This part of the course treats two topics

- How selected Western scholars of the past (1750 to 1900) tried to fit China into a pattern that would embrace all times and places.

- How contemporary scholars try to understand the great divergence in economic performance between Europe and China from the C17 to the C20.
Historical Perspectives I: Classics

Adam Smith

Alfred Marshall
Why study these scholars of the past?

- They pioneered comparative studies.
- They were the intellectual ancestors of the scholars of today.
- Through their influence they changed world history.

The classics I discuss are from English political economy and German philosophy/sociology.
My classics and connections between them: roughly 1750-1900

- Smith
  - Malthus
    - Mill
  - Marshall
- Hegel
  - Marx
  - Weber
My classics

- They were not specialists on China—they were generalists who included China in comprehensive views of the world.

- They did not know the Chinese language, or visit China.

- They relied on people who did or had.
Two big topics I won’t treat in any detail

- Chinese influence on Western thought. For a survey see J. J. Clarke *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter Between Asian and Western Thought* (1997).

- The influence of the Western classics in China. From the late C19 these works were translated, read and discussed. See Spence for this side of Chinese history.

(J. D. Spence’s *The Search for Modern China* (1999) is a useful general history of China, )
Literature on how European social thinkers accommodated China

- There are literatures on the history of economic thought, history of sociological thought, history of historical thought,… written by specialist historians.
- There is also a literature written by Sinologists on the history of Western thought about China.
- **However** the historians of thought have little to say about China and China specialists have little to say about economic ideas.
Two books on European views of China

  Conceptions of all kinds, not only those of scholars.

- David Martin Jones (2001) *The Image of China in Western Social and Political Thought*
  More specialised but still covers about 500 books!
Jones was writing after Said’s *Orientalism* and it shows..

- Edward W. Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) is a study of the way the Middle East and India were studied in Britain and France over the past 200 years.

- Britain and France were the main imperial powers in these regions and Said investigates the relationship between oriental scholarship and the imperial project.

- Said says little about China but his work has had such influence that Jones begins with a long introduction placing his book in relation to Said.
Histories of economic thought like Backhouse’s *Penguin History of Economics* tell how modern Anglo economics came about

- The subject took off in the C18.
- The C18 writers belonged to a legal/political tradition that was traced back to the Greeks and Romans via the religious writers of the Middle Ages.
- The only orientals who were part of this tradition were Arabs and Jews but the Arabs were pushed out at the beginning of C15.
Before the C18: the European view of the world and its past (a caricature)

- The Bible tells how God created the world in 4004BC and humanity—the Jewish part—descended from Adam and Eve.
- The Bible takes the story of the Jews through the birth of Christ and the beginnings of Christianity.
- Some Greek and Roman history glued on.
- The Babylonians, Egyptians and Persians came into this story but the Chinese (and most of humanity) were out.
Knowledge of China in C18 Europe

- There had been trade with China since the time of the Roman Empire
- But without any direct contact with China or tradition of writing about China.
- A Western travel literature begins with Marco Polo at the end of C13.
- From the C17 onwards a scholarly literature developed—mainly the work of Jesuits who had gone to China to convert the Chinese to Christianity.

(See Dawson and Jones)
The European Enlightenment

- An intellectual movement of the C18 in which most Western European countries participated.
- I will take two figures from the **French Enlightenment** and two from the **Scottish Enlightenment**.
- In C18 France was the most powerful European state and culturally the most influential.
- Scotland had been an independent state but had recently been united with the larger and richer England to become the United Kingdom.
Enlightenment approaches to China

- The Frenchmen Voltaire and Quesnay found lessons in China which Europe could follow with advantage.

- The Scots Hume and Smith treated China as part of the human experience: along with modern Europe and the classical past it provided data for their generalisations or instances to be forced into their frameworks. They were less impressed.
Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet): Europe’s most famous intellectual

- Re-wrote the Western history of the world bringing China in
- Thought of China as France without the oppressive Catholic Church
- China demonstrated that order could be maintained without Western oppression

See Dawson and Jones.

1694-1778
François Quesnay (Backhouse ch 5)

- A physician at the court of the French king who became a leading economist.
- His 1767 book *Despotism in China* presented the emperor as a *philosopher king* or *enlightened despot* who ruled in accordance with the law of nature.
- Quesnay called his economic doctrine *physiocracy*, the rule of nature.
David Hume (Backhouse ch 5)

- Wrote on many subjects including philosophy, history and economics.
- His essay on “The Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences” contains several generalisations including
  - “Nothing is more favourable to the rise of politeness and learning, than a number of neighbouring and independent states, connected together by commerce and policy.”
- (A generalisation based on recent European experience.)

1711-1776
In China there seems to be a pretty considerable stock of politeness and science, which, in the course of so many centuries, might naturally be expected to ripen into something more perfect and finished, than what has yet arisen from them.

BUT

China is one vast empire, speaking one language, governed by one law, and sympathizing in the same manners. The authority of any teacher, such as Confucius, was propagated easily from one corner of the empire to the other. None had courage to resist the torrent of popular opinion. And posterity was not bold enough to dispute what had been universally received by their ancestors. This seems to be one natural reason, why the sciences have made so slow a progress in that mighty empire.
Adam Smith  (Backhouse ch 5)

- A university professor of philosophy who taught many subjects including ethics and the philosophy of law.
- *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* is often treated as the first work of economics.
- It considers all nations past and present known to Smith—including China.
Smith on China

- Wealth depends on the productivity of labour and the division of labour which depends on the extent of the market.
- In Europe the market is an international market supported by sea transport. In China the market is national and based on rivers.
- “A country which neglects or despises foreign commerce, and which admits the vessels of foreign nations into one or two of its ports only, cannot transact the same quantity of business which it might do with different laws and institutions.”
“China has been long one of the richest, that is, one of the most fertile, best cultivated, most industrious, and most populous countries in the world.”

Wages are low because the capital that goes to support labour is not growing.

“It is this demand which regulates and determines the state of propagation in all the different countries of the world, in North America, in Europe, and in China; which renders it rapidly progressive in the first, slow and gradual in the second, and altogether stationary in the last.”

Select one discussion you find interesting and read enough of the surrounding text to make sense of it.

Then report on it.
At the end of C18 relations between Europe and China begin to change

- For the Enlightenment figures China was great society contemplated from afar.
- But it stopped being a world of their imagination as Europeans tried to draw it into their system of international relations.
- Paradoxically as Europeans had more to do with China their intellectuals became less interested in the country. (C19 intellectuals were more interested in Indian culture.)
The *Europeans*: who they were

- The British had emerged from the wars of the C18 and early C19 as the leading maritime power in Europe—overtaking France.
- They became the leading political and economic player of the C19 in China.
- France was squeezed intellectually by the rise of German literature—from the German-speaking lands for there was no state of Germany before 1871.
The British East India Company: a multinational with armies

- Britain’s interest in China was in trade.
- Trade was conducted by the East India Company.
- The company was set up in 1600 with a monopoly of Trade with the East.
- In the course of the C18 it conquered much of India.
- One of its major aims was to get China to accept *its* goods.
1792: Britain and the East India Company send an ambassador to China to open diplomatic relations to promote trade. Mission fails. See Spence *Search for Modern China*.

Lord Macartney at the court of Quianlong.

Lord M is on one knee but does not prostrate himself.
T. Robert Malthus *Essay on the Principle of Population*

- The 1st edition (1798) a polemic against egalitarian thinking associated with the continuing French Revolution and some current British social policies.
- Second (1806) and later editions (last in 1826) included surveys of population growth across the world and through history.
- From 1805 Malthus was professor of history and political economy at the East India College training men/boys for work in India.

(Backhouse ch 6)
Principle of population: what is it?

Essay Chapters I and II

- The critical factor “is the constant tendency in all animated life to increase beyond the nourishment prepared for it.”
- Without restraint population would double every 25 years.
- Food supply can only increase at that rate in previously uncultivated regions such as North America.
Checks to population growth

**Preventive checks**—involve human decision
- Moral restraint—postponement of marriage
- Vice

**Positive checks**—inflicted on people
- “all unwholesome occupations, severe labour and exposure to the seasons, extreme poverty, bad nursing of children, great towns, excesses of all kinds, the whole train of common diseases and epidemics, wars, plague, and famine.”
More of the population marries and marries younger than in Western Europe

So “what are the kinds of restraint, and the forms of premature death, which keep the population down to the level of the means of subsistence?”

These include:
- Infanticide
- Famine
Seminar 2

Read chapters II and XII of the sixth edition of the *Essay on Population*


And report on them.
Diplomacy turns to war: the Opium Wars

- Britain uses force to bring China into the international system.
- The wars were about trade but British economists did not write about them.
- British occupation of part of China did not generate interest in the way the Chinese economy worked.

The East India Co ship Nemesis destroying Chinese junks in 1841
John Stuart Mill, prominent British intellectual

Mill wrote on philosophy, politics and political economy.

- His *System of Logic* (1843), *Principles of Political Economy* (1848) and *On Liberty* (1859) were his most influential works.

- Worked for the East India Co but wrote little on China.

*(Backhouse ch 6)*
The principles applied to **all** forms of society

**but** social philosophy applications concerned the well-being of the people of the United Kingdom and how it could be raised.

Mill was interested in alternative forms of economic organisation—socialism for Britain and peasant proprietorship in Ireland—and discussed foreign forms of these institutions.
Principles has little on China but a general diagnosis of Asia

In countries where the principle of accumulation is as weak ...; where people will neither save, nor work to obtain the means of saving, unless under the inducement of enormously high profits, nor even then if it is necessary to wait a considerable time for them; where either productions remain scanty, or drudgery great, because there is neither capital forthcoming nor forethought sufficient for the adoption of the contrivances by which natural agents are made to do the work of human labour.
Treatment

- a better government: more complete security of property; moderate taxes, and freedom from arbitrary exaction under the name of taxes; a more permanent and more advantageous tenure of land, securing to the cultivator as far as possible the undivided benefits of the industry, skill, and economy he may exert.

- improvement of the public intelligence: the decay of usages or superstitions which interfere with the effective employment of industry; and the growth of mental activity, making the people alive to new objects of desire.

- the introduction of foreign arts, which raise the returns derivable from additional capital, to a rate corresponding to the low strength of the desire of accumulation: and the importation of foreign capital, which renders the increase of production no longer exclusively dependent on the thrift or providence of the inhabitants themselves, while it places before them a stimulating example, and by instilling new ideas and breaking the chains of habit, if not by improving the actual condition of the population, tends to create in them new wants, increased ambition, and greater thought for the future.
On Liberty—a warning, echoing Hume

- We have a warning example in China—a nation of much talent, and, in some respects, even wisdom, owing to the rare good fortune of having been provided at an early period with a particularly good set of customs, the work, in some measure, of men to whom even the most enlightened European must accord, under certain limitations, the title of sages and philosophers.

- They are remarkable, too, in the excellence of their apparatus for impressing, as far as possible, the best wisdom they possess upon every mind in the community, and securing that those who have appropriated most of it shall occupy the posts of honour and power.

- Surely the people who did this have discovered the secret of human progressiveness, and must have kept themselves steadily at the head of the movement of the world. On the contrary, they have become stationary—have remained so for thousands of years; and if they are ever to be farther improved, it must be by foreigners.

- They have succeeded beyond all hope in what English philanthropists are so industriously working at—in making a people all alike, all governing their thoughts and conduct by the same maxims and rules; and these are the fruits. The modern régime of public opinion is, in an unorganized form, what the Chinese educational and political systems are in an organized; and unless individuality shall be able successfully to assert itself against this yoke, Europe, notwithstanding its noble antecedents and its professed Christianity, will tend to become another China.
Malthus and Mill

- Malthus wrote on population with the same generalising ambition as Smith: he appears to have used the best information of his time.

- Mill had no interest in China and wrote about her as Voltaire had done without collecting any detailed information.

- For Malthus and Mill China was a backward country that served only as a warning to the West.
German observers

In the early C19 German merchants were not big in China and there was no German state with intercontinental ambitions until after 1871.

- Hegel contemplated China from Berlin where he was a philosophy professor.

- Marx contemplated China from London where he was a political exile and revolutionary organiser.
G. W. F. Hegel, the most influential German philosopher of C19

- Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* 1830-31 depicts human history as the growth of self-consciousness and freedom.
- In Europe freedom has passed from the preserve of the one to the many.
Early do we see China advancing to the condition in which it is found at this day; for as the contrast between objective existence and subjective freedom of movement in it, is still wanting, every change is excluded, and the fixedness of a character which recurs perpetually, takes the place of what we should call the truly historical.

China and India lie, as it were, still outside the World’s History, as the mere presupposition of elements whose combination must be waited for to constitute their vital progress.
The Emperor always speaks with majesty and paternal kindness and tenderness to the people; who, however, cherish the meanest opinion of themselves, and believe that they are born only to drag the car of Imperial Power. The burden which presses them to the ground, seems to them to be their inevitable destiny; and it appears nothing terrible to them to sell themselves as slaves, and to eat the bitter bread of slavery. Suicide, the result of revenge, and the exposure of children, as a common, even daily occurrence, show the little respect in which they hold themselves individually, and humanity in general.

And though there is no distinction conferred by birth, and everyone can attain the highest dignity, this very equality testifies to no triumphant assertion of the worth of the inner man, but a servile consciousness – one which has not yet matured itself so far as to recognize distinctions.
Karl Marx: German philosophy, British economics, French revolution

- Following Hegel, Marx had a theory of everything
- Settled in London from 1849
- Could see the industrial revolution changing Britain and how it would change the world.
- France provided models of political revolution and ideas about socialism.

1818-1883
China’s place—in the background

Marx was well informed on world affairs but did not go deeply into China’s condition and his comments on China dry up after the 1860s. *Das Kapital* 3 volumes (1857-94) analysed capitalism which was realised in Britain. Nevertheless

- Present and future—he noted how through trade China was being affected by globalisation.
- Present and past—understanding China’s distinctive society.
Marx & Engels *Manifesto of Communist Party* 1848  
http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf

What were the immediate consequences of the industrial revolution and of the division of society into bourgeoisie and proletariat?

- First, the lower and lower prices of industrial products brought about by machine labor totally destroyed, in all countries of the world, the old system of manufacture or industry based upon hand labor.

- In this way, all semi-barbarian countries, which had hitherto been more or less strangers to historical development, and whose industry had been based on manufacture, were violently forced out of their isolation. They bought the cheaper commodities of the English and allowed their own manufacturing workers to be ruined. Countries which had known no progress for thousands of years – for example, India – were thoroughly revolutionized, and even China is now on the way to a revolution.
“A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism” In 1848 Europe—tomorrow????

- We have come to the point where a new machine invented in England deprives millions of Chinese workers of their livelihood within a year’s time.

- In this way, big industry has brought all the people of the Earth into contact with each other, has merged all local markets into one world market, has spread civilization and progress everywhere and has thus ensured that whatever happens in civilized countries will have repercussions in all other countries.

- It follows that if the workers in England or France now liberate themselves, this must set off revolution in all other countries – revolutions which, sooner or later, must accomplish the liberation of their respective working class.
Commentaries on Anglo-Chinese affairs

- 1853-1860 Marx wrote articles on Britain for the *New York Daily Tribune*
  [http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/china/index.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/china/index.htm)

- Sometimes China figured in these articles—but not as often as India which was part of the British Empire.

- Like Smith and Hegel, was very much more interested in Western Europe. Towards the end of his life revolutionaries from backward Russian begin to make a noise—prematurely. But there were no Chinese revolutionaries in his time.
In parallel to his writing on current affairs Marx produced theoretical works

- His main theoretical work *Kapital* has very little on China
  

- The preparatory *Grundrisse* or *Outlines* (published only in 1939) has a bit more
  
General theory—materialist conception of history

- In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production.

- The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life.

Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy 1859

http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm
Application to China?

- In Europe “the hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist.”

- There is a hint of an oriental mode of production with large scale irrigation giving you the bureaucrat and the emperor.

- But this was not developed and Marx left China out of his stages of historical development. In C20 Wittfogel developed the idea: see Part II.
Marx in China—via Russia

“Before the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 in Russia, the Chinese had not shown much interest in Marxism.” (Spence Search 295.)

Parts of the Communist Manifesto were translated after the (failed) Russian revolution of 1905. (Spence 256.)

Smith’s Wealth and Mill’s Liberty had been translated earlier. (Spence 237.)
Seminar 3

Read a few of Marx’s newspaper articles and report on them

http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/china/index.htm

There is a short survey by the Soviet scholar David Riazanov (1926)

http://www.marxists.org/archive/riazanov/1926/xx/china.htm

The *Communist Manifesto* does not have much on China but is readable and worth reading

http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf
Alfred Marshall (1848-1924)

- Cambridge professor and key figure in the transformation of political economy into the modern university subject of Economics taught in Britain and the US.
- The *Principles* (1st edition 1890, 8th 1920) was his most influential work.
“Economics is a study of men as they live and move and think in the ordinary business of life.” The *men* are modern Western men—anglo-men.

“much more of modern economic theory, than at first appears, can be adapted to the conditions of backward races.” But Marshall does not treat those conditions. He mentions the Chinese only as labourers in the US—a development from around 1850.
The Principles on the past

- “The Growth of Free Industry and Enterprise” tells the history of the world
- Like the pre-Enlightenment history of the world except that instead of modern Christianity modern enterprise is the goal of history.

More generally

- Marshall emphasises the “influence of inherited institutions and race qualities and of physical nature.” (Genes & geography)
- Physical nature: climate must be favourable to vigour: the gifts of nature, her land, her waters, and her skies, determine the character of the race's work, and thus give a tone to social and political institutions.
The Principles reflects the racial theories and white supremacist views of the age

Generalisation:
“those races survive and predominate in which the best qualities are most strongly developed.”

However
“biology and social science alike show that parasites sometimes benefit in unexpected ways the race on which they thrive; yet in many cases they turn the peculiarities of that race to good account for their own purposes without giving any good return. The fact that there is an economic demand for the services of … for Chinese labour in California, is not by itself a proof, nor even a very strong ground for believing, that such arrangements tend to raise the quality of human life as a whole.”
Max Weber, German sociologist

Religion and capitalism.

- Why did Northern Europe overtake Southern Europe after the C15?
- Answer: the Protestant ethic propelled the rise of the bourgeoisie and the rise of capitalism.
- Weber studied the religion of China and the lack of a middle class and absence of capitalism.

See J. Goody *Capitalism & Modernity*
By the end of C19 the pre-C18 world history had been updated—the story’s end was not Christian Europe but advanced Europe.

But Chinese students were now studying in the West and producing a literature on China in Western languages.

However I will skip a century and consider contemporary writers.

Though modern scholars are hugely more informed about the present and past of China some of the old themes return.
Historical Perspectives II: Moderns

*The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*
David S. Landes

*The Great Divergence*
Kenneth Pomeranz
Representative works by modern American economic historians

- Landes treats universal economic history—the title echoes Adam Smith.
- Pomeranz is much more narrowly focussed and is based on information from the past, information that was never assembled and studied in this way.

Before looking at this modern literature—some background.
Economic history—the subject

- Economic history emerged as a separate discipline in the late C19.
- Part of the ‘scientific’ study of history pioneered by German historians.
- Adam Smith was a primitive economic historian—his information came from the literature of the time. The new scientific economic historians did not rely on published records but researched in archives.
Economic history—European focus

- Research done by Europeans into the European past.
- Concerned with the making of modern Europe.
- Focus on individual countries.
- British economic historians were mostly concerned with the Industrial Revolution and the growth of the labour movement in the UK.
Landes & Pomeranz are American—the West had gone west

My classics were Europeans but

- The C20 saw the rise of American scholarship and the relative decline of European. Some Europeans fled to America.

Also

- from the early C20 American scholars were more interested in China than their European counterparts.
The shift personified: German communist to American scholar

- Wittfogel began writing about China in mid 20s.
- In the 30s his writings were banned by the Soviet authorities.
- After being imprisoned by the Nazis he fled and settled in the United States in 1934.
- He opposed the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939.
- Became outspoken critic of the Soviet and PRC governments.

Karl Wittfogel
1896-1988
Wittfogel’s *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* 1957

- Elaborated Marx’s hints about an oriental mode of production and the view that the superstructure of society is determined by the technological base.
- The oriental mode of production became the “hydraulic economy.”
- Found not only in Asia but pre-Columbian America
- Hegel’s empire identified with totalitarianism of Stalin and Mao.

China in recent Anglo economics:

Interdisciplinary area studies—especially in US.

In Economics China figured in 3 sub-fields

- Development economics—China the largest developing economy
- Comparative economic systems—China as example of a centrally planned economy but not such a good example as the USSR. After the fall of the Soviet empire this subject lost its energy.
- International Economics.
Changing treatments of China

The changing treatment of China can be followed through leading textbooks


The changes reflect growing interest in China and changes in China and its relations with the West.
Author: Harvard economic historian David S. Landes (born 1924, PhD in 1953).

A specialist in general history—best known work was *The Unbound Prometheus: Technical Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to Present* (1969).
World economic history

- The big story of the “main stream of economic advance and modernization; how have we come to where and what we are, in the sense of making, getting and spending.”
- The big story of the main stream is a collection of smaller stories describing how the lead changed from one region of the world to another.
The argument

- “Nature’s Inequalities” (ch 1) gives geography (climate and resources) some role (cf. Marshall).
- “Answers to geography: Europe and China” (ch 2) compares agriculture showing different responses to problems posed by agriculture.
- Ch 3-28 cultural developments emphasising the specialness of the West since 1000AD.
- Emphasises technology and attitudes
“Empire and After” (ch 25) discusses role of colonialism in European growth C15-C20.

Argues that European rule did **not** set back development in colonised areas

Argues that empire was **not** needed to accelerate European development.

- Author: Kenneth Pomeranz (born 1958)
- Specialist in Chinese economic/social history: 1988 PhD
- Based at University of California Irvine
- One of the “California School”–several historians with similar views on world history are based there.
Divergence between ? and ?

Pomeranz stresses the difficulty of comparing Europe and China

- Neither China nor Europe are homogeneous.
- Within-variation is as great as between-variation.
- Parts of China—e.g. the Yangzi delta—were comparable to parts of Europe—e.g. England or the Netherlands.

Volume of research to synthesise—huge & uneven! The history of parts of Europe—separate states—is much better researched than that of parts of China.
The Great Divergence—Western Europe a “fortunate freak” (207)

The book makes four main points.

- Eighteenth-century China was well-developed in many ways.
- In most respects Europe's economy was less efficient than China's.
- Europe's relative advance came late, and only with industrialisation.
- Europe's success rested on the accident of finding new resources at just the right time.
The organisation of the book

- The first 4 chapters criticise existing accounts of the factors determining the different paths of Europe and China.
- These chapters are a good survey of some widely held views—the views not always compatible with each other.
- These chapters also provide the background to chapters 5 and 6 giving Pomeranz’s own theory.
Chapter 1 Population, capital accumulation and technology

Population

Life expectancy
“Rough comparability” 38

Birth-rates
“It appears that various groups of Asians were at least as able as any Europeans to keep birthrates down for the sake of maintaining or improving their standard of living.” 41 (Cf. Lee & Feng below.)
Capital accumulation

- Modern theories of economic growth put great weight on capital accumulation but there is not much information on accumulation in this period.
- Pomeranz cannot see any great difference between Europe and China.
Technology

- Pomeranz acknowledges that Europe had more of a scientific culture with potential for supporting technical advance.
- But “arguments that Europe in 1750 already enjoyed a unique level of technological sophistication need significant qualification.” (46)
- England *did* have an advantage in coal production.
Some historians argue that China was backward in the development of efficient markets.

This line is associated with Douglass North Nobel 1983

Pomeranz considers markets for goods and factors of production and finds no big differences in C18.
a) The Market for produce

- Pomeranz has only a brief discussion (86) which contrasts the policy of the state in England and France with policy in China.
- He concludes that the Qing state was more concerned to reduce monopolies in basic items than the European states.
- He does not investigate the relative importance of subsistence agriculture.
b) The Market in Land

- Europe had a history of restrictions on the alienability of land—those restrictions were generally easing by C18.
- “The overwhelming majority of land in all parts of China was more or less freely alienable.” (p. 71),
- Lots of detailed differences (both within and between) but no big and systematic differences.
China and Europe had a history of bound labour—slavery and serfdom.

- By C18 this was rare in Western Europe.
- Labour was more mobile in China than in Western Europe. Long-distance migration was more common.
3 Luxury consumption and the rise of capitalism

- The starting point for this chapter is the work of Werner Sombart, an early 20th-century German historian.
- Sombart argued that the growing demand for luxury goods in Europe produced new kinds of artisans and merchants.
- Pomeranz argues that these developments were not restricted to Europe.
Pomeranz takes issue with the argument of the French historian Fernand Braudel that European capitalism was associated with the rise of a distinctive form of economic organisation—the corporation.

Like Landes, Pomeranz criticises the view that colonial plunder was an important source of European capital.

Pomeranz emphasises how competition between European states stimulated exploration and overseas settlement.
Critical part done—constructive part begins

- Chapters 5 and 6 give Pomeranz’s own theory.
- This extends the land-labour imbalance theory that had formed the basis of Malthus and Mill’s views of future prospects.
Pomeranz argues that both China and Western Europe faced constraints to growth around 1800.

The constraints were shortage of land and shortage of fuel.

Europe, but not China, could evade these constraints.
Pomeranz argues that the exploitation of new lands in America eased the land constraint.

Malthus and Mill had been concerned with the relation between population and the supply of food required to support the population.

Diminishing returns in agriculture imposed a limit to growth with finite land imposed a limit on growth.

Mill recognised that the feared stationary state was postponed by the availability of food from the New World.
Landes and Pomeranz

- Landes sees divergence a necessary development from 1000. Pomeranz sees accidents.
- Landes relegates geography. Pomeranz re-instates it. Resources—land and coal—made the difference.
- The disagreement recalls earlier disagreements about the British Industrial Revolution. Was it a matter of knowledge and institutions or a matter of coal?
Other Divergences—the “Needham problem”

- Joseph Needham (1900-1995) found plenty of Chinese science to write about—unlike Hume.
- Needham observed that while European science advanced after C17 Chinese science did not.
- He associated the take-off in Western science with the rise of capitalism
Direct scientific/technological contacts between Europe and China

- Began when the Jesuit Matteo Ricci took a clock and prisms to China in 1583.
- The Jesuits sent back negative reports on the state of science in China.
- The Qing court patronised Western science—Ricci’s successors included astronomers.
- But there was no integration of European and Chinese science before the C20.
The 1950s saw the rise of historical demography in Europe.

In Europe national censuses data began around 1800 but parish records of births and deaths were kept from a much earlier period.

In the 50s historians began using this information to rewrite Europe’s population history.
Lee and Feng (1999) use what data they can find—including information on

- The Qing imperial genealogy for 1700 to 1840
- Household registers compiled in a Liaoning village between 1774 and 1873
- A sub-sample of 30,000 rural women born during the period from 1914 to 1930, included in the Chinese government’s 1982 1-per-1000 Population Fertility Survey
Each chapter takes off from a statement by Malthus

In general Malthus argued
- that only Europeans exercised foresight.
- In China only positive checks operate

Lee and Feng argue
- that in China fertility was equally rational
- but the values involved were social rather than private.
Lee & Feng argue

- Malthus exaggerated the role of famines in checking population growth.

- Marital fertility was markedly lower than in Europe—the result of slow starting, early stopping and long spacing of childbearing.

- Female infanticide distorted sex ratios led to a gender-unbalanced marriage market and a series of strategies to ensure perpetuation of family lines.
Thoughts on a long and tortuous story

- It belongs to the intellectual history of the West and to such subdivisions as the history of economic thought.
- In 300 years these subjects have changed.
- What was being contemplated was also changing too.
- In the background were changing economic and political relations between two parts of the World.
Broadly—phases of Western interest in China

- In the C18 the existence of a China so different from Europe liberated the thinking of European intellectuals like Voltaire.
- In the C19 and for most of C20 acquaintance brought indifference or contempt--China was just another backward country.
- Recently interest has revived. The interest is much better informed than in the C18 because of advances in historical and social science techniques.
Seminar 4: Write notes on some reviews of these works (JSTOR has more)

**Great Divergence**

**One Quarter of Humanity**

Zurndorfer’s “Beyond Sinology” reviews both books and surveys modern historical writing about China