

从 1760 至 1860 年的“对华贸易”到 1979 至 2011 年的“中国崛起”

理查·刘

引言

今年 3 月 2-3 日，笔者旁听了澳门利氏学社主办的题为“对华贸易、商人及艺术家（1760-1860）：历史文化新视角”的工作坊。就我这个对该段贸易史一窍不通且对商品买卖也不甚了了的退休银行及金融业者来说，那是一个绝好的学习机会。

听着热烈的讨论，一种似曾相识的感觉油然而生。同时我意识到，18 及 19 世纪的“对华贸易”，实际上为 20 世纪末及 21 世纪初的中国领导人提供了有益的教训。他们在采取实现中国“现代化”的措施的过程中，妥善地利用了这些教训。

本文之目的，在于从因果关系的角度，对这些“教训”中的若干进行反思，不管它们是来自商品贸易、结算方式、市场绩效、逐渐产生的贸易失衡、该历史阶段因贸易失衡而引发的事件，还是出自 119 年后一些对我们这个时代才始发的现象——“中国崛起”——的阐释。

在中国人看来，“中国崛起”是一个和平过程，与外界无涉。自共产党在北京建立政权以来，中国对外界置之不理长达 31 年之久。另一点必须牢记的是，中美关系的正常化，是美国人先行一步的结果。

然而并非人人都分享中国人的这一观点。为什么？这一现象能否这样来解释，即我们都有用自己的观念、自己的心态及期望来认识未知或陌生事物的倾向。

自意大利耶稣会士利玛窦（1552-1610）在赴京（利氏在京呆了 27 年，直至 1610 年去世）途中于 1582 年抵达澳门以来，外界对中国的看法，如果不是极其“神秘”，便一直是“与众不同”。这种观点至今尚存，只是程度略异而已。

期望本文读者发现，重新校正自己对中国的看法，使之靠拢中国人的观点，将不无裨益。笔者希望，通过审视中国历史，能够帮助你们提高对“中国崛起”背后的意义及其未来影响的认识。

从求学及工作经历来看，我的背景可谓“东西结合”，因此在本文中，我将从西方人的视角来考察“对华贸易”与“中国崛起”的联系，用东方人的观点来探讨“中国崛起”之影响。

“对华贸易”

在航海时代，将外夷影响隔离并控制于广州的政策，导致了在广州城外划地对夷通商的做法。信风预先决定了贸易季节。夷人在贸易季节结束后必须离开广州的御旨，使得澳门（被认为是葡萄牙人的“地盘”）成为西方客商及（后来的）家眷在非贸易季节的权宜住所。

这项政策还造就了一个新的社会阶层，即恩准与夷商贸易的行商。尽管他们曾经大肆哭穷，但这一特殊商人阶层个个富得流油。他们不仅在国内均有投资，而且还得到官家承认，被授予顶戴花翎，俾使他们能够应付官场，提升他们在邻里的社会地位。

夷人的需求，导致了当时当地外贸特产的生产。中国的外销画（由西洋画师[后有中国画师加入]绘制的反映中国沿海景致、中国人家居生活方式以及他们从事的各种活动的西式图画），便是一例。这类画作成为“对华贸易”的重要商品，海外市场对此类体裁的艺术品的需求，至今不衰。

面对这一市场机遇，中国方面的反应是培训雇用中国画师，将他们一字排开，每个画师专门绘制图画的某个特定部分，按照国外订单批量生产几乎一模一样的“原画”。这一流水作业的创举，多年后（1907/08）为亨利·福特先生所借鉴，用以在美国生产“T型”车。

澳门容有不少番妇，天气又潮又湿，因此中国扇子备受欢迎。扇子逐渐演化为具有装饰及社会价值的产品，远播海外。中国折扇用料繁多，如纸张、绢布，乃至丝绸，以香木、竹子或象牙为扇骨黏合。扇面上饰有精美的中国字画。

“对华贸易”的商品，初为茶叶、丝绸及瓷器，美国商人以北美出产的毛皮及西洋参与之交换。在工业革命之前，洋商除此之外拿不出什么能够吸引中国买家兴趣的东西，或者即便有拿得出手的商品，也为大清律令所不容。因此，夷商不得不用现金（时为硬币 specie）采办中国货物。

在贸易以硬币（金币或银币）支付结算的年代，中国的贸易顺差对采购中国商品的西洋买家造成了极大的压力，导致英商转而贩卖畅销中国市场的鸦片，以期扭转贸易逆差之局面。美商输入中国的鸦片，购自土耳其，而英人则在英属印度种植罂粟，继而加工成鸦片，然后将其走私入华。

随着中国加强业已执行数百年之久的禁烟法令力度，严禁鸦片进口，鸦片走私变得日益猖獗，对抗不可避免地引发了 1842 年的第一次鸦片战争及 1858 年的第二次鸦片战争。

1842 年签署的《江宁条约》，不仅令中国将香港割让英国，而且还被迫接受了西方的治外法权概念，给予英国“最惠国”待遇，并予赔款。1858 年的《天津条约》，迫使中国增开更多的通商口岸，将九龙半岛割让英国，立法准许鸦片进口，并予赔款。

重要的历史教训

将夷人及其活动隔离并控制于某个特定地点的政策，在“对华贸易”过程中推行了约两百年，中西商贾均依律而行。我们看到，这些学来的经验，被贯彻到了诸如深圳（1979/1980）等“经济特区”的设立及“一国两制”的构想之中，1997 年实现了前英国殖民地香港的回归祖国。对外国人来说，“一国两制”这个词听起来很空，但对中国人而言，那却是中国使用多种高度放权的制度来治理他们那个庞大帝国的某些地方的经验之谈。

另一个经验是，出口可为出口国创造财富。虽然贸易失衡给清帝国带来了严重的负面影响，但有利于出口商的失衡依然是好事。在中国做出再度对外开放的决定之后，我们目睹了这一经验的学习以及用作经济增长引擎的过程。

1980 年，中国流通着两种货币：中国公民使用人民币，访华的非中国人用外汇券。外汇券是设计来让外国人支付访华期间的酒店账单及购买中国商品的，尽管只能在友谊商店购买。外汇券可在外国人离开中国时换回外币。但是外国人无权使用也无

权真正拥有人民币。当时还有粮票，用以购买诸如米面及定量供应的基本商品。没有粮票，中国公民就买不到食品。在 2011 年的今天，粮票被作为有收藏价值的票证，在电子港湾上卖给钱币藏家。

中国领导人认识到，消除市场偏差，必须实行改革。通过推行允许农村公社保留余粮的定额生产制度，对公社体制进行了改革。这项后来成为事实上的效益奖励的政策，成功地解决了粮食短缺的问题。结果粮票就遭到废除。这一例子再次说明，中国人从两百年前的祖先那里，从对华贸易开辟的市场，学到了真经。

鼓励国内外合资企业利用外资生产出口商品，出口原定仅供再出口的中国劳动附加值产品，限制该类产品在国内市场销售的政策，成功地用外汇（特别是美元）充盈了国库。外汇增加了，外汇券也随之取消了。

外国人于是得以用自己的货币购买中国商品及支付服务，而国家则成功地控制了外汇流入及外汇利率。诸多此类例子证明，中国人确实从早年的对华贸易中取到了真经。实际上，中国人有以史为鉴、将历史经验视为值得一学的教训加以运用的传统。

在我看来，华夏儿女对对华贸易那段历史念念不忘的，是这样一个事实，清政府的腐败无能，国库空虚，防御形同虚设，与外强的优势（尽管人数不多）形成了鲜明的反差，最终导致丧权辱国。国耻反过来引发了一场不是针对政府、而是针对那个治理无方的政府的革命。国家（国即为家）几被葬送。引起革命的是爱国思想吗？如果革命后的军阀混战年代对我们有所启示，那么革命成功以后就没有取代反现行体制的东西，也没有取代皇帝概念的东西。虽然孙中山先生和共和党人仍在，但是联合推翻满清王朝的军阀，后来却为争当新皇帝而打得不可开交。

我想借此回顾一个从我父亲那里学到的最深刻的教训。不知怎么我和他去了平时不常去的菜市。父亲问我为什么有人买骨头。经过一番思索，我斗胆猜测，说他们买的是骨头上的肉。我认为我赢得了父亲的赞许，因为我知道，只要东西具有内在价值，就可以待价而沽；另外我也学会了用眼观察，用脑思考。我的意思是，华夏文明是代代相传的，不是从书本上学来的，也不是从（西方人意识中的）正规学校学来的。

在辛亥革命结束了清王朝（1644-1912）268 年的统治之后，历史向前速进，中日战争（1931-1945）、第二次世界大战（1939-1945）、国共内战，接着便是共产党 1949 年的胜利，于北京建立政权。自那以后，中国对外处于封闭状态，直至 1979/1980 年。是年，香港境北的小渔村深圳，被设为“经济特区”，颇似广州制度下珠江河畔的“夷馆”在“对华贸易”年间被辟为夷商活动区的味道。恢复后的广交会，依然带有季节传统，使人想起了早年由信风决定的贸易季节。

“中国崛起”

以下这个事实，便是中华文明及文化传统（从历史中吸取教训）的例证：皇帝登基之后所做的大事之一，便是为前朝修史。尽管人们可以根据自己的喜好来思考诠释这一传统，但愚意认为，这同样是皇上对臣民的一种“解释”，意在表达“朕已向老皇上请教治国方略”了。

亨利·基辛格在其《论中国》（企鹅出版社，2011）一书中暗示，在 1971 年开始导致中美关系正常化的秘密访华使命之前，他对中国传统的作用略知一二。

一切社会与国家，均倾向认为，自己是永存不灭的。他们珍爱各自的创世传说。中华文明的特征之一，便是它似乎不知何时为始。她在史书中不太像个传统的民族国家，而更像是一个永恒的自然现象。在许多华夏儿女奉为始祖的黄帝的传说中，中国似乎就已经存在。

作为创世英雄，黄帝在历史上世代流传。然而在创世神话中，他并非在开创而是在重建帝国。中国在其之前就业已存在。在历史的意识中，她是一个只需复兴而非创建的已建国家。

总而言之，中国的政治家倾向于将整个战略景观视作一个整体中的组成部分：善恶、远近、强弱，过去与未来，均相互关联。西方人把历史看作是一个现代化进程，是一系列击败邪恶与落后的绝对胜利；而传统的中国历史观，则强调衰败和纠偏的循环过程。在此过程中，自然和世界只能认识，而不能完全征服。

对于中国的先贤来说，世界绝对不可能被征服。明君只能希望顺应世界潮流。不存在可以移民的新世界，也没有静待人类救赎的遥远彼岸。“皇天乐土”即是中国，而中国人已经在此生根。中国文化的福祉（中国的优越即是明证），理论上可以惠及帝国边藩。但若使它漂洋过海，皈依化外之民，效法大汉，则并无荣光可言。天朝之风气，非远夷可及。

现在容我继续我的思路，“中国崛起”的先决条件，是政策或系列政策、领导班子、一个接一个的具有连续性和调整性（需要的话）的五年计划。但是导致“中国崛起”的，却是中国人民。他们对政策的响应以及他们的行动（个人的和集体的），带来了结果。

愚意认为，政府的领导及政策具有“硬件”效应，每一个五年计划都是新一代硬件的标志，而中国人民（他们在自己的环境里发挥的作用，他们对所处环境的改善，以及他们的切身经验对自己的改变），则具有使电脑运作更为有效的“软件”效果。

为了理解这一研究思路，我想打开一个现象的“包装”。“中国崛起”这个新词，对此现象作了不充分的描述。

崛起的是中国这个国家吗？在西方人看来，“国家”两个汉字的字面意义，就是“国级家庭”。“国”与“家”连用，蕴涵着国乃众多家庭自然发展而成之意。换言之，家存则国存，政府乃诸多“家庭”的“老爷子”，就像亘古以来，老爷子就“天经地义”地是一家之主那样。照此推论，“中国崛起”难道不是指“中华民族之崛起”——中国人的崛起吗？

接下来探讨中华民族。是什么把这个民族（主要为汉族）维系在一起，并赋予他们以共同特征的呢？笔者斗胆认为，是他们的悠久文化！早在两千年前，汉朝就赋予了这个民族一个身份：汉族子孙。西方只有神圣罗马帝国能够与之相比。神圣罗马帝国被分解为许多小的“民族国家”，而中华帝国却设法得以保全。把现今的中国称为“民族国家”，是一个用词错误，尽管她确实不复为帝国。将人们聚汇到“华人”意识之下的文化理念，只需考虑一下散居于世界各地的华人，即可求证。数以百万计的华人，已经在许多异域他乡的民族国家“本土化”了好几辈子，绝大部分与华夏文化

少有或没有接触，也不再能够读写汉语，但是他们对华人身份的认同感，却丝毫未有消减。

海外华侨是中国大陆的第一波外国投资者。为了利用其廉价劳力，他们将海外的工厂回迁至中国。在往口袋里揣出口利润的同时，他们心里说不定还洋溢着某种爱国主义的激情。但他们几乎意想不到的，早在两个世纪以前，中国人就已经首创了批量生产原画的生产线概念。海外华人投资者也许还会产生一种回乡之感，以及回家之后受到祖国保护的安全之感，而这种感觉是他们在海外的任何定居之所都没有的。

华夏文明有着许多传统。其中最深入人心的，便是天人合一、人人合一的观念。和谐是一个施受问题。做买卖时，店主也好，商贾也罢，均接受讨价还价的传统，因为那也是一种施受形式。

以史为鉴是一个重要传统。它又产生了另一个自学传统。教育是一个向长辈学习的积极过程，始自个人探索。在此过程中，知识和传统得以代代相传。教育从来不是一个必须上学的被动过程。学校这种机构在中国历史上出现得相对较晚。没有学识的中国人，常自称为“没有文化”，但他们会让自己的儿女学习读书写字。

中国人的学习责任及为下一代改善生存境遇的责任，业已化为他们的本能。中国人家观念强的说法，未免过于简单。对他们而言，人生是一个生活和学习的积极过程。中国人的能力，或许是人类学的一个最重要证据。无论受过何等教育，他们均有足够的能力解决自己的问题。为了翻身，穷人不惜承受千辛万苦。西方人的勤奋观念，不足以完全解释这一跨越世代的进步心态。

汉语不仅仅是一个交际工具。它本身也是一个教育过程。汉字的使用，表达了逻辑的存在，一个字和另一个字的组合，产生了不同的意义。举一个简单的例子，“ask”意为“问”，而“learn”则是“学”。两个汉字均为动词。然而当一个人学会了问，他便长了“学问”，意为“知识”。两个动词连用，变成了一个名词：“通过问而学来的知识”。

有“文化”（除其本意外，文化还含“教育”之意）者，识礼数。礼数决定了人神关系、男女关系和尊卑长幼关系。中国人围着圆桌一起吃饭，其中必有一个座位是老爷子的，就像西方礼仪中谁坐在盐的上首或下首一样。可以认为，中华文明的内在组织结构，提供了一个代代相传的基础。

外国观察人员可能忽略的一个事实是，海外华人的合资企业，在将工厂回迁至中国之前，就已经在销售他们的产品了。合资的目的，在于利用廉价劳力，提高毛利。转移定价的做法，给合资企业带来了较低的利润。所以，钱和钱的运作（或称资本运作），便是“中国崛起”的最为熟知的基础。

结语

由于篇幅所限，本文无法探讨“中国崛起”背后的含义，然而说它并非空穴来风，能够即时分析，即时求解，就已经足够。世界将会发生什么，没有任何明显的轨迹。

本文是应赵仪文神甫之邀，为《神州交流》而作，谨此向赵神甫致谢。另一个写作原因是，尽管中国的经济持续增长，改革不断深化，但是世界各国公众（含中国大陆及海外华人）对“中国崛起”的真实意义知之甚少。

适应“中国崛起”，是一个必然结局。在打造世界新秩序的过程中，如何顺应“中国崛起”背后的力量，依然是一个谜。但是如果本文成功地激发起读者对“中国崛起”的更深层思考，进一步认识其因果关系，那么本文就达到了本人不敢企及之目的。

理查·M. 刘是一位华裔人士，1930 年生于上海，父母为广东籍美国公民。1945 年欧洲二战结束后，他和家人被遣返美国，定居波士顿。刘先生就读于麻省康桥的布朗暨尼克尔斯学校，1952 年毕业于哈佛学院，获美国史学士学位，副修为生物化学、数学、物理学医学预科。

刘于 1952-54 年间应征入伍，参加美国陆军，在朝鲜服役两年，最后的岗位在韩国板门店联合国军司令部军事停战委员会。

1974 年回香港前，刘先生在银行及金融业工作了 17 年。除被派往台湾及阿曼苏丹国外，他均在香港居住工作。

郭颐顿译

On “China Trade” 1760 – 1860 to “China Rise” 1979 – 2011

Richard M. Liu

Introduction

On 2-3 March this year, I attended as an observer the *Workshop on “China Trade”, Merchants and Artists (1760-1860): New Historical Cultural Perspectives* organized by the Macau Ricci Institute. It was a remarkable learning experience for me, a retired practitioner in banking and finance, with no expertise on the products traded, nor indeed in any knowledge in the area of that period of history.

As I listened to the lively discussions, a sense of *déjà vu* came to me. At the same time, I realised as well that “China Trade” of the 18th and 19th centuries actually provided useful lessons for the late 20th and early 21st century Chinese leadership, who had made good use of these lessons when they took steps to “modernize” China.

The purpose of this essay is to reflect on some of these “lessons” – in terms of their causes and effects, be they gleaned from the products traded, the methods for settlement of the accounts, the performance of the market, the imbalance in trade that developed, and events arising from the imbalance in this period in Chinese history that suggest to me, 119 years later, some explanations for “China Rise”, that seminal phenomenon of our time.

“China Rise” is viewed by the Chinese as a peaceful process that has had little to do with the outside world, which China had chosen to ignore

(for 31 years) after the Communist Party took the seat of power in Beijing. One should bear in mind too that the normalisation of relationship between China and the United States was the consequence of the Americans taking the first step.

This Chinese view is, however, not shared by everybody else. Why? Can it be explained by a tendency in all of us, to perceive things unknown or with which we are unfamiliar according to our own perception, in our own mindset and expectation?

Ever since 1582 when the Italian Jesuit Mateo Ricci (1552-1610) arrived in Macau in order to go to Beijing 北京, where he remained for 27 years until his death (1610), China had been perceived by the outside world as being “different”, if not downright “mysterious”. This perception remains extant, varying only in degree.

Hopefully, readers of this essay will find it helpful to re-align their perceptions of China to be closer to those of the Chinese. On reflection, I hope that, in taking a historical perspective of China, I may be helpful to you in gaining a better understanding of the significance behind “China Rise” and its implications in the future.

In as much as my own background in terms of education and work experiences has been a combination of the East and the West, I shall examine in this essay the linkages between “China Trade” and “China Rise” from a western perspective; and the implications of “China Rise” in an eastern perspective.

“China Trade”

In the age of sail, the policy to isolate, contain, and control foreign influence to Guangzhou (Canton) gave rise to designating a specific area in Guangzhou outside the city wall for trading with foreigners. And the trade wind pre-determined the seasonality for trading. The official decree that foreigners had to leave Guangzhou at the end of the trading season made Macau (viewed as a “domain” of the Portuguese) a convenient place of abode in the off-season for western traders, and in time their families as well.

Part and parcel of this policy had been the creation of a new class of people, the *hong* merchants who were franchised to engage the western traders in trade. Despite their much trumpeted financial difficulties, this special class of merchants became wealthy; they invested in China as well as overseas; they earned official recognition by being given official ranks which enabled them to deal with the officials and enhanced their social status in the community.

An example of how demands of foreign residents led to creation of trade items unique to this time and place, is the China Coast paintings – western-style paintings by foreign artists, in time Chinese artists too – depicting sceneries of the China coast and life-style of the Chinese people in their habitat and engaging in a variety of activities. Such paintings became

an important product in “China Trade”; and brought about enduring markets for this genre of art outside China as well to this day.

A Chinese response to this market opportunity was to train and hire Chinese artists, deploy them into a line, with each painter specialising in executing a specific segment of a painting to produce many copies of virtually identical “original” paintings to fill a foreign order. This innovation of an assembly line of production found expression years later, in 1907/08, when a certain Mr. Henry Ford used the very same methodology to manufacture the “Model T” in the United States of America.

Principally because of the presence of foreign women in Macau, where the weather was hot and humid, the Chinese fan became a welcome accessory, and in time a product of evolving decorative and social value spread to shores beyond China. The Chinese folding fans were made with a variety of materials: paper, fabrics, even silk, held together with fragrant woods, bamboo, and ivory. The fans were decorated with beautiful Chinese brush calligraphy and paintings.

“China trade” first comprised principally tea, silk and porcelain, for which the American traders exchanged with fur skins and ginseng which originated in North America. It was before the Industrial Revolution, there was little else western traders had to offer that interested Chinese buyers, or were permitted to import by Chinese law. Therefore, foreign traders had to pay for their purchases with cash, at that time meant specie.

When settlement of trade called for payment in specie, which was gold or silver, trade imbalance in favour of the Chinese exerted enormous pressure on the western buyers of Chinese products. This pressure led to the British traders resorting to the sale of opium, which found ready markets in China, in order to balance their trade deficits. Whereas American traders purchased opium in Turkey and brought it to China, the British grew poppies in British India, processed it into opium, and smuggled it into China.

When China strengthened the already centuries-old anti-opium laws which forbade the importation of opium, smuggling became rampant, with confrontations that led inevitably to the First Opium War of 1842, and the Second Opium War of 1858.

The Treaty of Nanking 江宁条约 in 1842 saw China ceding Hong Kong to Great Britain, China being forced to accept the western concept of extra-territoriality, to granting the British “most favoured nation” status, and to paying indemnity. The Treaty of Tientsin 1858 led to the opening of more Chinese ports to trade, the ceding of Kowloon Peninsula to the British, to the legalisation of opium importation and requiring reparation payments as well.

Important Lessons from History

The policy to isolate, contain and control foreigners and their activities to a specific location for some 200 years in “China Trade” had worked for

China and the western traders. We see the application of these lessons learned to the creation of “special economic zones”, such as Shenzhen in 1979/1980; and to the use of the concept “one country, two system” to achieve the return in 1997 of Hong Kong, the former British colony, to Chinese sovereignty. To foreigners, the terms “one country two system” rang hollow, but to the Chinese, that has been the Chinese experience to operate certain parts of the vast empire on more than one system, and on a highly decentralized fashion.

Another experience had been that exports created wealth for the exporting country; that while trade imbalance brought negative and serious consequence to the Qing Empire, the imbalance in favour of the exporters remained, nevertheless, a good thing. We can see this lesson learned and applied as the engine for economic growth, once China made the decision to open to the outside world again.

In 1980, China had two types of currency in circulation: RMB (人民币 *renminbi*) for its own citizens and FEC (foreign exchange certificates 外汇券 *waihuijuan*) for non-Chinese while visiting China. The FEC had been devised for foreigners to settle their hotel bills and to buy Chinese goods in China, albeit only goods available at the Friendship Stores. FEC could be exchanged back to foreign currency when foreigners left the country. But foreigners did not have the right to use, nor indeed the rights to own, the RMB. At that time there was also the food coupon (粮票 *liangpiao* 粮食券 *liang shi juan*), for basic commodities such as rice and wheat, items that were rationed. Chinese citizens could not buy food without these coupons, which today, in 2011, are traded on eBay to numismatists as collectables.

The Chinese leaders saw that reform was necessary to eliminate market aberrations. Reform of the agricultural commune system followed, through the introduction of production quota, which allowed the communes to keep surplus production. This policy, which was to become the *de facto* performance incentive, succeeded in eliminating food shortage. As a result, the food coupons were abandoned. This is another example that the Chinese had learned well from their forebears’ experience two centuries before, from the markets created by China trade.

And implementation of the policy to encourage foreign investment by domestic/foreign joint ventures to produce items for export, and to export Chinese labour-added goods destined for re-export only, while restricting the sale of the same goods in the domestic market successfully filled the national treasury with foreign exchange, specifically, the U.S. dollar. That led to elimination of the FEC.

Foreigners then may use their own currencies to buy Chinese goods and to pay for services, while the State succeeded in controlling the inflow of foreign currencies as well as the exchange rates. These are more examples that the Chinese learned the lessons from China Trade of the earlier period very well indeed. In actuality, there has always been a tradition among the Chinese to learn from history and to apply experiences of the past as lessons that are worthy of learning.

What the Chinese of later generations did not lose sight of the period of “China Trade”, from my point of view, was the reality that corruption, an empty imperial treasury, and an inferior defence, which stood out in sharp contrast to the superiority of foreign troops, however small in number, resulted in the virtual loss of sovereignty. That in turn sparked a revolution, not against the government but against a government that governed so inadequately that *guo jia* — 国 (country) as 家 (family), a term coined much later — was almost lost. Is it a sense of patriotism that brought on a revolution? If the age of chaos that followed the revolution were indicative, there was nothing to replace “anti-establishmentarianism” when a revolution succeeded; and there was nothing to replace the concept of the emperor. Dr. Sun Yat-sen and the republicans notwithstanding, the warlords who united to overthrow the Manchu dynasty now fought each other to be the next emperor.

I would like to recall here one of the most profound lessons I learned from my father. Somehow I found myself with him in a food market, not a place where he and I frequented. He asked me why people bought bones. I pondered a while before venturing a guess that they were buying the meat on the bones. I think I earned my father’s approval for understanding that something is saleable because of its intrinsic value, as much as I learned to observe with my eyes and think with my head. The implication is that much of Chinese civilization is learned by one generation from an earlier generation, and not from books, nor from formal school (in the western sense).

Fast-forwarding history past the 1911 Republican Revolution that ended the 268 year rule of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), the ensuing Sino-Japanese hostilities (1931-1945), World War Two (1939-1945), the Civil War in China, then we come to the victory of the Communist Party in 1949 in establishing the seat of power in Beijing. From that time onwards China was closed to the outside world until 1979/1980, when the village of Shenzhen just north of the border of Hong Kong, was designated as a “special economic zone”, more or less just as the “foreign factories” on the bank of the Pearl River was designated the area of foreign traders under the Canton system of the “China Trade” period. The resumption of Guangzhou trade fair continued to carry on the tradition of seasonality, which one would recall was dictated once upon a time by the trade wind.

“China Rise”

The tradition in Chinese civilization and culture — to learn from history — was exemplified by the fact that one of the first undertakings of an emperor on acceding to the throne was to write the history of the previous dynasty. While one may speculate and interpret this tradition according to one’s own predilection, I happen to think that this was also “a form of accountability” of an Emperor to his subjects that he had “learned” already from the experience of the emperor he succeeded.

What Henry Kissinger has written in his book *On China*, (Penguin, 2011) suggests that he knew something about the role of Chinese tradition before he embarked on his secret mission to China in 1971 that led to the normalization of relationship between the United States and China.

Societies and nations tend to think of themselves as eternal. They also cherish a tale of their origin. A special feature of Chinese civilization is that it seems to have no beginning. It appears in history less as a conventional nation-state than as a permanent natural phenomenon. In the tale of the Yellow Emperor, revered by many Chinese as the legendary founding ruler, China seems already to exist.

The Yellow Emperor has gone down in history as a founding hero; yet in the founding myth, he is re-establishing, not creating, an empire. China predated him; it strides into the historical consciousness as an established state requiring only restoration, not creation.

In general, Chinese statesmanship exhibits a tendency to view the entire strategic landscape as part of a single whole: good and evil, near and far, strength and weakness, past and future all interrelated. In contrast to the Western approach of treating history as a process of modernity achieving a series of absolute victories over evil and backwardness, the traditional Chinese view of history emphasized a cyclical process of decay and rectification, in which nature and the world could be understood but not completely mastered.

For China's classical sages, the world could never be conquered; wise rulers could hope only to harmonize with its trends. There was no New World to populate, no redemption awaiting mankind on distant shores. The "promised land" was China, and the Chinese were already there. The blessings of the Middle Kingdom's culture might theoretically be extended, by China's superior example, to the foreigners on the empire's periphery. But there was no glory to be found in venturing across the seas to convert "heathens" to Chinese ways; the customs of the Celestial Dynasty were plainly beyond the attainment of the far barbarians.

Now, to continue with my own reflections, what laid the pre-conditions for "China Rise" would be policy or policies, leadership, and the five-year plan, as an example, one succeeding the other, which provide continuity and adjustments (when called for). But what brought about "China Rise" would be the Chinese people, their response to policies and their performance, individual and collective, which brought out the results.

I would surmise that government leadership and policies have the effects of the "hardware", with each five-year plan benchmarking a new generation of hardware, and that the Chinese people — how they function in their environment, how the environment is changed by them, and how they themselves are transformed by their own experience, have the effects of the "software" that enables computers to perform with ever greater efficacy.

To understand this line of inquiry, I would like to think, is the start of "unwrapping the packaging" of a phenomenon, for which two words were coined, but which describe inadequately: "China Rise".

Now, is it the rise of China, the nation? The two Chinese-character *guo jia*, “nation” in the western sense, literally means “nation family” in Chinese. Putting “nation” together with “family” suggests a nation as a natural outgrowth of a multitude of families. Putting that idea in a different way: so long as families exist, a nation exists; and government is the “patriarch” of the multitude of “families”, just as “natural an order” since time immemorial of the patriarch as the head of a family. Does it follow, then, that “China Rise” refers to the “Chinese People Rise”, the rise of the Chinese people?

So what about the Chinese people? What binds this people, preponderantly Han, to a common identity? I would venture the view that it is the very long and very strong culture! Two thousand years ago, the Han Dynasty gave the people a sense of identity – descendants of the Han people. The comparable situation in the West would be the **Holy** Roman Empire. Whereas the **Holy** Roman Empire had disintegrated into many smaller-sized “nation states”, the Chinese empire managed to hold together. It would be a misnomer to think of China today as a “nation state”, although an empire it certainly is no longer. The notion of the culture that binds the people to a sense of being “Chinese” begins to find validity when one considers the Chinese Diaspora; with overseas of Chinese in the millions, having been “indigenized” for several generations at many foreign nation states, a majority of whom having little or no exposure to the Chinese culture, nor knowing any longer how to read or write the Chinese language, and yet their sense of identity as Chinese does not diminish at all.

The first wave of foreign investors in Mainland China had been the overseas Chinese, who moved their factories outside of China back to China to take advantage of cheap labour. They probably felt a sense of patriotism, while filling their pockets with export earnings, but little did they realise that two centuries ago, the Chinese had already innovated the concept of production line in order to produce original paintings by the dozens. The overseas Chinese investors would have also felt a sense of home-coming too; and with it, a sense of safety with protection of the mother land, something they did not have in whichever overseas location they happened to have settled.

There are many traditions in the Chinese civilization. A pervasive one among the people has been the notion — that human beings live in harmony with nature, and with their fellow human beings, — and harmony is a matter of give and take. In commerce, be they shop keepers or traders accept the tradition of haggling over price, a form of giving and taking.

One important primary tradition is to learn from history. This leads to another tradition of self-learning. Education starts with individual inquiry, an active process of learning from the elders, through which knowledge and traditions are passed from one generation to another. Education had not been a passive process that involved going to schools (an institution that came very much later in the history of China). The Chinese who have had no learning would refer to themselves as “without culture” (没有文化 *mei you wen hua*). But they would want their children to learn to read and write.

It is “hardwired” into their “*id*” that they have a responsibility to learn and to improve upon their circumstances for the next generation. It is too simplistic to refer to the Chinese having a strong sense of family. To them life is an active process of living and learning. Perhaps the strongest evidence in terms of anthropology is the ability of the Chinese people, regardless of what education they have attained, are quite equipped to and capable of solving their own problems. The poor will endure incredible hardship to overcome. The western notion of hard work does not completely explain this progressive mind set that transcend generations.

The Chinese language is more than a tool of communication. It is an educational process in itself. Through the usage of the Chinese characters, logic exists as one word is added to another word to give rise to a different meaning. To cite one simple example: the word “ask” is “问 *wen*”; and the word “learn” is “学 *xue*”. Both characters are verbs. However, when one learns to ask, one gains “学问 *xue wen*”, meaning “knowledge”. Two verbs used together become a noun, “learnt from asking”.

To have “文化 *wen hua*”, meaning culture, meaning education, one expresses “*wen hua*” by knowing “good manner”, which define the relationship between man and God, between man and woman, between seniors and others younger in age. The Chinese dine together at a round table; yet there is the seat for the patriarch, which seat determines the equivalent in the western manners of those sitting above and others sitting below the salt. The innate organization and structure in the Chinese civilization can be seen to provide a foundation that endures from generations to generations.

What a foreign observer might overlook is the reality that the overseas Chinese joint venture party has been selling its products before relocating its factory into China. The purpose of the joint venture is to capitalize on lower labor costs in order to increase gross margins. The practice of transfer pricing has the effect of leaving lower profit margins in the joint venture. Be that as it may, “China Rise” is grounded on this small profit margin. So, money and the working of money (or capitalism) is the familiar under pinning to “China Rise”.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is beyond the scope of this essay to examine the implications behind “China Rise”; but suffice to observe here that this is not something that burst on the scene, capable of instant analysis and instant solution. There is no apparent trajectory to what will happen to the world.

I am grateful to **Fr Yves Camus** for the invitation to write this article for *The Chinese Cross Currents*; and, on further reflection, for this reason also: in spite of sustained economic growths and continuing reforms that are taking place in China, there is too little understanding among the world community of nations (nor among the Chinese themselves, on the mainland and overseas) of what “China Rise” really means.

To accommodate “China Rise” is a foregone conclusion. How to work with the forces behind “China Rise” in the fashioning of an emerging world order remains a puzzle. However, if this essay should succeed in stimulating readers to think more deeply about “China Rise”, to understand more its causes and effects, I think the essay will have accomplished more than I dare to hope.

Richard M. Liu is an ethnic Chinese, born in Shanghai in 1930 to Cantonese parents of American citizenship. He and his family were “repatriated” to the United States in 1945 just as World War II ended in Europe, settling in Boston. Mr. Liu attended the Browne and Nichols School in Cambridge, MA, and Harvard College from which he graduated in 1952 with a BA **an AB** degree in U.S. History and a minor in pre-med studies in the bio-chemical sciences, mathematics and physics.

He was drafted into the US Army and served two years (1952–1954) in Korea. His last posting was the United Nations Command, Military Armistice Commission, at Panmunjom, the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Liu’s career has been in the field of banking and finance with 17 years on Wall Street before returning to Hong Kong in 1974. Except for assignments to Taiwan and to the Sultanate of Oman, he maintains his residence and office in Hong Kong.