

# Globalization and the Transformation of the Chinese State: Comparing Modern Nation State and the Ancient Chinese State

NIU Geping

## Abstract

Notwithstanding its rapid economic development in last thirty years, China's undemocratic political system has increasingly become the focus of criticism from the West as well as from within China. One popular claim is that China has not succeeded its political modernization, the end of which should be Western style liberal democracy. It seems that this way of understanding the situation of present day China is but a new version of the old ideological prejudice which views modern nation state as the end of world history. This paper tries to provide a distinctive perspective to examine the transformation of the Chinese state during its modern history by comparing the system of modern nation states (the claimed goal of the transformation) and ancient Chinese state (the object to be transformed). The conclusion is that ancient China had acquired many characteristics similar to those of a modern nation state, but it had an essentially different style of political violence from that of the modern nation state system. The implication of this comparison for our understanding of the political problem of modern China is that, though modern China has been totally involved in modern world system, it has never really escaped the unconscious or inertial power of its own history.

**Keywords :** modern nation state, ancient China, modernization, globalization, democracy

## Introduction

I must acknowledge that, at first sight, the subtitle of this paper may seem bizarre. Wouldn't it be more "natural" to compare modern China to the modern Western nation state, or to compare ancient China to the antiquity or Middle Ages in the West? It seems that to compare Western style modern nation state to ancient China entails a logical mistake or implies an anachronism. Actually, the objective of this comparison, as the title of the paper indicates, is to provide a distinctive perspective to examine the transformation of the Chinese state in its modern history, which has a specific manifestation in this globalization era. <sup>1)</sup>

Modern nation states can be regarded as the dominating political system in the last 150 years

at least. It first appeared in Western Europe and then rapidly expanded throughout the world. Within a modern nation state, there is 'a state monopoly of legitimate violence', which results from political centralization and which has led to nation building. Outside of a modern nation state, there are other nation states, as well as 'no-nations', political entities which are not nation states. Modern nation states from the beginning constituted among themselves an international community and 'no-nations' were forcefully incorporated, generally as colonies, in the world system dominated by modern nation states. In response to this aggression, 'no-nations' tried to build themselves into independent nation states.<sup>2)</sup>

As a 'no-nation', China was forced around the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to join the world system dominated by strong modern nation states. With the failure of a series of wars with the Great Powers, which started with the Opium War at the end of 1840s, China increasingly became a 'half colony' (半植民地) shared by many colonial powers. With the collapse of the last dynasty Qing, (清) China fell into a prolonged period of civil war which later merged into a war of resistance against the full scale invasion of imperialist Japan. After 100 years or so of civil turbulence and colonial experience, China finally became an independent modern state in 1949, and was soon recognized as a member of the international community.

In the last decades of the Qing dynasty, reform minded ministers were thinking of pursuing Western style industrialization, but without changing the political system of ancient China. The main representative of this conservative reform theory is Zhang Zhidong (张之洞), who insisted on the basic policy of 'Chinese learning for fundamental principles and Western learning for practical application' (中学为体, 西学为用). However, with the downfall of the last dynasty, the mainstream of Chinese political thinkers turned to the modern ideology of revolution and nation state building. Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Nationalist party and of the Republic of China, advocated the three principles of the people: nationalism, democracy, and the people's livelihood (三民主義: 民族主義, 民權主義, 民生主義). Sun's clearly claimed goal was to change China into a modern nation state, as strong and powerful as the great powers.<sup>3)</sup> As far as this revolutionary goal of modern state building is concerned, it is the Communist party that essentially inherited and finally realized Sun Yat-sen's ideal, though under a more 'universal' ideology, that of socialism.

Thus, modern China was not only historically, but also ideologically incorporated into the system of modern nation states. Historically, it experienced a transformation from a half colonial nation to an internationally recognized independent state. Ideologically, it consciously set itself the goal of building a strong modern nation state, just like that of other Great Powers. In that sense, for China, as for many other 'backward' nations, the modern nation state became the 'end of history', the goal of the political establishment, and an ideal. In order to justify this 'end of history,' its own history was re-written according to the "prototype" of nation state history, the ideological understanding of Western Europe's history. One typical example of this tendency was to regard the political system of the 2000 years history of ancient China, from the first Qin (秦) dynasty to the last Qing (清) dynasty, as feudalism. Accordingly, the political situation of China between 1940 and

1949 was regarded as 'half feudal and half colonial'. In consequence the problem of China's modernization was construed as how to transform China from a feudal society first into a capitalist and then into a socialist society. And it was claimed, at least in the pre-reform Mao's era, that China had largely succeeded this political transformation though its industrialization level was still lagging behind.

With the development of this new period of globalization, and with the fading of Marxist ideology in the reform period of the last three decades, more and more people have abandoned the obviously ridiculous claim that the political system of ancient imperial China was feudalism. However, the domination of (another form of) Western ideology is still prevalent in China. After thirty years of reform, on the one hand, China seems have gained great success in its economic development, but on the other hand, many other problems appeared. The non-democratic political system has become the focus of criticism from the West and from within China, and the root of the problem is regarded as the dictatorship of the Communist party. One popular claim is that China has not succeeded its political modernization, the end of which should be Western style liberal democracy. It seems that this way of understanding the situation of present day China is but a new version of the old prejudice which views the modern nation state as the end of world history. This dominating liberal democracy ideology again sets the goal of social transformations and at the same time implicitly determines the way to realize that goal.

However, the actual 'success' or 'failure' of China's modernization can by no way be explained with this ideological and deterministic understanding of history. Even if we may still wish to use the terms 'success' or 'failure' to judge China's political modernization, the more important thing, I think, is to examine why it failed or succeeded. The efforts made to attain the conscious goals fixed by nationalist or Marxist ideology definitely played a role in the process of China's modernization, but at the same time, the unconscious or inertial power of its own history also played a no less essential role. It seems to me excessive to regard the history of modern China either as a typical process of revolution and modern nation state building, a "replication" of the history of Western states, or as a simple continuation of the old dynastic cycle of ancient China. Rather, we should regard it as a mixture or tangle of both. And to understand the problem of democracy in present day China, as well as to explore the way of solving this problem, we need to re-examine its 'goal' as well as its history.

This paper constitutes a part of an effort to do just that. It is in this context that the comparison of modern nation state — the goal of China's political modernization, and ancient China — the object to be transformed, will make sense. In a previous paper I developed a model of the modern nation state which will serve as a point of comparison to draw out some essential characteristics of ancient Chinese state in the following parts of this paper. I will argue not only that ancient China was not a pre-nation-state feudal society, but also that it had gained some essential characteristics of a modern nation state though with some important differences also. This will provide us a different perspective from which to look at the modern transformation of the Chinese state. In the

conclusion, I will discuss the implications of this comparison for our understanding of the political problem of modern China.

Methodologically, I want to emphasize that, as my former study of the modern nation state, this examination of ancient China is not a historical study as such, but tries to build a theoretical model of ancient China. As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this comparison is to help our understanding of the problem of China's political modernization in a more abstract sense, rather than a new contribution to our understanding of its history.

## Characteristics of ancient Chinese state

### 1. Unity and disorder

The central characteristic of the modern nation state as classically defined by Max Weber is the state's monopoly of legitimate violence.<sup>4)</sup> If we examine ancient China with this definition of modern nation state in mind, we might have the impression that China already showed some essential similarity to a modern nation state about 2000 years ago when the first dynasty Qin (秦) unified the whole country and ended the Warring States period. Under the rule of the First Emperor (始皇帝), feudalism (封建制) was abolished; prefectures (郡) and counties (県) were established throughout the country; they were ruled by officials appointed by the central government. With statute laws and a hierarchical bureaucratic system, state power was essentially centralized in the hands of the emperor. From the second dynasty Han (漢) until the last one Qing (清), notwithstanding many variations and developments, ancient China essentially inherited the political system of Qin.

Actually, the process of political centralization was going on long before this final unification took place. With the decadence of the feudal system of Zhou (周), more and more feudal lords transformed their domains into sovereign states and began fighting each other for larger power. Inside those warring states, feudalism was increasingly abolished and a centralized administration was established by drawing officials from the newly born intellectual class shi (士), and the common people (民) were increasingly incorporated into the state system by paying taxes and providing military services. Among those warring states, the Qin state is the one which, with the ideology of Legalism, carried out these measures most thoroughly and efficiently, and thus became the strongest that finally defeated all other six states and unified the whole of China.<sup>5)</sup>

To some extent then, the Warring State period of China resembles the period in Western European history when absolute monarchies began to be established. However, the end points of these two historical periods are different. In China, the competition and fighting among warring states lead to the unification of power under one monarch, the emperor, while modern Europe saw the transformation of competing monarchies into competing democratic nation states. Moreover, it seems that in modern Europe the state's monopoly of legitimate violence continued uninterrupted notwithstanding the transformation of the form of the state. In ancient China, a cycle of order and

disorder appeared. Even though the ruling dynasties from Qin onwards all acquired the monopoly of legitimate violence when first established, they could not maintain this monopoly continuously. Periodically, the political rule of an ancient Chinese dynasty started declining, its government increasingly lost its capacity to enforce state laws and keep social order; the nation would finally fall into civil wars, until a new dynasty with a strong government would replace the old one. Thus, if on the one hand, the political system of ancient China throughout 2000 years remained largely unchanged, on the other hand, a cyclic mechanism of dynastic change constituted the flip side of the stability of the political system.

## 2. Small household economy

The modern nation state came into being with the progress of industrialization and of capitalist market economy. The modern state sees market economy as the foundation of its strength and power and works to guarantee its proper function. In contrast, in ancient China, the state regarded agriculture as its foundation (以農為本), and considered handicraft production and trade as less important and even sometimes as harmful to agricultural production. Thus, notwithstanding its great size and its complexity, commerce in ancient was socially discriminated and legally restricted. In the four major classes of occupations of people, intellectuals, peasants, handicraftsmen, and merchants (士, 農, 工, 商), commerce was socially regarded as the lowest type of activity (末業).

In ancient China, the majority of people lived in rural area, leading a largely self-sufficient life in the context of small household economy. As Ogata pointed out, Chinese people mostly lived in small family, with an average of five members. Family properties were usually divided among grown up children, which is clearly different from the primogeniture system we find in most feudal societies.<sup>6)</sup> It was this large number of independent rural households that provided taxes and services to the government. At the same time, the small size of family units made people essentially powerless and totally dependent on the state.

In ancient China, when a new dynasty took power, the state usually tried to redistribute land equally to guarantee that most people would have a piece of land to live on and pay taxes based on its products. However, as time went by this equal distribution of land would disappear; land would be more and more concentrated into the hands of landlords. This is because, for the small household peasants, heavy taxation or bad weather might push them into bankruptcy and they had to sell their land in time of need, while both government officials and successful merchants who had the intention to invest their salaries, money from bribery, or profit, could buy land. The big official landlords usually had the privilege of some taxes exemption. They employed landless peasants to cultivate their land as tenants, which would provide them not only with a safe income but also with some form of social power. Thus, in the declining period of a dynasty, economic inequality grew dramatically and the government was increasingly losing its ability to rescue the poor. Consequently, natural disasters would often result in large numbers of refugees, which constituted another factor of social and political instability at the end of a dynasty.<sup>7)</sup>

### 3. The system of rituals and the rule of laws

One of the primary principles of the modern nation state is the rule of laws. Modern states have replaced religion as a means of setting up rules for the whole society by resorting to the principle of rationality. Every aspect of social relationships is defined by laws. Law itself has gained a 'moral' character in modern society. But in ancient China, ideologically, the system of rites (礼制) was regarded as more fundamental than 'the rule of punitive laws.' If a state only relied on punitive laws to rule, such as the first dynasty Qin, it would be regarded as a cruel, and not a benevolent, government. In ancient China, punitive laws were regarded as supplementary to rituals. It was in rituals and not laws that morality laid. The ancient Chinese state usually recognized and tried to promote traditional customs and rituals in society, it also ruled itself according to rituals.

This difference in political rule is closely related to the difference in economic foundations discussed above. In the modern era, the centralization of state power created a unified national market and at the same time transformed people from members of traditional social groups into individuals, or free laborers. In modern market economy, exchanges do not create bonds. Their overarching rule is that of perfect reciprocity. In such an exchange, one side buys and the other sells; when the exchange is over, they no longer have any necessary relationship. Modern state uses laws not only to define crimes and guarantee social peace, but also to define and guarantee the basic rules of free market economy such as free competition, free contract, etc.,<sup>8)</sup> and when market does not work well, the state also serves to regulate the economy with macro-economic policies.

But the centralization of state power in ancient China rested on small free peasants, who in good times did not have to sell their labor, but rather lived within a largely self-sufficient household economy. Generally speaking, commercial exchanges occupied only a minor place in most people's life. Rural Chinese society was mainly organized by traditional customs and rituals. Unlike the principle of universal reciprocity of market economy, the form of social relationships in Chinese rural society was dominated by nominal reciprocity. The state did not usually interfere with this social autonomy. Laws were designed in such a way that people tried to avoid litigation.<sup>9)</sup>

However, notwithstanding the ideological derogatory attitude towards punitive laws, we must point out the de facto importance of the rule of laws in ancient Chinese political system. Ideologically, punitive laws were secondary relative to rites, but in reality, it was essentially through the rule of laws that the state maintained (to the extent that it could) its monopoly of legitimate violence. Moreover, when the state power was strong, social rules according to patriarchal lineages and rituals constituted a complementary system to the rule of state laws; but when a dynasty declined and the state could no longer keep social order with its laws, and when the land became more and more concentrated into the hands of a few, the autonomy of local society became a decentralizing factor and a potential threat to the declining state power.

#### **4. Homogeneous but not generic culture**

Benedict Anderson points out that, in modern industrial society, the division of labor is complex and constantly changing, which requires explicit, precise, and context-free communication among members of society. One important role of modern state is to maintain a homogeneous national cultural through a universal educational system. The universal 'high culture' of modern society has become largely secularized, and the spirit of this modern culture is rationality.<sup>10)</sup>

In ancient China, given that the country was politically united and economically integrated, it also developed a largely homogeneous culture. Most of its population was living a similar way of life. However, though largely homogeneous, traditional Chinese culture was not generic, there was a clear distinction between the vernacular and high culture. Most of the peasant population was illiterate. Only a few, most of them children of rich families, were educated and became the candidate for positions as government officials.

Moreover, unlike modern education which claims to be free from traditional moral doctrines, ancient Chinese culture was 'ethic-centric'. The most important parts of school education were the Confucian cannons; and vernacular cultures, notwithstanding regional differences, were also largely Confucian based on rituals that emphasized morality in social relationships. In modern democratic states, the people are viewed as the foundation of the state's power, governments should periodically be elected by their citizens, and public services have completely lost any religious justification and are now one vocation among others. To the opposite, in ancient China, following the state ideology of Confucianism, the sovereign power of the emperor came from the 'mandate of the Heaven' (天命), a mandate whose proof consisted in the well-being of the people. This form of political thinking justified both the absolute power of the emperor and the revolutions which lead to dynastic change.

#### **5. The ambiguity of territory and the absence of an international community**

Territoriality is a fundamental characteristic of modern nation states. It means not only that a modern state has clear boundaries separating the country from other countries, but also that the state sovereignty exerts itself equally everywhere within the territory, something which presumes or implies a certain "homogenization" of the population. In ancient China, the concept of territory was there already, but it was not as crucially related to state power as in a modern state. Physically, the boundaries between ancient China and its neighbors were unclear and constantly changing. Politically, boundary areas were much less well-governed than the central area of the empire. Moreover, notwithstanding the high degree of homogenization of its population and culture, there were always many largely autonomous minority groups within the country. The sovereign power of the central government over these minority groups was clearly more limited than over the majority Chinese.

This difference regarding territories relates to the fact that we are dealing with different international systems. In the system of modern nation states, there exist many states. The

boundaries of a nation state are constructed through a double process of internal homogenization and of interaction with other nations where a similar double process is taking place. The presence of other nation states, similar political entities, is thus a necessary condition for the construction of a modern nation state. Thus, modern states constitute an international community. Moreover, outside this international club of nation states there are, as mentioned earlier, 'no-nations', countries which are not or have not yet transformed themselves into modern nation states. The history of modern nation states is also the history of colonial expansion. While within the international community, nation states simultaneously competed as equals, recognizing each other's sovereign power over their own territories, they did not acknowledge any equality between themselves and colonies or 'no-nations'.

But in ancient China, the Chinese state was singular, unique, and for most of its history incomparable to other political entities close by. There were essentially no other competing neighboring states of the same kind. Therefore the ancient Chinese emperor regarded himself as the sole legitimate power. He believed that he had received "the mandate of the Heaven", and consequently was superior to all surrounding political units. Countries such as Korea or Vietnam, which in time adopted a political system similar to that of ancient China, had for a long time been tributary states of China. The nomad peoples in the north and west were constantly in a potential state of conflict with China, though in time of peace they often formally recognized the superior power of China.<sup>11)</sup>

As mentioned in the first section, something similar to what took place in early modern Europe happened during the Warring States period of Chinese history when many centralized states evolved through a process of fighting and competing with each other. However, unlike what happened in Europe, those warring states only competed among themselves, they did not find nor did they look for open lands or external colonies where they could carry out their dispute. Maybe, this constitutes an important reason why the Warring State period of China ended up with the rise of a single unified state, rather than a set of independent nation states that continued competing with each other. And consequently, this unified state power of ancient China regarded itself as a complete world, ideologically ignoring the importance of neighboring countries, though in reality it had to 'cope with' them in one way or another.

## **6. Culturalism not nationalism: the monopoly of violence re-examined**

In modern nation state, the state's monopoly of legitimate violence means, on the one hand, peace within the states territory, and on the other hand, constant potential violence and conflict with other nations. In such a system violence toward the outside actually constitutes a precondition of internal peace. The period of modern nation state is the period of nationalism. The modern nation state is closed, it is not easy for a foreigner to become a national, and it is almost impossible for a foreigner to rule a nation of which he is not a national. At the same time, the system of nation states is an extremely expansive form of political entity, the whole world was first involved in it

through its effort at colonial expansion, and today, with the end of the colonial period, almost all countries have become nation states, at least formally.

In ancient China, the monopoly of legitimate violence was literally much more of an exclusively internal issue. The state was not constantly prepared to fight outside enemies. External violence did not in the case of ancient China constitute a crucial precondition of internal peace. And, as mentioned earlier, the monopoly of legitimate violence and internal peace periodically failed. Furthermore, China's boundaries were relatively open, what prevailed was more a kind of culturalism than nationalism. Outsiders were always welcomed in time of peace, and many nomad subjects migrated into the Chinese interior. As a result, many so called 'barbarians' (夷狄) sooner or later adopted the Chinese way of life and culture and became Chinese, and the territory of ancient China throughout 2000 years expanded a lot. At the same time, the existence of culturally non-Chinese people both inside and outside its territory brought potential conflicts that usually flared up in the declining periods of dynastic cycles. Throughout Chinese history, the invasion of nomad peoples from the north and west was a constant problem and they even established several dynasties.<sup>12)</sup>

### **Conclusion: the curse of violence**

In conclusion, ancient China was obviously not a nation state, but neither was it a feudal society which could 'naturally' be transformed into a modern nation state following the route of modern Western European states. Actually, the political system of the warring states that existed before the first unification of China resembled modern European nation states much more than did the unified Chinese dynasties which came afterwards. In Chinese language, the former were called states (国), understood in its plural form, while the latter were referred both as state (国), understood in its singular form, and as 'all under the Heaven' (天下), and the unification by the First Emperor was called 'the unification of all under the Heaven' (统一天下). Ancient china viewed itself as the whole world, regarding those outside it as 'barbarians' and hence ideologically ignoring the real world outside of it. Thus, ancient China saw itself as a 'world system'. In Chinese history, the Warring State period was regarded as a transition period, the transition from a feudal system to a system of centralized state power, both the former and the later were regarded as a 'world system'. If the warring states looked somewhat like nation states, then those Chinese dynasties in the following two thousand years seem to some extent more like a post-nation state political structure.

If we agree that ancient China was to some extent a world system by itself, then this system is essentially different from the world system dominated by modern nation states. They have different type of political violence. In a modern nation state, internal peace was established as a result of the nation building process, especially the homogenization of the population and centralization of state power, which was by no means a peaceful process. And a modern nation state

was from its beginning not an isolated polity. The state's monopoly of legitimate violence or the continuing peace within a nation state had as its condition of possibility the constant possibility of violence towards others, other nation states and no-nations. Following Marx Weber's definition of modern state as 'the monopoly of legitimate violence', Carl Schmitt defined the political as the 'friend-enemy' distinction. In the system of modern nation states, violence never disappear, it was only separated from peace spatially.

While in ancient China, the political unification put an end to the violence of the Warring State period. As the term warring states indicated, there were constant wars at that time; political violence took the form of wars among competing states, which to some extent resembled the situation of wars among nation states in modern times. However, those warring states in ancient China, unlike early modern nation states, did not try to go outside to find and establish colonies, which could provide them with new strength and temporally defer the conflicts that divided them, as happened in the modern era, at least according to Carl Schmitt.<sup>13)</sup> Notwithstanding 'continuing internal peace' within each state, the burden of this kind of political violence, that is, interstate wars, was too heavy for them. Even though no state was willing to be destroyed by others, unification was regarded as a historical trend, and even an ideal in ancient China. And the unification was realized by the most powerful warring state Qin, which made its success by rigidly applying the legalist (法家) policy of political centralization and totalitarian mobilization and control of the people for hundreds of years. The First Emperor, rather than building a feudal empire as had happened throughout the history before him, after unification expanded political centralization to the whole country and thus started a new period of Chinese history. The following dynasties essentially inherited the political system of the First Emperor, though they tried to hide and alleviate the totalitarian aspect of the legalist policies through advocating Confucian ideology and the 'system of the rituals'. However, ancient China could not escape the curse of violence in this new historical constitution. The dynastic cycle appeared. Violence and peace in ancient China were separated temporally, not spatially as in the system of modern nation state. In a modern nation state, the state monopoly of violence is legitimate, and its violence, war with other states or invasion of no-nations, was justified at least from its own point of view. In ancient China, when a strong dynasty was established, the state's monopoly of violence was certainly legitimate, but when the government became corrupted and could no longer keep social order, violence aiming at replacing that dynasty was also largely justified.

From the mid of 19<sup>th</sup> century, China was forced to join the world system dominated by modern nation states, and soon began to adopt the logic of this modern world system, that is to recognize its 'backwardness' and try to escape the fate of being colonized by transforming itself into a modern nation state. However, this new situation and new ideology concealed another side of the reality, that is, this typical modern history of colonization, revolution, independence and nation building was coinciding with the old history of dynastic cycling: the decadence of an old dynasty, the invasion of foreign people, civil wars, and finally the establishment of a new dynasty. Though, as we

discussed above, from a long term historical point of view, the political system of ancient China was essentially different from the system of modern nation state, those factors such as political centralization and totalitarian mobilization and control of the population which are essential to modern nation state building were by no means lacking in the political constitution of ancient China. And the concept of revolution had already been profoundly discussed in Confucian classics and was deeply rooted in Chinese society. In a sense, the modern 'success' of the Chinese revolution and nation building was not an accident, and at least not a completely new achievement; it was actually facilitated by China's own political tradition.

On the other hand, the modern history of China was by no means a pure repetition of the old dynastic cycle. As we mentioned in the introduction, Chinese people had completely adopted the modern Western style ideology of revolution and nation state building. Nationalism played a fundamental role in modern Chinese history. It decided to a large extent the result of the wars, both the wars against Japanese invasion and the civil war among the warlords, the Nationalist, and the Communist. It also directed the policies in the Communist regime. Land reform, universal education, state led industrialization, etc., all aimed at a higher level of homogenization and modern state building. Moreover, in the world system of modern nation state, China, especially in the pre-reform regime, had totally given up its old concept of 'all under the Heaven' and begun to regard itself as one state among many others, many of them much powerful than itself; constant concerns regarding foreign 'enemies' actually constituted one important motivation for its domestic mobilizations.

However, while modern China could no longer escape the problems of the modern world system, neither could it escape the curse of its own history. There is a story about a conversation between a famous scholar and Mao Zedong at the moment of the establishment of the People's Republic of China. The scholar asked Mao how the Communist China could avoid the old dynastic cycles, that is, the corruption of the government and the decline of the state power. Mao answered that we could surely avoid it by democracy. However, with the process of globalization, it seems that, notwithstanding its' having become modern in many aspects, China has not really realized its goal of becoming a 'typical' modern nation state. Economically, China has become the world factory in a very different sense from the way that term was once used for Great Britain. And its non-democratic system has become the focus of Western criticism. At the same time, it seems that China's political problems are not so much due to its recent past as a 'Communist totalitarian regime,' as is claimed by the West, as it is due to the difficulties it inherited from its long term history. The Communist regime could not prevent its own officials from the rampancy of corruption, the gap between rich and poor has very much widened not so much due to the market mechanism as such, as to indifference to issues of social injustice; separatist movements are rapidly increasing among some large minority groups, and the natural environments is facing severe problems. These are all the modern manifestation of an ancient problem.

After the colonial wars, WWI, WWII, and the Cold War, when all states in the world could

finally became formally equal members in the international community, it seems that the system of modern nation states itself has come to its end. In this new world system that is appearing, China is by no means favorably situated. It seems that this time China can no longer ignore its old problems when facing the new challenges.

## Notes

- 1) This paper forms a part of a larger research project *Comparing Liberalism and Confucianism, a Perspective to Understand China's Political Modernization*. The justification of that larger research project has been discussed briefly in a paper *Liberalism and Confucianism: Rights and Virtues (Core Ethics, p. 235. vol. 7, 2011)*. This comparison of modern nation state and ancient China will to some extent function as the 'historical background' for the comparison of liberalism and Confucianism. However, the comparison itself may also be read as an independent study, a distinctive perspective on and understanding of China's political modernization.
- 2) I discussed the system of modern nation state in *A Model of the Modern Nation State: a Methodological Approach* (pp. 323-337. *Core Ethics*, vol. 6. 2010).
- 3) For a detailed discussion of Sun Yat-sen's positive attitude toward nationalism and modern nation state, see my paper *Reflection of the Concept of Nation in Early Globalization: Tagore and Sun Yat-sen*, in *Ritsumeikan Studies in Language and Culture*, September 2010, Vol.22 no.1, pp.81-94.
- 4) In his text *Politics as a Vocation*, Max Weber uses both the term 'legitimate use of physical force' and that of 'legitimate violence.' Recently, there is interesting discussions about the distinction of political violence and legitimate violence. See Paul Dumouchel's *Le Sacrifice Inutile, Essai Sur la violence politique*. Given the purpose of my study, I will not discuss further the meaning of political violence in this paper, but simply take 'the monopoly of legitimate violence' as a well understood definition of modern state.
- 5) For a detailed and enlightening description of this process, see Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, 1990, State University of New York Press.
- 6) Ogata, Isamu 尾形 勇, 『中国古代の「家」と国家— 皇帝支配下の秩序構造 一』, 岩波書店, 1979年10月.
- 7) Many authors explain the dynastic cycle of ancient China as the result of such an economic mechanism. See Mark Edward Lewis, *The Early Chinese Empires Qin and Han*, first Harvard University Press paperback edition, 2010. Also see John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China a New History*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006.  
Concerning rich merchants buying lands, we have to acknowledge that this was just a general trend. As QIN Hui and JIN Yan(2010) points out, in some specific situations, merchants might have no intention to invest in lands.
- 8) For an enlightening discussion of the transformation from traditional reciprocity from perfect reciprocity in modern society, see Paul Dumouchel, *Le Sacrifice Inutile, Essai Sur la violence politique*, Flammarion, 2011.
- 9) For a detailed discussion of the social mechanism in rural China, see Fei Xiaotong, *From the Soil, the Foundation of Chinese Society*.
- 10) Anderson (2006). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin And Spread of Nationalism*. Verso Books; Revised.
- 11) As for the way ancient Chinese dynasties dealing with its neighboring states, see Hori, Hitokazu 堀敏一, 『東アジア世界の歴史』, 講談社学術文庫, 2008.

12) Ibid.

13) Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*. G.L. Ulmen, trans. Telos Press, 2003. Original publication: 1950.

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