

The Eleventh
George Ernest Morrison Lecture
in Ethnology

Delivered by

DOUGLAS COPLAND,

Vice-Chancellor of The Australian National
University

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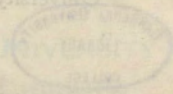
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FOUNDATION OF THE GEORGE ERNEST MORRISON LECTURE IN ETHNOLOGY

The George Ernest Morrison Lecture in Ethnology was founded by Chinese residents in Australia in honour of the late Dr. G. E. Morrison, a native of Geelong, Victoria, Australia.

The objects of the foundation of the lectureship were to honour for all time the memory of a great Australian who rendered valuable services to China, and also to stimulate interest in Australia in the art, science, and literature of the Chinese Republic. It is the opinion of many Chinese economists that cultural knowledge must accompany trade, if it does not actually precede it. We must know more of the art, science and literature of China; the Chinese must learn more of the political, scientific and literary history of the Commonwealth of Australia. The foundation of the lectureship, which had the official support of the Chinese Consulate-General, was particularly due to the efforts of Mr. William Liu, merchant, of Sydney; Mr. William Ah Ket, the distinguished Supreme Court barrister in Melbourne; Mr. F. J. Quinlan, and Sir Colin MacKenzie, of Canberra. The inaugural lecture, entitled "The Objects of the Foundation of the Lectureship and a Review of Dr. Morrison's Life in China", was delivered by Dr. W. P. Chen, Consul-General for China in Australia, on Tuesday evening, 10th May, 1932.

The second lecture, on "Eastern Thought, with Special Reference to Confucius", was delivered by Mr. William Ah Ket on Wednesday evening, 3rd May, 1933.

The third lecture, on "The History and Development of Chinese Art", was delivered by Mr. James S. MacDonald, Director of the National Art Gallery of New South Wales, on 3rd May, 1934.

The fourth lecture was delivered by Dr. W. P. Chen, Consul-General for China in Australia, on Tuesday, 10th May, 1935. He dealt with "The New Cultural Movement in China".

The fifth lecture was delivered on 2nd September, 1935, by Dr. Wu Lien-teh, M.A., M.D. (Cantab.). This distinguished visitor from China gave an address on "Reminiscences of George E. Morrison: and Chinese Abroad".

The sixth annual Morrison Lecture was delivered at the Australian Institute of Anatomy on Tuesday, 4th May, 1937. Dr. Chun-Jien Pao, M.A., Ph.D., the Consul-General for the Republic of China, was the lecturer. He chose as his subject "China Today: with Special Reference to Higher Education".

Tuesday, the 17th May, 1938, was the date of the seventh annual Morrison Lecture, which was delivered by Professor Aldred F. Barker, formerly a lecturer of the Chiao-Tung University. Professor Barker chose as his subject "The Impact of Western Industrialism on China".

The Eighth Morrison Lecture was delivered by Professor S. H. Roberts on Monday, 5th June, 1939, who spoke upon "The Gifts of the Old China to the New".

The ninth oration was delivered by His Grace the Archbishop of Sydney on Wednesday, 29th May, 1940. The subject selected was "West China through the Eyes of a Westerner".

The tenth George Ernest Morrison Lecture was delivered at the Australian Institute of Anatomy on Thursday, 5th June, 1941. The lecturer was Dr. W. G. Goddard, President of the China Society of Australia, and his subject was "The Min Sheng: A Study in Chinese Democracy".

The eleventh lecture is the one reproduced in this book, and was delivered in September, 1948. Since that date responsibility for the lecture has been transferred from the Institute of Anatomy to The Australian National University. Under the auspices of the National University two further lectures have been given, the twelfth in October, 1949, by the late Professor J. K. Rideout, on "Politics in Medieval China", and the thirteenth in March, 1951, by Mr. C. P. FitzGerald, on "The Revolutionary Tradition in China".

THE ELEVENTH MORRISON LECTURE

The eleventh annual Morrison Lecture was delivered in Canberra on 27th September, 1948, by Professor D. B. (now Sir Douglas) Copland, Vice-Chancellor of The Australian National University. His subject was "The Chinese Social Structure".

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THE ELEVENTH MORRISON LECTURE

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FOREWORD

At the time this address was delivered China was in the throes of a struggle between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communists, and the latter were soon to establish their authority over the mainland of China. Publication was delayed at first because of my desire to make some minor revisions in the text, and later because it was thought that the new regime being established in China might initiate some fundamental changes in the social structure. This may be so in the long run, but it is too early to forecast the impact of a new set of ideas on China's traditional structure. I am therefore submitting the text as originally prepared with but minor alterations. The new regime may desire to supplant the traditional family outlook with a broader national outlook, and there is evidence that it is attempting to do this with the cadre of active party members who are the administrators of the new government. If it succeeds in making so fundamental a change for its own elite, it will probably have to be content to allow them to rule the vast Chinese State with its ancient structure largely unaffected by change from the top. That would be in the Chinese tradition, which has withstood many attacks in the long history of the country.

DOUGLAS COPLAND.

May 4th, 1951.

PREFACE

At the time this address was delivered China was in the throes of a struggle between the Nationalists and the Chinese Communists, and the latter were soon to establish their authority over the mainland of China. In addition was added as their means of my desire to make some minor revisions in the text and later because it was thought that the new revision being established in China might indicate some fundamental changes in the social structure. This may be so in the long run but it is too early to forecast the nature of a new set of ideas on China's traditional structure. I am therefore submitting the text as originally prepared with but minor alterations. The new revision may desire to emphasize the traditional family outlook with a broader national outlook, and there is evidence that it is attempting to do this with the aid of active party members who are the administrators of the new government. If it succeeds in making so fundamental a change for the country, it will probably have to be content to allow them to rule the Chinese State with the ancient structure being maintained by those from the top. That would be in the Chinese tradition which has withstood many attacks in the long history of the country.

Thomas Gordon

May 26, 1951

THE CHINESE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

By DOUGLAS COPLAND,

Vice-Chancellor of The Australian National University

Of all forms of social organisation the Chinese is the most enduring in history. It embraces over one-fifth of the world's population, occupies a vast territory with great agricultural resources, and combines in a rare degree a basic unity of purpose with a wide scope for individual enterprise. The simplicity and order of society in a young and somewhat elementary civilisation like that of Australia stands in striking contrast to the complexity and apparent disorder of the Chinese social structure. It is to be compared with the medieval ideas of Christendom more than with anything else in history, but medieval Christendom was much more of an abstraction and less of a reality than organic China. It is true that for some centuries Christendom was the embodiment of a spirit that preserved and carried forward civilisation in the West, but it did not endure against the rising tide of material progress and national feeling in the fifteenth century that divided Europe into conflicting States. The foundations of the Chinese social structure were firmly laid long before medieval Christendom held Western Europe under its benign influence, and it has endured long after, almost unchanged for three millennia. In culture and spirit China has achieved a unity that has no parallel in history. In no country is the impression of the nation as a living and continuing personality so irresistible. No civilisation has shown comparable qualities of endurance and persistence in the face of so many obstacles. No people have preserved their vigour over so long a time as the Chinese. No nation in history has exerted so much influence on the world over so long a period as China. On our standards of political order and material progress we are apt to overlook the magnitude of this achievement, and to regard China as backward, weak and disintegrating under the burdens of internal strife and its enormous numbers.

The visitor to China is struck by signs of disorder everywhere, by the sweat and toil of the masses, by poverty on a scale unknown in the West, by the absence of any control or direction from a central administration, by the illiteracy of the vast majority of the people, by the prevalence of disease and disregard for the most obvious forms of public health now well established in all advanced communities, by the woeful lack of capital and the wasteful use of labour, by widespread human suffering, and by the docility and resignation of the people. This arouses pity in some, contempt in others; but those who look below the surface will soon become aware of an indestructible social force beneath these manifestations

of disruption and discontent. He will be aware that at almost any time in the past two thousand years the same conditions in greater or less degree would have impressed the mind of the superficial observer, and that they must not now be regarded as portending the disintegration of a great society. They are in some respects the inevitable accompaniments of that society, and in part the price that is paid for its supreme qualities of endurance and continuity. To appreciate this it is necessary to examine the nature of the Chinese social structure, its strength and its weakness, its kindness and cruelty, its combination of security and risk, its emphasis on numbers and at the same time its disregard of human life, its distrust of government and devotion to the family unit, and its tremendous resistance to new forces combined with its power to adjust the impact of these forces to its own mould.

I shall attempt to explain the basic conditions that account for the virility and endurance of the Chinese social structure. In the first place, we have to think quite differently in terms of time when we look at China past and present. Throughout the greater part of her history China moved in an orbit of her own, almost uninfluenced by the "barbarian" world beyond her frontiers. Only in the past two centuries has her serenity been disturbed by the forces of trade and imperialism from the West, and she has withstood the impact of these forces with less damage to her indigenous culture than any other country. Two hundred years in Chinese history is but a short time, and there is still the imprint of ages on an ancient society. It matters little that China is backward in modern technique in all its phases, in industrialisation and in communications. These are but manifestations of material progress that China will accept in her own way and in her own time. They are not to be embraced as giving anything basically superior to the social pattern she has developed in a period of time that stretches back almost to the beginnings of civilisation on the earth. Long before Western civilisation had become the accepted pattern for the rest of the world, China had developed the arts, handicrafts, calligraphy, a basic philosophy and a way of life that has not been excelled, in spite of the superior technique of the West. In the art of living China can still claim to have much that is in advance of other civilisations, and she will not lightly cast this aside, even though it means that her progress in accepting the lessons of modern science is slow, and her material welfare thereby retarded. Time is required for adapting new ideas and new ways in China more than in any other country. So much is this so that one might almost say that Time is itself an element in the Chinese social structure. Over vast areas of the enormous expanse of the country the peasant is still working and living very much as he was two hundred years ago, before the West endeavoured to force its way into a country that was unwilling to be disturbed by "barbarians".

Next in importance perhaps is the place of rural life in China. A distinguished Chinese scholar recently published a book embodying his researches into the peasant life of the province of Yunnan. He gave it the title: *Earthbound China*. No description of China in two words could be so eloquent, none more imaginative. In spite of some progress towards industrialisation in the present century, and some development of modern transport and communication, China remains today 80% a peasant country. I shall later give some of the salient facts about the rural economy. Here it is only necessary to emphasise the importance of the rural economy in China, past and present. For the future, too, it must remain the outstanding feature. In no other way will it be possible to maintain China's enormous numbers and to sustain her devotion to population as a main objective of national life. The peasant economy is notoriously conservative, and in China, of all places in the world, it has the greatest resistance to new methods, new customs and new forms of social organisation. Thus the peasant economy has been the fertile soil on which the main social forms in China have been built up over time and deeply embedded in the national conscience. The peasant economy is, moreover, a permanent way of life itself; it gives to the soil what it takes from it, and the Chinese farmer has more experience in methods of conservation than any other farmer in the world. At least this is true over a longer period. Without this it would not have been possible for China to build up and to maintain so enormous a population. It has kept the vast mass of the people close to the soil, bound to the earth, has guided their every activity and moulded their personal lives into a pattern that seems indestructible. In walking through rural China, as I was privileged to do in some places right in the heart of China, such as the environs of Chungking, one has the impression of the weight of ages resting on the personal lives of the peasants. No doubt there are other similar areas in the world, but none covering so great a territory and so many people where the peasant economy is the foundation on which a great and historic civilisation has been built, giving a culture that in all its essentials is accepted by the whole of the people. The nearest approach is India, but India is not really one India in the sense that China is one China.

The third striking fact about the social structure of China is that it is local in influence, and the local unit is far more important than any form of government. If it be true that government in its best form springs from the life of the community, using the word community in the sense of a relatively small group with obvious common interests, then it must be conceded that China has a form of government that has a high standing among accepted forms of government. Control from the centre has always been weak, even with the most efficient and vigorous of the dynasties. China is really made up of myriads of little communities; not even

the provinces can be regarded as the real instruments of government. The nearest approach would be the *hsien*, the smallest recognised unit of government in China. It may be regarded as a small district containing several villages, but each village has an organised community life of its own, so that not even the *hsien* could be accepted as having undisputed authority over the people it contains. There is in fact the widest dispersion of authority in China, insofar as the Chinese tolerate authority from some source external to their communal life. It must be counted a virtue to the Chinese that, throughout their long history they have held their State together loosely and tenuously without a strong central administration. The distant provinces are barely conscious of the existence of a central government except when the tax gatherer approaches, or a local war lord endeavours to establish his power by conscripting an army and expropriating property and food. This has been tolerated by the Chinese but never accepted. It is the integrated social structure of China that has held her together rather than any central force based upon a form of national government. The centrifugal nature of the Chinese political structure is brought out clearly in the place the province occupies. Provinces like Yunnan, Szechuan, Kwantung, Shansi and Hopei are States within themselves, and their allegiance to a central government resembles much more the relationship between the United Kingdom and the British Dominions than the relationship of a State or a province in a modern Western federation. In fact, it may be said that China developed a structure like that of the British Commonwealth centuries ago, and that it is much more firmly established.

Another striking feature of Chinese social development has been the absence of religious controversy and conflict. In this, as in so many other matters, Chinese development has been marked by tolerance to religious ideas, more so for oriental religions than for Christian missionary effort, and a capacity to absorb them without damage to her own culture and social structure. To the Christian, China may appear to be a godless country, but it would be a mistake to assume that it has been uninfluenced by a life of the spirit or that it is more materialistic than countries that have been influenced by religions. China has avoided the divisions and conflict to which contending faiths have given rise in other countries.

Ancestor worship takes the place of religion, and this has very important social implications. It has elevated the family unit to the position of the central force in the social structure. The family, past, present and future, is the dynamic force in social ethics. The unity of China is that of a civilisation rather than of a political system, and as one writer has put it, this unity rests "on the Chinese family, uniting not the living alone, but the living, the dead and those yet to be born, in an undying community" (Tawney: *Life and*

Labour in China). Much has been written on the Chinese family system, but it is difficult for the people of the West to grasp how far it has reached down into the recesses of the Chinese social structure. It is pervasive, embodying as it does in each individual the spirit that animates the life of the whole country. It has given personal relations a place in social organisation that has no counterpart in other countries. It has emphasised personal obligation and responsibility to the family tradition, rather than political action, as the mainspring of social cohesion. The behaviour of the individual centres round his obligation to carry on the family, to perpetuate his stock, to honour his ancestors by ensuring that male descendants will always be available to safeguard the long line of family achievement. This is the supreme virtue, the key to happiness and the basis of all ethics. It explains the enormous numbers of China, the over-population, the toil and sweat of people, the ever-present threat of famine and destitution, the suffering and insecurity of life, the stability of the social organism, the patience, resignation and good humour of the people. But above all it explains both the weakness and the strength of the social structure. On the one hand it has given a unity to the nation of which everyone is conscious without requiring political action. More than anything else it is responsible for "China's destiny" as a great and permanent force reaching back to antiquity and projecting itself forward in time, regardless of the material forces that threaten it. On the other hand, it is responsible for the looseness and ineffectiveness of all central control in administration and policy, for the resistance of the whole mass to new ideas and new methods, and for the inability of China to keep pace with the modern world of power politics. It accounts for the paradox of intense pride in the past achievement of China, devotion to the living China and confidence in its future, co-existing without the sense of patriotism as it is understood in the West, and with a degree of inefficiency and corruption that at times provokes revolt. In a word, it is responsible for most of what is both good and bad in the Chinese social structure, but its outstanding characteristics are the degree of unity it has given China in an intense devotion to a common ideal, and the stability and endurance it has imparted to the social system based upon it.

Another important feature of the Chinese social structure is its capacity for absorbing outside influences and for incorporating them into its own development without disturbing the pattern of its own progress. I cannot speak with authority on the past because my knowledge of Chinese history is limited, but I shall show later in this address that modern Western economic penetration in China is, as Tawney put it, little more than "a modern fringe stitched along the hem of the ancient garment". It has not affected the pattern of the garment itself, and when the pattern is

changed it will be by stitches inserted by the Chinese themselves. No one can quite foresee how the influence of the modern technique of Western industry will be absorbed into the Chinese social structure, not even perhaps the wisest of the Chinese themselves. Perhaps the present rulers of China made a mistake in the thirties, when they had established their authority over a large area of east China, by allowing their enthusiasm for Western technique to lead them to a much too hasty adoption of its outward forms, even though they had determined to break down the foreign concessions. They have succeeded in the latter objective. Their plans for adapting the technique of the West have not greatly affected the ancient structure of China.

Before closing this survey of the social structure a word on the administrators will be appropriate. The scholar has always stood high in the administration of China, though there are in the Republic itself some striking examples of uneducated people in high places and the tradition may be weakening. The classical entrance examinations under the Empire were open to all, but in practice it was difficult for any but the rich to afford the necessary training. In addition to the natural conservatism of the majority of this class, the examination itself, consisting largely of memorising the classics, tended to produce traditionalists and conservatives rather than innovators. The rewards of office were high, as the examiners could adjust the number of new officials to prevent the profession from becoming overcrowded. Thus there was every inducement to the official to support the Government provided that it left him enough authority to make what he considered a worthwhile "squeeze". In this, as in so many other matters, it was tradition that had to be maintained, and there were ample checks against any possible innovations. It was a system fitting neatly into the Chinese social structure, and itself acting as one of the forces preserving and strengthening that structure.

Such, then, are the basic features of a social system that has held together a vast people over so long a period. A more detailed discussion of the rural economy and the family system is perhaps the best method of expressing in more concrete terms the main ideas that I wish to emphasise. The average size of the family on the farm is just under six persons, and the average farm about 3.5 acres. This does not mean that the average number of persons living in one house or peasant's hut is six; it is probably many more, because the family unit for housing purposes consists of three generations, and perhaps in some cases even more. There is nothing fixed about this, and in modern China there is a greater tendency for families to be dispersed. There is also some tendency for the original discipline of the family to be broken down, but this would not affect the peasant class so much as the upper classes, who may go into banking, financial and industrial work or become officials. It is

nevertheless true, as Olga Lang shows in her study *Chinese Family and Society*, that the Chinese are "family-centered".

In spite of all the changes that have taken place in the last thirty years since the Revolution and of the great shift in population on account of the war, the family is still to be considered as "a concrete and basic component of the whole social fabric, not an abstract and isolated phenomenon". Those affected by Western influences were mainly the middle and upper classes of the cities. Though social changes tend to spread downward through society by imitation of upper-class behaviour, it does not seem to me that this will proceed very quickly unless there is a marked rise in the standard of living. In the unsettled present any speedy advance seems unlikely, and improvements in health and production that may occur will be swallowed up by the resulting increase in population. The family seems likely, therefore, to remain an integral element of the peasant structure, unlikely to be greatly disturbed by further developments in industrialisation and communications or in the application of modern technique to the Chinese economic system. The typical Chinese farm is thus itself based upon the family system and is more self-contained than the farming unit in probably any other great farming system in the world. According to recent investigations, 40% of the labour is performed by the operator (peasant-owner or tenant), another 40% by members of the family, and about 20% by hired labour, the last-mentioned being necessary during harvest and other busy periods. From 50% to 60% of all farms in China are probably owned by the farmer himself, the balance being on the basis of a tenancy, or to a lesser degree on a part-ownership basis. The ancient system of exacting a gross percentage of the main crop as rent still exists, and apparently that is true even in areas under the control of the Communists, who have substituted the government for the landlord and have, as far as one can gather, brought rents under control and fixed them on a more reasonable basis than before. Frequently, the Chinese land system is referred to as a feudal structure. This is probably true as regards that part of the system which is still under tenancy; and landlords, including temples and monasteries reminiscent of religious institutions in the Middle Ages in Europe, exercise great economic power over the tenants. In other cases, where the peasant owns his own land, no obvious element of feudalism is to be found, but the peasant-owner is subject to exactions by whatever form of government may be operating in his area, is beset with difficulties in financing his operations during the year and in marketing his produce, and finds it almost impossible to lift his economic position above that of a medieval serf. Interest on money advanced during the crop year is extremely high and the profit margin for marketing equally devastating to his fortunes. This is no doubt a veiled form of feudalism, and the ideas of land

reform which were included in the basic principles of the Revolution and are now in the foreground of the reform programme of the Communist Party aim at the elimination of these evils. If rents and interest rates are made more reasonable and a more equitable system of marketing developed, the net effect will be to preserve and not to impair the basic structure of the peasant economy. There is every indication that the Communists, having experimented with other ideas, now accept this view. The Chinese have a high sense of property, and it is unlikely that any theoretical system based upon common ownership would find firm roots in Chinese soil.

It should not be assumed, however, that these financial and ownership problems determine the shape of the Chinese peasant system. It is the family system and the enormous numbers of people who subsist on the farms that are the determining factors. The average farm depends for about 20% of its total consumption on purchases, the balance being produced from the land or by the labour of the family. Labour is plentiful and cheap. The typical Chinese rural scene is a group of people, men and women, carrying out a common task, even on the smallest farm. The Chinese never work alone, any more than they live alone. In his extensive investigations into the Chinese farm economy, J. L. Buck has made comparisons between the United States and China in respect of the employment of labour. In the United States a cotton crop requires 289 hours of man labour per hectare compared with 1,620 in China, a wheat crop 26 hours in U.S.A. compared with 600 in China, a corn crop 47 hours compared with 663. The average capital per farm was about 1,800 Chinese dollars at the time Buck made his investigations in the thirties. Of this, 75% was invested in the land, whilst buildings constituted about 14% and livestock and equipment only 7%. Thus the part of the capital which would be regarded as being directly applied to the land would amount to only some 130 Chinese dollars, or approximately 70 American dollars, per farm. This indicates the very low capital equipment of the average farm and its great dependence upon human labour. Livestock occupies a very small part in the Chinese rural economy, which is based essentially upon the production of food for direct human consumption and not for feeding the animals for indirect human consumption. Only pigs and poultry would normally be regarded as being held for human consumption; the other livestock is required as a limited capital equipment for farm operations. The bulk of these operations, however, is undertaken by the toil and sweat of people, as is the major part of transport throughout rural China. This is inevitably wasteful and inefficient, and produces very low returns. Even if there were no famines, floods and pestilences to be encountered, the Chinese peasant and his family would be living close to material discomfort, if not to actual

destitution. The average earnings per adult male, again according to Buck, and including the value of the residence in which the family live, were found to be 65 dollars per annum—less than 40 American dollars. The average income per head of all people living on the farm would probably on this standard be not more than 12 American dollars. Investigations into the national income of China confirm these figures, yielding as they do an average income of from 12 to 20 American dollars per head.

This necessarily imposes a low standard of living, and the weight of the population on the land, together with the costly methods of production through human labour create a position which cannot easily be solved. There is little chance of capital equipment being improved, and if it were it would create an appalling employment problem. The possibility of improving methods of agriculture, and particularly of plant breeding, are limited because of the ignorance and apathy of the peasant and of his enslavement to tradition. Thus the inherent resistance to change is the worst enemy of the peasant himself and the best guarantee that the structure, which has the weight of ages upon it, will not be disturbed readily by new methods, new ideas or the application of farming technique as it has been developed in the West. The Chinese peasant is accustomed to long hours of toil, to living on the borderline of poverty all his life, devoting himself to his little plot and to his responsibilities as head or member of a family. His position has always been insecure and he expects this inherent insecurity to be aggravated at times by floods and famines and political disorder. He has for this reason developed a patient and tolerant attitude to misfortune and is not easily moved by those who seek to offer him something better. But there have been recurrent signs that he is not satisfied with his conditions, and the present internal conflict in China is in part centred round peasant reform—the People's Livelihood, according to the third principle of Sun Yat-sen's teaching. The work of some of the new universities in the golden years of the Revolution (the thirties) was just beginning to make some impact upon the peasant mind in respect of farming practice, plant breeding and the treatment of pests. The foundations of better rental, financial and marketing arrangements were being actively discussed among progressive Chinese agriculturalists who had acquired some knowledge of Western methods. But their numbers were small and their work was a casualty of the Sino-Japanese War, as was so much else that was fundamental in the Revolution. It will, however, not remain a permanent casualty and the solution of the social evils at which it was directed is one of the first tasks of those who seek to build a modern China.

This brief sketch of the rural economy of China will, I hope, explain some of the elements of the social structure that account

for its endurance and stability. It is absurd to imagine that the fringe of industrialisation that has been developed in the past twenty years can have influenced that basic structure fundamentally. The industrialisation was at first forced upon China by the European countries which exacted concessions from a weak and decadent dynasty, and now it has fallen into the hands of westernised Chinese, in part associated with foreign capital holding tenuously to its former privileged position. When the Chinese settle their present internal conflict, as they will in their own way eventually, the process of adapting modern technique to the economic development of the country will proceed under Chinese control. Just what form this will take it is impossible to forecast, but one thing may be stated with certainty. The form of industrial enterprise will be adapted to Chinese conditions in such a way as to preserve the basic social structure and to maintain the features of the family system that has held China together for centuries. It may be that the Chinese will fail to reach the standards of efficiency in technique that the West has attained, and that the weakness of administration may prove a barrier to building up great centralised enterprises, public or private, that readily fall within the administrative capacity of Western communities. These failings are probably inevitable, but they do not spell failure for China. Local enterprise on a small scale is much more in the Chinese tradition than the nation-wide industrial unit, and the present rulers of China would no doubt have gone further if they had attempted to build up modern technique in the province or district, where its beneficial impact on the lives of the people would have been understood. A grandiose scheme for the electrification of the Yangtse Valley appeals to those who think that in one bound China would return to her former glory by outstripping the West. Such a scheme is not only beyond the resources of China, even when linked to those of a powerful country in the west; it is also outside the mainstream of Chinese history, and therefore condemned at its birth. China is not richly endowed for modern industry; the form in which Western technique can best be adapted to Chinese conditions is the small enterprise that will bring relief to the peasant in the way of life to which he has long been inured. Light and fuel in his primitive home, power for his individual handicraft, fertiliser and simple machinery for his farm, less exacting methods of weaving and spinning his simple garments, local organisation of health services—these are the obvious ways in which modern technique can serve China best, and these are the ways in which China will eventually absorb and adapt Western technique to her needs. They are not the ways in which the West attempted in the past 100 years to impose its technique upon China, nor are they the ways in which the modern rulers of China have conceived the task. Their regime stands between the old China and the new, belonging

strictly to neither. Their brief rule will most likely be regarded as a temporary interruption in the main current of Chinese history.

The strength of the Chinese social structure rests on its devotion to custom and tradition, on its belief in the family as the centre of all organised life, on its capacity to face hardship and disaster, on its universal acceptance of the basic unity of China, on the tolerance and good humour of its people, accustomed as they are to suffering and disappointment, and to the elemental virtues of family life. China is a land of unremitting toil and intense human activity, where insecurity is the common lot of man. But the toiling masses are cheerfully poor, far more good-humoured than most peoples whose material standards are far higher, and more at peace with the world than many whose security has been guaranteed. Good humour in the face of impending disaster is an outstanding characteristic of the Chinese people—perhaps the thing that most distinguishes them from other peoples. It is aptly put by a Chinese who had enjoyed the benefits of a Western education and returned to China in the days of her travail in the war with Japan (Han Suyin: *Destination Chungking*). "That is perhaps our outstanding and most excellent Chinese trait, our sense of humour. Chinese laughter, sometimes mellow, sometimes acrid, lightens the most tense situation with appreciation of the ludicrous. It saves us from the solemn absurdities of the Japanese. It gives us a sense of proportion. It is the secret of our resiliency. We endure; we come through. After catastrophe we rise up and build out of the fragments, as I have seen the people of Chungking putting up shelters of broken brick and splintered wood salvaged from their bomb-wrecked homes. Our sense of humour makes us accept things as they are; our cheerfulness makes us laugh at inconveniences; our good temper helps us to put up with discomforts. We are not as progressive and efficient as we might be if we took all seriously, but we are happier."

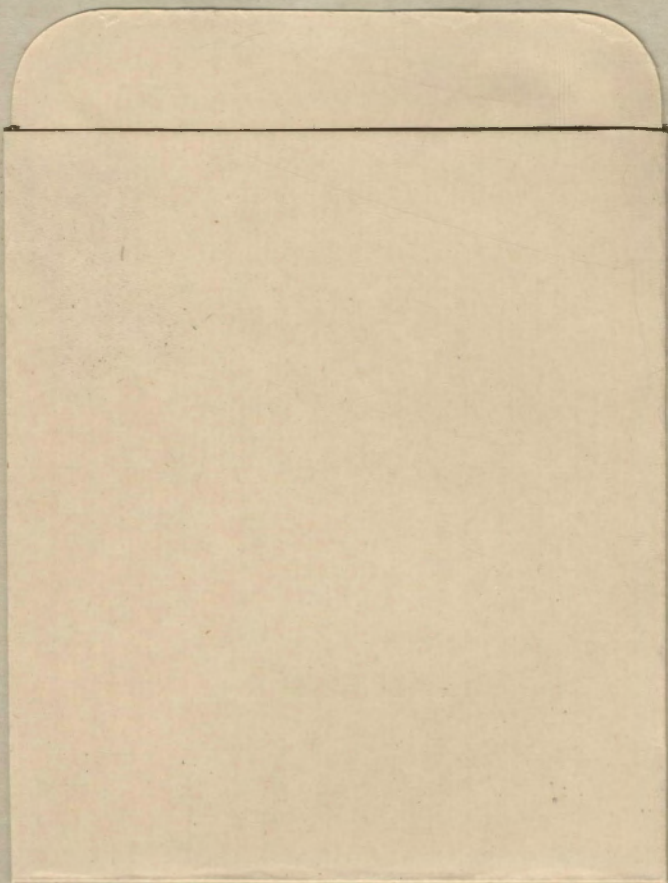
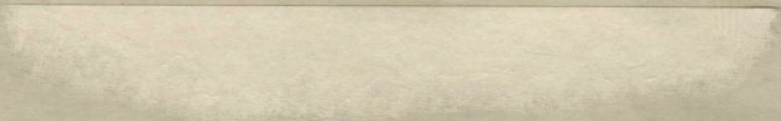
In the modern world of power politics these qualities of good humour, tolerance, and patience with conditions that impose such inefficiency and suffering can perhaps be carried too far. Loyalty to the family is responsible for many of the weaknesses of China in the modern world of power, as it is responsible for so much of the virtue of community life. It imposes great discipline in personal conduct in the more limited sphere of family relations, but it also imposes great limitations on the conception of public duty. Patriotism is not one of the virtues of Chinese social ethics. There is a mystic belief in the State, springing from the common ideals of millions of fellow countrymen, the acceptance of a culture and way of life that appear to the average Chinese as being universal, and confidence that no disaster can overwhelm China. But this co-exists with a rapacity and corruption that permits of the greatest abuses of office and personal aggrandisement. National power can-

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not be built on such standards of neglect of public duty. On Western standards this is perhaps the greatest weakness of the Chinese social structure. Among the upper classes in China manual labour and the martial arts are still despised, and many a Chinese general has never seen a shot fired. Unselfish devotion to the State is still a neglected virtue in China, and the discipline of public service falls down before devotion to the family. Perhaps this gives China the best of both worlds in the long run. She is rich in manpower but weak in the resources of material power, and a State built on material power has less chance of enduring. China may be neglectful of human life, but, paradoxical as it may seem, she is not neglectful of human happiness. Even thoughtful people in the West know that individual or collective happiness does not rest upon the exercise of power. Nevertheless, China has suffered many humiliations on account of the inherent weakness of her social structure in building up a strong central administration and the exclusion from her social ethics of patriotism as one of the supreme virtues. She remains "at once under-capitalised and over-manned", to use an apt expression from Tawney. It may be true that her power over long periods of time is indestructible, but at any moment of time in the modern world of power technique she is weak and her material standards lower than they need be if she were able to set about adapting Western technique to her ancient structure. Improved economic welfare for the masses is not inconsistent with the preservation of that structure; nor is the elevation of China to a position in which she could command respect as a Great Power at variance with her laudable desire to maintain her basic culture as a great influence in the world. Modern China has not made the headway in these respects that the founders of the Revolution hoped and expected, but China can still claim that in spite of the long valleys of shadow and even of darkness in her history, she has given more people contentment of mind and repose of spirit than any other country. Her material backwardness and administrative weakness are to be set against the tolerant philosophy and enormous good humour of her millions of people who believe that virtue resides in contentment of mind and not in material power.

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