

## In This Issue

In his presidential address, ALBERT FEUERWERKER discusses the question of why the Chinese economy developed differently than the Western European, North American, and Japanese economies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. That issue has defined the field of Chinese economic history for more than a century, and has been the subject of several articles and statements in the *JAS* during 1991 and 1992 (Rawski 50.1:84–111; Myers 50.3:604–28; Huang 50.3:629–33; Wong 51.3:600–11).

Feuerwerker begins from a premise established only within the span of his career, the agreement that “the Chinese economy and society in the late-Ming and early-Qing dynasties were remarkably dynamic,” replacing an earlier assumption that the Chinese economy was stagnant and backward. Once this view of early modern Chinese economy became accepted, historians began asking why such dynamism did not produce industrialization in China as it did in Western Europe. Feuerwerker agrees that part of the answer lies in the fact that the Chinese case is different because of “specifically Chinese cultural features.” Thus, he agrees these differences meant the Chinese economy could not change in exactly the ways that produced industrialization in Western Europe. However, his main point draws distinctions among three forms of economic growth: *extensive* growth characterized by constant returns to additional inputs, *modern* growth, à la Adam Smith, involving increased per capita output, but characterized by major cyclical fluctuations and real barriers to sustaining such increases over time, and *intensive* growth, à la Simon Kuznets, which produces sharp structural changes that produce breakthroughs based on the application of new technology to produce greater per capita output and incomes. He believes specialists studying Chinese economic history have not paid sufficient attention to these distinctions. If they do, he believes, it is possible both to better understand and to more clearly interpret Chinese economic history.

R. KEITH SCHOPPA has chosen Xiaoshan county in Zhejiang province to investigate a problem that has fascinated students of the Chinese revolution for several decades: What were the specific factors that led to revolution in rural China? He begins by carefully drawing distinctions among regions within the county based on the contrasting geography and economy of its three sections and then describes the major pattern of revolutionary action. In his conclusions, Schoppa emphasizes that different ecological arenas or “microregions” within this one county where the processes and consequences of change appeared were quite distinct. Schoppa believes these “microregions,” whose dimensions usually spill across administrative boundaries, are critical to understanding the revolutionary process, and much of his analysis bears on this point. Second, he emphasizes the importance of cultural forms for creating, shaping, and authenticating various kinds of political activity, and third, he argues that differences in the actors involved in the politics and leadership within a microregion—what he calls “human agency”—is again critical to the outcome. He would argue that, based on his research in Xiaoshan, these three elements are the most significant avenues to explain why the rural revolution took various forms and produced various outcomes in modern China.

KATHERINE BOWIE uses evidence about textile production in northern Thailand to explore the economic and social history of the Thai peasantry in the nineteenth

and early twentieth centuries. In contrast to the prevailing characterization of Thailand of that period as a happy, egalitarian peasant subsistence economy whose existence was insured by the royal Thai family—where “fish abound in the streams and canals and many fruits and vegetables grow without care”—she portrays a struggle for subsistence among the highly stratified rural populace through hard work and complex patterns of exchange. Bowie employs both historical records and field interviews with aged rural inhabitants in building her case.

In this issue’s last article, based on the Shōwa Emperor’s funeral and the Heisei Emperor’s succession rites, TAKASHI FUJITANI reflects on the altered imperial presence in Japanese society. Fujitani concludes that, during the post-1945 era, the imperial aura has become smaller, shriveled, and banalized. Television, he finds, turns the Japanese monarch and the imperial household into “simply other commodities, to be consumed.” Thus, while he does not share the fear that the Japanese emperor may somehow reemerge as the powerful, remote, and divine talisman of national greatness, he concludes that the figure of the emperor still may serve as the vehicle for new brands of neo-nationalism, possible in large measure because of the way the contemporary media, especially television, appropriate the emperor, which empties his figure of all meaning, providing only diversion through spectacle, and transmitting historical forgetfulness.