively recent incursion of the Mongoloid race into North America, while the American Indians themselves are thought to have come originally from Siberia by way of Alaska. Archaeology suggests the spread of the Mongoloids from the north and central parts of East Asia southward and outward to the offshore islands. The movement of the Thai people some seven centuries ago from Southwest China to their present home in Thailand was part of this great movement.

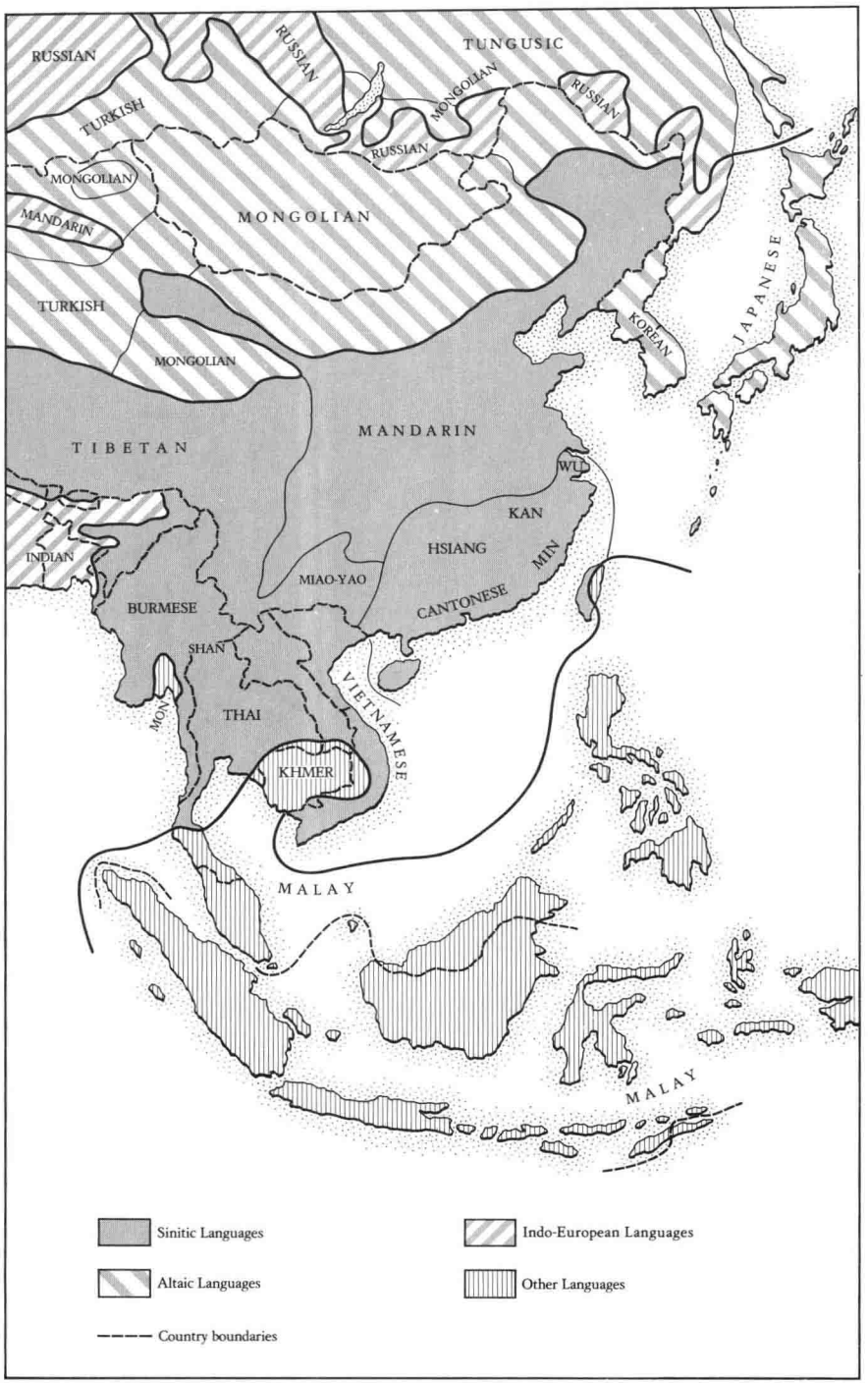
The Mongoloids were not, however, the sole occupants of this part of the world; the peripheral areas of East Asia contain many survivors of non-Mongoloid races. The most interesting of these are the Ainu, at present restricted to the northern extremities of Japan, who show certain traits of Caucasoid man. For example, they have considerable facial and body hair, a feature notably lacking in most Mongoloids.

The Sinitic Languages. The significant human divisions within East Asia, as in the West, are primarily linguistic rather than racial. In both East Asia and the West there is a common misconception that these linguistic differences correspond to racial divisions, but in fact there is no more a Chinese or Japanese race than there is a German or Hungarian race.

The largest linguistic division in East Asia is the Sinitic (or Sino-Tibetan) family of languages, which is comparable to the great Indo-European family that spreads over most of Europe and much of the Islamic and Indian zones of civilization. The Sinitic family of languages occupies a very solid block in the center of East Asia, covering all of China proper, Tibet, Thailand, Laos, most of Burma, and perhaps Vietnam. Except for the Tibetans, all the members of this language group appear to have been farmers since the Neolithic period, sedentary occupants of their part of the world, contrasting with the early Indo-Europeans, who often were nomadic, herding peoples and therefore wandered far afield.

Within the Sinitic group, Chinese is by far the largest linguistic subdivision. Chinese-speaking people have been in North China since the earliest recorded times. They have spread by emigration and also have assimilated culturally and linguistically allied groups. In time they came to occupy almost the whole of China proper and more recently Manchuria, much of Inner Mongolia, parts of Sinkiang, most of Taiwan (Formosa), as well as Chinese sectors in Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia, where Chinese now constitute more than 40 per cent of the population, and Singapore, where they are the great majority.

In the course of this expansion the Chinese language divided into several mutually unintelligible languages, as distinct from one another as Spanish is from Italian, or Swedish from German. Chinese proper, which has been called Mandarin, is spoken as a mother tongue by more people than any other lan-



MODERN LINGUISTIC MAP OF EAST ASIA