Some Recent Trends in the Historical Study of China and the "Non-Western" World

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In the late 1960s and early 1970s, an interrelated group of new approaches to and attitudes toward the study of history became very influential in the United States and elsewhere. Called "social history" or "history from below," these new approaches sought to distinguish themselves from the kinds of narrative histories or discussions of the activities of small groups of well-known, powerful people that were then prominent in the history field. In contrast to history that focused on narratives of events, the new approaches sought to emphasize the study of social and economic processes; instead of examining the actions of rich, famous, and powerful people at the top of society, the new historians centered their attention on the everyday lives and problems of ordinary people at the bottom. By the 1980s the social history approaches had become so widely accepted and practiced within the historical profession that they had become in many respects the new mainstream orthodoxy.

In recent years, however, a number of overlapping, loosely-connected conceptual and methodological trends have begun to supplement—and in some cases to challenge—the achievements of the social historians. Referred to within the historical profession by a variety of terms, such as "the interpretative turn" or "the new cultural history," these approaches are themselves particular manifestations of much larger, emphatically interdisciplinary and

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international, academic trends such as "cultural studies," "postmodernism" and "postcolonialism." Though these broad new trends originated primarily in the fields of literature and philosophy, their influence is now apparent in many other academic areas as well. In the process of their diffusion, a great deal of cross-fertilization and mutual influencing has occurred. As one consequence, for example, while historians have become more aware of the usefulness of literary techniques for the analysis of historical texts and of anthropological insights for the study of social groups in the past, literary critics and anthropologists have themselves become more aware of the need to add historical context to their own work.

Too diverse and complex for succinct description, the new academic movements—perhaps "mindsets" is a better term for them—share a sense of the inadequacy of many established categories of social and intellectual analysis (such as class and ideology), and a keen awareness of the malleable, subjective quality of words, "facts" and the texts that are constructed from them. Instead of investigating and classifying the structural relationships among institutions, groups and ideas, they examine the interrelated and evolving systems of thought and action ("discursive practices") through which people interact and power is manifested in societies. Rejecting pursuit of "true" or "factual" descriptions of reality, they stress instead the changeable, variably-interpretative, and culturally constructed nature of all representation, including historical texts.

In addition to (and to some extent interrelated with) the spreading influence of these new approaches, a number of other developments have affected the kinds of favored research topics and subjects of special debate in the historical profession. One of these developments is the collapse of the Communist regimes in Russia and Eastern Europe, coupled with the rapid processes of economic and social reform occurring in the People's Republic of China (PRC). These changes have prompted within the academic profession a

profound questioning of the relevance of Marxist-influenced analytical methods, while at the same time the circumstances under which the Cold War ended have encouraged a reorientation toward new topics (studies of social movements and the emergence of "civil society," for example, have proliferated, while studies of comparative and peasant revolution have languished).

The events surrounding and succeeding the breakup of the Soviet empire and the end of the Cold War have also helped encourage two other, partially contradictory, developments that have stimulated and channeled recent scholarly research interests. One of these is a dramatic upsurge in nationalist feeling and ethnic conflicts, notably in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics, but elsewhere as well. The other is a growing sense of "globalism," fostered not only by ongoing long-term changes in worldwide patterns of economic and cultural interaction, but also by the end of the constraining influence of "East" and "West" blocs as meaningful categories of geopolitical analysis. The persistence and/or new development of such nationalist and ethnic conflicts—which were once thought to be merely "old-fashioned" survivals from earlier eras or temporary phenomena in countries newly emerging from colonialism—has led to renewed scholarly interest in studying their origins and nature. Similarly, the recent major realignment in world power relationships, together with a growing sense of the complexity of global interactions, has led scholars to reexamine earlier notions about the characteristics of world systems, and about how they are historically produced and maintained.

Particularly in North America, the above-mentioned scholarly trends have been affected by another extremely influential development: namely, the dramatic expansion of scholarly interest in feminism and gender-related issues. This has made an obvious impact first by affecting the subject matter that scholars study, so that there has been a vast profusion of studies on women workers, household life, marriage and child-rearing, and gender

inequality.[1] In addition to the direct effect on what topics are studied, however, the theories and methodologies developed for studying gender issues have also had a broad but more indirect influence on how other subjects are analyzed.

In the remainder of this presentation, I will first explore some of the effects that these scholarly trends have had on the study of relations between Western and non-Western cultures, and then make some comments on the particular impact that they have had on English-language studies of recent Chinese history.

I. New Approaches to the Study of the "Non-Western" World

As noted, in recent years there has been a remarkable amount of cross-disciplinary interaction and ferment in North American academic arenas, and the boundaries dividing academic fields such as history, anthropology and literature have become much less distinct than they previously were. As a result, hybrid, historically-sensitive approaches such as "ethnographic history" and the "new historicism" have become prominent within fields such as anthropology and literature, while historians have become much more open to the use of techniques of textual criticism and intercultural analysis.

At the same time, however, this has led to a questioning of established modes of writing and analysis. In no area has this questioning been more persistent and subversive than in that of the study of historical interactions between Western and non-Western peoples, both in colonial and non-colonial contexts. In this section I will examine several types of critical reaction to older scholarship and attempts to develop alternate types of analysis.

ORIENTALISM. One of the earliest but still most noteworthy critiques from a "cultural studies" perspective of established Western scholarship on the "non-Western" world came almost twenty years ago, with the publication

in 1978 of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. In this work, Said combined elements of the thinking of Foucault and Gramsci to articulate the notion that Western thinking on "the Orient" constitutes a comprehensive and persistent set of beliefs, practices and traditions (a "discourse") that sharply dichotomizes the Orient and the West, and makes sweeping, abstract and stereotypical generalizations about the essential character of "Oriental" culture. He further argued that these enduring characterizations of a generalized Oriental culture have served a hegemonic function by justifying and encouraging political and military actions by Westerners to dominate and colonize non-Western peoples, and that Orientalist discourse is perpetuated in part by the academic apparatus (universities, research institutes, publications, conferences) through which professional experts study the Orient.

Because of Said's own professional background as a literary critic and his personal interest in Palestinian politics, the "Orientalism" which he described in this book focused primarily on literary texts by British and French authors writing about the Middle East. Within a very short time, however, other scholars began to apply his methodology and the general outline of his argument to Western writing and thinking both about other parts of the Orient—South, Southeast, and East Asia—and about other parts of the non-Western world. This process of generalization has been encouraged by more recent writings by Said himself, most notably *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), which uses a similar perspective to examine Western imperialism and resistance to it on a worldwide scale.

The general concept and style of argument embodied in *Orientalism* has become so well known in Western academic circles that "Orientalism" is often used as a shorthand term without specific reference to the book itself. In addition, a large number of other books have been written applying or examining the usefulness of Said's overall approach in a wide variety of specific contexts.[2]

As scholars have subjected Said's books and his overall approach to close scrutiny, many deficiencies have been pointed out. He's been criticized, among other things, for presenting an imprecise and multi-faceted definition of "Orientalism," for essentially writing within and adopting many methods of the intellectual tradition he is criticizing, for characterizing "Western" thinking in much the same sort of overgeneralized and overly-homogenous terms that he deplores in his examination of how Westerners have conceived of the "Orient," for overemphasizing the hegemonic dominance of Western thinking and neglecting the interaction and mutual influencing that occurred among colonizing Westerners and the peoples they colonized, and for his failure to include either socioeconomic or gender-related issues in his work. Rather than undermining Said's overall conclusions, however, these criticisms have more often served as stimuli for scholars to develop more sophisticated, expanded and refined variants on his themes. *Orientalism* thus remains a major foundational text for those interested in exploring the cultural dimensions of historical contact between Western and non-Western peoples. (MacKenzie 1995; Clifford 1988; Sprinker 1992)

COLONIAL DISCOURSE STUDIES. Building on and often greatly extending Said's insights, many literary critics, historians and anthropologists have in recent years written extensively on the variety of textual forms through which the West has produced and elaborated knowledge about non-Western, and particularly colonized, peoples. Much of this new writing has also sought to modify Said by emphasizing the complexity and variability of the intercultural interactions involved, and stressing that peoples subject to Western domination were not simply passive victims, but also active agents in shaping both their situations and the knowledge Westerners learned about them.

As these writers point out, not only did Western nations such as France

and Britain differ among themselves more than Said suggests in how they approached the non-Western "Other," but also within each country views of the colonial enterprise and of other cultures varied considerably on the basis of class and gender. While the process of colonization obviously changed the areas brought under Western control, empires also affected their respective home countries in various ways; the process was one of mutual interaction rather than simply a one-way imposition of Western control. Moreover, neither individual Western colonizers nor their collective domination was as omnipotent as sometimes imagined; recent studies have tended to emphasize the relative brevity of imperial rule, the vulnerabilities, doubts and fears of the colonizers, and the selective nature of native absorption of Western ideas and practices. (MacKenzie 1995)

While thus making the process of establishing empires and collecting knowledge about non-Western peoples appear more complex and multi-faceted, much of the new writing retains Said's focus on texts and "discourse," and accepts many of his assumptions about the power implications of Western knowledge-gathering and codification. Good examples of this are found in the growing number of works that describe and analyze the literature of Western exploration and travel. One of the most notable of these is Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* (1992), which examines travel accounts of Western visitors to Latin America and Africa during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Her work notes the prevalent rhetorical and analytical techniques which Western travelers used to classify, categorize and explain the peoples and places they viewed in ways that contributed to the sorts of Orientalist discourse described by Said, while at the same time it reveals the extent to which subordinated peoples were able to draw selectively on the dominant culture instead of being passively imposed upon. Pratt and many other analysts of travel literature (among them Sara Mills [1991] and Dennis Porter [1994]) have also been particularly sensitive to the effects that gender

has on travel writing.

Deeply implicated in all of the writing on travel and exploration are issues regarding the nature and process of intercultural understanding. Some of these issues are posed with particular clarity in a recent argument between the eminent anthropologists Gananath Obeyesekere (1994) and Marshall Sahlins (1995) over the interpretation of the events surrounding the killing of the great Pacific explorer Captain Cook in the Hawaiian Islands in the late eighteenth century. In addition to providing an excellent illustration of the extent to which anthropologists have recently begun to incorporate history into their writing, this argument highlights the persistence of argument within academic circles over the proper role of the ideas of "rationality" and autonomous individual agency developed during the European Enlightenment. As discussed further below, these ideas have been frequently criticized in recent years as prominent components of the sort of Orientalist discourse outlined by Said, which assumes a sharp dichotomy between "rational" Westerners and "irrational" non-Westerners. In the argument over Captain Cook, both scholars draw upon this criticism of Enlightenment ideas, though in different ways: Obeyesekere, a person of Third-World origin, accuses Sahlins of perpetuating persistent images of non-Westerners as being primitive and irrational, while Sahlins responds that Obeyesekere is assuming that the non-Western Hawaiians are governed by just the sort of "rationality" that many Third World intellectuals now criticize as a construct of hegemonic Orientalist thinking.

Further reevaluation of the ideologies and assumptions involved in Western interaction with non-Western peoples emerges in somewhat different form and with different emphases in the large and growing body of scholarship that discusses gender issues in colonial context. In addition to the discussions of women travellers mentioned previously, there has been a great deal of other writing in recent years about the ways in which gender

complicated colonial relationships. Some works have examined the ways in which Western men related to non-Western women in colonial contexts and how these relations changed once Western women appeared on the scene in significant numbers; other works have focused on the colonial experience of Western women as individuals and in their family relationships; and still other studies have examined the effects of colonial experiences on overall conceptions of gender, including influences on the "home empires" in European countries. (Chrisman 1994; Grewal 1996; McClintock 1995; Sharpe 1993; Stoler 1995; Stoler 1996 [1992]). In addition, some writers of Third World origin have written feminist critiques of Western feminist writing on the Third World, arguing that the Western writings tend to assume (incorrectly) that "woman" is a homogeneous and universal category, and that therefore Western writers on gender issues can speak also on behalf of non-Western women. (Mohanty 1994 [1988]).

SUBALTERN GROUPS AND RESISTANCE. The development of better understanding of the complexities of interactions that took place among Westerners and the non-Western peoples they sought to dominate has prompted new interest in studying the behavior of subordinated groups (the "subalterns") within colonial situations, and in particular in examining the forms of resistance to domination in which subordinate groups engaged. Given the fact that many of these forms of resistance were not obvious and overt, and that much of the surviving source material now available consists of documents and accounts written by Westerners or by powerful local people cooperating with them, scholars studying subaltern groups have also been led to discuss to what extent and through what means the true "voice" of subaltern groups can be recovered.

One of the primary sources of discussion and research on such issues has been the so-called Subaltern Studies group, a collection of South Asian

scholars loosely associated with the periodical *Subaltern Studies*. In addition to producing large quantities of empirical case studies, the Subaltern Studies scholars have also sought to develop theories and methodologies that move beyond previous nationalist and Marxist critiques of colonialism and its legacies, which they feel have been too dominated by Eurocentric — and sometimes Orientalist — discourses. In the process, they have been led to engage in extensive discussion of the historiographical and epistemological questions raised by their project of seeking to recover the thoughts and feelings of subordinated groups who have been largely excluded from historical accounts written by upper-class colonizers and their local post-colonial successors. Although the group's own empirical work is largely confined to South Asia, their overall approach and the larger issues their work raises have led to their influence being felt in many other academic fields as well (O'Hanlon 1988; *American Historical Review* 1994).

While seeking to center attention on historically silent groups, the Subaltern Studies scholars have precipitated a broader ongoing debate over the question of whether it is indeed possible under any circumstances for the "subaltern to speak." Some scholars, mostly literary critics arguing from a deconstructionist point of view, assert that all texts are by their nature so variously interpretable by different readers, and so affected by dominant discourses both when they are constructed and when they are read, that it is impossible for the "true" voice of subordinate groups to be reconstructed from them. Other scholars have argued that although the Subaltern Studies group claims in their writings to be questioning Enlightenment assumptions about autonomous, rational individuals, they themselves often subtly reintroduce such assumptions into their own work. In part due to these and other critiques, subaltern scholars have more recently begun to shift their focus somewhat from emphasizing subalterns as autonomous subjects making their own history and outside of dominant discourses to seeing them as resistant figures

operating within dominant discourses, subject to those in power but also exerting pressure upon them (O'Hanlon 1998; Hershatter 1993; Prakash 1994).

In this respect, Subaltern Studies participates in another more general academic discourse involving the study of "resistance." As Sherry Ortner (1995) notes, ideas about what constitutes resistance and how to analyze it have been changing in recent years under the impact of many of the new academic trends described above. Formerly, both resistance and its polar opposite concept "domination" were thought of in rather simple and clear-cut terms: domination was a relatively fixed and institutionalized form of power, while resistance was organized opposition to power institutionalized in this way. Thus, to take an example relevant to Chinese studies, scholars around the world thinking of resistance in this manner have produced countless studies of how different forms of economic and social domination by rural elites such as landlords have produced peasant resistance through various forms of violent uprisings.

Now, however, scholars have begun to recognize that both domination and resistance also often occur in much less institutionalized and more diverse forms. One of the most well known proponents of this view is James Scott, whose books *Weapons of the Weak* (1985) and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990) have been widely read and very influential. In these works, Scott points out that most resistance to the power of dominators occurs, not in the form of outright rebellion or other violence, but rather through various forms of "everyday resistance" such as foot-dragging, theft, deception and hidden sabotage. As he also notes, behind the public mask of humility and deference to the powerful, subordinate groups develop extensive private discourses—what he calls "hidden transcripts"—that express their opposition in word and action. These discourses represent a secret acting out of the anger and aggression felt by subordinate groups against the harm they suffer at the hands of the dominant. Because they must be hidden, much about them is

irrecoverable, or is visible only in ambiguous expressions that are subject to alternate interpretations. Through these disguised expressions of feeling and acts of everyday resistance, subordinate groups are constantly testing the limits of domination, and forcing dominant elites to work to defend and maintain their power. This constant process of contestation, Scott asserts, is an important but understudied aspect of politics, and its analysis an indispensable complement to the much more common focus on the relatively rare occasions when everyday resistance escalates into open rebellion.

The stimulating work of Scott and other scholars who study resistance from a similar perspective has also generated its share of criticism. It is pointed out, for example, that Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* is based largely on anecdotal evidence taken out of context from numerous different historical and cultural situations, that the evidence is disproportionately drawn from the most extreme sorts of domination (such as slavery and serfdom), and that the term "resistance" is loosely applied to a wide range of ambiguous activities that could in fact be inspired by quite different motives. In addition, critics note that many of the new studies of resistance retain an overly-sharp dichotomy between dominant and subordinate groups, which fails to account for the fact that members of dominant and subordinate groups often have things to offer one another, and that subordinates engage in many forms of "everyday collaboration" with as well as "everyday resistance" to dominant groups. They also tend to treat both dominant and subordinate groups as undifferentiated wholes, and in particular frequently fail to consider the effects of the internal political, social and gender divisions that inevitably exist within subordinate groups (Ortner 1995; O'Hanlon 1988; Cooper 1994).

NATIONALISM, POSTCOLONIALISM, GLOBALISM. One of the impulses motivating Subaltern Studies and many of the other academic trends

described above has been to develop analytical viewpoints that avoid the Eurocentric, Orientalist assumptions of past scholarship. At the same time, they wish to make better sense of the changing patterns of historical and contemporary interaction among the peoples of the world. The confluence of these impulses, together with the additional impetus provided by events and processes such as the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, and shifting flows of information and other resources, has led to a great deal of recent study and debate over how best to conceptualize past and present relationships among different parts of the world.

Nationalism. One notable area of recent discussion in this regard involves a marked revival of interest in the subject of nationalism. Over the course of the last generation, a number of important works have appeared which together have overturned old notions of nations as primordial, "natural" units based on deeply-rooted commonalities of territory, language and biology. Instead, nations are now generally viewed as relatively arbitrary and recent inventions, consciously constructed rather than naturally emergent. Nor are nations and nationalism constant and unchanging once formed; rather, there often remain areas of negotiation and contestation within the overall framework of national identity, and possible alternative visions of the nation sometimes remain viable (Eley and Suny 1996).

The most important single text in articulating this new view of nationalism has undoubtedly been Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (revised version, 1991). As the title indicates, Anderson stresses that all nations are "imagined communities," in the sense that they are much too large for all of their inhabitants actually to be acquainted with one another. Rather than ancient, primordial entities, they are modern inventions, examples of a concept developed first in the 18th century as a product of Enlightenment thinking, new technologies of mass publication developed in the course of the growth of capitalism, and tensions between European states and their new

colonies. Once developed, the concept of nation was embraced by existing European state governments as well as by newly-coalescing groups of politically-conscious intellectuals, and eventually spread around the world to become the ubiquitous model that it is today.

In the revised edition of his book, Anderson also deals at some length with various aspects of the diffusion of the model of the nation to the colonial world. In particular, he notes the manner in which European colonial regimes used various forms of knowledge-gathering and presentation such as the census, map and museum to classify, categorize and shape local populations, territories and histories in ways which first gave them coherence as colonies and later helped provide the foundations for their post-colonial successors. Similar themes have also been articulated by a wide range of other recent works dealing with the use of such techniques of categorization, codification and boundary-setting as important components of colonial discourses of power (Richards 1993; Winichakul 1994; Mitchell 1988).

Postcolonialism. Coexisting with the recent efforts to reinterpret nationalism have also been a variety of discussions about new interpretive outlooks that seek simultaneously to explain the present rapidly-changing world, incorporate the culturally-attuned poststructuralist perspectives outlined above, and yet avoid the Western-created intellectual frameworks that have long dominated academic discourse. The loose cluster of works produced by this ongoing and controversial effort are often lumped together under the broadly inclusive label "postcolonialism."

It is a reflection of the fluid state of contemporary intellectual affairs that neither the meaning nor even the utility of the term "postcolonial" is agreed upon by those who are engaged in discussion of it. Most acknowledge that the "post-" in postcolonial implies both that the interpretation involved deals with aspects of the state of the world in a period that is in some sense "after" colonialism, and that it involves the sustained use of concepts and

standpoints that are in some way "beyond" or "outside" of the established intellectual frameworks of analysis that were developed in the West and implicated in past Orientalist constructions of the colonial "Other." There are evident difficulties with both parts of this description, however. Some critics, for example, argue that although classic European colonization has essentially ended, many of the structural relationships of inequality, dependency and peripherality established during the colonial era remain intact. Thus, they maintain, if colonialism is gone, imperialism remains, or a neocolonialism now exists; in either case, *post*colonialism is not the proper term by which to describe the current state of affairs. Perhaps partly in response to this argument, some advocates argue that a state of postcoloniality is primarily a matter of consciousness rather than chronology, and begins to be engendered in colonized people at the very moment the colonizing impact starts to be felt, a proposition that seems to others both to be historically inaccurate and to rob the term of much of its interpretive relevance to the present. Critics also point to the extremely wide range of countries with highly divergent cultures and circumstances that might technically be termed "postcolonial" — including "White settler" colonies such as Australia and Canada — and questions whether such diverse entities have enough characteristics in common to constitute a meaningful category for analysis (Williams & Chrisman 1994; McClintock 1994 [1992]).

Questions have also been posed concerning the extent to which practitioners of postcolonialism have in fact been able to transcend features of the Western-centered mindsets and methodologies that they oppose. Critics point out, for example, that the notion of postcoloniality involves the same sort of idea of linear historical progress (from precolonial to colonial to postcolonial) as many of the approaches it sets out to overturn, that postcolonial theorists employ the same sort of overly homogenizing we-versus-they dichotomy that characterizes Orientalism, and that they

frequently reintroduce subtle forms of the Enlightenment ideas about rationality and autonomous individual behavior that they wish to avoid (McClintock 1994 [1992]; O'Hanlon & Washbrook 1994 [1992]).

Criticism and debate to the contrary notwithstanding, postcolonialism remains widely used as a broadly inclusive term which encompasses a variety of research that seeks to move from analyses of social and economic structures toward more textually-oriented, culture-centered approaches. Postcolonialism thus overlaps considerably with the work of Subaltern Studies scholars, colonial discourse analysts and travel literature specialists already mentioned above.

Globalism or Globalization. In its concern to develop new ways of interpreting the interconnections among various parts of the world, postcolonial studies likewise overlaps considerably with another emerging academic trend sometimes known as globalism or globalization studies. At the risk of some oversimplification, this trend might be characterized as seeking to extend the insights, approaches and overall mindset of postcolonial studies to the task of revising and reinterpreting earlier structural analyses of the "world sytem" and "dependency" put forward by scholars such as Immanuel Wallerstein. These earlier studies analyzed the construction and maintenance of the European- (and later American-) centered worldwide system of economic and political domination that began in the sixteenth century and assumed fuller and more elaborate form during the great waves of colonialism and imperialism that followed. By means of a complex analytical model of the world as being divided into "core," "peripheral" and "semi-peripheral" areas, the world systems scholars sought to explain the great disparities in power and wealth between "developed" and "underdeveloped" areas, and why they had persisted for centuries.

In contrast with this structural, economically-centered model studying the persistence of long-existing worldwide patterns, globalization studies

focuses much more on cultural relationships in a contemporary world seen as in the process of dramatic change. A good example of the interests and approaches of this type of scholarship is provided by an article by the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai entitled "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy" (1994 [1990]). In this essay, Appadurai asserts that the "modern world is an interactive system in a sense which is strikingly new, involving interactions of a new order and intensity." The twentieth century's revolution in transportation and information technology has led to mutual interactions of population and knowledge that are not easily encompassed by existing models of center-periphery and so forth. Instead, the human flows of migrants, refugees and tourists; the rapidly changing flows of huge amounts of capital; the fluid configurations of technology; and the vast reservoir of shared repertoires of images and ideas made possible by the worldwide distribution of film, music and electronic media; all together have led to the construction of much more elaborate linkages than before. These different kinds of flows of people and information do not all proceed in the same directions. Moreover, the influences are often mutual, and cultural artifacts (such as music or political ideas such as democracy) are often given local meanings that vary from place to place. Under such circumstances, many of the questions that analysts ask remain the same as in the past, but they need to be asked in different ways: instead of assuming that the world constitutes an orderly, stable system of some sort, we must think of it in terms of complex, overlapping, and uncertain dynamics – something like a human version of the "chaos theory" of the natural sciences is needed.

II. Some Recent Trends in English-Language Scholarship on China

Not surprisingly, English-language scholarship[3] on China has been influenced by the new academic trends. Some of this influence comes from the processes of academic osmosis that normally spread new attitudes and approaches from

one scholarly field to another. As in the case of the broader scholarly community, some also results from a desire to rethink past scholarship in the light of developments such as the end of the Cold War and the collapse (or, in the case of China, the ongoing reform) of socialist states. And some stems from the evident resonances that exist among past and present conditions in China and the new scholarship dealing with colonial discourse, postcoloniality, resistance, and other topics. Although China was never formally a colony, its experience with the economic, political and particularly cultural incursions of imperialism at the hands of the Western powers and Japan was arguably sufficiently similar to what happened in formal colonial contexts to suggest that the new methodologies and sensibilities developed for studying Western-non-Western interactions are applicable to the Chinese case as well.

In the following comments, I will discuss primarily developments in the field of modern Chinese studies that are directly or indirectly related to the larger academic trends mentioned previously, and will focus particular attention on trends in the study of history, which is my own area of academic specialization. Regrettably, this means that a great deal of fine scholarly work that does not fit into these parameters will have to be omitted from consideration in this short review.

PARADIGMS AND STATES OF THE FIELD. One significant sign of the effect that developments of both academic and non-academic types have had on the study of modern China is the recent proliferation of articles and symposia devoted to reviewing the "state of the field," often with the aim of demonstrating that a condition of flux exists and that "new paradigms" are needed to restore stability and provide enhanced intellectual coherence. Occasional articles of this sort are part of the normal ongoing stock-taking process that occurs in all academic disciplines, but an unusual number and

variety of such essays have appeared in recent years. At the same time, new journals have been launched and others renamed and reoriented, in more or less explicit recognition of changing academic circumstances.

Some of the recent evaluative, agenda-setting efforts have involved articles and symposia devoted primarily to discussions of various specific approaches and issues in the China field, while others have engaged in more abstract and general discussion of the need for reorientation of the field and of the overarching paradigms that structure research and understanding. Notable examples of the former type of discussion include a symposium in *Modern China* on the applicability to the Chinese case of the European-originated concepts of "public sphere" and "civic society" (1993), another in the same journal assessing the state of the study of the Chinese Revolution (1995), and a third symposium in *The China Quarterly* on "Reappraising Republican China" (1997). Prominent among examples of the latter type of discussion of the promises and pitfalls of new paradigms are essays in *Modern China* by Philip Huang (1991) and Arif Dirlik (1996), and essays in *positions* by Tani Barlow (1993) and by Judith Farquhar and James Hevia (1993).

These symposia and essays naturally vary widely in approach and content, but several general issues relevant to the scholarly trends mentioned in Part I are raised prominently and repeatedly in them. These include: nationalism, questions concerning the relevance and appropriate content of the concepts of "modernization" and "revolution" as paradigms, questions about the respective characteristics of and relationship between the study of socioeconomic and of cultural processes, the relevance to China studies of concepts and approaches developed in and/or applied to the study of the Western world, and questions of historical periodization and continuity.

NATIONALISM. China has been among the areas of the world in which nationalistic feelings and ethnic tensions have appeared to intensify in recent

years, and so it is not surprising that recent scholarship has also sought to address these issues and their historical contexts. One of the most prominent of several recent products of this concern has been Prasenjit Duara's award-winning book *Rescuing History from the Nation* (1995; other useful sources include Unger 1996, Fitzgerald 1996, and the works cited in Harris 1997). In this work Duara reexamines the interrelationships among nationalistic discourses and various facets of China's early-twentieth-century history from a perspective informed by concepts popularized by recent theorists of nationalism such as Benedict Anderson, historiographical and epistemological arguments espoused by Subaltern Studies scholars, and what Duara calls (p. 6) "a still vaguely defined 'postcolonialism' which informs much of the new scholarship in India and elsewhere."

In a wide-ranging work which combines discussion of nationalist theory and its comparative application in India and China with investigation of specific Chinese phenomena such as anti-superstition campaigns and programs for self-government and federalism, Duara argues against the view (popularized by Benedict Anderson) that nationalism is strictly a modern concept, and also against the common notion that nationalism within individual countries is necessarily a cohesive and unitary force. Instead, he suggests that what is new about the modern period is not the existence of nationalistic "totalizing, self-conscious political communities" (p. 9), but rather the global institutional revolution which produced the world system of nation-states. Within each nation-state, moreover, nationalism is rarely a unitary expression of the feeling of the nation's entire population, but rather a relational, shifting and contested product of a number of different "nation-views" held by subsets of the population. Duara explores these ideas in the Chinese context by examining a number of intertwined discourses on state-society relations and modernity present in China during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including both indigenous traditions and more recently imported

Enlightenment-inspired concepts.

MODERNIZATION AND REVOLUTION. As the work of Duara and many others suggests, nationalist thinking both in China and elsewhere has often been closely connected to notions of "progress," "modernization" and the need for revolutionary change. Virtually all of the recent state-of-the-field discussions share this orientation, and agree that most postwar English-language studies of China have been predominantly products of an academic discourse structured around the concepts of modernization, revolution and the relationship between them. Among the main problems this literature has set out to examine are: Why did China fail to modernize in the first half of the twentieth century? How and why did the Communist-led Chinese revolution emerge from this failed modernization process? How did the new socialist government of the PRC compare with pre-1949 governments in its modernization policies and their results? Within this broad, overarching discourse there has been room for a variety of approaches and interpretations, many of which were ideologically and emotionally charged by their production in the context of the Cold War. As pointed out first with considerable venom by politically conservative scholars who felt their views were being slighted (Myers & Metzger 1980; cf. also the discussion in Israel et al. 1985), but now widely noted by others as well, for the bulk of the postwar period historical narratives have been fundamentally structured around and scholarly energies disproportionately focused on the phenomenon of the Chinese revolution, at the expense of studies of modernization.

Comments in the recent "state of the field" articles, together with other indications, suggest that this longstanding emphasis on the centrality of the Chinese revolution in the historical experience of twentieth-century China is now being very seriously questioned in light of recent scholarly trends and world developments—notably the collapse of Communism in many parts of

the world and the continuing reforms in China (Bergere 1997: 309; Strauss 1997: 329-31: Esherick 1995: 69-72). A gradual decline in practical interest in the study of the Chinese revolution has in fact been apparent since the mid-1970s, encouraged by the end of the Vietnam War and reduced incidence of other rural revolutionary struggles, waning international political interest in the "Maoist model" in the wake of revelations about the excesses of the Cultural Revolution era, and dissatisfaction with the inconclusiveness and sterility of existing academic debates over causes for the revolution's success. The new questioning of revolution as paradigm, however, has deeper and more varied intellectual roots.

The recent questioning or reevaluation of the significance of the Chinese revolution is taking a wide range of forms. For some, the new world developments have confirmed or revived interest in the study of China's earlier non-revolutionary modernization efforts, such as the pre-1949 activities of the Nationalist government and their later institutional legacies on the mainland and on Taiwan (Kirby 1992; Strauss 1997), and have led to implicit or explicit suggestions that in the long run it may turn out to be the Communist-led revolution and the subsequent PRC government rather than the regime of the Nationalist opposition that is seen as the transitional historical sidetrack (Esherick 1995: 70). For others, reinterpretation of the revolution has involved reducing its salience and centrality as an epoch-making event of significance both to Chinese and to the world by weaving it skillfully into a mosaic of long-term socioeconomic processes extending over centuries (Huang 1985; Huang 1990).[4] And for still others it has meant emphasizing that the whole construction of revolution as key event is based on Marxist and/or modernization theories derived from Western experiences that are at best only imperfectly applicable to China's circumstances, and that at worst are Orientalist (Farquhar & Hevia 1993).

Despite these reevaluations, new writing on the revolution does continue

in the U.S. Where the previous generation of scholarship focused primarily on explaining the triumph of the revolution itself, however, much recent scholarship looks instead at the uncertainties, ambivalences and costs of a process that now seems to have been much less predestined for success (Esherick 1995: 53-55). Thus, for example, recent studies of the early years of the Chinese Communist Party stress the pluralistic, fluid nature of the early party, and note that the authoritarian political culture characteristic of the party later on developed in the process of consolidating and homogenizing the early party organization (Dirlik 1989; van de Ven 1992). In a different vein, Chen Yung-fa's studies of early intraparty purges in Jiangxi (1994) and Yan'an (1995b), and of Communist involvement with opium cultivation and trading in Yan'an (1995a), point out the toll that the revolutionary struggle took on the human resources and morality of the movement's own participants. Similarly, Joseph Esherick's study of the establishment of a "party-state" in northern Shaanxi notes both the contingency and costs of Communist success, the variability of people's motives for joining the movement, and the crucial brokerage role played by local cadres (Esherick 1994).

Some of the recent works likewise try in varying degrees to convey a fuller and more balanced sense of the alternative possibilities visible from time to time within the revolutionary movement. One of the clearest examples of this is Gregor Benton's study (1992) of the struggle waged by Communist remnants in South China following the start of the Long March, which seeks to recover the history of revolutionaries whose contributions and sacrifices have been overlooked due to the long dominance of a Mao-oriented historiography both in China and in the West. From a quite different perspective, Christina Gilmartin (1995) examines the history of women's participation in Communist-led revolutionary activities during the 1920s, and finds that despite the important role that women's emancipation played in the party's stated goals during this period, the actual behavior of many male cadres

tended to reproduce aspects of the existing male-dominated social order, and to marginalize the contributions of the party's early female members.

Perhaps the most striking of the new writings on the revolution, however, is a work dealing directly with the construction of the party's core Mao-centered myths about the "Yan'an Way" and the revolutionary history leading up to the Yan'an period. David Apter's and Tony Saich's *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic* (1994) is a complex, difficult text that only imperfectly blends the individual authors' rather disparate approaches and writing styles, and demands a great deal of persistence on the part of the reader. The more accessible portions of the book supply a significant amount of useful new information (synthesized from interviews and memoirs) about the social and attitudinal context of party cadres' lives during the Yan'an period. The real heart of the study, however, consists of a wide-ranging and thought-provoking (if often stylistically opaque) analysis of the political and moral discourse about revolution—and about Mao's place in it—that was developed in the course of the extensive political campaigns, educational programs and intra-party discussions that took place during this period. In its reliance upon the kinds of techniques for discursive analysis that are widely-employed in such fields as literature, "new cultural history" and postcolonial studies, this study clearly reveals the influence of the new academic trends discussed in Part I.

SOCIOECONOMIC AND CULTURAL PROCESSES. The impact of the new trends may also be seen in both general discussions and empirical research projects that deal with the interface between socioeconomic and cultural processes. Though scholars have always recognized that these types of processes are in fact interrelated in various ways, boundaries among academic specializations formerly tended to compartmentalize their study, especially when "culture" was understood to mean primarily "high" or elite culture. As

popular culture, social history and Annales-school investigations of long-term processes became common topics of study for historians, and as anthropologists, literature specialists and political scientists began to take greater interest in the historical contexts of their own studies, the interrelationship between the study of socioeconomic and cultural phenomena also began to "thicken." Nevertheless, a distinction still remains, manifested in methodological tools and conceptual mindsets alike.

One of the consequences of the rising influence of "cultural studies" and other related approaches is to call renewed attention to the question of the relationships between socioeconomic and cultural processes and how scholars examine them. Though this has sometimes involved quite critical and dismissive attacks on large bodies of past scholarship (Barlow 1993 is an example of this), it has also begun to generate a growing body of empirical research focused on issues that relate in one degree or another to both spheres of inquiry.[5]

One significant concentration of such recent scholarship is in the area of Chinese urban studies, with a special focus on Shanghai (Bergère 1997; Yeh 1997). During the past decade or so, literally dozens of projects have been launched on Shanghai alone, while a lesser but still significant number have been undertaken on Beijing, Tianjin, Chengdu, Chongqing and other cities. Many of these projects, such as well-known studies of Shanghai labor by Perry (1993), of regional identity formation by Honig (1992), of urban-centered native place organizations by Goodman (1995), and of the police by Wakeman (1995), are carefully-conducted works of social and socio-political history. But the influence of new trends is also apparent, as in the recent work of Gail Hershatter.

Hershatter's study of twentieth-century Shanghai prostitutes (1997) provides an excellent example of a study that combines social history, gender studies and cultural studies in a manner which enhances all of these types of

approach. The core of Hershatter's study is a richly-detailed social-historical examination of prostitutes' lifestyles and working conditions, and of the various efforts made to reform and regulate them. At the same time, Hershatter's work also directly engages issues of concern to cultural studies scholarship. She stresses, for example, the complex, variable and culturally constructed roles that prostitution played in twentieth-century Chinese discourses about modernity and nationalism, and emphasizes the slippery, highly-interpretable nature of the "factual" content of the historical texts she has used. In addition, she pays particular attention to the sorts of issues raised by Subaltern Studies scholars, such as whether and to what degree it is possible to recover the true "voice" of historically inarticulate subalterns such as Shanghai prostitutes, and to what extent the actions of prostitutes can be interpreted as "resistance" to oppression.

Besides choosing to explore these issues through what is obviously and directly a gender-related topic, Hershatter also explicitly situates her work within a context of broader feminist discussions of the meaning and significance of prostitution. In thus focusing on issues of gender and sexuality, her work joins a rapidly-growing body of other recent work by Western scholars of China. A representative sample of the broad range of issues and approaches involved in this work is available in *Engendering China* (Gilmartin et al. 1994), a volume of essays by an interdisciplinary group of Western and Chinese scholars. The diversity of essays in the volume clearly indicates both the overall complexity of the issues involved and also the variation in discourses about gender and sexuality that exist between Western and Chinese feminist scholarly communities. Economic and political issues of the sort discussed in older scholarship remain very visible in the book, but various of the essays also clearly indicate the influence on this subset of China studies of several of the scholarly trends mentioned in the first part of this essay. Among these are the shifting scholarly agendas caused by the end of the Cold

War and the ongoing Chinese reforms, a strong interest in questions of representation and agency, emphasis on the cultural construction and historically changeable nature of the category of "woman," concern over the potentially hegemonic quality of Western-centered feminist theorizing about non-Western women, and a desire to break down or complicate long-established conceptual dichotomies.

Accompanying the expansion of work on gender has been a related growth in scholarly study of sexuality and issues related to the body and its representation. One recent example of work in this field is Frank Dikötter's book *Sex, Culture and Modernity in China* (1995). Drawing on a wide range of periodicals, textbooks, guidebooks and other publications of this period, Dikötter describes a range of complex and sometimes contradictory Chinese discourses about sex, and discusses their relationship to long-established conceptions of gender and gender roles, contemporary questions of national and ethnic identity, and corresponding Western discourses about sexuality. Another interdisciplinary collection of essays entitled *Body, Subject and Power in China* (Zito & Barlow 1994) discusses some similar issues of sexuality and gender roles, as well as a wide range of other topics connecting expressions of power to bodily representations and activities (such as bowing and other forms of ritual behavior, artistic representations of rulers, connections between conceptions of women and nationalist thinking, and so forth).

DEBATES OVER CONCEPTUAL BORROWING. In whatever forum it appears, most recent American studies of China from both social history and cultural studies perspectives draw in some measure upon concepts and approaches drawn from academic work on other cultures, including Western cultures in Europe and the U.S. Debate over the role of such external (usually Western-originated) ideas in the study of non-Western history is, of course, a

prominent part of new academic trends mentioned in Part I. Awareness of the problematic aspects of such borrowing is also becoming apparent among scholars of China. Gail Hershatter, for example, has written on the uses and pitfalls of applying Subaltern Studies concepts to the Chinese case (Hershatter 1993), and similar consideration of the usefulness and appropriateness of employing such imported theories, models and orientations in studies of China has likewise been a frequent topic of discussion in recent articles on the state and direction of the field (Huang 1991; Farquhar & Hevia 1993; Dirlik 1996).

One early discussion of this theme is visible in Paul Cohen's book *Discovering History in China* (1984), which criticizes the application to Chinese historical studies of concepts of Western origin such as modernization and imperialism, and urges instead the development of "China-centered" history. Though this has appealed to many scholars as a general goal, and has been echoed in different ways by other scholars (Huang 1991), Cohen's description of what exactly constitutes "China-centered" history has been criticized frequently both for imprecision and for itself remaining subtly tied to Western-centered (some even say Orientalist) conceptions. (Lin 1986; Farquhar & Hevia 1993; Dirlik 1996).[6]

Cohen's discussion of the problems of applying Western theories to China focuses primarily on long-established conceptual systems such as modernization theory and imperialism, and his work thus feeds into current discussions over the use of these concepts in the China field. In addition, debate has recently occurred over the applicability to the China case of the concepts of "public sphere" and "civil society," which are derived from the Europe-centered work of Jurgen Habermas (1989; cf. also Calhoun 1992).[7] Discussion of these concepts in the China field began with an article by William Rowe (1990) introducing the concept of "public sphere," and with publications by Mary Rankin (1986; 1990) which made use of this idea in interpreting local elite politics in the Qing period, particularly during the

dynasty's final decades. The closely related topic of civil society also appeared in China-related research, most notably in work on early twentieth-century Beijing politics and other subjects by David Strand (1989; 1990).

One motivation for employing such concepts has been the general desire to see China studies connected more fully with developments in Western (especially European) historical scholarship, where scholars have built up a large and theoretically sophisticated body of work written from social and cultural history perspectives. More specifically, some scholars wishing to examine the contentious, evolving interface between Chinese state and society existing over the course of the last century or so, without replicating earlier types of state-centered political histories, have employed notions of civil society/public sphere to introduce additional room for discussion of the social-cultural dimensions of politics.

In addition to these academic trends, the popular political upheavals that occurred in 1989 in Eastern Europe and China provided an additional motivation to employ civil society/public sphere concepts as tools for analysis of these unexpected events. As the bourgeois public sphere of civil society studied by Habermas had been closely associated with political agitation for democracy and human rights in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe, so it seemed to some scholars that the various "democracy" movements against Communist rule in 1989 might well have been similarly fostered by emerging civil societies in China and elsewhere.

The persistence of this perceived linkage between civil society and democracy, however, has led also to criticism of the usage of civil society/public sphere in the Chinese context, as evident in a symposium on the topic published in *Modern China* (1993). Critics note that Habermas articulated these concepts explicitly within a framework for examining the rise of bourgeois democracies in Europe, and that the terms are therefore not only imperfect tools for the analysis of other cultures, but also laden with a

variety of ideologically-charged assumptions that make them politically inappropriate. Advocates of the concepts accept that these criticisms had some validity, but maintain that the problems can be overcome by using them as loose guides for stimulating further thinking about similar issues in the Chinese context rather than as exactly equivalent intellectual transfers from European studies. A number of scholars on both sides of the issue suggest that the clear-cut dichotomy between state and society present in the European-centered formulation of Habermas needs to be modified in the Chinese context to accommodate the existence of intermediate institutions and organizations that were neither purely state organs nor unambiguously social groups.

Since this symposium, discussion of these issues has continued, though rather inconclusively. As Marie-Claire Bergère points out in a recent review (1997), part of the problem is that scholarship on many aspects of twentieth-century Chinese history is still so sketchy that it is frequently possible to reach quite diverse conclusions on the basis of the same limited data. Similarly, she also notes that it may well be that concepts of civil society/public sphere are a better analytical fit for the specific set of social and political conditions that prevailed during the last decades of the imperial era than they are for what may well have been rather different conditions existing during the subsequent Republican period. Moreover, she argues that the tendency of many scholars to deploy terms such as civil society in very loose ways often clouds the issue, while fascination with these and other concepts drawn from anthropological and cultural studies scholarship sometimes leads to unwarranted neglect of older forms of analysis — most notably economic relations.

In another discussion of the civil society/public sphere issue, Prasenjit Duara notes that Western thinkers themselves long ago developed two somewhat divergent conceptions of the relationship between civil society and the state. One of these (originating with Locke) posits not only that society

is autonomous of the state but also that society has priority over the state: if the state violates its obligation to safeguard social freedom, society can take action to recover its freedom. The other view (originating with Montesquieu) assumes that both state and society exist in a creative equilibrium in which both are necessary. It is this latter conception, Duara suggests, that may be more relevant to the Chinese case. In China, he further argues, ideas associated with the *fengjian* ("feudalism") tradition of political thought provided an indigenous counterpart to Western thinking on civil society. In the late nineteenth century, *fengjian* theories and Western-derived concepts of civil society combined in the thinking of intellectuals such as Liang Qichao to encourage efforts at carving out local social and political autonomy *vis-a-vis* the late Qing-early Republican state (Duara 1995, Ch. 5).

The participants in these debates have generally not couched their arguments in cultural studies terminology, and most have probably not have had such work in mind.[8] Nevertheless, it is interesting that the general framework of the argument is quite similar to concerns raised by scholars of Subaltern Studies and postcoloniality about the dominance of Western-originated historiographical paradigms and "Enlightenment thinking" about individuality. It also quite clearly replicates the general strong rejection of simple dichotomies and binary oppositions (such as that of "state versus society") evident in much cultural studies scholarship.

PERIODIZATION. As the impact of recent academic trends and world events have encouraged many American China scholars to reflect upon the paradigms and approaches that guide their research, so also have they suggested a need to rethink the field's historical periodization. In particular, as the perceived nature and significance of the Chinese revolution changes in the eyes of academics, and as both the revolution and the subsequent People's Republic are viewed from a steadily lengthening chronological perspective, the

degree of prominence formerly accorded to 1949 as a major historical dividing line has come to seem problematic to a growing number of scholars. On the one hand, accumulating research findings and greater access to contemporary Chinese society have begun to reveal the existence of significant social and institutional continuities across what was once seen as a very broad gulf separating the "Republican era" from the "Communist era." On the other hand, habitual disciplinary conventions in American scholarship that once made the pre-1949 period primarily the province of historians and the post-1949 period typically that of political scientists and other social scientists have begun to erode, both because as time passes the post-1949 years are gradually becoming more evidently "historical," and also because interdisciplinary trends in recent scholarship have blurred the boundaries between formerly discrete areas of academic inquiry (Strauss 1997: 329-31; Esherick 1995: 48).

To a lesser extent, these trends have also affected thinking about another established demarcation line: the 1911 transition between the empire and the republic. In contrast to the 1949 date, which has tended to be conceived of as a dividing line comprehensively splitting two quite different worlds, American scholars have long considered 1911 as having considerably greater significance as a marker for changing political institutions than for evolving social and economic processes. Nevertheless, recent research on local elites (Rankin 1986), self-government (Thompson 1995), education (Keenan 1995; Chauncey 1992), and warlords (McCord 1993) has further refined this image, on the one hand strengthening the impression that the "innovations" of the late Qing reforms in many cases had well-established institutional and conceptual antecedents, and on the other hand confirming the notion that many of the processes already underway in the late Qing period continued on unabated well into the Republican era. More than ever, it seems preferable to think of the shift from empire to republic in terms of a transition zone of two

or more decades straddling the beginning of the twentieth century, rather than as a more or less discrete, compressed event occurring in the latter half of 1911 (Rankin 1997).

This rethinking of established periodization points is a fluid and contested process that is likely to last for some time. Not all scholars find the new efforts completely persuasive (Bergère 1997: 318), and the process has as yet had no obvious impact on textbooks or course syllabi, and relatively little on published monographs (with exceptions, such as Huang 1990, and some collections of essays such as Gilmartin et al. 1994). Still, certain other effects are already clearly visible, in comments made at conferences on the direction of the study of Republican China, for example, and in the numerous Ph.D dissertations in progress or recently completed which try seriously to deal with both pre- and post-1949 manifestations of various social, economic and political processes. The recent decision of the editorial board of the journal *Republican China* to change the journal's name to *Twentieth-Century China* and to expand its chronological and subject matter coverage was also made in significant measure in recognition of the transition in thinking about historical periodization that is currently underway.

Conclusion

As even this short and quite selective discussion indicates, the combination of recent world events and evolving academic viewpoints has significantly affected the general study of historical relations between Western and non-Western cultures, and is also—although somewhat more slowly—beginning to affect American studies of China as well. Among the important overall results of these developments has been a rethinking of established conceptions of worldwide historical cultural interactions, greater impetus toward interdisciplinary cross-fertilization in academic research, and a stronger recognition of the changeability and interpretability of even the most

seemingly "natural" and durable human institutions, cultural concepts, and forms of representation.

At the same time, like most academic trends, the turn toward cultural studies has caused controversy and conflict as well as interest and enthusiasm. Some of this stems from the tendency of both cultural studies advocates and practitioners of older styles of political, social and economic history to assume – often unconsciously – that scholarly approaches are like exclusive categories; that is, they are either "right" or "wrong," "good" or "bad," and that adoption of one impels rejection of the others. Other conflict arises from assertions about the perceived potential deficiencies of one or another type of approach (such as charges that social history tends to be excessively empirical and easily "loses sight of the forest for the trees"; or that cultural studies involves merely abstract textual analysis instead of solid research, and amounts simply to "intellectual navel-gazing" that is largely divorced from reality).

It seems to me that these sorts of conflicts are largely unnecessary. Scholarly approaches are most productively thought of not as exclusive alternatives, but as usefully diverse and complementary ways of looking at complex phenomena. As the French historian Eugen Weber (1976: 493) puts it, "the question to ask is not whether an argument is right enough to exclude all others, but *how* right it is, how much it tells us that we did not know." Similarly, the excesses, deficiencies and idiosyncrasies of one approach can be counteracted or supplemented by the strengths of others, so long as scholars remain open to alternative perspectives and do not retreat into comfortable, confined and self-referential academic dens. If an open mind is kept, it is in fact precisely times of conceptual challenge, transition, and ferment that are the most stimulating and rewarding in which to carry on scholarly work. That we now see both our world and our intellectual environment changing all around us, therefore, is not a problem to be deplored, but an opportunity to be

embraced.

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NOTES

1 To give some idea of the scale of this interest in gender studies among scholars in the U.S., one professor told me that when he was on a committee to select panels to appear at a recent convention of the American Historical Association, perhaps one-third to one-half of the proposals received directly or indirectly concerned gender issues.

2 A computer search of the Michigan State University library holdings, for example, revealed well over fifty books on the subject of "Orientalism."

3 Most of the authors cited below are scholars (including some of foreign origin) who have been trained and now work in the U.S., Britain or Australia, but I have also cited a few works by foreign scholars which appear in publications addressed primarily to English-speaking audiences.

4 I do not wish to imply that a conscious aim of Huang's works has been to marginalize the revolution, but simply to argue that this has been their effect.

5 By far the most prominent recent venue for the presentation of research on East Asia written from cultural studies or postcolonial viewpoints is the journal *positions*, which began publication in 1993. Self-consciously adopting an oppositional editorial stance toward current mainstream scholarship on political and socioeconomic issues similar to that adopted twenty years ago toward an earlier generation of mainstream scholarship by the journal *Modern China*, *positions* has quickly become a stimulating and quite widely

read (though not universally applauded) source of new writing from a predominantly cultural studies perspective.

6 Paul Cohen is currently working on a revised version of his book, which may address some of these criticisms.

7 Prasenjit Duara provides useful definitions of "civil society" and "public sphere" as they developed in the European context: "Civil society represents a domain of private and collective activity that is autonomous from the state. It includes economic activities as well as associational life and the institutions of sociability, but excludes political parties and institutionalized politics in general. The 'public sphere,' in particular, the bourgeois public sphere of the eighteenth century concentualized by Jurgen Habermas, is a historically specific expression of civil society and is understood as a realm of freedom to be defended against state intrusion and domination. This realm is constituted by public opinion and debates in the coffeehouses, salons, popular literature, newspapers, and so on. Not only does this realm articulate a defense of society against state, ...[but also] it introduces a rational-critical discourse on public matters." (Duara 1995: 148).

8 Duara's work is an exception in this regard; he is very much aware of Subaltern Studies writing, and of arguments about "Enlightenment historiography."

(付記)

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