

China and the Seventeenth-Century World Crisis

Imperial rescript to the Board of Revenue and other yamen:

We are reminded that for a number of years now there has been no surcease from military hostilities. Hundreds of millions have been spent on urgently needed supplies. Added to that, there have been floods and droughts, and the little people have found it difficult to eat. The local officials cannot soothe and pacify them, and as a result, they become vagabonds who cut off Our roads. The entire world within Our territorial boundaries is part of Our own personal Mandate. Unable to endure the sight and sound of such misery, We find no solace in sleeping and eating. The time to rescue and protect them cannot be postponed. The Board of Revenue and other yamen have charge of certain tax revenues. Let them all clearly ascertain the actual amount of silver taels in their treasuries, and then quickly come forward and let Us see. Special rescript. Twenty-third day of the second month of Shunzhi eleven (1654).

The fall of the Ming house (1368–1644) and the rise of the Qing regime (1644–1911) was one of the most colorful and abrupt dynastic successions in all of Chinese history. Yet in spite of the Manchus' sudden occupation of Beijing in 1644, only six weeks after the Ming emperor committed suicide just outside the vermilion walls of the Forbidden City, the transition from Ming to Qing was no sudden coup d'état. Whether from our own detached perspective in the present or from the closer vantage points of Ming subjects and Qing conquerors at the time, the change must appear part of a much longer process: the economic decline of seventeenth-

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century commerce, the social disintegration of the Ming order, and the political consolidation of Qing rule.

Late Ming China's connection with a global monetary system is by now quite clear to historians. Because of a constant deficit in the balance of payments in favor of Chinese goods and industries, silver flowed to China's *Weltwirtschaft* from all over the world. "Long before Europeans knew the world in its totality, the globe was already divided up into more or less centralized and more or less coherent zones, that is, into several world economies that coexisted."¹ Within the East Asian economic zone during the early 1600s, China probably imported an average of 33,000 to 48,000 kilograms of silver from Japan per year, and from outside that zone even more specie flowed into "the tomb of European moneys." China during the seventeenth century, through trade with the Spanish Philippines, became the major recipient of American silver, receiving in a good year between two and three million pesos (57,500–86,250 kilograms).²

Some historians have argued that this flow of bullion into China from European dominions in the Americas was only a secondary surplus trade.³ We would maintain, however, that East Asia formed its own world economy, "*eine Welt für sich*," with core and peripheries, though without the overseas settlements and colonies of the corresponding European world economy.⁴ China, at the center of this system, drew as much as 20 percent of all silver mined in Spanish America directly across the Pacific via galleon to Manila and thence to Guangdong, Fujian, and Zhejiang in exchange for silks and porcelains. Other American bullion found its way indirectly through the Central Asian trade at Bokhara. As much as half of the precious metal mined in the New World may have thus ended up in China. When this quantity is combined with the silver exported from Japan, the total amount of specie annually reaching China in the first third of the seventeenth century was at least 250,000 to 265,000 kilograms and probably considerably more.

Although at a considerable remove, the Chinese economy stood ready to be badly affected by the severe depression that struck the worldwide trading system centered on Seville between 1620 and 1660. Before the European trade depression of the 1620s, the numbers of Chinese ships calling at Manila amounted to as many as forty-one per year. By 1629 this number had fallen to six vessels, and, as trade relations with Central Asia attenuated at the same time, the supply of silver reaching China from the New World dwindled. During the 1630s, silver began to flow again in great quantities. The Manila galleon continued to bring supplies from New Spain, the Macaonese carried Japanese silver to Canton, and

yet more specie came from Goa to Macao through the Straits of Malacca.⁵ But then, in the late 1630s and early 1640s, this flow was again and even more drastically interrupted, just at a time when the highly commercialized regional economy of the lower Yangzi had come to depend more and more upon expanding amounts of money to counter inflation.⁶ After 1634 Philip IV took measures to restrict the shipment of exports from Acapulco; in the winter of 1639–40, many of the Chinese merchants in Manila were massacred by the Spanish and natives; in 1640 the Japanese cut off all trade with Macao; and in 1641 Malacca fell to the Dutch, who severed the connection between Goa and Macao. Chinese silver imports plummeted.⁷

One of the secular effects upon the bimetallic copper and silver currency system of China may have been a steadily worsening copper inflation during the late Ming—an inflation that drove up the price of grain in heavily populated areas like the Yangzi River delta, causing great hardship to the urban population there. The immediate impact of the drastic curtailment of silver shipments between 1635 and 1640 was even worse on residents of that area, which depended so much upon sericulture for its livelihood. As the international trade in silk waned, causing yet a further decline in silver imports, silk-growing areas like Huzhou in northern Zhejiang grew economically depressed.⁸

At the same time, after two centuries of dramatic population growth (between 1400 and 1600, China's population may have increased from 65 million to more than 150 million), climate and disease took their toll. Unusually severe weather struck China between 1626 and 1640, around the beginning of the Maunder Minimum (otherwise known as “the little ice age of Louis XIV,” 1647–1715), when the earth's climate fell to the lowest temperatures since A.D. 1000. Extreme droughts were followed by major floods, which were exacerbated by the decline of “controlled hydraulic works” (*zhudi*) during the previous century.⁹ Frequent famines, accompanied by plagues of locusts and smallpox, produced starvation and mass death during the same period. The result was an extraordinary depopulation during the late Ming; one scholar has even suggested that between 1585 and 1645, the population of China may have dropped by as much as 40 percent.¹⁰ There was in any case an unusual demographic dip in China during the years coinciding with the global economic depression: “At approximately the same times China and India probably advanced and regressed in the same rhythm as the West, as though all humanity were in the grip of a primordial cosmic destiny that would make the rest of man's history seem, in comparison, of secondary importance.”¹¹

This common demographic decline has led historians to believe that China participated in the same general seventeenth-century crisis that gripped the Mediterranean world.

From the perspective of many of those actually suffering from the inflationary trends of the late Ming, their economic difficulties were mainly to be attributed to the growing monetization of the economy. Contemporary gentry commonly bemoaned commercialization and exalted the simpler life of a century or two earlier, when people were more self-sufficient and much less caught up in marketing relationships.¹² One early seventeenth-century gazetteer, for instance, contrasted the moral and economic tranquility of the Hongzhi reign (1488–1505), when arable fields were plentiful, houses were abundant, mountains forested, villages peaceful, and bandits absent, with the turmoil and social disruption of the Jiajing period (1522–66), when property frequently changed hands, prices fluctuated, rich and poor grew socially apart, and market conditions grew complicated. By 1600, the gazetteer stated, the situation was even worse: “One out of a hundred is wealthy, but nine out of ten are impoverished. The impoverished are unable to oppose the wealthy so that, contrary to what should be, the few control the many. Silver and copper cash seem to dominate even Heaven and Earth.”¹³

Modern historians have commonly attributed the economic difficulties of the late Ming to a systemic breakdown affecting the entire social order.¹⁴ The early Ming pattern of a self-sustaining administration, with taxes in kind supplied by tax collectors among the people, military costs covered by self-sufficient hereditary garrisons, and labor services provided by corvée or permanently registered hereditary occupational groups, had depended upon the central government’s ability to maintain efficient registration and allocation procedures.¹⁵ The monetization of the economy; the move of the primary capital to Beijing, away from the major grain-producing regions in the lower Yangzi River delta; and the lack of rational procedures at the center of the bureaucracy to perpetuate the ideally self-sustaining population units all led to a breakdown.

The erosion of the older system of state finance under the influence of new economic pressures can be seen in the civil service system. For example, in the early Ming, the civil service and the kinsmen of the emperor were supposed to live off imperial prebends which had been fixed in bushels of rice when the sole capital was in Nanjing. When the primary capital was moved north, the rice stipends were converted into payments of another kind: first paper currency, then bolts of cloth, and finally silver. The rate of exchange was based upon grain prices at that time. Dur-

ing the following two centuries, grain prices rose more or less constantly, yet the stipend expressed in taels (ounces) of silver remained relatively constant. By 1629, the subsidies to civil officers and imperial clansmen in Beijing (of whom there were approximately forty thousand in the capital alone) amounted only to 150,000 taels, or less than 1 percent of the national budget. Private engrossment was the inevitable result. Thus, although the problem of low salaries leading to corruption was a recurring one in Chinese history, it was particularly acute during the late Ming. Officials at all levels acquired additional income through embezzlement and other illegal means. In 1643 the Chongzhen emperor (r. 1628–44) decided to test the reliability of the military rationing system and secretly checked to see how much of a Ministry of War allotment of forty thousand taels dispensed for supplies actually reached the garrisons in the northeast (Liaodong). His investigators reported that none of the funds had reached their destination; they had simply disappeared along the way.¹⁶

This was a given of conventional historiography, of course: the belief that rulers' moral decline lost the reigning dynasty its mandate to rule. But in this case, even though it would be difficult to weigh the relative cost of monarchical misrule against the consequences of the global economic depression analyzed above, there is no question that individual rulers' expensive habits of consumption added indirectly to the burden of the fisc upon the populace.

Especially condemned was the Wanli emperor (r. 1573–1619), who had repeatedly diverted government funds for palace building, confused the privy and public purses, and allowed his purveyors to deduct regularly a 20 percent kickback on all costs regardless of any other "squeeze."¹⁷ But despite his own particular heedlessness and irresponsibility, the Wanli emperor was simply one among many Ming emperors who had to support an enormous personal establishment in the Forbidden City. By the seventeenth century there were three thousand court ladies and close to twenty thousand eunuchs in the imperial palace in Beijing.¹⁸ The eunuchs were partly there to look after the emperor's wives, but that task constituted only a minor portion of their functions. Acting as the emperor's private servants, they administered a large bureaucracy composed of twelve palace directorates, controlled the imperial tax bureaus and government storehouses, managed the government's salt monopoly and copper mines, collected the rents from the imperial estates (which at one time composed one-seventh of the private property in the country and took up most of the land in the eight districts around the capital), supervised the Guards' Army protecting the capital, and formed a secret police force

(the dreaded Eastern Depot or *dong chang*), which had complete powers of arrest, torture, and even execution quite apart from the regular judiciary.

A powerful arm of the throne, the eunuch establishment attracted more castrati than it could readily support.¹⁹ The opportunities in the palace for corruption, petty and otherwise, were endless, and the eunuch directorates ended by being an enormous financial burden for the Ming ruling house. Ironically, eunuchs themselves often acted as the emperor's tax collectors for the supernumerary charges that were tacked on to regular tax quotas as commercial imposts during the late Ming, but they still failed to pay for themselves.²⁰ Despite emergency land-tax increases after 1618, the Ministry of Finance was fortunate to be able to account for 70 percent of the twenty-one million taels it was supposed to receive. The emperor's privy purse, which was partly filled with funds from the public coffers, did not fare much better. The dynasty's fiscal starvation was aptly, if somewhat comically, represented in an anecdote detailing an incident that occurred in 1643. During that autumn, the Chongzhen emperor supposedly expressed his desire to check the inventory of some of the rooms in his treasury. The doorkeeper, when summoned, repeatedly pretended that he could not find the proper keys to open the vault. When the vault finally was opened, the emperor found it empty of all but a small red box with a few faded receipts.²¹

In addition to being such a visible burden on the public fisc, eunuchs also symbolized to the public at large the isolation of most late Ming monarchs from their outer court and bureaucracy.²² Serving as they did as intermediaries between the inner court and the outside world, eunuch palace directors soon assumed the function of transmitting memorials from the ministries to the throne and drafting the monarch's rescripts and edicts in return. Consequently, it became unnecessary for the emperor himself to deal with the regular bureaucracy directly.²³

Whereas earlier Ming emperors like Taizu, the Hongwu emperor (r. 1368–98), and Chengzu, the Yongle emperor (r. 1403–24), had used their private agents to increase their own personal control over the government, the growing strength of the eunuchs caused later Ming rulers actually to lose power and authority over the bureaucracy. Sometimes emperors simply ceased seeing their regular ministers at all, becoming mere puppets in the hands of the personal secretaries and eunuch directors who shielded them from the outside. There was not a single court audience between 1469 and 1497; and during the sixteenth century, Shizong, the Jiajing emperor, and Shenzong, the Wanli emperor, each held only a sin-

gle audience with their ministry heads.²⁴ Consequently, officials who had never even set eyes upon their monarch—a shadowy figure somewhere deep within the palace—lost confidence in the certainty of any imperial action. Knowing that personal whim might prevail in each case, they formed alliances with individual eunuch directors, or gathered informal (and illegal) political factions of their own to promote decisions. Practices of political patronage through the examination system deepened this factionalism, so that by the 1620s the central bureaucracy was riven with deep cleavages that led ultimately to political purges and life-and-death struggles between groups like the Donglin Academy literati and the eunuch director Wei Zhongxian's allies. Even relatively trivial issues became inflamed by this factionalism, and the result was often a deadlock rather than a decision.²⁵

Under these conditions, both economic and political, the social fabric of the empire began to unravel. By the Chongzhen era, the poor and starving were coming to the cities, trying to support themselves by begging or stealing; and entire rural districts in central China were deserted.²⁶ There were more and more signs of growing public indignation on the part of the indigent as well as those members of the gentry shocked by the growing animosity between rich and poor during these years.²⁷ A folk song of the period, addressed to the Lord of Heaven, is tellingly worded:

Old skymaster,
You're getting on, your ears are deaf, your eyes are gone.
Can't see people, can't hear words.
Glory for those who kill and burn;
For those who fast and read the scriptures,
Starvation.
Fall down, old master sky, how can you be so high?
How can you be so high? Come down to earth.²⁸

After the great Henan famine of 1640–41, hundreds of thousands of outraged and suffering peasants began to gather under the banners of rebel leaders like Li Zicheng, who began to entertain imperial ambitions of their own.²⁹

Public services simultaneously began to collapse.³⁰ In 1629 the government postal system was ordered cut by 30 percent to reduce costs, but the result was a breakdown in communications, so that officials themselves had to hire mercenaries to travel on the highways of the empire.³¹ As many posts fell vacant, the “arteries” (*xuemai*) of the empire were blocked, and after 1630 officials in the provinces could no longer be certain that their memorials would reach the capital.³² In the 1630s private

parties often took over the management of such public functions as firefighting, irrigation, charitable welfare, relief granaries, even local law and order.³³ The public/private distinction in the management of these activities had never been cut and dried, but now conscientious magistrates had to pay out of their own pockets to hire private militiamen, and local gentry drilled their own “village troops” (*xiangbing*) for self-defense.

For the enemy at the gates could just as easily be a Ming soldier as a peasant rebel. When thirty thousand soldiers of General Zuo Liangyu entered Hubei in 1636, ostensibly to pursue the rebel Zhang Xianzhong, the inhabitants had to flee into palisades in the hills in order to save the women’s honor and their own lives.³⁴ And later, in 1642 and 1643, when General Zuo mutinied against his own Ming emperor, the residents of Jiangnan in the lower Yangzi delta felt that they had more to fear from him than from the rebels themselves. Whether fighting on the side of the emperor or with the rebels dedicated to his overthrow, armies like Zuo Liangyu’s reflected a general pattern of uncontrolled militarization. Stable social structures thus seemed to be giving way to ambulant military states which finally brought down a ruling house long overwhelmed by social forces it could not control.³⁵

From the perspective of the Qing rulers who eventually won the empire that Chongzhen and his ancestors had lost, the great enterprise (*da ye*) of conquering China had begun long before 1644—perhaps around 1618, with the fall of Fushun in the Northeast. The Manchu conquest ultimately required about two-thirds of a century to be completed, culminating with the victory of the Kangxi emperor (r. 1662–1722) over the Three Feudatories and the Zheng regime on Taiwan in 1681 and 1683. The political consolidation of Qing rule was consequently a long and drawn-out process, beginning with a period of preparation along the marches of the Ming empire, passing through a time of experimentation as adjustments were made to the Ming institutions which the Manchus had inherited in Beijing, and then resulting in a subtle blend of “Chinese” and “barbarian” modes of rule in which Manchus and Han each had to accept the reality of Qing power on terms not initially their own.

Critical to this political process of rise, adjustment, and fulfillment were the Chinese who collaborated in the Manchus’ development into imperial Confucian dynasts. These Han played different roles at different times, and their social backgrounds corresponded to successive stages of the conquest: early transfrontiersmen who took on a Manchu identity among the tribal aristocracy as Nurhaci rose to power, Liaodong militarists who formed a new Han banner elite of their own as the northern provinces

were brought under domination, northern Chinese landed gentry who claimed high political roles for themselves in exchange for helping the Manchu prince regent Dorgon take over the central government in Beijing, and Jiangnan literati who accepted jobs as pacification commissioners in order to facilitate the civil conquest of the south without bloodshed and strife. With the exception perhaps of the first group, many of these Han supporters of the Qing remained ambivalent toward the Manchus.³⁶ The Manchus were not without comparable ambivalences of their own.

Individual Manchu rulers could not do without the collaboration of Chinese officials in order to best members of their own aristocracy; and yet they also knew how quickly they, as monarchs in the Han imperial style, could easily become too sinified to retain the loyalty and affection of their own people. And, as much as they were grateful to the most helpful Chinese collaborators for teaching them how to rule the empire in Confucian ways, so were some Manchu rulers also contemptuous of these turncoats, despising their sense of expediency and condemning their moral compromise.³⁷ As Dorgon (r. 1643–51) put it: “The Chongzhen emperor was all right. It’s just that his military officers were of bogus merit and trumped up their victories; while his civil officials were greedy and broke the law. That’s why he lost the empire.”³⁸ But precisely because this judgment cast the fall of the Ming in terms acceptable to Han scholar-officials, the Confucian political accommodation transcended ethnic differences and suited common class interests. Just as bourgeoisie and aristocracy came to a compromise with the absolutist state in France and elsewhere in Europe to settle internal social instabilities during the last half of the seventeenth century, so did the Chinese landowning elite and the Manchu monarchy agree after the notorious 1661 Jiangnan tax case to restrict both the gentry’s tax-exemption privileges and Manchu military prerogatives in favor of stable civil rule.³⁹

However, this mutual accommodation was accompanied by a certain moral uneasiness.⁴⁰ In return for giving up the flamboyant ethical heroism of Ming loyalists, Chinese adherents of the Qing dynasty gained a substantial opportunity to carry out the kinds of political reforms that actually did stabilize the central government in a way that the more self-righteous literati of the Chongzhen court could never accomplish. In exchange for the right to say that they had lived up to their Confucian vocation by effectively “pulling the people out of the water and fire,” however, those same collaborators also lost a certain kind of intellectual autonomy and moral commitment, so that ethical philosophers became

scholarly academicians, and political leaders turned into bureaucratic administrators.⁴¹ The spiritual uneasiness that collaboration provoked even among the most expedient Han officials who served the early Qing government led to an even greater zeal for moderate reforms. It was as though such men could, by dint of soberly rationalizing the Ming institutions their Manchu masters had inherited, allay their own private moral anxieties about serving alien rulers. A series of piecemeal solutions—revised cadastral surveys and tax collection methods, new and more effective forms of bureaucratic communication, functionally differentiated hydraulic conservancy administrations, and specially designed local control mechanisms to police the provinces around the Chinese capital—made it possible for the Qing state to rebuild the power of the central government with unusual rapidity. Political stability accompanied and even accelerated economic recovery, if only by facilitating the interregional transport of goods, by encouraging the circulation of hoarded silver, and by stabilizing grain prices.⁴² The Chinese polity and the society it governed were thus able to recover from the seventeenth-century crisis sooner than any major power in the world.

By 1661, the population of some Jiangnan market towns and cities had returned to sixteenth-century levels.⁴³ In Suzhou and Hangzhou, where all the looms had been destroyed in 1644–45, textile manufacture had resumed by at least 1659 and in 1686 had returned to original production levels, both by implementing the old Ming *tangzhang* (hall-chief) quotas and by instituting a centralized manufacturing system known as *mai si zhao jiang* (buying silk and summoning artisans).⁴⁴ The same recovery could be seen by 1688 in Jingdezhen's porcelain works. By the late 1680s, people were eating as well in Beijing as they had been before 1620, and north China was rapidly developing a new stratum of wealthy peasants (*funong*).⁴⁵ Between 1683 and 1712 there was a 23 percent increase in the amount of land under cultivation, which came to be 93 percent of what it had been in 1626. Cultivated acreage by 1770 had increased to 950 million *mu* (approximately 58 million hectares), compared with 600 million *mu* (37 million hectares) in 1650. Between 1661 and 1685, there was a 13.3 percent increase in the amount of *fu* tax and a 43.7 percent increase in the revenues from the salt gabelle. By 1685, in fact, the total amount of land tax, salt income, and miscellaneous taxes entering the government treasury was twenty-nine million taels. And within another hundred years, the population of China was to increase roughly threefold.⁴⁶

To be sure, along with the general recovery of economic productivity

during the early Qing, there was also a partial restriction on markets as a result of the reduced amount of silver in circulation. In the late 1660s the quantity of silver in circulation may have declined by as much as two million taels per year, owing both to the closing of the seacoast against the Zheng regime on Taiwan and to the accumulation of bullion reserves in the imperial treasury. During the early years of the Kangxi reign, commodity prices mainly fell for want of currency to buy grain, meat, and cloth, and in Jiangnan the cost of rice dropped from 3 to 0.5 taels per *dan*. Falling prices may also have reflected resumption of production, of course, but presumably both prices and the circulation of commodities increased when more silver became available after the treasury reserves were spent during the war against the Three Feudatories, and after the coastal ban was lifted in 1684–85.⁴⁷

If the evolution of the capitalist nation-state, as it developed in early modern Europe, is regarded as teleologically progressive, then the early Qing political and economic recovery may have been—in terms of crisis theorists—a pseudosolution to the catastrophe of the late Ming. Its form of development offered no fundamental alternative to the old imperium, although the restoration of dynastic order did bring a new sense of permanence to the *ancien régime*—a regime that became the envy of European absolutist rulers who may have misjudged its ultimate wealth and power.⁴⁸ For the Manchu monarchy erected, upon the solid institutional foundation laid by Dorgon, Shunzhi, and Kangxi, an imperial superstructure of awesome proportions, clothed in dazzling cultural array. For nearly another two centuries, while China's borders expanded to incorporate nearly twice as much territory as the Ming had ruled, there were no serious domestic and no genuine external rivals to challenge Manchu rule over China.⁴⁹

But there was a paradoxical price to the *Pax Manchurica* of the High Qing. The great wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the European continent—where the locus of economic superiority had shifted from the Mediterranean to the North Sea—took place between nearly equal combatants, so that those states were forced both to revolutionize their military technology and to rationalize their autocratic administrative systems.⁵⁰ China, lacking competitive contenders, had no overwhelming need to improve its military technology beyond the stage needed to conquer relatively backward inner Asian peoples, restrain Cossack adventurers, and maintain suzerainty over Southeast Asia and Korea.⁵¹

Furthermore, although the establishment of the Grand Council in the

eighteenth century represented a new centralization of power at the highest levels of the imperial government, the fiscal reforms of the Yongzheng period (1723–35)—reforms which might have given the Qing state the fiscal means it needed later in order to tax its population more effectively during its struggle with the West—were not sustained for more than a few years.⁵² Between 1753 and 1908, land taxes rose from about 55 million to 102 million taels of silver, but national county-level tax revenues fell on the average from 0.0942 to 0.0706 taels per *mu* of land over the same period. And even when customs duties were included, the revenues of the central government at the end of the nineteenth century came to less than 6 percent of the country's gross national product—an extraordinarily low figure at the time.⁵³

The maintenance of this relatively inelastic tax system was not just because of the absence of earlier adversaries formidable enough to force rationalizations upon the Qing imperial system. It was also because of the sheer success of the early Qing state in recovering political stability through the use of remarkably advanced but still quite traditional institutions and techniques. Power was strongly centralized without being thoroughly rationalized. Monarchical authority waxed while bureaucratic initiative waned.

In 1835, still somewhat imbued with the *philosophes'* admiring image of China, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote: "Travelers tell us that the Chinese have tranquility without happiness, industry without progress, stability without strength, and material order without public morality. With them society gets along fairly well, never very well. I imagine that when China is open to Europeans they will find it the finest model of administrative centralization in the world."⁵⁴

The Europeans who finally did force open China's gates found the Qing empire less well governed than Tocqueville had thought. Authority was still strongly centralized, but the administrative periphery was already losing touch with the command posts of the bureaucracy. Even worse, the entire system had hardened, relinquishing the resilience it had enjoyed under early Qing rule.⁵⁵ The very success of the Manchus' initial reconstruction of imperial order in the seventeenth century made it difficult to contemplate institutional alternatives when China finally entered a new stage of world history in the nineteenth century: a stage in which remote and often invisible ties linking separate world economies were replaced by more direct and immediate political connections that created a single global system under the aegis of European imperialism.⁵⁶

The seventeenth-century crisis in China occurred within an East Asian

world economy affected by general global phenomena related to climate and disease, and furthermore connected by indirect economic conjuncture to the Atlantic *Weltwirtschaft* then emerging. The precise linkages of this conjuncture have yet to be explored; there is even the possibility that China, emerging as rapidly as it did from the global crisis of 1650, provided an important trigger for European economic recovery through the tea and silk trades of the early 1700s.⁵⁷ During that same period, however, China fell back upon itself. Ostensibly controlling its own ports of trade, especially after 1759, the Qing dynasty chose to develop its world-empire without formally recognizing the triangular tea and opium trade that was drawing it into a world economy dominated by the British empire.⁵⁸ Within its confines, as population growth literally changed the face of the country by deforestation and polderization, China's domestic economy flourished.⁵⁹ Though we are barely beginning to understand the relationship between that endogenous growth and changes in the world economy outside the Chinese empire, it is clear that political institutions designed to maintain Shunzhi's "entire world within Our territorial boundaries" were inadequate defenses against the powerful industrial states that arose in the West after 1800. China's recovery from the seventeenth-century global crisis was remarkably rapid. Its recovery from the shock of the discovery two hundred years later that China was inevitably a part of world history, and on terms not necessarily of its own choosing, has yet to be fully accomplished.

NOTES

Epigraph: Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'an guan [Number One National Archives of China], comp., *Qingdai dang'an shiliao congbian* [Compilation of historical materials from the Qing archives], fascicle 9 (Beijing, 1983), 1–2. See, for its dramatic aspects, Frederic Wakeman Jr., "Romantics, Stoics, and Martyrs in Seventeenth-Century China," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 43, no. 4 (August 1984): 653–56.

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9. Pierre-Étienne Will, “Un cycle hydraulique en Chine: La province du Hubei du XVIe au XIXe siècles,” *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* 68 (1980): 272–73; Co-ching Chu, “Climatic Pulsations during Historic Time in China,” *Geographical Review* 16, no. 2 (April 1926): 277; Wang Shao-wu and Zhao Zong-ci, “Droughts and Floods in China, 1470–1979,” in *Climate and History*, ed. T. M. L. Wrigley et al. (Cambridge, 1981), 279, 282.
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11. Fernand Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400–1800* (New York, 1973), 3.
12. Mi Chu Wiens, “Lord and Peasant: The Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century,” *Modern China* 6, no. 1 (January 1980): 20.
13. This famous and often-quoted passage is from the gazetteer of She county in Xin’an, southern Anhui. See Willard J. Peterson, *Bitter Gourd: Fang I-chih and the Impetus for Intellectual Change* (New Haven, CT, 1979), 70.
14. Henri Maspéro, “Comment tombe une dynastie chinoise: La chute des Ming,” in *Mélanges posthumes sur les religions et l’histoire de la Chine*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1950), 209–27; Ray Huang, 1587, *A Year of No Significance: The Ming Dynasty in Decline* (New Haven, CT, 1981), 64; Ray Huang, “Military Expenditures in 16th C. Ming China,” *Oriens Extremus* 17 (1970): 85.
15. Ray Huang, *Taxation and Government Finance in Sixteenth-Century Ming China* (London, 1974), 44.
16. Li Qing, *Sanyuan biji* [Historical notes covering the years 1637–45], in *Guxue huikan* [Sinological compilations], series 1 (Shanghai, 1913), *fushi*, 12b.
17. Lien-Sheng Yang, *Les aspects économiques des travaux publics dans la Chine impériale* (Paris, 1964), 51–57; Ray Huang, *Fiscal Administration during the Ming Dynasty* (New York, 1969), 112; Li Qing, *Sanyuan biji*, *fuzhong*, 13a; Frederic Wakeman Jr., *Ming and Qing Historical Studies in the People’s Republic of China* (Berkeley, 1980), 106–7.
18. Huang, 1587, *A Year of No Significance*, 13; James Geiss, “Peking under the Ming (1368–1644),” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1979), 29.

19. Robert Crawford, "Eunuch Power in the Ming Dynasty," *T'oung pao* 49, no. 3 (1961), 116; Ulrich H.-R. Mammitzsch, "Wei Chung-Hsien, 1568-1628: A Reappraisal of the Eunuch and the Factional Strife at the Late Ming Court" (PhD diss., University of Hawaii, 1968), 152-33.
20. Yuichi Saeki, "1601 nen 'shikiyo no hen' o meguru sho mondai," in *1601 nen 'shikiyo no hen' o meguru sho mondai*, Toyo Bunka Kenkyu jo kiyo, vol. 45 (1968), 87.
21. Wen Bing, *Liehuang xiaozhi* [Anecdotes of a stem emperor], *Taiwan wenxian congkan* [Taiwan documents series] no. 263 (Taipei: Zhonghua shu ju, 1969), 218.
22. Miyazaki Ichisada, "Mindai So-Sho chihō no shidaifu to minshū" [The local gentry and populace of Su-Song during the Ming], *Shirin* 37 (June 1954): 1-33.
23. Mammitzsch, "Wei Chung-hsien," 48-50.
24. Crawford, "Eunuch Power in the Ming Dynasty," 115; Preston M. Torbert, *The Ch'ing Imperial Household Department: A Study of Its Organization and Principal Functions* (Cambridge, MA, 1977), 10-11.
25. Mammitzsch, "Wei Chung-hsien," 155; Jerry Dennerline, *The Chia-ting Loyalists: Confucian Leadership and Social Change in Seventeenth-Century China* (New Haven, 1981), 24-28; Charles O. Hucker, "The Tung-lin Movement of the Late Ming Period," in *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Chicago, 1957).
26. Albert Chan, "The Decline and Fall of the Ming Dynasty: A Study of the Internal Factors" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1953), 188, 199-200; Albert Chan, *The Glory and Fall of the Ming Dynasty* (Norman OK, 1982), 329-44; Li Xun, "Gongyuan shiliu shiji de Zhongguo haidao" [Chinese pirates in the sixteenth century A.D.], paper presented at the International Symposium on Ming and Qing History (Tianjin, 1980), 1-2; Hong Huanchun, "Lun Mingmo nongmin zhengquan de gemingxing be fengjianxing" [On the revolutionary character and feudal character of peasant political power at the end of the Ming], *Nanjing daxue xuebao* [Nanjing University Journal], no. 4 (1978): 71.
27. Okuzaki Hiroshi, *Chūgoku kyōshin jinushi no kenkyū* [A study of Chinese gentry landlords] (Tokyo, 1978), 34.
28. Quoted in Mi Chu Wiens, "Masters and Bondservants: Peasant Rage in the Seventeenth Century," *Ming Studies* 8 (Spring 1979): 63.
29. Frederic Wakeman Jr., "The Shun Interregnum of 1644," in *From Ming to Ch'ing: Conquest, Region, and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century China*, ed. Jonathan D. Spence and John E. Wills Jr. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 45; James Bunyan Parsons, *The Peasant Rebellions of the Late Ming Dynasty* (Tucson, AZ, 1970).
30. Will, "Un cycle hydraulique en Chine," 275-76.
31. Chan, "Decline and Fall of the Ming Dynasty," 213-16; Ray Huang, "Ni Yüan-lu: The Man, His Time, His Fiscal Policies and His Neo-Confucian Background," paper presented at American Council of Learned Societies Conference on Ming Thought, June 1966, 8.
32. Zheng Tianting and Sun Yüe, compilers, *Mingmo nongmin qiye shiliao*

[Historical materials on peasant uprisings at the end of the Ming] (Shanghai, 1954), 4–7; Zhao Yi, *Nianer shi zhaji* [Detailed records from the Twenty-two Histories], vol. 1 (Taipei, 1963), 731.

33. Yoshinobu Shiba, “Ningpo and Its Hinterland,” in G. William Skinner, *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, CA, 1977), 422.

34. Joseph Liu, “Shi Ke-fa et le contexte politique et social de la Chine au moment de l’invasion mandchoue” (PhD diss., Paris, 1969), 25; Li Qing, *Sanyuan biji, fushi*, 2a.

35. The term *ambulant military states* is C. C. Bayley’s. See Bayley, *War and Society in Renaissance Florence: The De Militia of Leonard Bruni* (Toronto, 1961).

36. Frederic Wakeman Jr., *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China* (Berkeley, 1985), ch. 15.

37. Wakeman, “Romantics, Stoics, and Martyrs,” 637.

38. *Duoergun shezheng riji* [Daily record of the regency of Dorgon], Palace Museum edition, reprinted in *Biji wubian* [Five records of events] (Taipei, 1976), 5.

39. Wallerstein, *Modern World System II*, 120–23; Jerry Dennerline, “Fiscal Reform and Local Control: The Gentry-Bureaucratic Alliance Survives the Conquest,” in *Conflict and Control in Late Imperial China*, ed. Frederic Wakeman Jr. and C. Grant (Berkeley, 1975), 86–120; Hilary J. Beattie, *Land and Lineage in China: A Study of T’ung-ch’eng County, Anhwei in the Ming and Ch’ing Dynasties* (Cambridge, 1979), 81.

40. Paul S. Ropp, *Dissent in Early Modern China: Ju-lin Wai-shih and Ch’ing Social Criticism* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1981), 41.

41. Frederic Wakeman Jr., “The Price of Autonomy: Intellectuals in Ming and Ch’ing Politics,” *Daedalus* (Spring 1972): 55–56.

42. The second point was suggested to me by W. S. Atwell during the 1980 Sino-American Symposium on Social Change, held in Beijing.

43. Liu Shiji, “Ming-Qing shidai Jiangnan shizhen zhi shuliang fenxi” [Numerical analysis of the towns of Jiangnan during the Ming and Qing periods], *Si yu yan*, 16, no. 2 (July 1978): 27–28; Chin Shih, “Peasant Economy and Rural Society in the Lake Tai Area, 1368–1840” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley), chs. 3, 7.

44. Peng Zeyi, “Qingdai qianqi Jiangnan zhizao de yanjiu” [A study of textile manufacturing in the early Qing period], *Lishi yanjiu* 1963, no. 4, 92–95.

45. Kataoka Shibako, “Minmatsu Shinsho no Kahoku ni okeru nōka keiei” [Farm management in north China during the late Ming and early Qing], *Shakai keizai shigaku*, 25, nos. 2–3 (1959): 100.

46. Ping-ti Ho, *Studies on the Population of China, 1368–1953* (Cambridge, MA, 1959), 270.

47. Mio Kishimoto-Nakayama, “The Kangxi Depression and Early Qing Local Markets,” *Modern China* 10, no. 2 (April 1984): 227–56.

48. Although political development is stressed here, the same might be said for economic growth.

49. Ping-ti Ho, “The Significance of the Ch’ing Period in Chinese History,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 26, no. 2 (February 1967): 189–95; Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life*, 58.

50. It was Max Weber, of course, who first argued that China’s unified em-

pire was spared “rational warfare”; it did not experience an “armed peace during which several competing autonomous states constantly prepare for war. Capitalist phenomena thus conditioned through war loans and commissions for war purposes did not appear” (Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, trans. Hans H. Gerth [Glencoe, IL, 1951], 103).

51. Huang, “Military Expenditures in 16th C. Ming China,” 59; Wang Yeh-chien, “The Fiscal Importance of the Land Tax during the Ch’ing Period,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, 30, no. 4 (Aug. 1971): 832–40; Dwight Perkins, “Government as an Obstacle to Industrialization: The Case of Nineteenth Century China,” *Journal of Economic History*, 27, no. 4 (Dec. 1967): 487; Chi-ming Hou and Kuo-chi Li, “Local Government Finance in the Late Ch’ing Period,” in *Modern Chinese Economic History*, ed. Chi-ming Hou and Tzong-shian Yu (Taipei, 1978), 568–83.

52. Madeline H. Zelin, *The Magistrate’s Tael: Rationalizing Fiscal Reform in Eighteenth-Century Ch’ing China* (Berkeley, 1984), 264–308.

53. This figure is based upon Wang Yeh-chien’s estimate, which incorporates *lijin* opium excise duties and gambling taxes as well as the land tax (which came to 35 percent of the whole), that the Qing empire’s revenues on the eve of its downfall came to 292 million taels. Wang Yeh-chien, “Fiscal Importance of the Land Tax,” 837–38.

54. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Garden City, NY, 1969), 91.

55. Frederic Wakeman Jr., *The Fall of Imperial China* (New York, 1975), 103–6.

56. Frederic Wakeman Jr., *Strangers at the Gate: Social Disorder in South China, 1839–1861* (Berkeley, 1966), preface.

57. Louis Dermigny, *La Chine et l’occident: Le commerce à Canton au XVIIIe siècle, 1719–1833* (Paris, 1964), vol. 1, ch. 1.

58. Frederic Wakeman Jr., “The Canton Trade and the Opium War,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, 1979), 10: 163–212; Dilip K. Basu, “The Peripheralization of China: Notes on the Opium Connection,” in *The World-System of Capitalism: Past and Present*, ed. Walter L. Goldfrank (Beverly Hills, CA, 1979), 171–87.

59. Will, “Un cycle hydraulique en Chine,” 279.