

# Dragons, Tigers, and Dogs in Late Imperial China

Review >  
China

The study of the late imperial Chinese state and its relationship with the society it governed has been a field of great dynamism in the last couple of decades. Hence developed a more sophisticated understanding of the actual operations of institutions, and of the ways in which individuals pursued careers and social groups sought to maximize their interests in contention with each other and with the powers of the state itself. While some of this scholarship has taken earlier dynasties as its focal point, it has been the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) which has been most thoroughly investigated and which has come to yield perhaps the most subtle analysis.

By Kenneth Hammond

The present volume, a collection of eleven essays on various aspects of late imperial administration and social intervention, brings together many of the authors of major works which have already greatly expanded our knowledge and interpretive comprehension of the period, as well as new work from scholars exploring the vast reservoir of Chinese local history. It is an exceptionally strong anthology, with a clear focus on the practical workings of the Qing state in its management of daily affairs across the empire. The title reflects the book's concerns: from the lofty realm of dragons, representing the emperors, to the quotidian activities of officials in the bureaucracy; either fierce, superior tigers or subordinate dogs.

The book is functionally organized into four parts. The first is the editors' introduction, which provides an overview of the individual chapters and draws out the themes and analyses which run through the volume. Chapters 2-6 are studies of the development of particular institutions during the Qing. Robert Antony deals with sub-county bureaucracy in Guangdong; Philip Yeun-sang Leung studies the 'expectant official' system in the period after the Taiping Rebellion; Richard



Three members of the Grand Council sitting outside a pavillion, most likely in a garden in Beijing.

Lufrano traces the development of the use of merchant petitions by urban commercial groups; Zhang Zhongmin looks at informal government in Shanghai; and R. Keith Schoppa discusses water management in a micro-region of Zhejiang. To cite only one example from among these, Lufrano's paper highlights the contribution this collection makes to a more subtle and nuanced understanding of late imperi-

al relations between state and society. In exploring the use of petitions from merchant groups to influence local government officials, he argues that we need to see these activities as part of a nexus of interest negotiations incorporating local commercial groups, government officials at the *yamen* level (local government office), and the overarching perspective of the imperial state. Rather than a simple clash of gov-

ernment intervention and merchant resistance, Lufrano reveals a certain convergence of interests which allowed the Qing to promote economic development and support local administration at the same time.

Chapters 7-11 are case studies of situations which called for particular responses from state administrators, and how those were handled. Nancy Park presents two corruption cases from the Qianlong era; Jane Kate Leonard revisits her analysis of the Daoguang era grain transport crisis, focusing here on the final phase of this crisis in 1826; Joseph Tsi-hei Lee explores the roles of Christian communities in dealing with collective violence in Guangdong; David Atwill looks at ethnic violence in Yunnan; and Dorothy Borei addresses ethnic conflict and land policy in Xinjiang. The final chapter is a comparative study by Zheng Shiping which traces the lingering influence of Qing administrative practice on local governance in post-1949 China.

Two major themes emerge from these papers. The first is that, while the Qing imperial state was willing and able to adapt to local conditions and to changing circumstances, it did not do so by making radical breaks with established practice or existing institutional systems. Qing officials drew on the wealth of precedent and experience which was available to them from previous administrative experience and from local informants. At the same time, in recognition of the structural limitations of the imperial bureaucracy, there was an increasing tendency to turn to extra-bureaucratic agents in the resolution of problems. In some

instances these were traditional local elites or participants in the examination culture who had not found places in the official hierarchy. In others they were newer manifestations of economic developments such as merchants' associations, which both facilitated the articulation of commercial interests and extended the reach of the state into the expanding economy. In other words, if a single term were needed to characterize the Qing state as revealed in these papers it would be 'flexible'. In conjunction with works such as William Rowe's study of Chen Hongmou as an exemplary administrator, or Bradley Reed's work on county clerks in the Qing, the papers in *Dragons, Tigers, and Dogs* do a great deal to strengthen our understanding of, and appreciation for, the sophistication and modernity of government in the late imperial age. <

- Antony, Robert J. and Jane Kate Leonard (eds), *Dragons, Tigers, and Dogs: Qing Crisis Management and the Boundaries of State Power in Late Imperial China*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press (2002), pp.xiii + 333, ISBN 1-885445-14-8

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# The Burdens of Economic Growth

Prior to World War II already, Japan was the first non-Western country to become successfully industrialized. From the 1970s onwards, Japan again transformed its backward position, which resulted from the War, into one of world leadership in terms of its economy, its wealth, and its position at the forefront of technology and science, but not, or much less so, of its political institutions or culture. During the 1970s and 1980s, there was widespread belief that Japan's economic model was far superior to both the European Rhineland model and the free market ideology and practices of the United States and Great Britain. Only in the 1990s, when Japan's growth faltered, was this assumed superiority called into question.

Review >  
Japan

By Benno Galjart

The British sociologist Runciman has pointed out that, in a social science there are four different meanings of understanding something: to report what happened, more or less as a journalist does; to explain why something happened; to describe how what happened was experienced by the people concerned (that is, how it felt); and, finally, to evaluate whether what happened was a good thing or a bad thing. This book is a mixture. It concentrates on what happened but, in some instances, also explains why a particular event happened and, in others, describes what the participants felt. The book consists of seven chapters, arranged chronologically: Japan up to the end of World War II; the American occupation; the foundations of the economic miracle (1952-1962); the miracle itself (up to 1972); a discussion of the shock-absorber system (up to 1980); the dilemmas of power (1980-1992); and a final chapter on the end of the Japanese model (up to 2000). In each chapter occurrences and changes in the economy, the polity, the society, and the international relations of Japan are dealt with.

Development is a multidimensional phenomenon but, although a positive long-term correlation between dimensions clearly exists, in the short term progress in one dimension may well occur at the same time as stagnation or deterioration in another. Japan is to some extent an example of this contradiction between long term and short term. Bouissou explains that, prior to as well as after World War II,

Japan's phenomenal economic growth was directed by the state. In both pre- and post-war periods, the main goal was independence. Before that war, independence was seen as the tool which would enable Japan to be an imperial power like Great Britain. Since the late 1950s, independence as a national goal has been seen not in military but in economic terms: it means independence from foreign technology and foreign finance. This is not to be achieved through autarchy but, on the contrary, by exporting as much as possible while importing as little as possible. Growth, however, not only implies that production is increased but also, after a while, that value is added and wages increase. In turn this means that labour will eventually become too expensive for certain goods to be produced. Growth may in the end benefit most people in a society, but it also creates hardship because some industries or sectors go out of business, or because the push to produce cheaply causes environmental and health problems. Faltering businesses may temporarily be kept going by handing out subsidies, which becomes prohibitively expensive, or by restricting cheaper imports, which meets with international resistance and, eventually, sanctions. Japan did both, rather successfully, until the late 1980s. Belief in and optimism about the Japanese model, not only on the part of foreigners but, also, of the Japanese themselves, led to speculation in land and shares, a so-called bubble, which burst in 1989. Since then, the economy has stagnated.

There has been, and still is, debate about who rules Japan. Bouissou refers to the 'Iron Triangle', which consists of the

LDP (the party that has ruled Japan with only a minor interruption since the mid-1950s), the bureaucracy, and the large business groups (p. 247). This elite managed to stay in power and, in the process, created the economic miracle. What also helped was the doctrinal rigidity of the main opposition party, the socialists. The victims of growth had no political alternative.

Whereas the subtitle of the book, 'the burden of success', suggests some causal connection between the earlier economic successes and the stagnation of the nineties, other than that the latter followed upon the former, it is only in the introduction of each chapter that an attempt is made to establish a causal relation between economy, polity, and society. It is a rich book in the sense that it contains a staggering amount of facts; but, for that very reason, readers need to build a somewhat more simple causal chain for themselves. The same elite that created the miracle – more scandal-ridden now than ever, Bouissou seems to suggest – now stands in the way of a resumption of growth, because it does not want to sacrifice its power. <

- Bouissou, Jean-Marie, *Japan: The Burden of Success*, London: Hurst and Company (2002), pp. xix + 374, ISBN 1-85065-569-3

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- Runciman, W.G., *A Treatise on Social Theory: Volume 1*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1985).

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