after the king’s death or loss of favour. The location of women’s powers in the
private sphere makes it sometimes very difficult to assess their real roles. Even
so, Wellman has succeeded in demonstrating how crucial these women were in
shaping court culture, the visual arts, and politics, thus being able to argue that
women did have a Renaissance.

Some features seem to be specific to the French monarchy, and puzzle the
reader. First of all, the king’s legitimate and illegitimate children could be reared
together in the same palace, generally separated from the one where the king was
living. Second, some foreign young royal brides were educated in the French
court from early childhood, and thus there was the possibility of being refused
after a lengthy stay in France, as happened to Margaret of Austria (1480-1530),
who was engaged to Charles VIII, and Mariana Victoria of Spain (1718-1781),
formerly to wed Louis XV and later queen of Portugal by her marriage to Joseph I.
Also, French queens might be crowned in separate ceremonies, that is, not jointly
with their husbands, whereas in some kingdoms coronations were replaced by
other rituals of passage, not extensive to royal wives. Last but not least, the very
status of royal mistresses: even though virtually all kings in Europe were entitled
to have them, France seems to have been a case where these women displayed an
official status unrivalled anywhere else, meaning that such mistresses predictably
created similarly official extra-magnetic fields for competition among courtiers.
Why such important differences occur is yet to be explained. These are questions
that the reader might want to see answered in the book, but perhaps this task is for
other historians, as the comparative study of queens and mistresses in the different
European monarchies is yet to be undertaken. For now, Wellman has surely done
enough to shine a light on queens and mistresses in Renaissance France.

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Zarrow, Peter – After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese

As China, and other non-Western societies became deeply entangled with the
global capitalist system, fundamental transformation began to take place in the
political, economic, and social realms of these societies. In the Chinese case,
the transition from a universal empire (the Qing dynasty) to a nation-state with
defined political boundary (Republic of China) exemplified the local inflection of
such global transformations.

The envisioning of a Republic was rendered possible through new conceptual
categories like “citizen”, “democracy”, “equality”, “popular rights”, and the
diminishing of the notion universal empire in Confucian tradition. Peter Zarrow’s
finely argued and cogently presented After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation
of the Chinese State, 1885-1924 serves the purpose of interrogating these ideas and their meanings in the Chinese political discourse.

As Zarrow’s research demonstrates, the manifold transformation took place in several realms, from empire to nation-states, subject of the Qing to citizen of the new Republic. Chapter one discusses the conservative political reformism of Kang Youwei, whose constitutional monarchism upheld the Confucian emperor as the sole source of political legitimacy. For conservative reformers like Kang, Zarrow points out, the primary concern was “protect the country, protect the race and protect the teaching” (p. 57). Chapter two pertains to Kang’s disciple, Liang Qichao, who eventually diverged from his mentor’s Confucian monarchism, and advocated for a state constituted by national citizens. The emergence of a public sphere, and the ever-expanding participation of people from all walks of life, including low-ranking gentry, educated urban dwellers, women from the upper class and so on, formulated the notion of national citizen in late Qing.

The next three chapters (3, 4 and 5) deal with the intricate relation between nationalism and statism in the state-building project commenced during the late Qing era. It is in this part that Zarrow scrutinizes the transition from universal empire, embodied in the Qing imperial rule, to a “sovereign territorialized state”. Accompanying this process was the formulation of racial and national consciousness.

The late Qing and early Republican era was characterized by the indelible marks of Social Darwinism. Among the early revolutionary, a foremost task was to apply the borrowed Social Darwinism in their interpretation of the indigenous conditions, namely China’s backwardness in the arena of global capitalism. The epistemological break with Confucianism eventually allowed the increasing radicalization of revolution thinking.

At the early stage, revolutionaries could only be distinguished from the more conservative reformers by the former’s anti-Manchu sentiment. Hence, the early revolutionary ideas of republicanism, and even socialism, were associated with the anti-Manchu, anti-dynastic sentiment. With the transitory success in the founding of the Republic of China, the revolutionaries changed to a strategy that aimed at organizing a unitary nation-state through the incorporation of the five races (Han Chinese, Manchus, Mongolians, Tibetans and Hui Muslims) into “an ethnic-based state” and “turn imperial subjects into citizens who felt the mutual bonds of national fellowship” (p. 284).

The last three chapters (6, 7 and 8) illustrate that the irreversible 1911 Revolution not only embarked on the state-building process in the Republican era, but it also, more significantly, inaugurated the fundamental transformation in the intellectual realm. New social and intellectual trends, such as Social Darwinism, beliefs in “rights” and “equality”, adoption of linear and progressive notion of history, began to overshadow and surpass the millennium Confucian traditions of emperorship and the Sino-centric notion of “All Under Heaven”. Despite this pervasive transformation in all political, economic, social, and cultural realms, it did not imply a rupture from China’s imperial and Confucian past. The remnants of the imperial past lingered on, and resurfaced in Yuan Shikai’s attempt to restore
the dynastic rule by claiming himself the new emperor of China in 1916 with the reign title of Hongxian (Glorious Constitution). Yuan’s misjudgment that “ideology and rituals of emperorship continued to resonate” predestined the fatal failure of his monarchical movement.

Zarrow’s book situates the rise of new political ideologies in the historical transition from Imperial Qing to the Republic of China. He probes into and combs the pivotal concepts like “equality” (pingdeng), “democracy” (minzhu), “popular sovereignty” (minquan), and explains how this set of political concepts fundamentally derived from the European historical experiences were acculturated to the new circumstances facing the Chinese intellectuals and politicians at the turn of the twentieth century. A way to approach Zarrow’s book is to read it as a global diaspora of political ideas and the localization of these ideas. Contemporary relevance of this conceptual transformation is still discernible in today’s China, as Zarrow claims, “if modern Chinese identity is understood as a project, it was not finished in 1912, and it is still not finished today” (p. 272). The conceptual transformation that has been started between the crucial years of 1885 and 1924 clearly still shapes the open-ended political discussions in today’s China. Peter Zarrow’s book is a welcome addition to the study of the modern transformation in Chinese history, and without doubt will remain one of the most authoritative researches on the development of Chinese political ideas for many years to come.

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