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MODERN CHINESE HISTORY STUDIES

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Modern Chinese History Studies

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An Analysis on Chinese Modernization from the Perspective of Economic History

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Understanding Chinese Modernization from the Historical Trajectory of China

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An Uncertain World: Litigation and Order in a Flood-Irrigation Society: A Case Study on Three Villages in South Shanxi During the Ming and Qing Dynasties

Zhang Junfeng(31)

As a unique way for water resources development and utilization in the semi-arid areas, flood diversion irrigation has been a wide-spread practice on the Loess Plateau since the Reform of Wang Anshi in the Northern Song Dynasty. However, the unpredictability of flood water engendered unpalatable uncertainties for these areas, which were completely dependent on the flood water for agricultural irrigation. In their perpetual struggle for irrigation water, villagers of the three villages in southern Shanxi showed the preference to resolve their disputes on water right through litigation. For those local villagers, litigation was part and parcel of their strategies for survival in a hostile environment. They were ready to defy official rulings and endless litigation and counter-litigation became the normal in the three villages. The unpredictability of flood water engendered unpalatable uncertainties for the local society, which in turn tended to exacerbate the unpredictability of flood water. In addition, it was also uncertain who had the right to use the flood water, which was definitely a limited resource. To get rid of such uncertainties root and branch, local villages must change their dependence on the flood water and diversify their means of livelihood. In this sense, "uncertainty" is a core concept through which we can understand the human-nature relationship in such semi-arid areas like the Loess Plateau since the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Environmental Changes and Land Reclamation in the Middle Reaches of the Yangtze River from Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China

Liu Shigu(49)

The Yangtze River Basin has been an open and dynamic natural system. There are not only natural changes such as river flooding and sandbar rising and collapse, but also a large number of transformations stemmed from human activities. Sandbar in the river is a typical waterfront lowland. It is the land where the sediment carried by the inflow water from the upper reaches of the Yangtze River meets the resistance and slows down and accumulates. It is more exposed to erosion than other types of land. The construction and maintenance of dams, key water conservancy events in the lowland society, was actualized thanks both to state intervention and autonomous governance of the local society. The adaptation of waterfront people to the ecological environment around them was manifested in the rise and collapse of sandbars, land reclamation and water control efforts. Since the late Qing Dynasty, the northern branch of the Yangtze River has gradually developed into a bow-shaped channel. Residents who originally lived on the north bank of the Yangtze River went to the south bank to reclaim wasteland in droves, resulting in constant disputes over the newly reclaimed land. In the past, local people generally resorted to family power or invoked the principles of "neighbor priority", "first possession" and "tax registration" to resolve land disputes among them. When it came to disputes over the land on sandbars, however, various groups preferred to resort to relevant land reclamation regulations or land regulations to bolster their claims for land occupation. This phenomenon shows that the modern state and its institutions have played a more important role than in the past in the transformation of the new silt land from "ownerless" to "ownership".

Ownership Identification and Dispute Resolution Involving the Fengtian State Forest during the Republican Period

Chi Xiang(65)

The Beijing Government began implementing the State Forest System during the early Republican period. However,

this system challenged the established forest tenure practices in Northeast China. During the late Qing period, forest ownership in northeast China included the property rights of both the trees and the forest land. Land licenses (dizhao) and Mountain Tax Certificates were used by the local people as the proof of private forest ownership. However, the new State Forest System redefined forest ownership and clarified its sub-types, aiming to nationalize the natural forests and those trees that were not planted by anybody. The Forestry Bureau would be tasked to solely grant National Forest Certificates. The separation of natural forest ownership from forest property rights and its nationalization effectively deprived the local people of their ownership of and their access to trees in private and public forests, triggering a myriad of disputes over forest rights. In places like Fengtian where enormous natural forests existed, the expanding state forest ownership impinged on private forests and public mountain forests, giving rise to countless litigation over forest rights and incrementally reshaping the configuration of local property rights.

The Treaty of Nanking in Images: Reinterpreting the Historical Materials on the Sino-British Negotiations During the Opium War Wang Yakai and Li Wuzhe(83)

The Rise of the “Confucian Gangs” in the Mid-1900s and Local Power Struggles: A Case Study on Qu Zhenhan Rebellion in Yueqing of Zhejiang Province Li Shizhong(99)

On the Financial Crunch of the Tang Shaoyi Cabinet Li Wenjie(113)

The 1911 Revolution left the centralized fiscal system of the Qing dynasty in shambles. How to raise enormous amount of fund, which was imperative for dealing with the aftermath of the revolution, confronted the Nanjing Provisional Government and then the Tang Shaoyi Cabinet of Beijing Government in an urgent manner. After such measures like issuing public debt and military banknote and campaigning for national donation, both the Government in the north and its south counterpart finally resorted to borrowing overseas. Tang Shaoyi Cabinet, in particular, sought to alleviate its financial crunch by borrowing overseas in earnest, which was almost a consensus among its cabinet members. Since foreign debt was inextricably linked with the sensitive issue of national sovereignty, however, senators were quick to criticize the borrowing overseas policy, which later became politicized among partisan divisions and ideological uproar. Consequently, Tang Shaoyi lamented his inability to take action and decided to resign under huge pressure. It turned out that the financial crunch confronting the Tang Shaoyi Cabinet was an important factor that had contributed to its ultimate demise.

A Historical Analysis on the Failure of the Wartime Mass Work by the KMT Regime: A Case Study on the Political Department of the Military Affairs Committee of the Nationalist Government Jin Zhixia(132)

After the outbreak of the Total Resistance War Against Japanese Aggression, the KMT established the Military Affairs Committee to centralize command of the war efforts by the Chinese military and people. In addition to its responsibility in political work in the military, the Political Department of the Military Affairs Committee was also tasked with instructing the wartime mass work. It implied that the military started to involve itself in the mass work, which used to be the domain of the KMT Party Department and the KMT government. The original objective for establishing the Political Department in the Military Affairs Committee was to centralize the management of wartime political work and mass work and lead the Chinese war efforts by various groups in a coordinated manner. However, such an objective turned out to be unachievable due to power struggles among the military, the KMT Party Department and the KMT government. As a result, the KMT failed to conduct the mass work in a consistent and coordinated manner and conflicts and infighting among its military and political wings were daily occurrences. The organizational structure and infighting among different factions of the KMT were blamed for such a chaotic situation, in addition to the KMT's inherent antipathy to mass movement. All these factors go a long way towards explaining the lack of success in the KMT wartime mass work.

Selective Introduction of Scientific Knowledge by Foreign Missionaries during the Late Qing Dynasty: A Study on the Translation of *Universal Geography* Li Kan(146)

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