

**SOCIETY AND ECONOMY IN MODERN CHINA:  
SOME HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS**

*BY*

RAMON H. MYERS

Urban Trends and Cycles of State Fiscal Crisis and Reform  
Capitalism, Feudal Reaction, and Foreign Imperialism  
Quantitative Growth and Qualitative Standstill  
Conclusion

The purpose of this essay is to critically evaluate some leading paradigms which have tried to explain trends and patterns of social and economic change in modern Chinese history.

A paradigm or model contains one or more propositions that identify important causal relationships between actors, institutions, and their environment in order to explain certain observable trends or patterns in history. A historical trend or pattern can be defined as some regular occurrence of events. Many historians now use social science theory and quantitative methods to measure such regularities. Every historian, of course, must relate these observable trends or patterns to significant historical problems.

I have singled out three paradigms which have greatly influenced our understanding of how society and economy evolved in modern China. I refer to the first as the emergence of a new urban spatial hierarchy that provided the context for a cycle of state fiscal crisis and reform. The second is the repeated occurrence of expanding productive forces becoming constrained by socioeconomic class relationships. The third is the steady expansion of the Chinese economy and society without any substantive change in the productivity of the organizations responsible for that expansion.

I define modern China as that period between the sixteenth century and

the mid-twentieth century. I deliberately chose the sixteenth century because many wide-ranging contacts between China and the West began at that time. According to Donald F. Lach, the early accounts of Asia that began circulating in Europe after 1500 "contained materials of differing types and of varying degrees of authority."<sup>(1)</sup> By describing the spice trade, various navigational problems, and the activities of the Portuguese between the Red Sea and China, these reports made Western man aware of societies and cultures very different from his own. After 1500 Chinese history becomes world history. The unification of China in 1949 signals the end of an era.

### Urban Trends and Cycles of State Fiscal Crisis and Reform

Several recent studies have argued with statistics and central place theory that a new urban hierarchy emerged in the last half millenium which uniquely accommodated the slow, sustained population growth that also occurred. While the majority of people lived in settlements not any larger than villages and market towns, new cities both large and small also sprang up in less populated regions of the old Chinese empire. Even this new expansion somehow never altered the long-term urban population ratio for the country. In those new regions the core and periphery differentiation of economic activity and population density resembled that of the older macro-regions of the empire.

As this new urban-spatial pattern emerged, the number of bureaucrats expanded less rapidly than did population. In order to govern more people by the same number of state functionaries, the throne and local officials increasingly relied upon the local elite and the complex, informal organizations developed and managed by those same elite. This triadic relationship made it possible for officials to mobilize revenue and manpower to defend and support the state. Chinese history for the Ming and Ch'ing periods should be seen as a new historical phase in which the spatial hierarchy of cities, market towns

---

(1) Donald Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), Vol. 1, p. 154.

and villages accommodated the interaction of officials, elite, and masses through a complex mix of patron-client relationships, informal controls, and formal bureaucratic rule.

At first this arrangement worked satisfactorily to provide a very beneficial economic environment for the ordinary people to pursue wealth and live their lives in peace. The state also obtained sufficient revenue to carry out its tasks of defense and governance. As time passed, however, the state's financial institutions weakened because of corruption and the ability of local elite to shift their fiscal burden upon commoners less able to pay. The state received fewer tax revenues than expected. These dysfunctions worsened at about the time when the state had to deal with enemies from without and contend with outbreaks of lawlessness at home. Repeated attempts by the state to provide national security and maintain domestic peace required greater amounts of revenue which were not forthcoming as expected. A severe fiscal crisis for the state forced its leaders to initiate reforms to ensure the state's survival. But when the state tried to carry out those reforms, local communities protested and uprising erupted. The state suddenly faced a political crisis and the possible loss of its legitimacy to rule.

This process of imperial crisis and reform can be described more concretely. In the early sixteenth century the Ming initiated the single-whip tax reform to obtain more revenue for defense and governance. Although this reform was supposed to equalize the tax burden and eliminate costly, inefficient fiscal administration, it became associated with considerable local discontent over Ming rule. By the early seventeenth century popular dissatisfaction had become widespread, first breaking out in Shensi in 1628-29 and then spreading to Shansi, Szechwan and elsewhere in the 1630s.

The same cycle of state fiscal crisis and reform occurred during the Ch'ing period. In the 1790s and early 1800s, the Ch'ing state faced a severe fiscal crisis brought on by the White Lotus rebellion between 1796-1805, the rising costs of operating the Grand Canal in the 1820s and 1830s, the flooding of

the Yellow River in the 1840s, and the general economic deflation throughout that period produced by the massive outflow of silver. In spite of state reforms to deal with this fiscal crisis, economic conditions worsened, and social dissatisfaction spread to produce the great rebellions of the 1850s.

We observe another cycle of fiscal crisis and reform during the last decade of the Ch'ing dynasty. Faced by severe revenue shortage which hindered the state's ambitious reforms after China's defeat by Japan, the state began imposing more taxes. In spite of sweeping reforms to modernize the country, many elements of the populous perceived these taxes to be unjust and collected by a government which no longer deserved to rule.

Aside from the difficulty of understanding these complex historical events and the role of the individual to enact new policies, certain regularities or trends and cycles were taking place in society in late imperial China. Regarding the long-run trend of a tilt toward a rural society of villages and market towns, the findings of G. W. Skinner and G. Rozman show that a new urban-spatial hierarchy had emerged after the Sung period.

Rozman defines seven levels of central places according to the urban functions each performed. His six and seven level central places are defined as intermediate markets and standard marketing centers with periodic markets. For the Ming, Rozman estimates around 2,000 and 7,500 intermediate markets and standard marketing centers respectively. "During the first two centuries of the Ch'ing dynasty the population of China increased by approximately 150 percent," but the share of total population living in cities still remained about 6 percent while standard marketing centers increased to 12,000.<sup>(2)</sup> In the early Ch'ing "there were approximately eight level 7 markets per administrative unit and one to two level 6 markets per unit. Less than 200 years later these averages had risen to sixteen and four respectively."<sup>(3)</sup> In other words China's

---

(2) Gilbert Rozman, *Urban Networks in Ch'ing China and Tokugawa Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 282.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 284.

huge population growth remained confined to villages and small markets in towns, and the state's ruling administration managed to govern the empire from only a few large urban centers.

Because very little migration from villages to cities took place, China's cities and their social structure never developed the capacity to mobilize resources for modernization as Japan's cities would successfully do in the late 19th century. According to Rozman, considerable migration to cities took place during Tokugawa so that by the 19th century "level 7 marketing settlements were comparatively scarce and a high proportion of villages relied directly on cities at level 6 or above for marketing."<sup>(4)</sup> By this time Japan's urban population had reached 11-12 percent compared to China's 6-7 percent. This statistical difference is further highlighted by the comparison that in central Japan "one of six people in the Kanto region lived in Edo while one of twenty to twenty five people in Chihli province lived in Peking."<sup>(5)</sup>

Noting the same shift in the urban spatial hierarchy, G. W. Skinner points out that the number of county-level units over a millennium only rose slightly by 1730 from 1,235 to 1,360 to reflect a "secular decline in governmental effectiveness from mid-T'ang on to the end of the imperial era, (and) a steady reduction in basic-level administrative central functions from one era to the next."<sup>(6)</sup> To show the new urban trend, Skinner divides China into eight macro-regions, each with periphery and core areas which are distinguished by their population density and the number of central places they contain.

Skinner sees the Ch'ing managing its huge empire by first creating only a few administrative units in the periphery of macro-regions and establishing more administrative units in the cores. He observes that the security concerns along the northern and northwest frontiers dictated having fewer county administrative units and only locating important strategic sites to guard the

---

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 100.

(5) *Ibid.*, p. 202.

(6) G. W. Skinner (editor), *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), p. 19.

“approaches to the heartland of physiographic regions, whose rich resources to great cities constituted the ultimate military objectives” for any aggressors.<sup>(7)</sup> This tactic enabled the state to conserve its resources. But to maximize control over revenue collection in the rich cores of the country, the monarchy willingly placed more county level units in those same areas.

Although both studies have elucidated a new urban-spatial hierarchy, we must remain skeptical of the historical implications which their authors are eager to infer from this structure. By showing that Tokugawa Japan's urbanization was very different from that of the Ch'ing, Rozman concludes that Japan's leaders were able to utilize different social organizations to mobilize more resources for modernization. Yet he neither demonstrates any close connection between urban structure and modernization reforms nor identities which social organizations were truly a by-product of those urban trends.

Skinner's claim that a reduction in lower-level administrative functions took place during the late imperial period is also difficult to accept within the context of two of the longest, enduring dynasties in Chinese history. Skinner is also most vague about which administrative functions declined and precisely why that was the case when the number of functionaries in county seats failed to increase. Whether state services on a per capita basis declined is problematic. More important, Skinner ignores another historical process which did take place: the growth of public services by informal organizations in the private sector.

Aside from these flaws, both Rozman and Skinner direct our attention to the importance of that complex relationship between state officials, local elite or gentry, and informal grass roots organizations. We now ought to ask how and why did that relationship change over time? Our understanding about this new matrix of local control and its implications for state governance is very sketchy at this time, but it bears a close relationship to the cycle of state fiscal crisis and reform already alluded to above.

During the Ming the court forcefully moved elite families to urban centers

---

(7) *Ibid.*, p. 345.

where officials could better control them: emperor Chu Yuan-chang moved over 4,300 powerful families in Chekiang and Kiangsu to Nanking city in a bid to deny them local bases of power; later, emperor Ch'eng-tsu moved another 3,000 wealthy families to Peking. While doing this, the throne also established the *li-chia* system of household clusters that supplied quotas of labor and grain tax to the state. Officials allowed local elite to manage these household organizations. But within this new arrangement, there gradually emerged a privileged, new elite that evaded supplying any labor services and paid little tax.<sup>(8)</sup> This new elite consisted of two social strata: those who had passed the imperial exams and held degrees but did not serve as officials; a second stratum of wealthy commoners who through bribe or official connection managed to escape performing the odious labor services. Some members of the latter also held important managerial positions in water conservancy projects which had been constructed by state officials and the local wealthy in the early sixteenth century.<sup>(9)</sup> Still others had "managed to falsify their household registers, just as they had falsified their land registers", so that they

(8) Wada Masahiro, "Yu eki yūmen jōrei no tenkai to Minmatsu kyo jin no hō teki ichi: meneki ki'ungaku no kentō o tsūjite" (Changes in the Ordinance for Exemption from Labor Services and the Legal Position of the Chū-jen at the End of the Ming Period: A Survey of the Standard Amount of Exemptions from Labor Services), *Tōyō gaku* 60: 1-2 (Nov. 1978), p. 123.

(9) Hamashima Atsutoshi, "Mindai Konan no suiri no ichi kōsatsu" (A Study of Water Control in the Kiangnan Region During the Ming Period), *Tōyō bunka kenkyūjo kiyo* (The Memoirs of the Institute of Oriental Culture) 47 (Feb. 1969), p. 54. See also Hamashima Atsutoshi, "Minmatsu Shinsho Konan deruta no suiri kankō no saihen ni tsuite" (Reorganizing the Practices of Water Control in the Delta Region of Kiangnan in the Late Ming and Early Ch'ing Periods), *Shakai keizai shigaku* (The Journal of Social Economic History), 40:2, 1974, pp. 23-42. In the latter article Hamashima used local materials from Hu-chou prefecture to argue that in the sixteenth century the state ordered local officials to encourage small landowners to cooperate with their tenants and rebuild former water conservancy works which had become unusable because of disrepair. Landlords had to supply a quota of grain according to the land they owned, and their tenants supplied labor to rebuild these works. (*chao-t'ien p'ai-i, yeh-shih tien-li*) (照田派役, 業食佃力). Further, the areal division surrounding and containing these projects called the *yu* (圩) replaced the *li-chia* unit, and landowners within each *yu* mobilized their tenants to repair the dikes. This building program apportioned costs more equitably between local landowners and their tenants; it also reduced tensions between the two parties and elevated the power and prestige of the landowners because of their new managerial role over water conservancy works.

too evaded state corvée and taxes.<sup>(10)</sup>

This new elite group, whether of bonafide gentry or powerful commoners or both, frequently spearheaded local protest movements or allowed themselves to be coopted by charismatic leaders to complain to local officials. Of greater importance, however, these elite managed to divert tax revenues to themselves which normally should have gone into state coffers. By forgoing that revenue, the state often found itself short of funds when it needed to repel outside enemies or deal with domestic crises like a famine or rebellion. The precise cause of these periodic Ming fiscal crises still needs to be explained satisfactorily. To be sure, scholars like Ray Huang have argued that the Ming state failed to develop alternative sources of tax revenues and preferred to rely upon the weak fiscal machinery that collected taxes from agriculture.<sup>(11)</sup> Whether this choice was deliberate or related to officials' failure to garner more tax revenues from the local elite are issues that still merit study. By the 1580s, the fiscal crisis was extremely severe with the "central government running an annual tax deficit of approximately one million taels."<sup>(12)</sup> The cause of that deficit is clear enough. The state had spent millions in previous decades to eliminate pirates along the southeast coast and repel Mongol attacks along the northwest frontier, but at the same time the state simply had not been able to increase revenue rapidly enough to restore those former surpluses. Yet its officials certainly tried. In the 1570s Grand Secretary Chang Chu-cheng (1525-1582) came to power and managed to compel enough state officials to audit their accounts and force delinquent tax payers to pay up, thus restoring some "administrative discipline and strict observation of tax laws."<sup>(13)</sup>

---

(10) Jerry Dennerline, "Fiscal Reform and Local Control: The Gentry-Bureaucratic Alliance Survives the Conquest", in Frederic Wakeman, Jr. and Carolyn Grant (editor), *Conflict and Control in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 45.

(11) Ray Huang, *Taxation and Government Finance in Sixteenth-Century Ming China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 316-321.

(12) Frederic Wakeman, Jr., "Introduction: The Evolution of Local Control in Late Imperial China", in *Conflict and Control in Late Imperial China*, p. 7.

(13) *Op. Cit.*, Ray Huang, pp. 284-285 and, p. 296.



Some prefectural officials also began adopting the new single-whip tax reform which combined the land tax and labor services into one or two annual, lump-sum silver payments. But these reforms to streamline and simplify the fiscal system proved short-lived. After Chang died, official laxity toward finances revived.

By 1632 "tax arrears of 50 per cent or more were reported in 340 counties, that is, more than a quarter of the fiscal districts of the entire empire. Moreover, 134 of these counties had actually delivered no tax payments to the central government whatsoever."<sup>(14)</sup> Why the state bureaucracy could not squeeze more revenues from counties is perhaps explained by the remarkable power of the local elite to subvert any such efforts. When officials applied pressure, they quickly alienated elite support for their networks of control and elicited a firestorm of tax protest. Whether this process was at the heart of the massive rebellions that spread across the empire in the 1630s has not been convincingly proven. But fiscal crisis followed by fiscal reform certainly seems to have been indicative of a weakening imperial authority. Can we say that this pattern bears any relationship to the urban spatial hierarchy identified by Rozman and Skinner? If any causal connection between urban structure and the cycle of state fiscal crisis and reform does exist, it must still be documented and analyzed.

It seems the same pattern just cited still persisted throughout the Ch'ing period. Like the Ming before it, the Ch'ing opted for the *pao-chia* system to "help the emperors gain control of the empire at a sub-administrative level."<sup>(15)</sup> Ch'ing officials also worked with local notables. In 1826 after Taiwan's Hsinchu city had been destroyed by rebels, the local elite planned and contributed "substantial sums to help finance the construction work" for rebuilding the city.<sup>(16)</sup> The role of local gentry in managing local public works is well

---

(14) *Ibid.*, p. 308.

(15) Kung-chuan Hsiao, *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960), p. 45.

(16) Harry J. Lamley, "The Foundation of Cities: Initiative and Motivation in Building three Walled Cities in Taiwan", in G. W. Skinner (editor), p. 189.

known.<sup>(17)</sup>

Just as members of the local elite were enhancing their prestige and authority, higher level officials too became more independent of the court in the management of their duties. By the early nineteenth century many provincial governors "had in fact gained a large measure of influence over (their) subordinates in the provincial capital,"<sup>(18)</sup> thus abrogating the throne's long-standing right to select and transfer officials for intra-provincial duties.

Some scholars have written about the patron-client relations that characterized elite and local official relations as well as between officials of low and high rank.<sup>(19)</sup> Japanese scholars, in particular, have pointed out that local degree holding elites used their official connections to make local officials extremely dependent upon them for sources of information or financial assistance.<sup>(20)</sup> As these developments gained momentum by the late 18th century, the equilibrium balance of power between state functionaries, local officials, and local elite began to break-down and produce that very same problem so endemic in the mid and late Ming period: the diversion of tax revenue from state to private hands. "In early 1800 a Board of Revenue memorial reported that since 1798 and 1799 the accumulated tax arrears of every province amounted to some 20 million taels. This same memorial went on to say that the reason for this state of affairs was not that the people did not pay taxes

---

(17) Examples can be found in Chung-li Chang, *The Chinese Gentry: Studies on their Role in Nineteenth-Century Chinese Society* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1955), pp. 51-70.

(18) Robert N. Weiss, "Flexibility in Provincial Government on the Eve of the Taiping Rebellion", *Ch'ing-chih wen-t'i* (June 1980), p. 3.

(19) See the unpublished Ph. D. thesis by James M. Polachek, *Literate Groups and Literate Politics in Early Nineteenth Century China*, p. 64, Dept. of History, U. of California, Berkeley, 1976.

(20) See the summary of Shigetani Toku's various writings on this topic by Mori Masao, "Nihon no Min-Shin jidai shikenkyū ni okeru kyōshin ron ni tsuite" (Debates over the 'Gentry' in Japanese Historical Studies of the Ming and Ch'ing Periods), *Rekishi hyōron* pt. 2, no. 312 (April 1976), pp. 26-27.

(21) Suzuki Chūsei, "Shinmatsu no zaisei to kanryō no seikaku" (Fiscal Policy in the Late Ch'ing Period and the Character of Officials), in *Kindai Chūgoku kenkyū iinkai* (comp.), *Kindai Chūgoku kenkyū* (Studies of Modern Chinese History), series 2 (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1958), p. 195.

but that officials illegally expropriated those monies."<sup>(21)</sup> Whatever the reason for this diversion of tax revenues, tax arrears became greater rather than smaller.

Again the state tried reforms. The Chia-ch'ing emperor demanded "changes in personnel and economies in expenditures."<sup>(22)</sup> He appointed new advisors like Ts'ao Chen-yung (1755-1835) and replaced many provincial governors. More Han Chinese officials were allowed to enter the top bureaucratic echelons, and the court made a "highly publicized effort to reduce spending by curbing waste and conspicuous consumption."<sup>(23)</sup> The heads of the salt monopoly, the Grand Canal tribute system, and the Yellow River conservancy works tried to balance their costs and revenues. But contemporary scholarly opinion has judged these reforms as inadequate. Susan Mann Jones and Philip Kuhn write in the recent Cambridge history of China that the "crises in the grain transport system were part of a general breakdown of public functions in the early decades of the century, stemming in part from bureaucratic malfeasance."<sup>(24)</sup> Their voices are joined by those of Suzuki Chūsei who blamed official corruption for the mounting tax arrears in the early 1800s,<sup>(25)</sup> and Hsiao I-shan who cited numerous examples of official corruption.<sup>(26)</sup>

If state reforms allegedly failed to elicit more tax revenue, the delicate balance of power between officials, gentry, and commoners was also becoming unhinged as the silver outflow produced deflation and affected the mode of land tax payment and increased its burden. Sasaki Masaya's study of rural riots in Chekiang in the early 1840s argues that the basic cause for these riots was that a certain group of rural elite and commoners rose up in protest when

(22) Susan Mann Jones and Philip A. Kuhn, "Dynasties Decline and the Roots of Rebellion", p. 116, in Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (editors), *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 19, pt. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 116.

(23) *Ibid.*, p. 118.

(24) *Ibid.*, p. 127.

(25) *Op. Cit.*, Suzuki Chūsei, pp. 269-271.

(26) Hsiao I-shan, *Ch'ing-tai t'ung shih* (A General History of the Ch'ing Period) (Taipei: T'ai-wan shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1962), Vol. 2, p. 218.

they perceived they were paying more land tax than other groups.<sup>(27)</sup> Their complaint was that the conversion rate of silver that they paid for their land tax into the white boxes collected by yamen runners was a higher tax burden than those paid by households represented by wealthy gentry patrons who paid that tax in silver for them.

The rebellions of the 1850s originated from many complex causes of which the severe economic deflation of the times probably was only one. In response to this new socio-political crisis, however, rural and urban elites created new organizations like the local defense associations (*t'uan-lien*).<sup>(28)</sup> The state also began selling official degrees to wealthy commoners to raise more funds, and this policy radically changed the composition and behavior of the local gentry class.<sup>(29)</sup> As a result, local society became more differentiated and complex than before. After 1900, the state even began collecting new taxes and levies to carry out its modernization reforms. The total land tax revenue almost doubled between 1901 and 1910.<sup>(30)</sup> To make matters worse, the state already had been minting new copper coins,<sup>(31)</sup> and local officials minted their coins too.<sup>(32)</sup> As a consequence, the money supply rapidly rose and generated price inflation. Rising prices and increased taxes produced angry howls of protest from the new local elite and their organizations.

Although we can observe a cyclical pattern of state fiscal crisis followed by reforms and then rebellion in both the Ming and Ch'ing periods, the critical

---

(27) Sasaki Masaya, "Kanho ninen Kinken no kōryō bōdō" (The Riots Opposing Grain Price Increases in Yin County in 1852), in *Kindai Chūgoku kenkyū*, series 5, 1963, p. 187 and pp. 189-199.

(28) Philip A. Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 210.

(29) *Op. Cit.*, *The Chinese Gentry*, pp. 138-141.

(30) Wang Yeh-chien, *Land Taxation in Imperial China, 1750-1911* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 118-119.

(31) Jerome Ch'en, *State Economic Policies of the Government, 1840-1895* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1980), p. 121.

(32) David Faure, "The Rural Economy of Kiangsu Province, 1870-1911", *Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies*, 9:2 (1978), pp. 365-469. For relevant information on silver deflation and increase in grain conversion rates after 1896 see p. 433. For local minting of copper coins and their introduction into Kiangsu see p. 435; for discussion of inflation see pp. 436-438.

factors responsible for those cycles have not yet been carefully identified and analyzed. The sketchy causal pattern which I have just described is only partially complete and correct. Furthermore, we do not really know if those cycles are related at all to the new spatial hierarchy which also evolved. But by perceiving the state to interact with society through its fiscal and bureaucratic control relationships and placing these complex arrangements within the context of the newly evolving urban spatial order, researchers now have an exciting agenda of problems and issues to analyze.

### **Capitalism, Feudal Reaction, and Foreign Imperialism**

A far less effective but popular approach has been the paradigm used by historians in mainland China and Japan. It deserves comment because its practitioners have produced a large literature on such issues as the 'sprouts of capitalism' and foreign imperialism.<sup>(33)</sup>

This paradigm consists of three conceptual elements: productive forces such as labor or other resources like capital and land; production relations, which are "effective power over persons and production forces, not relations of legal ownership";<sup>(34)</sup> and society's 'superstructure' defined as a "set of non-economic institutions, notably the legal system and the state."<sup>(35)</sup>

These three core elements are supposed to functionally interact in complex ways to produce historical discontinuities. Generally speaking, the practitioners of this paradigm prefer a mono-causal explanation, adopt a macro approach to account for change in socioeconomic history, and see society in terms of class or sub-class relationships. At times, some historians will assign explanatory power only to production relations, at other times only to productive forces. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s the Chinese communist party required that historians examine history solely in terms of how class relations prod-

---

(33) For an excellent bibliography and discussion of the "Sprouts of Capitalism", see Tanaka Masatoshi, *Chūgoku kindai keizaiishi kenkyū josetsu* (Preliminary Studies of Modern Chinese Economic History) (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1973), pp. 233-241.

(34) G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 63.

(35) *Ibid.*, p. 216.

uced shifts in class power and influence, increased the economic burden on less fortunate classes, and blocked 'progressive trends.' After 1978 when the party line began praising the 'four modernizations,' historians had to turn their attention to the role of productive forces in history. Now historians try to explain why China's productive forces failed to expand more rapidly in the late 19th century after contact with the West or why in the late imperial period the productive forces were so weak.

In the 1950s, however, some Chinese historians already had advanced a very systematic framework to explain the long-term trend of socioeconomic history from the 14th century to the early 20th century. Stated baldly, that conceptual explanation stressed the expansion of productive forces which became constrained by class relations and the superstructure to produce quantitative change but very little qualitative change in China's society and economy. Let me present this paradigm in the following way.

"After the Chinese people threw off the shackles of backward Mongol rule which had kept them in slavery, certain production forces were liberated." (36) Technical advance then occurred in all sectors of the economy and rising market demand promoted more specialization, exchange, and a greater division of labor. These processes combined to increase output and income.

Examples of technological progress can be observed in coal mines where miners used small explosives to extract more coal which in turn became the source for smelting iron. In the iron making industry, four to six males began operating large box-type bellows to increase the temperature for the required level of smelting. Sometimes, water power operated these bellows. (37) By the 16th and 17th centuries, casting techniques had improved to enable large cannons called *Hung-i-p'ao* (Red Barbarian Cannon) to be manufactured. (38)

---

(36) Huang P'ei-chin, "Kuan-yu Ming-tai kuo-nei shih-ch'ang wen-t'i k'ao-cha" (A Survey of the Internal Market Problem During the Ming Period), in Jin-min ta-hsueh Chung-kuo li-shih chiao-yen-shih (comp.), *Ming-Ch'ing she-hui ching-chi hsing-t'ai ti yen-chiu* (Studies of Ming-Ch'ing Social and Economic Structures) (Shanghai: Shang-hai jen-min ch'u-pan-she, 1956), p.201. Henceforth *MCSH*

(37) *Ibid.*, p. 201.

(38) *Ibid.*, p. 201

In cotton textiles workers began using new implements for bowing more cotton which led to improved yarn spinning and weaving of cloth. Technical progress in printing and shipbuilding also contributed to saving labor power and raised labor productivity. <sup>(39)</sup>

Associated with these technological advances was greater division of labor in many segments of productive activity within each industry. <sup>(40)</sup> Certain households began to produce cotton only for the market, while others bought cotton from the market to bow, spin, and weave cloth. In the cities, certain organizers with capital only engaged in the fulling or dyeing of cloth. Other organizers only engaged in the marketing of the processed cloth product. Similar divisions of labor could be found in industries like straw braid, silk, pottery, paper, dyes, shoes, and sugar. <sup>(41)</sup>

Greater division of labor received a powerful impetus from the expansion of the market and the rising population demand for more goods and services. Some of the great cities in the empire greatly increased in size. By 1500, Nanking city exceeded a million, and between 1500 and 1620 Peking is supposed to have grown from .6 to 1.0 million people. <sup>(42)</sup> Medium size cities also expanded, and some of them even became famous for their specialization in luxury goods. Ching-te-chen city in Kiangsi became a major center for very high quality porcelains which its merchants sold throughout China and even abroad. <sup>(43)</sup> Lin-ch'ing city in Shantung supported more than 100,000 people by the end of Ming and became a large trading entrepôt for all points

---

(39) *Ibid.*, p. 205. See also examples of new farming improvements in Hsieh Kuo-chen, *Ming-tai she-hui ching-chi shih-liao hsuan-pien* (A Compendium of Selected Materials on Social and Economic History of Ming) (Foochow: Fu-chien jen-min ta-ch'ang-she ch'u-pan, 1980), Vol. 1, pp. 102-113. This same text cites original sources to show the modest technical advances in handicraft. See pp. 127-288.

(40) Han Ta-ch'eng, "Ming-tai shang-p'in ching-chi ti fa-chan yu tzu-pen chu-i ti meng-ya" (The Development of a Commercial Economy and the Sprouts of Capitalism During the Ming Period), in *MCSH*, p. 6.

(41) *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9, and Huang P'ei-chin, pp. 206-210.

(42) *Ibid.*, p. 211.

(43) *Ibid.*, p. 214.

of the compass in north China. Canton, Hanchow, and Soochow were other medium sized cities of important commercial fame. Finally, market towns proliferated throughout the empire in both the Ming and Ch'ing periods. This development made it possible for the surrounding villages to sell a greater portion of their surplus in exchange for the products which travelling merchants brought from other regions. Therefore, huge quantities of grain entered markets of the central provinces to be gathered on grain boats by merchants from the lower Kiangnan region and shipped to the grain deficit provinces of Kiangsu, Chekiang, Fukien, and Kwangtung.

These developments just described were referred to by communist historians as a new proto or incipient capitalism (*tzu-pen chu-i meng-ya*). This vague term was supposed to denote a new stage or phase in China's economic history in which new capitalist relations based on new forms of payment had finally begun to emerge in a more conspicuous manner than ever before: labor received wages for their services; landowners received cash rent for the use of their land; creditors received interest; organizers of production and trade received a profit.

One example of these new classes was the managerial landlord (*ching-ying ti-chu*) who hired farm workers and collected rent from the land they leased to tenants.<sup>(44)</sup> This class stored grain or industrial crops and marketed it when prices were highest. The new cash nexus and market relations created by these managerial landlords were supposed to be exploitative according to communist historians. These managerial landlords never paid workers what they properly deserved; they always charged tenants higher rents than they should have really paid; and they always marketed their goods at monopoly

---

(44) Shang Yueh, *Chung-kuo tzu-pen chu-i huan-hsi fa-sheng chi yen-pien ti ch'u-hu yen-chiu* (A Study of the Origins and Early Transformation of Capitalist Relations in China) (Peking: San-lien shu-tien, 1956), p. 15; see also Nan-ching ta-hsüeh li-shih-hsi Chung-kuo ku-tai-shih chiao-yen-shih (comp.), *Chung-kuo tzu-pen chu-i meng-ya wen-t'i t'ao-lun-chi* (Collected Essays on the Problems of Sprouts of Capitalism in China) (Peking: San-lien shu-tien, 1960), pp. 89-94.



prices to the disadvantage of consumers.

Just as new productive forces had created new class relations, so did these new class relations produce certain contradictions which set in motion a chain reaction of negative consequences for both society and economy. The first contradiction was an unequal income distribution and a widening gap between poor and wealthy. Consider the following remark by the historian Hung P'i-chin:<sup>(45)</sup>

One group of nouveau rich farmers became feudal landlords, while another group lost their property and became servile workers and tenants. Furthermore, many wealthy farmers became managers of farms or of handicraft establishments. One segment of the farm economy became involved in handicraft while another of impoverished farmers entered the cities to become handicraft workers, petty tradesmen, and unskilled laborers.

More and more households somehow failed to acquire assets and had to work in the various towns and cities to earn income. Meanwhile, those households with property produced for the market and greatly increased their wealth and income.

Another contradiction arose from the intense competition between areas of self-sufficiency and those areas which had specialization and trade. In the early Ming period the people of Chou county in Shantung province "did not weave any cloth for profit, but they produced cloth for local needs"; "as merchants never came to sell any cloth, households produced just enough to meet their needs."<sup>(46)</sup> Districts like Chou county eventually began receiving merchants bringing cloth from other areas, and these cloth imports put those local, cloth-producing households out of business.

A third contradiction arose between the state and the new wealthy classes of merchants and owners of handicraft enterprises. By the late sixteenth cen-

---

(45) *MCSH*, p. 255.

(46) *MCSH*, p. 33.

tury the court began levying more taxes upon those producers and the merchants trading in luxury goods like silver, gold, jewelry, and salt. Many officials also demanded bribes from these same producers and merchants. For example, in Fukien an official named Kao Ts'ai allegedly had "terrorized and extorted cash from merchants for a long time; he also took their rice, gold and other goods so that no one even dared to declare the price of their wares. When these merchants and handicraft owners paid their taxes, the local officials audited them and demanded that they lower their prices."<sup>(47)</sup> In this particular case, Foochow city merchants became so outraged they finally rioted.

A fourth contradiction arose from the rich exploiting the poor. Communist historians have argued that handicraft owners always paid their workers too low a wage. Landlords extracted high rents from their tenants. Merchants charged too high a price for consumers. Creditors charged exorbitant interest rates on their loans.

These four contradictions produced many urban riots and rural disturbances. These social upheavals apparently did not ameliorate the miserable conditions of the poor and exploited. Instead, these periodic outbreaks of violence frightened the state, and the throne responded by rallying to restore order and discourage any further occurrences of violence. At the same time, the state began introducing new taxes like the single-whip and imposed other tax burdens on the common people and those new capitalist classes in villages and market towns. Communist historians have referred to this development as a feudal backlash or reaction which proved to tip the balance of power in society by stunting capitalism and blocking the further growth of productive forces in the Ming economy.<sup>(48)</sup>

To sum up, the conflict between new productive forces and class relations had culminated in a series of contradictions that had produced social violence

---

(47) Shang Yueh, p. 50.

(48) *MCSC*, pp. 257-258.

and encouraged a feudal reaction by society's superstructure. By the early 17th century, Chinese society had merely expanded in size, more than doubling since the early 15th century. Yet, in qualitative terms the social structure and cultural ethos of the early 17th century were not any different than two centuries before.

Communist historians are divided in their opinion about what kind of historical process then took place in the Ch'ing period. Some scholars like Li chih-ch'in have argued that new capitalist relations again emerged after the turbulent 17th century, and these were based upon an even greater specialization of resources and trade.<sup>(49)</sup> But Shang Yuch and other scholars have countered with a different view. According to Shang Yuch, "in the 200 years from 1644 to 1840 Chinese society had definitely developed, but that rate of change never surpassed that achieved during the 16th century."<sup>(50)</sup> Shang Yuch contended that tremendous socioeconomic dislocations had occurred in the mid and late 17th century, and these had disrupted the economy and contributed to its enormous decline.<sup>(51)</sup> Even though the 18th century economy prospered, the same exploitative class relationships had emerged, income distribution became unequal, pockets of poverty became conspicuous, and the Manchu state behaved very much like the feudal, reactionary Ming. Because the forces of production remained too weak and new class relations had not yet developed, China never experienced the dynamic capitalism of a Europe and its superstructure never became transformed.

Just as communist historians are divided on their interpretation of the historical change for early and mid Ch'ing, so too are they divided on what kind of historical change occurred in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some have emphasized the budding trade relationships between China and the outside world and cited the new mixture of economic relations and positive

---

(49) *MCSC*, p. 278.

(50) Shang Yuch, pp. 74.

(51) These disruptive events are described in Shang Yuch, pp. 78-84.

developments these produced.<sup>(52)</sup> Others, however, have only countered by alluding to the new exploitative relations that foreign trade and the new productive connections produced. They also stressed the economic dislocations caused by the new imports which impoverished so many villages.<sup>(53)</sup> Instead of capitalism becoming a powerful engine for socioeconomic change, capitalism merely became the catspaw of foreign imperialism. Foreign merchants and capitalists linked up with factions in the old superstructure and exploited China's resources with greater intensity and deliberation than domestic capitalists ever did. China's economy, as a result, became poorer, stunted, and more distorted than ever before.

In recent years some American and European scholars have used certain core elements of this same paradigm to explain why China by the early 20th century was more underdeveloped than in the 11th century.<sup>(54)</sup> The explanation for this perverse phenomenon is as follows. A coalition of gentry, merchants, and landlords came to rule society and control a substantial share of the country's national income. These dominant classes partly hoarded, partly consumed, and partly used for gift exchange and bribes that huge surplus to keep their position of power. This coalition persisted through the centuries until the late 19th century when compradores, bankers, manufacturers and even foreign imperialists joined its ranks. After 1900, this new coalition refused to make the necessary sacrifices for China to initiate modern economic growth. Only with the 'revolution' in 1949 did a new ruling order replace that old class coalition, mobilize the existing economic surplus, and then initiate modern development.

---

(52) For a discussion of how these different relations developed between the 1840s and the World War I period see Chiu Chung-kuo ti tzu-pen chu-i sheng-ch'an kuan-hsi pien-hsieh-tsu, *Chiu Chung-kuo ti tzu-pen chu-i sheng-ch'an kuan-hsi* (Capital-Production Relations Under the Ancient Chinese Régime) (Peking: Jen-min ta-ch'ang-she, 1977), pp.23-53.

(53) Hu-pei ta-hsüeh cheng-chih ching-chi-hsüeh chiao-yen-shih (comp.), *Chung-kuo chin-tai kuo-min ching-chi-shih chiang-i* (Lectures on Modern Chinese Economic History) (Peking: Kao-teng chiao-yü ch'u-pan-she, 1958), pp. 173-183.

(54) Philip C. C. Huang (editor), *The Development of Underdevelopment in China: A Symposium* (White Plains, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1980), p. 132. See in particular the long essay by Victor D. Lippit which is the cornerstone piece of this volume.

Does this paradigm provide a satisfactory analytical framework to analyze modern Chinese history? I think not. First, the conceptual core elements of productive forces, class relations, and superstructure are so imprecise as to cause enormous confusion about what these terms are supposed to mean and how they should be related to historical facts. Second, these three elements are very difficult to measure in any meaningful way even if some agreement could be reached as to what these concepts mean and what kind of historical phenomena they are supposed to include.

Third, practitioners of this paradigm inevitably use these vague concepts in a simplistic, mono-causal way. For example, the model initially focuses only upon economic phenomena as necessary and sufficient to produce historical change. Factors such as economic growth, income distribution, economic dislocation, and economic exploitation are supposed to produce social change like riots, rebellions, or revolutions. If economic change is perceived as too weak, then society fails to develop to the next historical stage whether it be feudalism, capitalism, or socialism.

Finally, when this model has been used to explain events, trends, or patterns in Chinese history, it inevitably fails to provide any valid explanation which most historians can agree is correct. The reasons for this dismal failure are the following. First, the practitioners of this paradigm always ignore evidence that might disprove their argument; second, the explanation usually advanced is simplistically mono-causal and ignores the complex causal factors at work; third, the historical problem is often mis-specified and obscured by reference to the imprecise categories embodied in this paradigm; finally, the quantification procedures sometimes used to confirm a causal relationship are so poor or questionable as to invalidate their findings.

### **Quantitative Growth and Qualitative Standstill**

Our final historical paradigm tries to explain why Chinese society has reproduced itself while enlarging but incurring only very minor changes in the

organizations that carried out the tasks of production and distribution. Even when some dramatic change did take place, these were never exploited sufficiently nor diffused throughout the country to alter dramatically the foundations of economic and social life. I will refer to the inter-connecting elements which produced that process as the neo-Malthusian paradigm.

In essence, this paradigm argues that without a scientific revolution and the state taking the lead to promote efforts and build institutions to initiate technological advance, modern economic growth never could take place. In spite of this failure, however, Chinese society demonstrated remarkable organizational abilities to off-set the scarcity of key resources and to find adequate substitute means to replace those resources. By continually off-setting any diminishing returns to productive factor, China somehow managed to expand output sufficiently to match the growth of its huge population. In fact, Chinese economic organizations did that while still providing the same quality of living standards as those of the recent past. At times, naturally, society's living standards did decline, but when peace and order were restored, they rebounded to their former level. More important, however, over the last five hundred years, the over-all living standards slightly improved in quality.

How was this possible? Economic organizations in the private sector displayed that flexibility, enterprise, and rationality necessary to acquire the scarce resources they required and increase output of which a large share was marketed. Markets functioned on a highly competitive basis, so that organizations were able to allocate scarce resources to activities where they received the highest income reward. Economic units responded to market signals to supply more, alter their output mix, or produce less when price trends dictated such actions. By organizing resources in such a manner, the Chinese economy quantitatively enlarged but qualitatively demonstrated very little advance from 1400 to the 1930s. Moreover, China remained predominately rural, its economic activities highly labor intensive, and its people hard working, vigorously accumulating wealth, and demonstrating extraordinary ingenuity

to overcome the problem of acute scarcity.

According to one of the chief exponents of this paradigm, Mark Elvin, between 1500 and 1800 there was a renewal of vigorous economic growth, but "invention was almost entirely absent."<sup>(55)</sup>

The reason for this was that the intellectual and cultural ethos discouraged that curiosity and desire for experiment so necessary for tinkering and gadget making by which technological discoveries of grand importance follow. Part of the reason for this new ethos was that the emperor T'ai-tsu forbade coastal people to go overseas; he tried to prevent any popular use of foreign goods, and he tried to abolish all but official tributary missions to neighboring states. These same policies in later decades continued to perpetuate the empire's isolation, although some private trade took place in the sixteenth century and thereafter. Another reason for the lack of invention was that neo-Confucian thought discouraged experimentation.<sup>(56)</sup> Confucians like Wang Yang-ming and Fang I-chih pondered the essence of things without trying to duplicate physical phenomena under controlled conditions to test laws or theories that might explain that phenomena. Problem solving was just not in the cards. Even after Western Jesuits arrived, Chinese attitudes toward experimentation and formulating laws received little impetus. The demand to verify and validate general principles was especially weak in Chinese philosophical circles.

Even though China did not have its scientific revolution, there occurred a unique concatenation of events which enabled the Chinese to minimize resource scarcities, and by that very success nullify any incentive to invent new implements to give them greater control over their environment. According to Elvin, the first of these was the emergence of a free-floating labor force partly created by flight or revolt against large rural estate managers to flee to other areas to live independently. A second development was the emergence of a managerial-gentry stratum that operated local irrigation systems, organized

---

(55) Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), p. 203.

(56) *Ibid.*, 229-230.

granaries and public works to provide for social welfare, and helped to maintain law and order. The third event was the gradual structural change in agriculture and handicraft made possible by the emergence of periodic markets, greater division of labor, improved transport, and expanding contractual arrangements so that commerce increasingly substituted for direct economic management. <sup>(57)</sup>

Elvin's argument is very subtle. Because markets functioned so effectively, and economic units within product and factor markets organized production and distribution so efficiently, the relative prices of commodities and factors of production never changed to any great degree to reflect that any commodity or productive factor was becoming acutely scarce in supply. If the price did rise for a particular good or resources, economic units responded through the market place to organize resources and produce enough of the commodity in question or substitute means were found to utilize more abundant resources for those becoming scarce to off-set factor scarcity.

For these reasons, Chinese economic organizations still remained small scale, labor intensive, and dependent upon complex inter-household relationships for resource exchange. This economic system did not require large scale enterprises, modern machinery, or advanced credit institutions. The absence of these elements did not mean that China lacked the capability of modernizing itself, if indeed society truly wanted that kind of development. Elvin dismisses the claim that China lacked the financial means to invest and produce more capital by referring to the enormous financial hoards kept by the traders of Anhwei, Shansi, and Kiangsu provinces. He also denies that a narrow home market reduced the profit margin for farmer, handicraft producer, and tradesman by referring to the long distant trade that the Chinese actually carried out across their great country. Elvin rejects the view that political factors obstructed economic growth by pointing out that officials and merchants were always silent partners in business. Finally, he rebuts the contention that family

---

(57) *Ibid.*, p. 281.



enterprises operated for only a short duration by citing examples of successful bankers and merchants who conducted their business affairs from one generation to another.

In other words, the conventional arguments for why China never experienced modern economic growth simply collapse before the explanatory power of this paradigm that shows the Chinese economy simply operating too successfully in its traditional small-scale, labor intensive way while the "best Chinese techniques spread steadily over the country."<sup>(58)</sup> Invariably, this selection of best technology as viewed by economic units was always associated with the lavish use of more labor. By making best use of their abundant resource, labor, the Chinese increased output with the technology they had on hand.

But this strategy, according to Elvin, was not without difficulty in the long-run. Eventually, "the input-output relationships... assumed a pattern that was almost incapable of change through internally-generated forces."<sup>(59)</sup> The major example of this was that farm output per acre was gradually approaching the limits of what was actually possible, and without modern inputs the land would not yield anymore. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, China had reached that stage of acute diminishing returns in which only the infusion of new technology and the re-organization of production could reverse that process.

Ramon H. Myers, however, argues that Elvin's conclusions were premature and neglected the role that greater commercialization could play to off-set diminishing returns.<sup>(60)</sup> He first examines four patterns of village economic development on the north China plain between 1890 and 1949 and finds that the variation of village development ranged from villages that prospered to

---

(58) *Ibid.*, p. 298.

(59) *Ibid.*, p. 302.

(60) Ramon H. Myers, *The Chinese Peasant Economy: Agricultural Development in Hopei and Shantung, 1890-1949* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), Chapter 15 and Chapter 19.

those that stagnated or declined.<sup>(61)</sup> After weighing all of the evidence for population expansion, growth of farm output, and trends of prices, wages, and living standards, Myers concludes the following. Population grew, and the periodic outbreaks of violence and the absence of any central rule in China made it impossible for any improvement in farming technology to take place. In spite of those perverse developments, the supply of family farm capital continued to grow so that output kept pace with population growth at least until 1937 when the Japanese invaded north China. Equally important, the opportunities for off-farm employment also rose, so that rural households were able to supplement their farm income with wage income. In this way, this peasant economy just maintained the low living standards of the late nineteenth century. Only after war commenced in late 1937 did living standards for the farming communities begin to fall drastically.

How was this possible when the state failed to provide law and order and made no efforts to introduce new farming technology into the villages? By extending the analysis from single types of villages to family farming patterns region-wide during this period, Myers then shows that the development of new railroads, growth of cities, and expansion of foreign and domestic trade enabled more households than in the past to take advantage of the growth of the market either by producing higher value crops for sale or earning more wage income. Furthermore, rural households shared the same characteristics of economic rationality, motivation to work hard, and allocated their labor to "field work and nonfarm employment according to the amount of effort and risk involved to earn the largest income."<sup>(62)</sup> Villages were able to respond to the new commercial opportunities because the product and factor markets were highly competitive and provided a flow of new information on those activities that were profitable and available.

Rural organizations, institutions, and markets made it possible for more

---

(61) *Ibid.*, Chapter 8.

(62) *Ibid.*, p. 211.

rural households to share in the new gains being produced through market expansion, greater division of labor, and more commodity and resource exchange. But this rural economy was often subjected to random disturbances produced by poor weather, banditry, or war which farmers did not have any means to control. Because of the absence of a central government which could have minimized these disturbances or at least have cushioned them, this farming economy often paid a very high price in terms of loss of income and employment. Had the state been able to improve farming technology such as introduce high yield, disease resistance seeds, improve irrigation, and provided modern fertilizers, this farming economy could easily have taken advantage of these new capital inputs and greatly increased farm output and income without having to undergo any drastic institutional reforms or reorganizations like those that took place after 1949.

The Myers and Elvin studies show that the Chinese economy and society had remarkable organizational attributes which permitted the slow, long-term growth of population without any major improvement in general living standards. Until China could become politically unified and committed to the goal of importing and producing a new technology for its economic organizations, she would not be able to achieve modern economic growth.

### **Conclusion**

The three paradigms briefly described above have tried to explain certain central tendencies or regularities about society and economy in modern Chinese history. All three have focused on key issues and problems relevant to why China endured long periods of gradual social stability and slow economic development; why population growth could be accommodated to the few cities that ruled the empire, why commercial patterns were characterized by small-scale organization and labor intensive methods; and why the imperial state experienced periodic fiscal shortages and failed to remedy these difficulties without inevitably confronting social rebellion?

The weakest paradigm in this writer's opinion is that which has tried to assign historical causation to technology and class economic relationships. Rather than give the same importance to the role of ideas, cultural values, state leaders and institutions that are given to productive forces and class relations, practitioners of this model have preferred a simplistic, reductionist analysis of history. Further, by insisting that history can and must be viewed in terms of stages which have the same linear path irrespective of a society's space and time, this model distorts comparative historical studies. It should also be pointed that in Communist China where this paradigm has been widely endorsed, there exists a strong intolerance for any alternative approach to the study of modern Chinese history.

The neo-Malthusian paradigm, while interesting and of considerable validity, has perhaps exhausted any further use value it might produce. The time has come to expand our horizons and inquire about more complex relationships such as the state's influence and control over society, the relationship of intellectuals and reformers to political change, and the influence of cultural values upon social and economic behavior.

The paradigm related to state fiscal crises and reforms within the context of new, urban spatial hierarchy offers perhaps the most exciting agenda for future research. First, this approach should encourage more attention to social relationships and social change at all levels of society: villages, market towns, small, medium and large cities. Patterns of social control, social mobility, and social disturbances must be identified and studied for their particular and general characteristics. By undertaking these kinds of investigations within the relationship of settlement patterns and state cycles of crises and reforms, historians should be able to integrate their study of the key event with that of historical regularities and trends to achieve a total history approach.