

China's Development from a Global Perspective

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Edited by

María Dolores Elizalde
and Wang Jianlang

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PART 1:

**CHINA FROM GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES:
AN INTRODUCTION**

CHAPTER ONE

CHINA FROM GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES: AN INTRODUCTION

MARÍA DOLORES ELIZALDE,
WANG JIANLANG, MANEL OLLÉ
AND KENNETH POMERANZ

Presentation: China in the World, the World in China
María Dolores Elizalde

The texts joined in this volume were presented in the session entitled “China from Global Perspectives,” Major Theme 1 of the 22nd World Congress of Historical Sciences, which took place in the city of Jinan, China, in August 2015. Its goal was to take a historical look at China in a global world.

It was a scientific meeting organized by professor Wang Jianlang, of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and María Dolores Elizalde, of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), with the support of Robert Frank, general secretary of the International Committee of Historical Sciences, the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Spanish Committee of Historical Sciences. I would like to acknowledge also the excellent team who organized the Congress in Jinan and gave us the opportunity to expose and debate our ideas with the more than 900 scholars who attended the session. And finally, I would like to thank the support and encouragement of Manuel Espadas Burgos, former president of the Spanish Committee of Historical Sciences and head of the Department of Contemporary History at the CSIC, and of Brunello Vigezzi, former president of the Commission of History of International Relations and professor of the University of Milan, who twenty-five years ago introduced me to the World Congresses of Historical Sciences and to the Commission of History of International Relations, two institutions with which, since then, I am committed.

In the session, we had a splendid discussant, Kenneth Pomeranz, professor at the University of Chicago and author of *The Great Divergence*, an absolute reference for all who want to understand the role of China in the history of the world; the collaboration of Manel Ollé, professor at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra and one of the greatest promoters of Chinese studies in Spain; and a wonderful team of great specialists on China and world history, who were speakers at the Congress and are the authors of the set of chapters here presented, conveniently rewritten after the meeting.

The purpose of these studies is to understand China from global perspectives, analyzing together, but from diverse angles and historiographic traditions, what China has meant in (and to) the history of the world, and how China has become integrated in and has influenced that global world. The texts analyze various aspects and visions of China's history from a global perspective, trying to define the role that China has played directly and indirectly in the globalized and plural world. In some cases, they present the perceptions and representations of China that circulated at different times in different cultures. In others, they explore trading routes and exchanges established and engaged throughout history. China's diplomatic relations are also analyzed, as well China's incorporation into the international organizations, and the various elements that influenced the country's foreign policies. They also engage the early globalization processes in which China was involved. Close attention is paid to the first contacts between Imperial Rome and China, the Chinese silver monetization during the Ming Dynasty, the long-running internal effects it had and the global interactions that it implied. Encounters between societies, cultures and mentalities are analyzed, as well as the relations of collaboration and solidarity between Chinese and non-Chinese civil societies, paying special attention to the role of professional associations such as the engineers' association, all of which played a key role in Chinese modernization. The texts look also at the Chinese diaspora in its various waves, especially at the interplay between processes of integration and exclusion and how these influenced the position of the Chinese, and China, in a global world. In summary, this set of presentations offers a very diverse range of chronological situations and topics on the subject that concerns us here: China in the world, the world in China and, in brief, China from global perspectives.

Preface to *China from Global Perspectives* **Wang Jianlang**

When the 21st International Congress of Historical Sciences was held in August 2010 in Amsterdam, Netherlands, the Association of Chinese Historians submitted a bid to host the 22nd Congress. Later on, the General Assembly of the International Committee of Historical Sciences (ICHS) formally voted to select Jinan in China as the host city of the 22nd International Congress of Historical Sciences. This important decision proved to be a milestone in the 100-year history of the ICHS. It enabled China to become the first Asian country to host the Congress.

China is renowned as one of the four great ancient civilizations in the world, together with ancient Egypt, Babylon and India, but it is the only one that enjoys extraordinary cultural continuity of approximately 5,000 years. The splendid civilization developed by the ancient Chinese never perished throughout history and has continued to this very day. China is also proud of its long tradition of historical studies. The earliest written records in China indicate that the Chinese have been attaching great importance to the recording of history since the dawn of their civilization. A great deal of historical literature, such as *The Book of Documents* (Shangshu), *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chunqiu), *Commentary of Zuo* (Zuozhuan) and *A History of the Zhou States* (Guoyu), were written and compiled 2,500 years ago. *The Historical Records* (Shiji), completed in 91 BC, was regarded as an encyclopedic masterpiece in historical writing, with far-reaching influences. Since then, each Chinese dynasty compiled the history of its predecessor. *The Twenty-Four Histories*, a compilation of ancient Chinese official historical books, covered an uninterrupted history of more than 2,000 years. In short, the study of history enjoys a significant and cherished position in China.

Inter-civilization exchanges and communications provide essential impetus to social development and the well-being of humankind. Like all the other great civilizations, the Chinese civilization was also an outgrowth of inter-civilization exchanges and an integral part of the world civilization. Cultural exchanges between China and the outside world have been a timeless theme in China's long history. China appeared in Western historical recordings very early. In 139 BC, Zhang Qian, an official envoy of China, toured westward across mountains and deserts and went as far as the eastern shore of the Mediterranean sea. Following in Zhang's footsteps, a Silk Road linking Asia, Europe and Africa emerged. China's exchanges with the outside world gained further momentum during the Sui and Tang Dynasties in the sixth to ninth centuries, when the surge of

maritime trade forged a Maritime Silk Road. In the fifteenth century, Zheng He, the great Chinese navigator in the Ming Dynasty, led the then-largest fleet in the world, traveling across the western Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean seven times, and reached as far as the east coast of Africa. He is thus honored as one of the great frontrunners in the Age of Discovery. With the frequent exchanges between China and the West, Chinese technologies and products, including the famous Four Great Inventions of Ancient China, spread to the West; the West also brought enormous cultural influences on China in return. Yet, in its long history, China also experienced periods of isolation, during which its exchanges with the outside world temporarily suffered, although they were not completely suspended.

With the introduction of reform and opening-up policy in the late 1970s, China resumed its extensive connections with the outside world. Against this background, Chinese historians were eager to increase communications with their international counterparts. In 1982, the Association of Chinese Historians was formally admitted into the ICHS. This heralded a new era for intensive communications between Chinese historians and their international colleagues. More importantly, in 2010, the decision of the General Assembly of the ICHS to hold the 22nd Congress in Jinan, China, in 2015 provided an invaluable opportunity for the mutual understanding between China and the outside world.

Today, with China's more and more intimate relationship with the world, many foreigners are both fascinated and puzzled by this land in which the old and the new coexist. It is no wonder that China-related topics became the focus for the 22nd International Congress of Historical Sciences. "China from Global Perspectives" became one of the four major themes of this Congress, which was very unique in its history.

I was honored to work with Professor María Dolores Elizalde from the Spanish National Research Council as joint organizers for the sub-conference around the major theme of "China from Global Perspectives." More than 30 historians from various countries submitted their papers. Due to time constraint on the sub-conference, we could only select 14 of them to make presentations at the conference.

From diverse angles, these papers shed light on China's communications and interactions with the outside world, with wide temporal and spatial dimensions. On the temporal dimension, the topics ranged from exchanges between Imperial Rome and the Chinese Empire, China's interactions with the outside world in the pre-modern era (for example, China's silver monetization in the sixteenth century) and how China adapted its relationship with the outside world after Western civilization expanded

eastward in the modern era. On the spatial dimension, the speakers thoroughly discussed China's relationship with East Asia, South Asia, Europe and America. The papers covered a wide range of interesting topics, including international political, economic and cultural relations, China's relationship with international organizations, foreign organizations in China, China's involvement in internationalization and so on. The sub-conference attracted around 900 scholars to make up an enthusiastic audience, some of whom raised meaningful questions. Senior researchers and young students alike benefited from these discussions, which will promote the study of the history of China's relationship with the outside world. Professor Kenneth Pomeranz from University of Chicago and Professor Manel Ollé from Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona) made inspiring comments on these papers. I would like to extend my gratitude to all the speakers and commentators, as well as all the other contributors who submitted papers to us.

The gathering was short, after all, and it is impossible to address all the concerned issues during such a short conference. Some of the papers need to be further discussed, some researchers did not have the chance to share their research results at the conference and, more importantly, more efforts are really needed to further relevant studies and discussions. That is why Professor María Dolores Elizalde has been working devotedly to look for opportunities to publish these papers as chapters in an edited volume. Her efforts have paid off. Cambridge Scholars Publishing has agreed to publish the English version of the symposium, while China Social Sciences Press intends to publish the Chinese version. Many thanks to these far-sighted publishers.

I am also indebted to Professor Elizalde, who did almost all the contact work, such as calling for papers and looking for publishers. I am deeply inspired by her enthusiasm and greatly impressed by her patience for all of these tasks.

China in the World: Historiographical Reflection

Manel Ollé

We would like to begin with a short historiographical reflection on the way in which historians have seen the situation of China in the world, in order to understand the following studies in a wider context. Rigorous historical studies, based on new documentation about specific features of some episodes in the history of the relationship between China and the world, serve as the best antidote to the Orientalist essentializing generalizations that have been postulated too often about China, alleging

that it has more civilization than history, because of its isolation and cultural determinism. These texts serve as the best antidote to the already long-standing cliché of an atavistic China, enclosed within its walls and always the same, without historical change or relevant external influence. Despite the substantial historiographical advances made over the last decades, this kind of simplistic image has been reformulated to some extent since the eighteenth century by some Sinological (and some non-Sinological) historiography and continues to have some impact in the global academic sphere. Understanding non-Western civilizations in their full dynamism and heterogeneity is a critical step toward the renewal of the historiographical theories that were built upon the Orientalist knowledge accumulated in previous centuries. The Western conception of the East has oscillated between universalism and particularism, and between naive idealization and ethnocentric bias.

The general view of the isolation of China, Japan, and Asia in general, throughout history and especially since the seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, dominates Western scholarship and also exists in Asia, partly influenced by Western thought and partly as a result of its own modern historiographical insistence that their isolation helps justify an independent, nationalist road, oblivious to outside influences. Another argument made in Western academia that has permeated deeply into the East is the stagnation of China against the takeoff of scientific progress in the West.

Paradoxically this kind of discourse recently reappears in China, in an unexpected auto-Orientalist turn, with a nationalist orientation. As the Sinologist Arif Dirlik has pointed out, in a recent article: “Nationalist historians see the PRC’s (People’s Republic of China) developmental success as proof of a cultural exceptionalism with its roots in the distant past. The perception derives confirmation from and in turn re-affirms Orientalist discourses that long have upheld the cultural exceptionality of the so-called ‘Middle Kingdom’.”¹

This kind of culturalist, exceptionalist and essentialist discourse dates far back, at least to when Voltaire the Sinophile affirmed that the core of the Chinese Empire had survived with all its splendor for more than 4,000 years without undergoing any noticeable change in its laws, customs, language or even the way its inhabitants dressed. According to the alternative Sinophobic paradigm, the biological conception of culture that

¹ Arif Dirlik, “Born in Translation: ‘China’ in the Making of ‘Zhongguo’.” An essay by Arif Dirlik,” *boundary2*, July 29, 2015. www.boundary2.org/2015/07/born-in-translation-china-in-the-making-of-zhongguo/.

formed the foundation of Herder's works identified in China an infantile nature "full of filial submission to its despots." Herder's book *History of Humanity* (1787) states the following: "the [Chinese] empire is an embalmed mummy painted with hieroglyphics and wrapped in silk; its internal cycle is like the life of animals that hibernate during the cold season."² In Herder's perspective, China had stopped developing thousands of years earlier, and therefore his contemporary China did not have a living culture, but only cultural ruins.

In his *Lessons on the Philosophy of History*, Hegel defines China's static essence when he considers that we are in the presence of the most ancient state yet nevertheless that it lacks a past, because it exists today as we know it was in the distant past. In this sense, China lacks a history. In Hegel's view, Chinese "history" is essentially static and non-dialectical. If the telos of political history is freedom, then the Chinese state cannot but remain always the same: despotic and unfree. This is the underlying meaning of Hegel's paradoxical statement that Chinese "history" is non-historical.

Hegel believes that China represents the initial phase of human history, in a formulation that can be considered one of the intellectual foundations of the Orientalist representation of Asia. Hegel considers that universal history travels from East to West, as Europe is precisely the fate of universal history, while Asia is the beginning. "Empires belonging to mere space, as it were – unhistorical History; – as for example, in China, the State based on the Family relation; ... This History, too is, for the most part, really unhistorical, for it is only the repetition of the same majestic ruin."³

Despite his harsh criticism of Hegel's conception of history, Marx adopted his predecessor's ideas about China's stagnation and isolation. Marxism defined the Asian mode of production as a cul-de-sac outside of the linear progression of the historical process (in the Marxist conception of history), that is, an area without history, in which the weight of the state in all the economic and social spheres had neutralized the "historical energy" of the oppressed. If the Chinese had any history, it would be the history of religion; once again: more civilization (Confucian) than history.

Wittfogel's theories about Oriental hydraulic despotism, or Max Weber's diagnostic according to which Confucianism blocked (through the iron rule of the bureaucracy) China's economic development and the

² Rolf J. Goebel, "China as an Embalmed Mummy: Herder's Orientalist Poetics," *South Atlantic Review* 60:1 (January 1995): 111–129.

³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2001), 123–124.

rise of capitalism in the Middle Kingdom, insist on this essentialist and culturist paradigm of China's millennial isolation and immobility. (This specious argument has been precisely employed in the past few decades in the opposite sense, notably by affirming that the disciplined, laborious subordination of the individual to the groups made up by the family and the state explains the success of the Asian Confucian – and principally authoritarian – dragons and tigers.)

Max Weber once remarked that China's fate was to serve as an opposite for the Western observer, a radically different form of human life in a positive or negative sense. The emphasis on the differences obstructs a more balanced approach based on the confirmation of the resemblance as axis for the comparison and for the elaboration of some less Euro-/Sinocentric historiography. We began by emphasizing the absence of essential characteristics or cultural atavisms. Such an assertion does not prevent us from taking into account continuities and influences between periods. We could perhaps even now endorse Mark Twain's words when he wrote that "History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme."

These essentialist and culturist perspectives about stagnation and isolation precisely found in Weber's theories a thorough diagnostic that subsequently had great influence. This vision of the stagnation-isolation of China is within the modernization paradigm proposed by Max Weber, who recasts and updates the enlightened thought in the tradition of Hegel and Marx. The early development in China of the meritocratic system of the reproduction of power through the imperial exams generalized starting in the eighth century, along with the perception of the centrality of the Chinese bureaucratic system in the hierarchized codification and territorial impact of the imperial power throughout centuries, led Weber to believe that Chinese society was absolutely dependent on and shaped by an omnipresent, highly efficient bureaucratic system, which guaranteed the Chinese Empire's great ability to prolong its spatial and temporal continuity.

Any description of Chinese history that is to some degree based on this type of culturist and essentialist approach is no longer defensible, to the extent that in-depth studies about different periods allow us to examine objectively how far China was connected with the outside world, in terms of trade or cultural and human exchange, how far these external links were influential in their historical changes (not only as a passive object of the change coming from outside), and how far we must include the intervention of other agencies and distinct specific dynamics that occurred in the interplay of complex tensions, which were not at all essentially

different from those that existed in other countries and empires, on the margins of any idealized and singular Chinese schema.

Despite the mirages of the imperial system and the centennial continuity of the bureaucratic system, its reiterative reconfigurations and transformations present very noteworthy variations. Thus, for example, the dialectic between the “external court” (based on the bureaucratic system that was diffused throughout the territory) and the “internal court” (theoretically centered on service to the emperor) was not always resolved in the same manner. We can identify emperors that did not accept a merely ritual and religious role, for they even went so far as to promote from the internal court their hold over the territory, and to delegate administrative and fiscal tasks to groups such as the eunuchs, who were not initially envisioned for this kind of work. Likewise, we can see, from the fringes of the ordinary channels of the exercising of power, that the territorial elite could take advantage of the direct influence they held in the palace by placing family members in collectives such as the eunuchs or concubines of the internal court, close to the imperial pinnacle. Finally, it is essential to take into account the network of interests and effective exercise of territorial power by members of the imperial family itself, as it had great scope and remarkable influence during certain periods. These were superimposed on the formal hierarchy of the bureaucratic system or even clashed with it.

In recent decades there have been several proposals, some more successful than others, which have tried to replace the old paradigms that had marked the development of historiography about China for almost two centuries with new formulas for a more valid approach to the history of China.

In some historiographical trends prevailing in the field of Chinese history in the twentieth century, the emphasis was focused on the role of Western aggressions in China, and the impact of modernization that was imposed by European countries or the United States – understood as a ferment necessary for the activation of Chinese history – in the traditional societies of the East Asia, although some aspects of Western imperialism are explicitly criticized.

This approach presents several quite obvious problems. On the one hand, it presents an active role in the West opposed to just passive and reactive China. Moreover, the West is seen as a reified entity, a block poorly differentiated, which shares the same goals and unique colonial enterprise, and its complexity is often forgotten in time and space. Also, similarly, China is currently a simplified abstraction that marginalizes the

exceptional diversity of the Chinese world, which calls into question the validity of many of the generalizations that are projected.

Another innovative historiographical proposal was formulated by the American historian Paul A. Cohen, who proposed to change the approach to Chinese history, until then focused on the performance of foreign countries in Chinese territory. He proposes a China-centered history of China. It is a history that claims that the starting point is China, not the West, and should be deployed using their own criteria, not imported from the West. Cohen shows how “impact” theorists, “modernization” theorists and “imperialism” theorists (both Right and Left), have constructed and periodised Chinese history as if the Western encounter was, for good or ill, the main factor shaping modern Chinese history. However, this “China-centered history of China” also raises some methodological questions. It is an approach not without an Orientalist echo: China remains isolated from universal history.

Another trend that can be found in the historiography developed in recent years points in the opposite direction to that outlined by Cohen, and consists of integrating Chinese history into world history, not in the service of the latter, but as an essential part of it. China from a global perspective.

China, especially in the last five centuries, has not only participated in but also contributed to the development of some of the great historical process of humanity. The work of historians such as Kenneth Pomeranz, Li Bozhong, Andre Gunder Frank, Bin Wong, Zheng Yangwen or Jack Godoy recognizes that history, as it is conceptualized and articulated today, is a product of the Enlightenment which exports theories that emerged to explain the changes in the rest of the Western world and exaggerates the differences to argue the unique and exceptional nature of the changes produced in Europe. Their proposals affect the comparative work that delves deeper into similarities than differences. They specifically disclaim and criticize the simplicity of explanations based on traditional versus modern, advanced versus primitive, binary opposition.

So, we are now moving inside this paradigm of global history or world history: seeing China from global perspectives. We are moving among the investigation of contacts, exchanges and relations between China and the rest of the world, in the study area of China's role in global historical processes, or in the field of investigations of comparative perspective, attentive to avoiding simplistic dichotomies or any conceptions of the East and West as essentially irreconcilable.

Placing China in Global Histories, and Global Histories in China: Some Comments

Kenneth Pomeranz

Here are presented an interesting set of chapters, and of course very diverse. I'll try to connect them a bit, but much of the story simply has to be chronological, as the issues of course change over time.

Wan Ming's chapter (Chapter 11) takes on silver, which is in many ways the first item of truly *global* trade – and continues two important trends in the scholarship of the last 20 years or so. The first emphasizes that China was not simply a passive recipient of silver, accepting it because it wanted nothing else (a view which had treated silver like modern “money” and thought in balance-of-trade terms). Instead China was an active trader, seeking silver *in particular*, and not, for instance, gold. This is one of the ways we can see that the silver flow wasn't just a balance-of-payments issue – gold frequently flowed out of China while silver flowed in, which would not have been the case if the silver had been the equivalent of contemporary money. They had a particular use for silver as a commodity – to use it as a medium of exchange and accumulation, for which you needed huge amounts of substances with particular properties – and they actively sought it out in exchange for silk, porcelain and so on.

Second, again much like some other recent scholarship, Wan rightly emphasizes that this was a monetization from below. Essentially, private parties were re-monetizing China with silver after the early Ming had made such a mess of their paper currency that nobody wanted it. The Ming Single Whip reform, converting taxes to silver, largely followed, rather than led, a switch to silver that was happening without government initiative (though admittedly, once it started, the Ming monetization of taxes gave silver-ization a further push). This interpretation has important consequences for China's domestic social, economic and political history, making it clear that it wasn't simply state tax demand for cash taxes that dragged peasants into the marketplace, as many scholars used to think; rather the state was trying to keep up with ongoing marketization that it couldn't control. This pattern of monetization without much guidance from the state was important to social and cultural history as well. The resulting markets were very dynamic, but also extremely volatile, in part because the state didn't really standardize the currency; this had profound effects on popular notions of risk and fortune, and other matters. One could compare, for instance, the Ming Dynasty Wutong (a very fickle, even vicious, god of wealth) with the much more benevolent Qing (and

modern) god of wealth, Caishen, as Richard Von Glahn has done.⁴ One might also note the late Ming texts about women entering the marketplace and the cultural ambivalence about that. The texts recording those anxieties exist partly because of wild fluctuations in relative prices for textiles and grain, which caused families to re-allocate their labor quite suddenly, regardless of gender norms.⁵

But for our purposes here, perhaps the biggest stories are those that connect Chinese trends to *international* history, and the often paradoxical role that Chinese silver demand plays. As Dennis Flynn and Arturo Giraldez have shown, Chinese demand (combined with Mughal demand, which was nearly as great) was crucial to keeping the global price of silver from collapsing in the late sixteenth and especially seventeenth centuries, given how much new silver was being dumped on the world market: and since it was the monarchy's cut of that silver revenue that kept Habsburg (and later Bourbon) administration in the Americas afloat, it is entirely possible that the entire European colonization project in the Americas would have stalled without this demand. Certainly the Habsburg wars in seventeenth-century Europe would have had to end much sooner. And since part of what the Habsburg aimed at was (a) crushing Dutch independence and (b) conquering Britain, one is led to the surprising conclusion that while silver mining (and the Asian demand that spurred that mining) was crucial to the growth of early modern capitalism, it also financed the armies that, if a few breaks had gone differently, might have squashed what turned out to be the most dynamic centers of that new capitalism.⁶ Lucrative silver prices were also critical to financing the wars of unification in Japan. And last but not least, it turns out that they may have mattered a lot to the building of the early Qing state – Nicola di Cosmo has estimated that as much as 20 percent of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century silver imports to China may have eventually

⁴ Richard Von Glahn, "The Gospel of Wealth: The God Wutong in the Social History of Jiangnan," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 51:2 (December 1991): 651–715.

⁵ Kenneth Pomeranz, "Women's Work and the Economics of Respectability," in Bryna Goodman and Wendy Larson, eds., *Gender in Motion* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 239–259.

⁶ Dennis Flynn and Arturo Giraldez, "China and the Spanish Empire," *Revista de Historia Economica* 14: 2 (Spring–Summer 1996): 309–338. Dennis Flynn, "Early Capitalism despite New World Bullion: An Anti-Wallerstein Interpretation of Imperial Spain," in D.O. Flynn, *World Silver and Monetary History in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum Press, 1996), 29–57.

wound up in Dongbei/Manchuria, mostly in exchange for ginseng. Given the small Manchu population, that kind of silver influx would have made this a remarkably monetized society, despite its relatively weak agricultural base and lack of cities. Under such circumstances, silver played an indispensable role in acquiring the luxuries that the Aisin Gioro clan conferred on their aristocratic clients, thus playing a critical role in helping them strengthen their following and centralize control over the banners (a crucial tool of both military and broader social organization); with those forces as a base, they were able to conquer the vastly larger and economically more productive society of Ming China.⁷

Guido Abbatista's chapter (Chapter 6) also takes on a familiar topic, but is inventive in at least two ways that I think deserve emphasis. The first is in emphasizing writers of practical significance rather than "the great tradition" – e.g. Elijah Bridgman rather than Hegel. The second is in emphasizing that there was a great deal of overlap between what we often think of as Christian discourses and liberal ones – much more than if we associate the former with the Jesuits and the latter with the anti-Jesuit Enlightenment. Enlightenment-era Protestants, and some Catholics, too, were much less likely to be impressed by the current state of China than the early Sinophiles had been, and to think that China would benefit by greater contact with the West. Moreover – and here I would suggest going further than the chapter currently goes – the Providential theory of trade, which held that God had distributed certain resources unevenly across the planet precisely in order to make different peoples come into contact with each other – was far from dead in the eighteenth or even nineteenth centuries, despite the rise of economic thinking with a more secular basis. One can see traces of the Providential theory, for instance, in John Quincy Adams' remarks on the Opium War of 1839–42, with which Abbatista closes. In that text, Adams also invokes the idea that because trade is mutually beneficial, one has a moral duty not to abstain from it – a duty so strong that it can justifiably be forced upon any country whose rulers block the way. So in many ways, Christian themes and supposedly secular ones drawn from Adam Smith et al. were always intertwined.

The chapter is also quite right in urging us to avoid assuming that aggressiveness was always associated with Sinophobia. Deep hostility to the Qing often went along with at least a theoretically positive view of how ordinary Chinese would respond (commercially, religiously and in

⁷ Nicola di Cosmo, "The Manchu Conquest in World Historical Perspective: A Note on Trade and Silver," *Journal of Central Eurasian Studies* 1 (December 2009): 43–60.

other spheres of life) if contact were opened more widely. This was, we must remember, a debate *within* the West, and it ebbed and flowed over a long period of time, rather than moving in a consistent direction. As Abbatista notes, what we see more of in the nineteenth century than before is above all what he calls “prescriptivism”: a Western belief that it had ways of making China better, which was in many ways an outgrowth of the Enlightenment. One thing I think the chapter misses, though, is that the opposite of prescriptivism was not necessarily a view that China was in good shape, as it had been for the Jesuits and Voltaire (more or less). Anti-prescriptivism could, on the contrary, also be connected with an extreme pessimism, which thought that China simply couldn’t improve: whether that view was based on the geographic determinism of Montesquieu in the eighteenth century or on nineteenth-century racism, which evolved partly out of that determinism (and which was also already prefigured in writers like Defoe). So on the one hand, the legacy of the Enlightenment, both to its friends and its foes, was a belief that humans armed with science could do great things; on the other hand, that legacy could also take the form of pseudo-scientific claims that there were some things that couldn’t change. And since *that* kind of anti-prescriptivism, unlike Sinophilic anti-prescriptivism, generally went with an indifference to what happened to a people who were considered hopeless anyway, it did not offer the kind of resistance to prescriptivist violence that earlier positive views of China (or other non-Western peoples) could offer. So, yes, the Enlightenment legacy was more complicated than old views suggested, and often fed into the nineteenth-century prescriptivism; but the Enlightenment also changed anti-prescriptivism, in parallel, but dark and dangerous, ways.

That darker side of things, is, of course, a crucial backdrop to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century situation discussed by Kramer (Chapter 7), Singarévelou (Chapter 8), Ferretti (Chapter 9) and Kawashima (Chapter 10). Singarévelou’s chapter departs from some of the darkest moments of all – the massacres and looting that accompanied the suppression of the Boxers. He shows that the provisional government in Tianjin that the Powers set up in 1901–02, which we often treat as the origin of various modernization initiatives, was not really the beginning. Rather, if we look more closely, we see continuity, especially in personnel, with some of the same people who had worked in Li Hongzhang’s earlier pilot projects being tapped as advisors by the provisional government, and then working for Yuan Shikai’s reform projects once the provisional government left. Singarévelou also notes that the concessions themselves were, of course, not new in 1900. These are points well taken, though I would still point out that there is a great acceleration in the pace of change

after 1901, as well as an important broadening of the agenda of reform from things very directly connected to defense and state power (such as Li Hongzhang's arsenal and military academy) to developments in public health (as noted by Ruth Rogaski⁸) and other areas that touched a much broader swath of the people.

Another point made here – that Western projects in China depended, pretty much from the beginning, on the involvement of a select group of professionally skilled and well-connected Chinese – is one worthy of special emphasis, as it also connects this chapter to those by Kramer, Ferretti and Kawashima. But the importance of such people also helps, I think, to explain some of the reasons why Tianjin's growth was slower than Shanghai's. Tianjin depended much more on *local* migration, while Shanghai picked up a lot of skilled and well-connected people who moved from Guangzhou, once the Canton system ended and they could see the writing on the wall; Tianjin's near surroundings also included only one other important city, while Shanghai was close to several. Tianjin did, as the chapter points out, become a second capital in the late Qing and Beiyang periods, replacing Chengde, which had had similar functions of helping the court escape the heat and being a place where non-Chinese VIPs were comfortable during the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, when the most important non-Chinese were Inner Asians. This is arguably another way in which a supposed Western import was built on older Chinese practices. Tianjin arguably also resembled Chengde in being a microcosm of the world the Chinese were dealing with. In Tianjin, however, the microcosm (or “permanent exhibition,” as the chapter calls it) was one that the foreigners built, rather than one the Qing built (as Chengde was); and it also represented a world that the Chinese were forced to deal with, not one they ruled.

The existence of multiple foreign concessions and models, and Tianjin's function as a second Beijing of sorts, was an enormous stimulus to the growth of the city. Nonetheless, Tianjin was, as just noted, hampered by being dependent for its immigrant population largely on its immediate hinterland, which did not provide reservoirs of wealth and skill comparable to those which the Lower Yangzi provided to Shanghai.

Tianjin also became the favorite retreat of retired Beiyang politicians in the teens and twenties. Despite the terrible reputation that these politicians have as “warlords” (which some of them certainly deserved),

⁸ Ruth Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity: Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty Port China* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004).

they also included people like Xiong Xiling,⁹ who become key figures in business and philanthropic circles, taking advantage of the relative safety of the concessions while also bringing with them Chinese capital and practices. Thus warlord disorder arguably did for Tianjin something like what the Taiping Rebellion did for Shanghai (jumpstarting elite Chinese immigration); but while the end of the Taiping Rebellion (in 1864) was followed by decades of relative stability, in which those immigrant elites could build a Chinese modernity in Shanghai, Tianjin had only a short respite between the time when regional disorder brought it an influx of elite residents and the much larger catastrophe of war with Japan. Thus Tianjin never had the chance to have the kinds of effects on its hinterland that Shanghai had, either for worse or for better; but that does not mean that many of the same forces weren't at work, as this chapter shows quite nicely.

Kawashima and Ferretti focus on what used to be the main subject matter that we talked about when somebody said “China and the world”: diplomacy. Their chapters show quite clearly that there is still life in this topic, despite the fact that most scholarly attention has gone elsewhere of late. Ferretti points out that, contrary to the picture we sometime have of turn-of-the-century global power politics – in which the US and the Japanese (and arguably the Russians and Ottomans) are the only non-Europeans who count as players – the Chinese were actually in a position where, because of the way that the alliance systems worked, they could potentially have brought on a world war by not remaining neutral in the Russo–Japanese War. This is an interesting point, and one that I don't think has been made before, anywhere in the literature. It shows that China was (a) not as marginal to the state system of this period as one might think, and (b) in some ways learning to play the Westphalian game. But we should also remember (as Petrov's Chapter 14 reminds us) that the Qing had dealt with a world of formally equal states when they needed to do so, at least as far back as the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689.¹⁰ Moreover, they had already shown, within a few years of the founding of the Foreign Ministry (Zongli Yamen) in the 1860s, the ability to work the Westphalian

⁹ On Xiong in particular, see Zhou Qiuguang, *Xiong Xiling zhuan* (Tianjin: Baiyi wenhua chubanshe, 2006).

¹⁰ Reaching much further back in time, the Song dynasty had done so almost a millennium before. See, for instance, Morris Rossabi, ed., *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th–14th Centuries* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1983). Ge Zhaoguang, *He wei Zhongguo? Jianguo, minzu, wenhua yu lishi* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2014).

system for marginal gains on some occasions.¹¹ Finally, while it's true that clumsy Chinese diplomacy could have been catastrophic in this particular case, it's not clear what, if anything, the Qing gained as a result of *not* being clumsy; if they did reap some benefit, this would be something to go into in developing the chapter further.

It is also interesting to pair Ferretti's chapter with Kawashima's: the one showing that Western-style foreign relations were far from completely alien in the first decade of the twentieth century, and the other showing that the tribute system wasn't entirely forgotten, even two decades after that. Kawashima focuses on discourse, such as the treatment of the tribute system in textbooks, but it is worth remembering that there's also a realm of practice. Here I think, again, that one might go farther along the same lines that the chapter pursues, and suggest that the Lifanyuan – the Qing foreign affairs system for Central Asia, which had overlapped with the tribute system while remaining quite distinct from it throughout the Qing – was not forgotten either. In fact, the Lifanyuan might well have been a more important source of holdovers than the remnants of the tribute system. After all, China didn't really retain much leverage over Vietnam, Korea, etc., in the twentieth century, but it did eventually recover control of Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, etc. – and political strategies and rituals descended from the Lifanyuan were far from trivial here, from Yang Zengxin's courting of Mongol princes and other traditional elites in Xinjiang during the 1910s and 1920s¹² all the way down to Mao Zedong's gifts of yellow satin (the traditional gift of an emperor to a Dalai Lama) during the 1950s.¹³

This brings us to Paul Kramer's chapter on the exempt Chinese under the US exclusion acts. This is, I think, a fascinating example of a story that had been right under our noses all along – we all knew there were exempt groups in these Acts – but that nobody, to my knowledge, had really developed until this chapter. It would be fascinating to hear more about who exactly *at the time* had the idea that the US needed Chinese help in order to carry out its westward expansion: who exactly was saying this? What response did they get, if any? It would also be really interesting to

¹¹ Mary Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-chih Restoration, 1862–1874* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957). Stephen Halsey, *Quest for Power: European Imperialism and the Making of Chinese Statecraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

¹² On Yang Zengxin, see Justin Jacobs, *Xinjiang and the Modern Chinese State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016).

¹³ Liu Xiaoyuan, *Recast All Under Heaven: Revolution, War, Diplomacy, and Frontier China in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 159.

know to what extent people on either side of the Pacific were thinking about the select groups as possible *permanent* immigrants. Were Chinese officials worried at all about what we'd now call a brain drain, or were they confident that either U.S. policies or the attractions of home would rule this out? Were the people who wanted to protect select migrants' rights to come to the US prepared to advocate that they should also be allowed to stay there, perhaps even as citizens? Or was that a bridge too far for them, too? Exploring this might bring race back into the picture a bit more. But in general, the chapter does a fascinating job of taking what's usually written as a story about race and making it one about class – and in general I think that's a very salutary move, particularly in light of contemporary migration issues. The chapter's allusion to wealth and skill-based immigrant quotas today is also a welcome one, making this a very relevant chapter, as well as a stimulating one.

The afternoon panel of the 22nd Congress has led to another set of interesting and very diverse questions. This time the papers sprawled across 2,000 years, and were too diverse for me to tie them together, even to the limited extent that I could unite the ones from the morning panel. There are some common themes, to be sure: both Kolb and Speidel (Chapter 2) and Al-Masum (Chapter 3), for instance, show that Chinese regimes in the fairly remote past were more interested in people with whom they shared no borders than the stereotypes of a self-centered “Chinese world order” might suggest, and consequently better informed about them. Ciriaco (Chapter 12) and Petrov (Chapter 14) both remind us of the importance of land-based trade, and how it often remained important well after supposedly superior maritime options appeared. And Petrov and Permanyer-Ugartemendia (Chapter 13) are united by showing us that Spanish and Russian state monopolies, which nationally focused historians have tended to pick out (as some liberal critics did at the time) as “peculiar” and as explanations for “backwardness,” were, for better or worse, really quite normal. They were, first of all, neither as rigid nor as completely state-dominated as their formal rules might suggest. Nor were they particularly unusual: not only did the Chinese with whom they dealt have a state-sanctioned (though privately run) oligopoly in Canton, but so did many other key players in the trading world of maritime Asia, including the supposedly “advanced” British and Dutch. This is a point already made by scholars of the stature of Chris Bayly (with respect to Mysore),¹⁴ Sanjay Subrahmanyam (for Portugal's Asian colonies)¹⁵ and

¹⁴ C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830* (London: Longman Group, 1989), 59–60.

others, but which still needs reinforcing, since the continuing importance of illiberal trade regimes well into the nineteenth century seems to be one of those truths that our teleological histories just keep forgetting. Ander Permanyer-Ugartemendia and Wu Lian-chun (Chapter 15) are united (and connected to some of the already-mentioned chapters) by their shared emphasis on the cross-links among multiple imperial powers, and thus on the inadequacy of histories that treat imperialism only as a set of competing efforts defined within national or proto-national containers. And finally, there is China's long-standing demand for various kinds of non-agricultural resources – war horses, sharks' fins, sandalwood, silver, furs, etc. – which have indirectly financed many expansion projects: from Peru and Siberia in early modern times to Indonesia's outer islands today.

But beyond these few observations, I think the chapters are best dealt with individually. In their work on Rome and early imperial China, Speidel and Kolb (Chapter 2) have done us the favor of working through some little-known and frustratingly ambiguous texts, and made them significantly clearer. That comments we have previously taken to be faint echoes of knowledge about *Rome* may instead have been about *particular parts* of Rome, such as Egypt, and that what appear to be confused comments about Roman emperors make more sense if we take them to be about Roman *provincial governors*, are insights which can help us avoid causally attributing our confusion to the allegedly defective understanding of earlier people. This research likewise helps balance the scales between what Rome knew of China and what China knew of Rome, without forgetting that knowledge on both sides had to be filtered through possibly suspicious intermediaries and multiple retellings – and, as the authors point out, probably mostly concerned Rome's Eastern provinces. I don't know the texts in question, but this strikes me as very sound and interesting historical detective work.

Similarly, Md. Abdullah Al-Masum's chapter shows us that the early Ming knew a fair amount about Bengal, and on some occasions tried to act on that knowledge across great distances – even to the extent of Yongle using diplomacy to help resolve a war between Bengal and a neighboring kingdom, almost 2,000 miles from Beijing. This serves, among other things, to remind us what an extraordinary period the Yongle era was, before a much less open attitude came to dominate the court later in the fifteenth century. (The Yongle era is also the era of the tribute mission from Sulu discussed by Liu Wenming in Chapter 4). It would be

¹⁵ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia 1500–1700: A Political and Economic History* (London: Longman Group, 1993), especially pp. 270–277.