

# THE PERIODIZATION OF CHINESE HISTORY

## A Survey of Major Schemes and Hypotheses

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As with the histories of all other countries, the history of China clearly follows a certain pattern, in one sense, and yet in another sense it defies all attempts at imposing any single pattern. Scholarly preference depends upon one's standpoint of historical analysis and the degree of generalization employed in that analysis. Because historians have applied different standpoints and different degrees of generalization, they have reached different conclusions regarding patterns of Chinese history. In general, historians have emphasized one of three patterns: repetitive dynastic or periodic cycles, continuous developments, and stagnation. All of these views have been reflected in different periodization schemes applied to Chinese history.

The periodization of Chinese history has been a subject of discussion for centuries within China, but also outside China in modern times. Many schemes and views of Chinese history have been presented in various Western language works.<sup>1</sup>

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1. John Meskill, (ed.), *The Pattern of Chinese History* (Boston, 1965), including twenty-three such articles and discussions; Wolfram Eberhard, *Conquerors and Rulers: Social Forces in Medieval China* (2nd. ed. Leiden, 1965), pp. 17-38; Meribeth E. Cameron, "Periodization of Chinese History," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (June, 1946), pp. 171-177. Miyakawa Hisayuki, "An Outline of the Naitō Hypothesis and Its Effects on Japanese Studies of China," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, XIV (1954-55), pp. 533-552; James T. C. Liu, "The Neo-Traditional Period (ca. 800-1900) in Chinese History," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1 (Nov. 1964), pp. 105-107, esp. the various notes; Hu Shih, "The Chinese Tradition and the Future," *Sino-American Conference on Intellectual Cooperation, Reports and Proceedings* (Seattle, 1962), pp. 13-22.

The tradition of dividing Chinese history into stages stems from Confucius (551-471 B.C.), the first Chinese thinker whose views on historical stages can be documented.<sup>2</sup> In modern times, K'ang Yu-wei (1858-1927) and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (1873-1928) were among the first to have discussed the problem. In a book entitled *Li-yun chu* (*The Li-yun Annotated*), K'ang proposed in 1884-1885 a three-division scheme of Chinese history: the Age of Order—the periods from Yao and Shun to Hsia, Shang, and (Western) Chou; the Age of Disorder—from Ch'un-ch'iu to the unification of China under the Ch'in; the Age of order—from Ch'in to his time (nineteenth-century China); and the Age of Great Peace—a new age of Grand Unity he proposed that China enter through reforms.<sup>3</sup> It is a well-known fact that this division of Chinese history follows the famous theory of the "Three Ages," a concept developed by Yen An-lo (first century B.C.), who was a third-generation disciple of Tung Chung-shu (179-104 B.C.), and Ho Hsiu (129-182 A.D.). This concept was included in their commentaries on the *Kung-yang Commentary* on the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Spring and Autumn Annals*). K'ang's contribution was to set forth his scheme in terms of the theory of the "Three Ages" and the idea of Grand

2. For example, *Lun-yü* (*The Analects of Confucius*), *Lun-yü cheng-i* ed. (Reprint, Hong Kong, 1963), pp. 39, 49, 56.

3. K'ang Yu-wei, *Li-yun chu* (*The Li-yun Annotated*) in *Yen-K'ung ts'ung-shu* (*Studies on Confucianism*) (Shanghai, 1912), pp. 2, 7, 112; Wu Tse, "K'ang Yu-wei Kung-yang san-shih shuo te li-shih chin-hua kuan-tien yen-chiu" (A Study of the Theory of Progress in K'ang Yu-wei's Theory of the Three Ages), in *Chung-hua wen-shih lun-ts'ung* (Collected studies in Literature and History), Vol. I (Shanghai, 1962), pp. 229-274, reference on pp. 233-242; Tuan Hsi-chung, "Kung-yang Ch'un-ch'iu 'san-shih' shuo t'an-yüan," (On the Evolution of the Theory of the Three Ages in the Kung-yang Commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*," *ibid.*, Vol. 4 (1963), pp. 67-76, reference on pp. 73-74. It is significant to point out that the dating of the *Li-yun chu* has been controversial. K'ang Yu-wei himself dated his preface to the book in 1884-1885. Ch'ien Mu rejects this dating and suggests that the book was written in about 1901-1902. Laurence G. Thompson questions Ch'ien's view and holds to K'ang's own dating. In a recent article on K'ang's philosophy, Hsiao Kung-ch'üan again holds Ch'ien's view. The works mentioned above have followed the dating of 1884-1885 and are followed here. See Ch'ien Mu, *Chung-kuo chin san-po-nien hsüeh-shu shih* (*A History of Chinese Scholarship during the Last Three Hundred Years*), (Shanghai, 1937), pp. 698-699; Laurence G. Thompson, *Ta T'ung Shu, the One-World Philosophy of K'ang Yu-wei* (London 1958), pp. 27, 34-35 (note 10); Hsiao Kung-ch'üan, "K'ang Yu-wei and Confucianism," *Monumenta Serica*, Vol. XVIII (1959), pp. 144-147; *idem*, "In and Out of Utopia: K'ang Yu-wei's Social Thought," *Chung-chi Journal*, Vol. 7 (1968), p. 147 (note 230); Lo Jung-pang, *K'ang Yu-wei: A Biography and a Symposium* (Tucson, 1967), p. 441.

Unity in the *Li-yun* section of the *Book of Rites*.<sup>4</sup> Political and social conditions are evidently the primary criteria in this periodization. The adoption of the idea of Grand Unity was aimed at easing the Chinese and non-Chinese, particularly the Manchu, conflicts of interest.<sup>5</sup> The unique feature of Grand Unity points to the Utopian nature of the proposal.<sup>6</sup>

Turning to the twentieth century, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (1873-1928), K'ang Yu-wei's pupil, seems to have been the first Chinese scholar to have discussed the problem of periodization of Chinese history. In 1901, following conventional European divisions, he proposed a three-division scheme. The ancient period lasted from high antiquity (the Yellow Emperor) to the end of Chan-kuo, and was characterized by aristocratic political structure and self-development of the Chinese people; the medieval period, from the founding of the Ch'in in 221 B.C. to the end of the reign of Ch'ien-lung of the Ch'ing in 1795, was characterized by autocratic government and keen competition of the Chinese with other Asian peoples; the modern period, initiated since the Ch'ien-lung period, has witnessed China's transformation into the modern age, with modern government and increasing contact and competition among China, other Asian

4. Tuan Hsi-chung, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-75.

5. Tuan Hsi-chung, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

6. It is on the idea of Grand Unity that K'ang later wrote his great Utopian classic entitled *Ta-t'ung shu*, which was first published in book form in 1935, eight years after K'ang's death, and translated into English by Laurence G. Thompson with the sub-title *The One-World Philosophy of K'ang Yu-wei*. But contrary to the prevailing view that the book was written during 1884 and 1885, recent studies indicate that it was first written in 1901-1902 and its final version was not completed until K'ang's last years of life. See T'ang Chih-chün, "Tsai-lun K'ang Yu-wei te *T'a-t'ung shu*" (When did K'ang Yu-wei write his *Ta-t'ung shu*), *Li-shih Yen-chiu* (Historical research), August, 1959 issue, pp. 57-69, ref. 57-62. Other views, including K'ang Yu-wei's own version which is, in many respects, not reliable, hold that the first draft of the *Ta-t'ung Shu* was written during 1884 and 1885; the second, 1887; and the final form of the book was done in 1902. For these views, see Ch'ien Mu, *op. cit.*, pp. 699-700; Chao Feng-t'ien, "K'ang Ch'ang-su hsien-sheng nien-p'u kao" (A Draft Chronological Biography of Master K'ang Ch'ang-su), *Shih-hsueh nien-pao* (History Annual), Vol. II, No. 1 (1934), p. 184; K'ang Yu-wei, *Tzu-p'in nien-p'u* (Autobiographical Chronicle) (Mimeographed, 1959), pp. 5b-6a, 7a, 8a; K'ang T'ung-pi, (comp.), *Nan-hai hsien-sheng nien-p'u hsü-pien* (A Sequel to Master Nan-hai's Autobiographical Chronicle), (Mimeo., 1958), p. 22b; Laurence C. Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp. 13, 19, 26; Hsiao Kung-ch'üan, "K'ang Yu-wei and Confucianism," pp. 106-115; *idem*, "In and Out of Utopia: K'ang Yu-wei's Social Thought," 1, 2, 13-14 (Notes 4, 5, 8); Lo Jung-pang, *op. cit.*, pp. 42, 43, 192, 441.

countries, and the West.<sup>7</sup> In 1922, Liang revised his scheme by changing the beginning of the ancient period to the time of the legendary Sage-ruler Yü of Hsia, and by changing the lower limit of the medieval period to the end of the Ch'ing dynasty in 1911.<sup>8</sup> This change added the factor of cultural growth to the two primary criteria used for the first scheme: the pattern of political structure, and the development of the Chinese people as a nation and its relations with other peoples of the world.

In 1913-1914, a more systematic scheme of periodization was proposed by Chang Ch'in (1880-1931). Based on the criteria of political and cultural developments, Chang divided Chinese history into four periods: the ancient period, from prehistory to the end of Chan-kuo in 221 B.C.; the medieval period, from the founding of the Ch'in in 221 B.C. to the end of the T'ang in 907 A.D.; the early modern period, from the beginning of the Five Dynasties in 907 to the end of the Ming in 1644; and the modern period, the Ch'ing dynasty.<sup>9</sup> The major contribution of this scheme is its suggestion of the Five Dynasties as the starting point of the early modern period, a view that, as will be shown later, has been agreed upon by contemporary researchers.

In 1918 Fu Ssu-nien (1896-1950) suggested still another scheme of periodization. Focusing on the history of the growth of the Chinese people as a nation, and its interactions with the various groups of northern nomads of Inner Asia, Fu periodized Chinese history as follows:<sup>10</sup>

I. Ancient Period: First China—China of the Han people

7. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, "Chung-kuo shih hsü-lun" (Introductory Remarks on Chinese History), in *Yin-ping-shih wen-chi* (Collected Writings of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao), (Shanghai, 1936), Vol. 3, pp. 1-12, reference on pp. 11-12; originally published in 1901.
8. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, "Ti-li yü nien-tai" (Geography and Chronology) in *Kuo-shih yen-chiu liu-p'ien* (Six Studies in Chinese History), (Reprint. Taipei, 1961), Appendix, pp. 1-10, reference on pp. 5-10; this is a speech originally delivered at Ch'ing-hua University in 1929. In this second periodization scheme, Liang also divided the ancient period into two subperiods, pre-771 B.C. and 770-229 B.C., and the medieval period into four, 221 B.C.-A.D. 219, 220-506, 507-1643, and 1644-1911.
9. Chang Ch'in, *Chung-hua t'ung-shih* (A General History of China), 5 Vols. (Reprint. Taipei, 1959), pp. 1-2, 92-102. The book was first published in 1934, but its mimeographed manuscript was circulated as lecture notes in 1914 (Note by Sung Chung-yüeh at the end of the book).
10. Fu Ssu-nien, "Chung-kuo li-shih fen-ch'i chih yen-chiu" (On the Periodization of Chinese History) in *Fu Meng-chen hsien-sheng chi* (Collected Works of Fu Meng-chen), (Taipei, 1952). Vol. 1, pp. 54-61; originally published in 1918.



Subperiod I : pre-770 B.C.

Subperiod II : 770-221 B.C.

Subperiod III : 221 B.C.-A.D. 317

Subperiod IV : 317-589 : Beginning of barbarian influence in China.

II. Medieval Period: Second China—China under Nomads' Penetration and Influence

Subperiod I : 589-959 : China under strong influence of northern barbarians.

Subperiod II : 960-1279: Revival of the Han spirit.

III. Modern Period: China of Nomads' Predominance

Subperiod I : 1279-1364: Mongol rule.

Subperiod II : 1364-1661: Revival of the Han rule from the founding of the Wu State (Chu Yüan-chang) to the Ming, and to the end of the Southern Ming.

Subperiod III : 1661-1900: Manchu rule.

IV. Contemporary Period:

1912—

Fu's view is a major contribution in its suggestion of the end of the Sung dynasty in 1279 as the starting point of the modern period in China. He is among the first to have made such a suggestion.

The topic of periodization became a subject of heated debate during the "Controversy on the Social History of China" in the late 1920's and early 1930's. Various schemes of division were advanced in this period. Among the notable ones are those of Kuo Mo-jo, T'ao Hsi-sheng, Li Chi, Mei Ssu-p'ing, Hu Ch'iu-yüan, Wang Li-hsi, and Ku Meng-yü.<sup>11</sup> Three of these

11. A concise discussion of the "Controversy on the Social History of China" is found in Kuo Chan-po, *Chin wu-shih nien Chung-kuo ssu-hsiang shih* (*History of Chinese Thought during the Past Fifty Years*), (Originally published in 1935; reprinted in Hong Kong, 1965), pp. 332-345; Ch'ien Chien-fu, *Chung-kuo she-hui ching-chi shih shang te ni-li chih wen-t'i* (*The Problem of Slavery in the Social and Economic History of China*), (Shanghai, 1948), pp. 1-22; Ho Kan-chih, *Chung-kuo she-hui-shih wen-t'i lun-chan* (*Controversy on the Social History of China*), (Shanghai, 1937); *idem.*, *Chung-kuo she-hui hsing-chih wen-t'i lun-chan* (*Controversy on the Nature of Chinese Society*), (Shanghai, 1938); Li Chi, *Chung-kuo she-hui-shih lun-chan p'i-p'an* (*A Critique of the Controversy on the Social History of China*), (Shanghai, 1936). For critical examination of the Controversy, see Benjamin I. Schwartz, "A Marxist Controversy on China," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, XIII (Feb. 1954), (pp. 143-153), pp. 143-148;

are sketched here to show the variety of views and approaches.

Writing in 1928, Kuo Mo-jo, following a Marxist interpretation of history, divided Chinese history into the following major stages:<sup>12</sup>

- I. Primitive Communism: Pre-Chou Period—classless clan society.
- II. Slave Society: Western Chou—nobles versus commoners and slaves.
- III. Feudal Society: From the Ch'un-ch'iu period to the mid-nineteenth century—well-stratified class society.
- IV. Capitalistic Society: Since the mid-nineteenth century to the 1920's—capitalists versus proletarians.

As Kuo clearly notes, his criterion is solely the mode of production and the social structure generated by it.

T'ao Hsi-sheng's view changed a few times during the period, but by 1935 his periodization scheme emerged in definitive form, as follows: ancient society from the fifth century B.C. to the third century A.D., during which China passed from a clan society in the Chou period to a slave society; medieval society from the third to the ninth century, during which manorial economy and aristocratic government prevailed; and modern society from the tenth to the nineteenth century, during which China saw autocratic government and a new monetary, market-and handicrafts-economy with expansion of domestic and foreign trade—a type of economy he had previously termed “proto-capitalistic.”<sup>13</sup>

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Teng Ssu-yü, “Chinese Historiography in the Last Fifty Years,” *Far Eastern Quarterly*, VIII (1949), (pp. 131-156), pp. 147-148; Wu Ming, “Chung-kuo she-hui chan ti chien-t'ao” (An Examination of the Controversy on Chinese Society), *Chung-shan wen-hua chiao-yü kuan chi-k'an* (Bulletin of the Institute of Cultural Education at Sun Yat-sen University), Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1935), pp. 169-190; Cheng Hsüeh-chia, *She-hui-shih lun-chan te ch'i-yin ho nei-jung* (*The Causes and Contents of the Controversy on the Social History of China*), (Taipei, 1965). For principal sources of the Controversy, see Wang Li-hsi and Lu Ching-ch'ing, (eds.), *Chung-kuo she-hui-shih te lun-chan* (*The Controversy on the Social History of China*), 4 Vols., (Shanghai, 1931-1933 [1932-1936]), which are the special volumes of the *Tu-shu tsa-chih* (Study Journal); *Tu-shu tsa-chih*, Vol. I: No. 2 and No. 3 (1931); Liu Chün-jo, *Controversies in Modern Chinese Intellectual History* (Cambridge, Mass. 1964), pp. 146-159; *Hsin sheng-ming* (New Life), Vols. 1, 2, and 3 (1928-1930).

12. Kuo Mo-jo, *Chung-kuo ku-tai she-hui yen-chiu* (*Studies in Ancient Chinese Society*), (Rev. ed. Reprint, Peking, 1960), pp. 20-21; Introduction written in 1928.
13. T'ao Hsi-sheng, “Chan-kuo chih Ch'ing-mo she-hui shih lüeh-shuo” (Notes on the Social History of China from the Warring States period to Ch'ing Times), *Shih-huo* (The Chinese Social and Economic History Semi-monthly), Vol. 2, No. 11 (Nov. 1935), pp. 17-19; T'ao's article in Wang Li-hsi and Lu Ching-ch'ing, Vol. 3 (1932); Ho Kan-chih (1937), pp. 210-219. For T'ao's most recent view, see his *Ch'ao-liu yü tien-ti* (*Currents and Droplets*), (Taipei, 1964), p. 145.

Taking the mode of production as his sole criterion, Li Chi periodized Chinese history in a quite novel way. He termed the periods of the legendary Yao and Shun as the era of a primitive communist mode of production, the period from Hsia through Yin as the era of an Asiatic mode of production, the Chou period as the era of a feudal mode of production, the period from Ch'in to the eve of the Opium War as the era of a proto-capitalistic mode of production, and the period from the Opium War to the 1930's as the era of a capitalistic mode of production.<sup>14</sup>

The "Controversy on the Social History of China" brought about three new fronts on the periodization of Chinese history. First, Chinese historians turned to a broad and penetrating investigation of the economic and social factors affecting major stages of Chinese history. Second, new views on periodizations were advanced at this time to form a new framework for Chinese historical studies. Third, periodization schemes proposed by scholars outside China were introduced; among these were the Naitō hypothesis and Karl A. Wittfogel's theory of "hydraulic society."<sup>15</sup> Above all, periodization has since become a major field of interest in contemporary Chinese historiography. Different schemes and views have been advanced. In 1936 Lei Hai-tsung (1902-1962) made a unique proposal.<sup>16</sup> He first questioned the applicability of the conventional European divisions—ancient, medieval, and

14. Li Chi, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18; Li's article in Wang Li-hsi and Lu Ching-ch'ing, 2nd vol. Note the slight revision of Li's views in the two sources.

15. Chou I-liang, "Jih-pen Nei T'eng Hu Nan [Naitō Konan] hsien-sheng tsai Chung-kuo shih-hsüeh shang chih kung-hsien" (The Contribution of the Japanese Scholar Naitō Konan to Chinese Historical Studies), *Shih-hsüeh nien-pao* (Annual Historical Reviews), Vol. 2, No. 1 (1934), pp. 155-172; Chi Hsiao-ch'üan, (trans.), "Chung-kuo ching-chi shih-te chi-ch'u ho chieh-tuan" (The Foundations and Stages of Chinese Economic History), by Karl A. Wittfogel, *Shih-hao*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Feb. 1937), pp. 1-27 (original pub. in English in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, Jahrgang IV, 1935, Heft I, pp. 26-60); Chang Yin-lin's review of Chi Ch'ao-ting, *Key Economic Areas in Chinese History* in *Chung-kuo she-hui ching-chi shih chi-k'an* (Chinese Social and Economic History Review), Vol. 5, No. 1 (March, 1937), pp. 121-125.

16. Lei Hai-tsung, "Tuan-tai wen-t'i yü Chung-kuo li-shih te fen-ch'i" (The Problems of Historical Periodization and the Periodization of Chinese History), *She-hui k'o-hsüeh* (The Social Science), Vol. 2, No. 1 (Oct., 1936), pp. 1-33; reprinted in Wu Hsiang-hsiang, *et al.*, (eds.), *Chung-kuo chin-tai shih lun-ts'ung* (Collected Studies of Modern Chinese History), Vol. I (Taipei, 1956), pp. 271-304; the English version of this article appeared in *The Social and Political Science Review*, XX (1936-1937), pp. 461-491.

modern—to the periodization of Chinese history. He divided China's past into two major cycles, "Classical China" from antiquity to 383 A.D., and "Synthetic China" from 383 A.D. to date. He pointed out that the history of "Classical China" followed, in general, the same growth pattern of other great civilizations—from feudal age to empire and the decline of classical culture—but the history of the second cycle is unique; no other nations have been able to create a synthetic culture on the basis of several foreign influences, racial and cultural, as did China during this long period. Like Fu Ssu-nien, Lei also took the national factor as his main criterion for the growth of Chinese civilization. In the first cycle, the creator of culture was mainly the Han Chinese, but in the second, the creator was the mixed Han-Tartar Chinese with a strongly Buddhist-influenced mind. Similar to Lei's basic attitude but different from Lei's view was the proposal made by Ch'ien Mu in 1939.<sup>17</sup> Ch'ien held that it is incorrect to study Chinese history in terms of European history, and that division schemes of European history are naturally not applicable to Chinese history. In the end, he divided China's past into eight parts: the period of pre-history and Hsia-Shang-Chou, the period of Ch'un-ch'iu and Chan-kuo, and six other periods arranged by dynastic groupings, i.e., Ch'in-Han, Wei-Chin and Nan-pei-ch'ao, Sui-T'ang and Wu-tai, Sung, Yüan-Ming, and Ch'ing.

One significant concept advanced further in the post-"Controversy" periodization schemes is "incipient capitalism" (*tzu-pen chu-i meng-ya*), a concept that played a key role in Chinese historiography of the 1950's and 1960's, when a great number of works were written on this problem in Chinese history.<sup>18</sup>

17. Ch'ien Mu, *Kuo-shih ta-kang* (*A General History of China*), 2 vols. (Reprint, Taipei, 1965), esp. pp. 1-29; the book was written in 1929 and first published in 1940.

18. Albert Feuerwerker, "From 'Feudalism' to 'Capitalism' in Recent Historical Writing from Mainland China," *Journal of Asian Studies*, XVIII (Nov. 1958), pp. 107-116; Albert Feuerwerker and S. Cheng, *Chinese Communist Studies of Modern Chinese History* (Cambridge, Mass. 1961), pp. 181-189; Tanaka Masatoshi, "Chūgoku rekishigaku kai ni okeru 'Shihon shuki no hoga' kenkyū," in Suzuki Shun and Nishijima Sadao, (eds.), *Chūgoku shi no jidai kubun* (*Periodization of Chinese History*), (Tokyo, 1957), pp. 219-252; Chung-kuo Jen-min Ta-hsüeh Chung-kuo Li-shih Chiao-yen Shih, (ed.), *Chung-kuo tzu-peng chu-i meng-ya wen-t'i t'ao-lun chi* (*Collected Studies on the Problem of Incipient Capitalism in Chinese History*), 2 vols. (Peking, 1957); *idem*, *Ming-Ch'ing she-hui ching-chi hsing-t'ai te yen-chiu* (*Studies in the Social and Economic Developments of the Ming and Ch'ing Periods*), (Shanghai, 1957); Nan-ching Ta-hsüeh Li-shih-hsi Chung-kuo Ku-tai-shih Chiao-yen Shih, (ed.), *Chung-kuo tzu-pen chu-i meng-ya wen-t'i t'ao-lun chi*, 2nd series, (Peking, 1960).

Although the concept was already developed by Wang Chih-jui, T'ao Hsi-sheng, and Li Chi, and termed *Shang-yeh tzu-pen* (commercial capitalism), *hsien tzu-pen chu-i* (proto-capitalism), and *ch'ien tzu-pen chu-i* (proto-capitalism), respectively,<sup>19</sup> Chou Ku-ch'eng in 1939 proposed a periodization scheme which included "incipient capitalism" as a major stage of Chinese history. His five-part division follows the order of (1) a tribal society before 770 B.C.; (2) an era of formation of private ownership of land, from 770 B.C. to 9 A.D.; (3) a high feudal age from 9 to 960; (4) continuation of the feudal society from 960 to 1840; and (5) an era of "incipient capitalism" from 1840 to the 1920's.<sup>20</sup>

The discussion of periodization schemes assumed a new vigor during the "Debates on the Periodization of Chinese History" in Mainland China in the fifties, and was continued, but with less vigor, into the early sixties, until the coming of the Great Cultural Revolution in 1966. Over 350 articles and a number of books dealing with the various aspects of periodization were published. About one-third of the articles were edited into seven impressive volumes.<sup>21</sup> While it is not feasible here to reproduce the diversified views of these

19. See Wang Chih-jui, *Sung-Yüan ching-chi shih* (*The Economic History of the Sung and Yuan Periods*), (Shanghai, 1931; reprint, Taipei, 1964), esp. pp. 10-13; T'ao's article in Wang Li-hsi and Lu Ching-ch'ing, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3 (1932) and *Chung-kuo she-hui chih shih-te fen-hsi* (*A Historical Analysis of Chinese Society*), (Shanghai, 1929), p. 7 (here T'ao also used the term *ch'ien tzu-pen chu-i*); Li Chi's article in Wang Li-hsi and Lu Ching-ch'ing, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2 (1932), p. 45 and Li Chi's book, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

20. Chou Ku-ch'eng, *Chung-kuo t'ung-shih* (*A General History of China*), (Shanghai, 1939). Note the change of Chou's general view in the recent edition of the book (Shanghai, 1957 [1955 and 1956] in two volumes). The first two periods are now termed as one "Ancient China from the Struggle between Man and Nature to the Struggle of Classes."

21. Three of these have been listed in note 18; the other volumes are Li-shih Yen-chiu Pien-chi Pu, (ed.), *Chung-kuo ku-tai-shih fen-ch'i wen-t'i t'ao-lun chi* (*Essays on the Periodization of Chinese Ancient History*), (Peking, 1957); Wen-shih-che Tsa-chih Pien-chi Wei-yüan Hui, (ed.), *Chung-kuo ku-shih fen-ch'i wen-t'i lun-ts'ung* (*Essays on Periodization of the History of Ancient China*), (Peking, 1957); Li-shih Yen-chiu Pien-chi Pu, (ed.), *Chung-kuo chin-tai shih fen-ch'i wen-t'i t'ao-lun chi* (*Essays on the Periodization of Modern Chinese History*), (Peking, 1957); *idem*, (ed.), *Chung-kuo te nu-li chih yü feng-chien chih fen-ch'i wen-t'i lun-wen hsüan-chi* (*Selected Essays on the Problem of Periodizing China's Slave and Feudal Ages*), (Peking, 1956). See also *Ming-ch'ing she-hui ching-chi hsing-fai te yen-chiu*.

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works,<sup>22</sup> a few of their common features or grounds can be discussed here. They follow, for the most part, the Marxist view of history that the only deciding factors in history are (1) the mode of production, (2) the class struggle, and (3) the principal contradictions within a society.<sup>23</sup> But a unique factor in the context of Chinese history that has been added to these elements is "nationalism," a factor depicted in struggles between the Han Chinese and northern nomads before modern times, and between the Chinese as a whole and Europeans since the nineteenth century. As we have already explored, the application of nationalism as a major factor in periodizing Chinese history is a traditional one; it dates back to Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Fu Ssu-nien. It is a product of the political nationalist movement in modern China.

The second common feature of the Marxist interpretation of history is that histories of all countries follow a single universal course: from primitive communism, to ancient slavery, to medieval feudalism, to modern capitalism, and to socialistic society.<sup>24</sup> But in the special context of China three additional conceptions, "incipient capitalism," "semi-colonial" (*pan ch'ih-min-ti*), and

22. For excellent studies on this problem, see Albert Feuerwerker, *op. cit.* (1958); *idem*, "China's History in Marxian Dress," *American Historical Review*, Vol. LXVI, No. 2 (Jan. 1961), pp. 323-353, reprinted in *History in Communist China* ed. by Albert Feuerwerker (Cambridge, Mass. 1968), pp. 14-44; Albert Feuerwerker and S. Cheng, *Chinese Communist Studies of Modern Chinese History*, pp. 1-27 (esp. pp. 21-27); Lu Yao-tung, "Chung-kung shang-ku-shih fen-ch'i wen-t'i" (Review of the Periodization Schemes Advanced in Communist China), *Min-chu p'ing-lun* (Democratic Review), Vol. 16, No. 13 (July, 1965), pp. 17-20 and Vol. 16, No. 14 (August, 1965), pp. 19-22; Chien Po-tsan, "Kuan-yü Chung-kuo li-shih fen-ch'i te wen-t'i" (Some Problems on the Periodization of Chinese History), *Tōyōshi kenkyū* (The Journal of Oriental Researches), Vol. 14, No. 4 (March, 1956), pp. 93-102 (its English translation appeared in John Meskill, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-84; its Japanese translation appeared in Suzuki Shun and Nishijima Sadao, (eds.), *Chūgoku shi no jidai kubun*, pp. 61-76); Ts'en Chung-mien, *Hsi-Chou she-hui chih-tu wen-t'i* (Problems in Western Chou Society), (Shanghai, 1956), esp. pp. 1-57, 143-154; Nishijima Sadao, *Chūgoku kodai teikoku no keisei to kōzō* (The Formation and Structure of Ancient Chinese Empire), (Tokyo, 1961), pp. 7-13; Masubuchi Tatsuo, *Chūgoku kodai no shakai to kokka* (State and Society in Ancient China), (Tokyo, 1960), pp. 1-48.

23. For Marxist views of history, see M.M. Bober, *Karl Marx's Interpretation of History* (New York, 1965), pp. 3-45; Patrick Gardiner, (ed.), *Theories of History* (New York, 1959), pp. 126-132.

24. For a discussion of the Marxist scheme, see M.M. Bober, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-63; also J.H. Hexter, *Reappraisals in History* (New York, 1963), pp. 14-17.

"semi-feudal" (*pan feng-chien*), have come to play a major role in historical periodization.<sup>25</sup> In the various periodization proposals, "incipient capitalism" is used to describe the later feudal age or to replace the era of "capitalism" in the Marxist model, and "semi-colonial" or "semi-colonial and semi-feudal" age replaces "capitalism," denoting China as under "imperialist" influences since 1840. The periodization scheme of Fan Wen-lan, one of the leading and at one time one of the most influential historians in Mainland China, serves a good illustration of this point. Fan holds that the period before Hsia was the age of primitive communes; the periods of Hsia and Shang represented China's slave society; the feudal age lasted from Western Chou to the Opium War; and a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society existed from 1840 to 1949. He also maintains that "incipient capitalism" began in the Ming period, but it was never strong enough to shake the feudal economy and society.<sup>26</sup>

While a small minority have dissented from the general Marxist normative stages of societal development by simply stating that the present state of research on Chinese history does not warrant periodization efforts, the majority of historians in Mainland China have followed the pattern. But this does not make analysis of their schemes any easier. They have disagreed about the

25. Although these terms can be readily found in Marxist literature, it was during the era of the Controversy on the Social History of China that they were employed to periodize Chinese history. Chu I-chih, Li Chi, and Lü Chen-yü were among the first to do so. See Chu I-chih, "Pan ch'ih-min-ti Chung-kuo ching-chi chieh-kou te t'e-cheng" (The Characteristics of the Economy of Semi-colonial China), *Hsin-sheng-ming*, Vol. 3, No. 10 (1930), pp. 1-14; Lü Chen-yü, *Shih-ch'ien ch'i Chung-kuo she-hui yen-chiu* (*Studies in Chinese Prehistoric Society*), (Peking, 1934), pp. 2, 11-61, esp. 32-61; Li Chi's article in Wang Li-hsi and Lu Ching-ch'ing, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2. It is held that the use of *pan ch'ih-min-ti* (semi-colony; semi-colonial) was influenced by Dr. Sun Yat-sen's terming China a *ts'u ch'ih-min-ti* (sub-colony) in his famous *San-min chu-i* (*The Three Peoples' Principles*); see Ch'ien Chien-fu, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-148 and Chu I-chih's article cited above; see also Hsüeh Mu-ch'iao, *Feng-chien pan feng-chien ho tzu-pen chu-i* (*Feudalism, Semi-feudalism, and Capitalism*), (Shanghai, 1937). In his "Chung-kuo ke-ming ho Chung-kuo kung-ch'an tang" (Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party; December, 1939), Mao Tse-tung described China after 1840 as "semi-colonial" and "semi-feudal" society. See Mao Tse-tung, *Mao Tse-tung hsüan-chi* (*Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*), Vol. 2 (Peking, 1952), p. 596; also p. 617.

26. Fan Wen-lan, *Chung-kuo fang-shih chien-pien* (*A Short History of China*), 4 vols. (Rev. ed. 1961-1965; earlier editions in 1949, 1955), pp. 5-75; *idem.*, "Chung-kuo chin-tai shih te fen-ch'i wen-t'i" (On the Problem of Periodizing Modern Chinese History), in *Chung-kuo chin-tai fen-ch'i wen-t'i t'ao-lun ch'i*, pp. 98-110.



presence of some stages following feudalism in Chinese history; for example, some have rejected the stage of "incipient capitalism." Further, even though they agreed on the order of stages of the system, very often they have disagreed with one another on the timing of shifts from one stage to another. It is this latter issue that has greatly divided Mainland Chinese historians. Most of the controversies in this regard have centered around two questions. One concerns when the slave age ended and the feudal age began; the other, assuming the existence of "incipient capitalism," concerns when this period began. For the former, Chou Ku-ch'eng proposed in 1950 that China's feudal age started after A.D. 9, while the period from the Shang through the Former Han to A.D. 9 was the slave age.<sup>27</sup> Kuo Mo-jo suggested in 1952 the transition from Ch'un-ch'iu to Chan-kuo as the transition from the slave age to the feudal age.<sup>28</sup> Yang Hsiang-k'uei proposed in the same year that the Western Chou represented the beginning of the feudal age; his view shared by T'ung Shu-yeh, Ts'en Chung-mien, Hsü Chung-shu, Fan Wen-lan, Lü Chen-yü, and many others.<sup>29</sup> Li Ya-nung's studies of 1953 contended that the collapse of the Western Chou in the eighth century B.C. marked the ending of China's slave age.<sup>30</sup>

As has been discussed above, the issue of "incipient capitalism" in the problem of periodization in Chinese historical studies is an old one. But the political factor has brought about a new wave of enthusiasm for a most intensive

27. Chou's article in *Chung-kuo te nu-li chih yü feng-chien chih fen-ch'i wen-t'i lun-wen hsüan-chi*, pp. 61-67.

28. Kuo Mo-jo, *Nu-li chih shih-tai* (*The Age of Slavery and Other Studies*), (New ed. Peking, 1956; original ed. 1952), esp. pp. 1-50, 69-98; *idem*, *Chung-kuo ku tai she-hui yen-chiu*, p. 11. Note Kuo's change from his earlier view discussed above. Kuo's new view was expressed in a postscript to the 1947 edition of *Chung-kuo ku-tai she-hui yen-chiu* (p. 344) but was not systematically elaborated on until 1952. See also Kuo, *Wen-shih lun-chi* (*Essays on Literature and History*), (Peking, 1961), pp. 117-126.

29. See articles by these scholars in *Chung-kuo te nu-li chih yü feng-chien chih fen-ch'i wen-t'i lun-wen hsüan-chi*; Lü Chen-yü, *Shih-chien ch'i Chung-kuo she-hui yen-chiu* (*Studies in Chinese Prehistoric Society*), (Rev. ed. Peking, 1961), pp. 6-37; *idem*, *Yin-Chou shih-tai te Chung-kuo she-hui* (*Chinese Society of the Yin and Chou Periods*), (Rev. ed. Peking, 1962); *idem*, *Chung-kuo cheng-chih ssu-hsiang shih* (*A History of Chinese Political Thought*), (Rev. ed. Peking, 1956), pp. 17-27; Ts'en Chung-mien, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-57, 133-154.

30. Li Ya-nung, *Hsin-jan-chai shih lun chi* (*Collected Studies in Chinese History from the Hsin-jan Studio*), (Shanghai, 1962), pp. 87, 124, 131.

and extensive investigation of the issue.<sup>31</sup> Numerous works on the problem have produced an amazing amount of new materials, secondary and primary, for the study of Chinese economic and social history. Disagreement on when "incipient capitalism" began in China, however, remains as wide as ever. Ten possible periods have been proposed, namely, T'ang (618-907), Sung (960-1279), Southern Sung (1127-1279), early Yüan (13th century), early Ming (14th century), middle Ming (the 15th to the 16th century), the early sixteenth century, late Ming (the late 16th and the early 17th centuries), the early seventeenth century, and early Ch'ing to the eighteenth century. But, like the very existence of the issue itself, none of these is conclusive.<sup>32</sup>

Historians of Nationalist China have been relatively inactive with regard to the problem of periodization. Only a few works have been written; none has been able to raise controversy.<sup>33</sup> Influenced by Ott Franke, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Fu Ssu-nien, and Lei Hai-tung, in 1957 Yao Ts'ung-wu proposed using the

31. The political factor was Mao Tse-tung's affirmative statement on the problem; it was first made in December, 1939, See *Mao Tse-tung hsüan-chi*, Vol. II (Peking, 1952), p. 596, and *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Eng. ed. 4 vols. London, 1954-1956), Vol. III, p. 77.
32. *Chung-kuo tzu-pen chui-i meng-ya wen-t'i t'ao-lun chi*, first series (2 vols.) and 2nd series; *Ming-Ch'ing she-hui ching-chi hsing-t'ai te yen-chiu*; Shang Yüeh, *Chung-kuo tzu-pen chui-i kuan-hsi fa-sheng chi yen-pien te ch'u-pu yen-chiu* (*Preliminary Studies on the Origin and Development of Capitalist Relations in China*), (Peking, 1956); Chung-kuo Jen-min Ta-hsüeh Li-shih Chiao-yen Shih, (ed.). *Chung-kuo feng-chien ching-chi kuan-hsi te jo-han wen-t'i* (*Some Problems of Feudal Economic Relations in China*), (Peking, 1958), pp. 187-345; Ch'en Shih-ch'i, *Ming-tai kuan shou-kung-yeh te yen-chiu* (*Studies in the Governmental Handicraft Industry in the Ming Dynasty*), (Wuhan, 1958); Wu Tan-ko, *Ya-p'ien chan-cheng ch'ien Chung-kuo she-hui ching-chi te pien-hua* (*Social and Economic Changes in China from the Ming Period Until the Opium War*), (Shanghai, 1959); Fu I-ling, *Ming-tai Chiang-nan shih-min ching-chi shih-t'an* (*An Exploration into the Urban Economy in the Kiangnan Area during the Ming Dynasty*), (Shanghai, 1957); *idem*, *Ming-Ch'ing shih-tai shang-jen chi shang-yeh tzu-pen* (*Merchants and Commercial Capital in the Ming and Ch'ing Periods*), (Peking 1956); and Fu Chu-fu and Li Ching-neng, *Chung-kuo feng-chien she-hui nei tzu-pen chui-i yin-su te meng-ya* (*Incipient Capitalistic Elements in Chinese Feudal Society*), (Shanghai, 1956).
33. In addition to the works to be discussed in this section, also see Chiang Hsiao-yü, *et al.*, "Chi-chung Chung-kuo shih fen-ch'i kuan-nien te chieh-shao" (Some Systems of Periodization of Chinese History), *Ssu-yü-yen* (Thought and Word), Vol. 3, No. 1 (1965), pp. 11-17; Hu Ch'iu-yüan, "Tui-yü Chung-kuo li-shih chih jo-kan kuan-ch'a" (Some Observations on the Pattern of Chinese History), in *Shih-hsüeh t'ung-lun* (*General Historical Studies*), ed. by Ta-lu Tsa-chih She (Taipei, 1960), pp. 225-242; *idem*, *Chung-kuo ku-tai wen-hua yü Chung-kuo chih-shih fen-tzu* (*Ancient Chinese Culture and Chinese Intellectuals*), Vol. I (Hong Kong, 1956).

development and influence of Confucian cosmopolitanism and the growth of the Chinese nation as the main criteria for periodizing Chinese history. In general, Professor Yao contends that the history of imperial China (221 B.C.-A.D. 1912) should be divided into two major periods: one prior to the fall of the T'ang dynasty in 907, and one after this date. Each constitutes an independent cycle in terms of the development of Confucian cosmopolitanism and the growth of the Chinese nation. Specifically, he suggests a four-part division: (1) Shang to the end of Han; (2) Wei to the end of T'ang; (3) the Five Dynasties to the end of Yüan; and (4) Ming and Ch'ing, each witnessing a complete cycle of racial mixing of the Chinese and northern nomads. He also holds that China of today is in the process of the fifth such cycle.<sup>34</sup> The striking feature of this view is its strong nationalist inclination and an absence of such conventional European labels as "feudalism," "modern," and the like.

Taking into consideration the complexity of the periodization problem, Lao Kan suggests three ways to look at the issue. Viewing political history and the tools used in different ages, he divides Chinese history into (1) a stone age—palaeolithic and neolithic; (2) a bronze age from Shang through Ch'un-ch'iu—feudal society; (3) an iron age from Chan-kuo to the end of the Tao-kuang reign (1821-1850) of the Ch'ing dynasty—agricultural empire with bureaucratic government; and (4) a machine age since Tao-kuang. Viewing stages of cultural progress, Lao proposes a four-part division: (1) a period from the Ch'in to the Eastern Han (221 B.C.-A.D. 25), marked by mutual influences and the growth of Confucianism and Taoism; (2) a period from the Eastern Han through the T'ien-pao era (742-756) of the T'ang dynasty, marked by great cultural progress and strong Buddhist influence; (3) a period from the end of T'ien-pao to the Tao-kuang era of the Ch'ing dynasty, marked by dominance of Neo-Confucianism, development of popular novels and stories and dramas, increasing political authoritarianism, and rigid civil service examinations; and (4) a period since Tao-kuang, an era of transformation.

34. Yao Ts'ung-wu, "Kuo-shih k'uo-ta mien-yen te i-ko k'an-fa" (A View of the Historical Development of China), in *Shih-hsüeh t'ung-tun* ed. by Ta-lu Tsa-chih She (Taipei, 1960), pp. 212-224 (Written and published in 1957); reprinted in *Tung-pei shih lun-ts'ung* (Collected Studies in the History of Manchuria), (Taipei, 1959), pp. 1-26. For Otto Franke's view, see *Geschichte des chinesischen Reiches*, 5 vols. Berlin, 1930-1952.

Viewing the periodic recurrence of internecine wars, Lao divides imperial China into three cycles: Ch'in to the end of the Southern and Northern dynasties (221 B.C.—A.D. 589); Sui through the Sung dynasty (589–1279); and Yüan to the end of Ch'ing (1279–1912), with each going through a cycle of cultural and political creative periods, an era of peace and prosperity, and a period of social and institutional disintegration and wars.<sup>35</sup>

It is clear that Lao's schemes stem from three early sources. The first is influenced by one of the conventional European divisions; the second is based on the works of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Fu Ssu-nien, Lei Hai-tsung, and others; and the third is a revision of a system first formulated by Li Ssu-kuang in 1931.<sup>36</sup>

Another scheme of Chinese historical divisions was suggested by Lo Hsiang-lin in 1953. Based primarily on the evolution of four factors—the role of family in Chinese society, the predominance of agricultural economy, the influence of Confucian principles, and the overall configuration of Chinese society, which he termed “olive-shape” society, Lo divides the long history, or more properly the history of the evolution of Chinese society, into four major periods: (1) the tribal society (3000–1401 B.C.), in which a confederate head ruled over various supporting tribes; (2) the feudal society (1400–221 B.C.), in which the king ruled over the feudal princes; (3) the selective-system society (221 B.C.–617 A.D.), in which the centralized power of the sovereign ruled the country by the force of a bureaucracy recruited through a recommendation-selection system; and (4) the civil service examination system society (617–1911 A.D.), in which the ruling class of the society was the elite

35. Lao Kan, “Chung-kuo li-shih shang te chih-luan chou-ch'i” (The Cycles of Order and Disorder in Chinese History), in *Shih-hsüeh tung-lun*, pp. 280–283 (Written in 1958); *idem*, “Chung-kuo li-shih te chou-ch'i chi Chung-kuo li-shih te fen-ch'i wen-t'i” (The Cycles in Chinese History and the Problem of Periodization of Chinese History), *Ta-lu tsa-chih* (Continent Magazine), Vol. 29, No. 5 (1964), pp. 1–8.

36. Li Ssu-kuang, “Chan-kuo hou Chung-kuo nei-chan te t'ung-chi ho chih-luan te chou-ch'i” (The Periodic Recurrence of Internecine Wars in China since the Chan-kuo Period), in *Ch'ing-chu Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei Hsien-sheng liu-shih-wu sui lun-wen-chi* (Studies Presented to Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei on His Sixty-fifth Birthday), Part I (Peiping, 1933), pp. 157–166; its English version appeared in *China Journal of Science and Art*, Vol. XIV, Nos. 3, 4 (March–April, 1931), pp. 111–115, 159–163. Li's English version has been discussed by Lin Yutang, *My Country and My People* (New York, 1935), pp. 28–34, and by Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (Boston, 1962), p. 532.

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who passed the civil service examinations 36A. Lo makes careful analyses of the characteristic developments of the aforementioned four major factors in each of the four periods. It seems clear that his periodization of Chinese history provides some insights into the evolution and dynamics of change of Chinese society, although the system itself is not entirely original.

Outside China, many different periodization schemes and views concerning the developmental stages of Chinese society and history have also been suggested. While some of these are duplicates of the models mentioned above, the others present new theories. A few representative ones may be briefly sketched here. In Japan,<sup>37</sup> Naitō Torajirō (1860–1934) suggested in 1922 that the late T'ang and the Five Dynasties marked the transition to China's "modern age," which started with the Sung, while the period from the end of the Han through the middle T'ang constituted China's "middle ages," and the period of the Han and prior to that lay in China's "ancient society."<sup>38</sup> Miyazaki Ichisada proposed in 1950 to divide Chinese history into four major ages: an ancient empire—from high antiquity to the end of the Han; an aristocratic society—from the Three Kingdoms to the end of the Five Dynasties; a period of autocratic government—from the unification of the Sung to the Opium War; and the age of

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36A. Lo Hsiang-lin, *Chung-kuo ming-tsu shih* (History of the Chinese People and Civilization), (Taipei, 1953), pp. 92–120; "Evolution of the Chinese Society and Its Relation to Chinese Historical Divisions," *Chinese Culture*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (March 1961), pp. 37–45.

37. For an excellent discussion of Japanese works on the periodization of Chinese history, see Nishijima Sadao, *op. cit.*, pp. 14–19; Itō Masahiko, "Tō-matsu kodai shūmatsu setsu o megutte" (On the Theory of the Late T'ang as the End of China's Ancient Age), *Shichō* (Historical Currents), No. 100 (Oct. 1967), (pp. 185–200), pp. 185–190; Shigeta Toku, "Hōkensei no shiten to Min Shin shakai" (Feudalism in the Ming and Ching Dynasties), *Tōyōshi kenkyū*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (March, 1969), pp. 136–181; Saeki Ariichi, "Nihon no Min Shin jidai kenkyū okeru sh'hin seisan kyōka o megutte" (Evaluation of Japanese Studies on the Commercial Economy of the Ming-Ch'ing Periods), in *Chūgoku shi no jidai kubun*, pp. 253–321; Miyakawa Hisayuki, *op. cit.*; Gotō Kimpei, "Postwar Japanese Studies on Chinese Social and Economic History," *Monumenta Serica*, No. 17 (1958), pp. 377–418.

38. Naitō Torajirō, "Gaikatsuteki Tō Sō jidai kan" (A General View of the T'ang and Sung Periods), *Rekishu to chiri*, Vol. 9, No. 5 (1922), pp. 1–12, reprinted in *Naitō Konan zenshū* (Complete Works of Naitō Konan), Vol. 8, pp. 111–119; see also Vol. 10 (*Shina kinsei shi*) (Tokyo, 1969), pp. 347–520 (esp. 347–359). Also see Hisayuki Miyakawa, *op. cit.* As Miyakawa already pointed out, Naitō's same ideas had first been put forward in an essay which appeared in 1914. See Naitō Torajirō, *Shinaron* (On China), ed. by Naitō Kenkichi (Tokyo, 1933), pp. 8–53: "Kunshusei ka kyōwasei ka" (Monarchy or Republic?), p. 9.

modernization—since the Opium War. Like Naitō, he also maintained that the dividing line between China's medieval period and the modern age was the late T'ang.<sup>39</sup> A theory quite different from the above two, which have been followed by a considerable number of scholars in Japan, was advanced by Maeda Naonori (1915-1949) in 1948. According to him, the periodization of Chinese history must be considered together with that of all other East Asian countries such as Japan and Korea. Secondly, the Five Dynasties period after the T'ang dynasty was the beginning of China's medieval, feudal society, while the T'ang and before constituted the ancient period, a society marked by slavery.<sup>40</sup> This new hypothesis has since aroused strong interest among a number of scholars. New research trends thus have resulted from their efforts to test its applicability to Chinese history and the histories of other East Asian countries. Among these researchers are Japan's leading scholars on Chinese economic and social history, such as Nishijima Sadao and Sudō Yoshiyuki.<sup>41</sup> In 1953 Hamaguchi Shigekuni, a leading Japanese expert on Chinese socio-economic and military history, proposed a different line of division: China's ancient society lay in the period from high antiquity through the Ch'un-ch'iu and Chan-kuo periods, and her middle ages lasted from the Ch'in to the end of the Ch'ing in 1912. He thus maintains that the differences in socio-economic and cultural developments between the Ch'in and Han, the Wei and Chin and Southern and Northern Dynasties, and the Sui and T'ang are merely those between the various subperiods of a long stage of history; therefore the period from the Ch'in and the Han to the middle T'ang is China's early middle age, in which some of the elements of ancient society still functioned, and the period since the middle T'ang represents China's high middle age, in which all medieval

39. Miyazaki Ichisada, *Tōyōteki kinsei (The Modern Age of the Orient)*, (Ōsaka, 1950).

40. Maeda Naonori, "Tō-Aija ni okeru kodai no shūmatsu" (The End of the Ancient Period of East Asia), *Rekishi* (History), Vol. 4, No. 1 (1948); also reprinted in *Chūgokushi jo jidai kubun*, pp. 349-367; its English translation (abridged) appeared in John Meskill, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-75.

41. Nishijima Sadao, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 19-53. Sudō Yoshiyuki has written extensively on T'ang-Sung society and economy, in search of a better understanding of the nature of the society of this long period; see his monumental works *Chūgoku tochi seido shi kenkyū* (*Studies in the Land System of China*), (Tokyo, 1954); *Sōdai keizai shi kenkyū* (*Studies in Sung Economic History*), (Tokyo, 1962); *Tō-Sō shakai keizaishi kenkyū* (*Studies in the Economic History of the T'ang and Sung Periods*), (Tokyo, 1965). See also Gotō Kimpei, *op. cit.*, for the division among Japanese scholars between followers of the Naitō proposal and that of Maeda.

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elements reached maturity.<sup>42</sup>

In the West,<sup>43</sup> various periodization schemes and views have been advanced. A few significant ones may be briefly stated. Following the Marxist theory of Oriental Society and control of water resources as his main concern, Karl A. Wittfogel considers imperial China a "complex hydraulic (Oriental)" society which never underwent basic changes and therefore needs little periodization. Chou and pre-Chou China are termed "simple hydraulic" and "semi-complex hydraulic" societies, respectively, in terms of governmental forms.<sup>44</sup> From a standpoint of sociological characteristics, Wolfram Eberhard sees no merit in the concept of basic differences between East and West, and suggests retaining the conventional European tri-partite division. Thus he periodizes Chinese history as (1) antiquity—a period of feudalism, from Shang to the mid-third century B.C.; (2) medieval time—a period of gentry society, from the mid-third century B.C. to the ten century A.D.; and (3) modern time—a period of the middle class, from the tenth century onwards.<sup>45</sup> Influenced by the Naitō proposal and, like Naitō, focusing major attention on socio-economic and intellectual changes, Edwin O. Reischauer and John K. Fairbank suggest that the late T'ang marked the transition from "classic" to "early modern" China. They regard the late T'ang and Sung as a period of renaissance that showed a decided shift in the basic values of culture and the establishment of new

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42. Hamaguchi Shigekuni, "Chūgokishijo no kodai shakai mondai ni kansuru oboegaki" (Notes on the Problem of Ancient Society in Chinese History), *Yamanashi Daigaku gakugei gakubu kenkyū hōkoku* (Research Report of the Faculty of Arts of Yamanashi University), No. 4 (1953); reprinted in Hamaguchi's *Tō ōchō no senjin seido* (*A Study on the Chien-min System of the T'ang Dynasty*), (Kyoto, 1966), pp. 549-574, additional notes on pp. 575-583.

43. An excellent study and collection of major views is found in John Meskill, *op. cit.* For excellent comments on different views and schemes, see Wolfram Eberhard, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-66, 74-88; Meribeth E. Cameron, *op. cit.*

44. Karl A. Wittfogel, *op. cit.*; *New Light on Chinese Society* (New York), 1938; "Chinese Society: An Historical Survey," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (May, 1957), pp. 343-364; *idem*, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New Haven, Conn. 1957), pp. 251-252, 260, 286ff. For critical reviews of Wittfogel's theory, see Frederick W. Mote, "The Growth of Chinese Despotism: A Critique of Wittfogel's Theory of Oriental Despotism as Applied to China," *Oriens Extremus*, VII (1961), pp. 1-41; and Denis C. Twitchett, "Some Remarks on Irrigation under the T'ang," *T'oung-pao*, XLVIII (1961), pp. 175-194.

45. Wolfram Eberhard, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-47, 172. Note that Professor Eberhard has refined his view from the first edition of the book (Leiden, 1952).



patterns.<sup>46</sup> Along the same line, noting a "great divide" taking place in the late T'ang, James T. C. Liu proposes a "neo-traditional period" from about 800 to 1900 A.D., which signifies a selective continuity of the old tradition as well as a reintegration of the old heritage and the new ingredients into a new tradition that in turn imposes its own set bounds.<sup>47</sup>

Somewhat different from the two suggestions just mentioned is Earl H. Pritchard's theory of "Six Ages," proposed in 1964.<sup>48</sup> He divides Chinese history into six major periods. The first two are "The Stone Age" and "The Archaic Bronze Age," which are contemporaneous, existing in different parts of China from ca. 2000 B.C. to 770 B.C. or 500 B.C. for the Archaic Bronze and Stone Ages, respectively. During the Archaic Bronze Age a fully developed civilization emerged, while elementary forms of society and different styles of economic life evolved during the Stone Age. The Classical Age lasted from 700 B.C. to 220 A.D., during which the dominant ideology ultimately became Confucianism; the Cosmopolitan Age, from 220 to 1127 A.D., possessed Buddhism as its dominant ideology, with Confucianism and Taoism of secondary importance; the Neo-Classical Age, from 1127 to 1911 A.D., was dominated by Neo-Confucianism; and the Sino-Western Age, which has continued to date, has had as its dominant ideology a mixture of Chinese and Western ideas. It is of interest to note Pritchard's use of "dominant ideology" as his main criterion in periodizing Chinese history, although factors of other kinds have also been taken into consideration. Pritchard also notes in his scheme three occurrences of the same cycles: (1) an "Interim-Empire" period: a period of division and internal disorder preceding a powerful empire, such as the Eastern Chou, the Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties, the Chin, the Hsi-Hsia, and the Southern Sung, etc.; and (2) "Empires" made up of (a) a short-

46. Edwin O. Reischauer and John K. Fairbank, *East Asia, The Great Tradition*. (Boston, 1961), pp. 183-188.

47. James T. C. Liu, *op. cit.* For still other views of the nature of changes in Chinese society that the late T'ang or the Sung experienced, see E. A. Kracke, Jr., "Sung Society: Change Within Tradition," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, XIV (1954-1955), pp. 479-488; Hu Shih, *op. cit.*, and "Authority and Freedom in the Ancient Asian World," in *Man's Right to Knowledge: An International Symposium Presented in Honor of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of Columbia University, First Series: Tradition and Change* (New York, 1954), pp. 40-45.

48. Earl H. Pritchard, "Basic Periods in Chinese History and Factors Contributing to the Decline of Major Dynasties," in Chi-pao Cheng, (ed.), *A Symposium on Chinese Culture* (New York, 1964), pp. 5-15.

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lived conquest dynasty such as the Ch'in, the Sui, and the Yüan; (b) a strong, long-lived dynasty such as the Western Han, the T'ang, and the Ming; (c) an "Interim-dynasty" such as the Hsin (Wang Mang), the Five Dynasties, the Ming-Ch'ing transition; and (d) another strong, long-lived dynasty such as the Eastern Han, the Northern Sung, and the Ch'ing.

Complementing these considerations of evolutionary movements is the theory of cycles, which, as our foregoing discussion has indicated, can be classed as periodic cycles and dynastic cycles. Chi Ch'ao-ting's division of Chinese history from 255 B.C. to A.D. 1912, based on the shifting of key economic areas, into five cycles of *unity and peace* and *division and struggle* represents the former; and Edwin O. Reischauer and John K. Fairbank's analysis of the cyclical pattern of the Han dynasty illustrates the latter.<sup>49</sup> The whole problem of dynastic configurations in Chinese history was further refined by Professor Lien-sheng Yang in 1954.<sup>50</sup>

The periodization schemes discussed above fall into three broad models: that of unique Chinese historical process, that of European history, and that of the Marxist normative stages of societal development. As already stated, historians of the last group hold that like the histories of all other countries, Chinese history follows a single universal course as prescribed by the Marxist

49. Chi Ch'ao-ting, *Key Economic Areas in Chinese History* (New York, 1936; reprinted in 1963), pp. 4-11; Edwin O. Reischauer and John K. Fairbank, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-123. For various aspects and discussions of cyclical theories, see also Wang Yü-ch'uan, "The Rise of Land Tax and the Fall of Dynasties in Chinese History," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (June, 1936), pp. 201-220; Owen Lattimore, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46, 531-552; Yao Shan-yu, "The Chronological and Seasonal Distribution of Floods and Droughts in Chinese History, 206 B.C.-A.D. 1911," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* Vol. 6 (1942), pp. 273-312; *idem*, "Flood and Drought Data in the *T'u-shu chi-ch'eng* and the *Ch'ing-shih kao*," *ibid.*, Vol. 8 (1944), pp. 214-226; Hans Bielenstein, "An Interpretation of the Portents in the *Ts'ien Han Shu*," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, XXVI (1951), pp. 127-143; and Wolfram Eberhard, "The Political Function of Astronomy and Astronomers in Han China," in John K. Fairbank, (ed.), *Chinese Thought and Institutions* (Chicago, 1957), pp. 33-70. An illuminating discussion of the dynastic cycle as a pattern of generalization in Chinese history is given in Arthur F. Wright, "On the Uses of Generalization in the Study of Chinese History," in Louis Gottschalk, (ed.), *Generalization in the Writing of History* (Chicago, 1963), (pp. 36-58), pp. 41-43, 49-53.

50. Yang Lien-sheng, "Toward a Study of Dynastic Configurations in Chinese History," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 17 (1954), pp. 329-345, reprinted in the author's *Studies in Chinese Institutional History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), pp. 1-17, additions and corrections on p. 225.

scheme of historical stages. The only cause of disagreements and disputes between them is the dating of the different stages within this single universal course.

Historians of the second group recognize the applicability of conventional periodization schemes of European history in analyzing Chinese historical stages. Their arguments emphasize the effects of economic and political development, with the focus of attention on the difference between preindustrial societies.<sup>51</sup>

The first model rejects the usefulness of Marxian concepts of historical process and the general model of European history in periodizing Chinese history; it assumes, instead, that the course of Chinese history is unique, that foreign concepts cannot fit in, and that new views of history and new methods of periodization must be created on the basis of unique characteristics of Chinese historical process, including the unique pattern of cultural growth, the pattern of relations between the northern barbarians and the Chinese, the image and influence of China in Asia, the developmental stages of Chinese national character, and the pattern of dynastic relations.

These differences in asserting the pattern of Chinese history, in general, can be understandably attributed to different stands based upon the cultural values and political beliefs of the historians. Specifically, they can be understood in terms of the intellectual climate and historiographic trends of the times in which the historians lived in the past, or now live. The majority of the historians of the first group, for example, are all renowned Chinese nationalists; their schemes of periodization were advanced during the height of the Chinese nationalist movement, in which the climate of opinion in almost every kind of intellectual pursuit was dominated by a strong nationalistic spirit.

It is significant to note that the frequency of proposals of periodization schemes and the intensity of interest in making such proposals are correlated with, among other elements, the general state of academic enterprise in China and of Chinese studies in countries outside China. For example, the highest frequency of writings on periodization in Mainland China was in the mid- and late-fifties, which was also the most active period of the mainland academic world under the relatively free atmosphere of *Po-chia cheng-ming* (let the

51. For a clear discussion of periodization schemes of European history, see Oscar Halecki, *The Limits and Divisions of European History* (South Bend, Indiana, 1962), pp. 7-61, 145-161, 165-182.

one hundred schools of thought contend).<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, the relative lack of attention to the periodization problem in Nationalist China may be explained by the fact that the academic world there had been in general less active until the 1960's, due to a complex of factors.

The search for patterns of Chinese history signifies a broad dimension of persistent efforts of historians in particular and scholars in general for an in-depth understanding of the configuration and salient phases of Chinese society and civilization. Besides constituting an integral intellectual discipline, such an understanding has direct contemporary relevance. For those historians and scholars outside China, this effort is part of their research on China's past and its relevance to the present, and constitutes a significant part of the meaning of their profession for their respective societies. For historians and scholars in China, such an effort is both part of the Chinese intellectual tradition and representative of the contemporary design of rewriting China's past in terms of current value systems and political ideologies. Looking into the long history of Chinese historical writings, it is a long, recurrent tradition that after a dynastic transition or during great political changes historians and scholars chose or were induced to devote their intellectual efforts to examining the pattern and course of past history. As a result, new historical writings based on new views were produced. The reasons for this phenomenon were manifold. First of all, the great changes, dynastic or otherwise, produced new ages which, in turn, gave rise to new ways of evaluating the past. Furthermore, the need to preserve the records of the past after the changes generated and directed new intellectual efforts in historiographic pursuit. Thirdly, political changes increased the desire and need to examine the historical course of the past to find the right course of action for the future, and to reinterpret the past to affirm the legitimacy and authority of the present institutions. An examination of the timing of and ideologies behind the historiographic endeavors throughout Chinese history can fully testify to these views.<sup>53</sup> For example, of the twenty-

52. A concise analysis of the academic atmosphere, particularly the world of historical studies, is given in Albert Feuerwerker and S. Chang, *Chinese Communist Studies of Modern Chinese History*, pp. vii-xxv.

53. These views become quite apparent in reading works on the history of Chinese historiography; a few of the well-known ones are given here for reference: Chin Yü-fu, *Chung-kuo shi-hsiieh shih* (*A History of Chinese Historiography*), (Reprint. Peking, 1962), esp. pp. 20ff; Naitō Torajirō, *Shina shigaku shi* (*A History of Chinese Historiography*), in Naitō's *Naitō Konan*

six Dynastic Histories, twenty-two were compiled in the first years of a new dynasty, and eight of these are not even the history of the preceding dynasty of the regimes under which they were compiled.<sup>54</sup> The tremendous amount of historical and quasi-historical works (over eleven hundred, according to a contemporary record) produced during the Ming-Ch'ing transition, which examined from both the standpoint of dynastic changes and general Chinese history the causes of the fall of the Ming and the rise of the Ch'ing, is another good illustration of these points.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, one may conclude that increased Chinese historiographic efforts in contemporary times—the upsurge in efforts to explore the pattern of Chinese history in both specific and general terms—is quite in line with a recurrent model of Chinese traditional historiography, i.e., the review and re-evaluation of past experiences after great political changes, for political, intellectual, and historiographic purposes.

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*zenshū*, vol. 11 (Tokyo, 1969), esp. pp. 106 ff; Li Tsung-t'ung, *Chung-kuo shi-hsüeh shih* (*A History of Chinese Historiography*), (Taipei, 1955), esp. pp. 168 ff; Charles S. Gardner, *Chinese Traditional Historiography*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), esp. pp. 7-18; Lien-sheng Yang, "The Organization of Chinese Official Historiography: Principles and Methods of the Standard Histories from the T'ang through the Ming," in *Historians of China and Japan*, ed. by W.G. Beasley and E.G. Pulleybland (London, 1961), pp. 44-59.

54. Hsü Hao, *Nien-wu shih lun-kang* (*Essentials of the Twenty-five Dynastic Histories*), (Reprint. Hong Kong, 1964), pp. 27-307; Chang Li-chih, *Cheng-shih kai-lun* (*An Introduction to the Standard Histories*), (Reprint. Taipei, 1964), pp. 3-146.
55. See the numerous works of this category listed in Hsieh Kuo-cheng, *Wan-Ming shih-chi k'ao* (*Historical Sources for the Late Ming and Early Ch'ing Periods*), 3 vols. (Reprint, Taipei, 1968); *idem*, *Ming-Ch'ing pi-chi t'an-ts'ung* (*Notes on Ming-Ch'ing Works and Events*), (Shanghai, 1962); and Chu Hsi-tsu, *Ming-chi shih-liao t'i-pa* (*Comments on the Historical Sources for the Late Ming Period*), (Peking, 1961), esp. pp. 1-122.

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