The rise of modern China, Immanuel Chung-yueh Hsü, Oxford University Press, 1990, 0195058674, 9780195058673, 971 pages. The Rise of Modern China vividly describes China's extraordinary metamorphosis from a traditional self-sufficient empire into a modern nation. Immanuel C.Y. Hsu surveys the main currents of modern Chinese history from 1600 to the present, devoting particular concern to the shaping forces of China's political, diplomatic, intellectual, social, and economic history. The new Fourth Edition of this classic is brought fully up to date to reflect the current economic, political, and cultural climate in China. Informed by Hsu's lifetime study of the country and observations during recent visits, new chapters offer an inside view of the problems created by China's accelerated economic growth in the past decade, and examine the cultural impact of Teng Xiao-p'ing's acceptance of various Western market mechanisms to help modernize the economy. More than 100 photographs, drawings, maps, and charts illuminate the narrative, and make it of interest to general readers as well as scholars of Chinese history.

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The Cambridge History of China, Denis Crispin Twitchett, John King Fairbank, 1978, China, 1203 pages. International scholars and sinologists discuss culture, economic growth, social change, political processes, and foreign influences in China since the earliest pre-dynastic period.

The Search for Modern China, Jonathan D. Spence, 1990, History, 876 pages. Covering more than four centuries of Chinese history, this work chronicles the various dynasties, the ideas of reformist Confucian scholars, and China's poets, novelists.


The Rise of Modern China, Tony Allan, Jan 1, 2002, History, 48 pages. Chronicles the history of China since 1990, including the people and events that transformed a traditional empire into a modern world power.


Revolutionary leaders of modern China, Jundu Xue, 1971, History, 580 pages.
Now in its sixth edition, this book has been updated to examine the return of Hong Kong in 1997 and the upcoming return of Macao in 1999. Hsü discusses the end of the last vestiges of foreign imperialism in China, as well as China's emergence as a regional and global superpower. U.S.-China rivalry and the prospect of unification between China and Taiwan are also considered.

Now in its sixth edition, this work by C.Y. Hsu is still one of the most popular textbooks on this subject in universities across the country. Within its 1000+ pages the book covers the period from the beginning of the Ch'ing dynasty (1644) to 1998. I believe that what separates this book from others on this subject is that instead of focusing primarily on geography, chronology, and names, it attempts to provide a glimpse of the personalities and motivations of the many important figures that emerged during this period. The chapters concerning the years between the decline of the Ch'ing at the turn of the 19th century and the establishment of the PRC in 1949 are extremely well done, and convey a great deal of information about important players of that age such as Sun Yat Sen, Mao, and Chiang Kai Shek. It is a well-researched, well-written book, and a pleasure to read.

I recently took a course on the history of modern China in university, which covered the era spanning from the late Qing to 21st century. Initially I was rather daunted by the size and thickness of this book, but I ended up reading this book 3 times by the end of the course because it was so readable. Immanuel Hsu's analysis is clear and obviously up to par. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is taking a similar course. If you're keen to understand China particularly in the light of current affairs, you need to know about its recent history as well. There is no better place to start than with "The Rise of China" by Immanuel Hsu.

This is the best single-volume history of Modern China that you could own. It covers the history of China from the Ch'ing (Qing) dynasty to the emergence of China as a global superpower at the beginning of the 21st century. Scholarly, yet immensely readable. This work will remain a lasting memorial to Professor Hsü, a preeminent scholar of Modern Chinese History, whom I had the great privilege to know.

Having grown up in mainland China, having read most of the Chinese history books available, and having steeped with all contemporary arts and media propaganda as well as serious scholar works, I thought that I have a full grasp of the modern Chinese history until I read this book half through, of which I bought the fifth edition several years ago but collecting dust on the book shelf. I could not help to wait the finish of my reading of the whole book but to write this. So far, this is a book I read with such fascination better than reading any book in my life, including those page turner best seller fictions. Originally I picked up to read this book as some kind of obligation to read those books I bought but never opened, following my successes with those Hemingway and Mark Twain, and pessimistically planned to spend the rest of July to finish it, and this was only three days ago and I'm already half through. When I read this book for the past few days, I cannot help to notice the connections between the events in the past and those events more recently. For example, Kang You-Wei's reform and four modernization; Tai Ping Tiang Guo and the lang reform of the 50's; the list goes on. Overall, I highly recommend anyone, especially those of us oversee Chinese from mainland China, to read this book. I will be anxious to know whether any attempt has been made to translate this book into Chinese so that every Chinese could read it. Not knowing the difference between the fifth and the sixth edition, I would offer a suggestion to consider for the seventh edition: to add a list of Chinese for those names used in the text, since it's very hard to remember all the names in the out dated old spelling, in addition to correspond each with the correct Chinese name.

Hsu fills in a niche which has remained empty for a long time. Chinese history written by self-styled western experts presents a real challenge for fairness and perspective. In Western eyes, the colonial period is often seen through rose colored glasses and this hampers their ability to present it objectively. With this book we can get a different perspective from someone who has lived the Asian experience from the Asian side. Good work!
While Spence’s “The Search for Modern China” may be currently the most popular survey of modern Chinese history, Hsu's work is indispensable for the student of wants a deep understanding of China and the Chinese. I was fortunate enough to have studied the material covered with Hsu at Santa Barbara, while he was working on the first edition and still using the then only good English language Asian history by Fairbank (+ others) as a text. While I still have my copy of Fairbank's two volumes, which remain useful for Japan and Southeast Asia, it is to Hsu's text I still refer on matters of Chinese history.

Born in Shanghai in 1923, he studied at Yenching University in Beijing, and at the University of Minnesota. He held a Harvard-Yenching Fellowship at Harvard University from 1950 to 1954. After receiving his doctorate from Harvard, he spent the years 1955â€“1958 as a Research Fellow at Harvard's East Asian Research Center. He taught modern Chinese history at the University of California at Santa Barbara from 1959 until his retirement in 1991, serving as Chair of the History department from 1970 to 1972. He was a Guggenheim Fellow in 1962â€“1963, as well as a Fulbright Fellow. His most widely read book is The Rise of Modern China, a survey of Chinese history from 1600 to the present, and a standard textbook.

According to Jonathan Spence in the Preface to the Chinese translation of his The Search for Modern China, the "two most prominent previous (to The Search for Modern China) English-language surveys" (of modern Chinese history) were those "by John King Fairbank in the 1960s and by Immanuel Hsu in the 1970s". Spence acknowledged that he had learned much from these two scholars.[3]

Unequal treaty refers to treaties signed with Western powers during the 19th and early 20th centuries by Qing Dynasty China and late Tokugawa Japan after suffering military defeat by the foreign powers or when there was a threat of military action by those powers. The term is also applied to treaties imposed during the same time period on late Joseon Dynasty Korea by the post-Meiji Restoration Empire of Japan.

Starting with the rise of nationalism and anti-imperialism in the 1920s, the Guomindang and Chinese Communist Party used these concepts to characterize the Chinese experience in losses of sovereignty between roughly 1839â€“1949. The term "unequal treaty" became associated with the concept of China's "Century of Humiliation", especially the loss of the Treaty Ports, extraterritoriality, and tariff autonomy.

The historian Wang Dong concludes that "although the phrase has long been widely used, (unequal treaty) nevertheless lacks a clear and unambiguous meaning" and that there is "no agreement about the actual number of treaties signed between China and foreign countries that should be counted as 'unequal'".[1] The term "unequal treaty" did not come into use until early in the 20th century. These treaties were considered unequal in China "because they were not negotiated by nations treating each other as equals but were imposed on China after a war, and because they encroached upon China's sovereign rights ... which reduced her to semicolonial status". In many cases China was effectively forced to pay large amounts of reparations, open up ports for trade, cede or lease territories (such as Hong Kong to Great Britain and Macau to Portugal), and make various other concessions of sovereignty to foreign "spheres of influence", following military defeats.[2]

The earliest treaty later referred to as "unequal" was the 1841 Convention of Chuenpee negotiations during the First Opium War. China and Great Britain signed the first unequal treaties under the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842. Following Qing China's defeat, treaties with Britain opened up five ports to foreign trade, while also allowing foreign missionaries, at least in theory, to reside within China. In addition, foreign residents in the port cities were afforded trials by their own consular authorities rather than the Chinese legal system, a concept termed extraterritoriality.[3] Under the treaties, Britain and America established the British Supreme Court for China and Japan and United States Court for China in Shanghai.

Korea's first unequal treaty was not with the West but with Japan. Taking a page from Western tactics, in 1875 Japan sent Captain Inoue Yoshika and the warship Un'yÅ• to display military might
over Korea in the Ganghwa Island incident. This forced Korea to open its doors to Japan by signing the Japanâ€“Korea Treaty of 1876.[5]

The unequal treaties ended at various times for the countries involved. Japan’s victories in the 1894â€“95 First Sino-Japanese War convinced many in the West that unequal treaties could no longer be enforced on Japan. Korea's unequal treaties with European states became largely null and void in 1910, when it was annexed by Japan.[6]

After World War I, patriotic consciousness in China focused on the treaties, which now became widely known as "unequal treaties". The Nationalist Party and the Communist Party competed to convince the public that their approach would be more effective.[7] Germany was forced to terminate its rights, the Soviet Union ostentatiously surrendered them, and the United States organized the Washington Conference to negotiate them. After Chiang Kai-shek declared a new national government in 1927, the western powers quickly offered diplomatic recognition, arousing anxiety in Japan.[8] The new government declared to the Great Powers that China had been exploited for decades under unequal treaties, and that the time for such treaties was over, demanding they renegotiate all of them on equal terms.[9] In the face of Japanese expansion in China, however, ending the system was postponed.[citation needed]

Most of China's unequal treaties were abrogated during the Second Sino-Japanese War, which started in 1937 and merged into the larger context of World War II. The United States Congress ended American extraterritoriality in December, 1943. Significant examples of unequal treaties on China did outlast World War II: unequal treaties regarding Hong Kong remained in place until Hong Kong's 1997 handover, and in 1969, to improve Sino-Russian relations, China reconfirmed the 1859 Treaty of Aigun.[citation needed]


Chinese civilization originated in various regional centers along both the Yellow River and the Yangtze River valleys in the Neolithic era, but the Yellow River is said to be the cradle of Chinese civilization. With thousands of years of continuous history, China is one of the world's oldest civilizations.[1] The written history of China can be found as early as the Shang Dynasty (c. 1700â€“1046 BC),[2] although ancient historical texts such as the Records of the Grand Historian (ca. 100 BC) and Bamboo Annals assert the existence of a Xia Dynasty before the Shang.[2][3] Much of Chinese culture, literature and philosophy further developed during the Zhou Dynasty (1045â€“256 BC).

The Zhou Dynasty began to bow to external and internal pressures in the 8th century BC, and the kingdom eventually broke apart into smaller states, beginning in the Spring and Autumn Period and reaching full expression in the Warring States period. This is one of multiple periods of failed statehood in Chinese history (the most recent of which was the Chinese Civil War).

In between eras of multiple kingdoms and warlordism, Chinese dynasties have ruled parts or all of China; in some eras, including the present, control has stretched as far as Xinjiang and/or Tibet. This practice began with the Qin Dynasty: in 221 BC, Qin Shi Huang united the various warring kingdoms and created the first Chinese empire. Successive dynasties in Chinese history developed bureaucratic systems that enabled the Emperor of China to directly control vast territories. China's last dynasty was Qing, which was replaced by the Republic of China in 1912, and in the mainland by the People's Republic of China in 1949.

The conventional view of Chinese history is that of alternating periods of political unity and disunity, with China occasionally being dominated by steppe peoples, most of whom were in turn assimilated into the Han Chinese population. Cultural and political influences from other parts of Asia and the Western world, carried by successive waves of immigration, expansion, foreign contact, and cultural
assimilation are part of the modern culture of China.

What is now China was inhabited by Homo erectus more than a million years ago.[4] Recent study shows that the stone tools found at Xiaochangliang site are magnetostratigraphically dated to 1.36 million years ago.[5] The archaeological site of Xihoudu in Shanxi Province is the earliest recorded use of fire by Homo erectus, which is dated 1.27 million years ago.[4] The excavations at Yuanmou and later Lantian show early habitation. Perhaps the most famous specimen of Homo erectus found in China is the so-called Peking Man discovered in 1923–27.

The early history of China is obscured by the lack of written documents from this period, coupled with the existence of later accounts that attempted to describe events that had occurred several centuries previously. In a sense, the problem stems from centuries of introspection on the part of the Chinese people, which has blurred the distinction between fact and fiction in regards to this early history.

Although there is disagreement as to whether the dynasty actually existed, there is some archaeological evidence pointing to its possible existence. Sima Qian, writing in the late 2nd century BC, dated the founding of the Xia Dynasty to around 2200 BC, but this date has not been corroborated. Most archaeologists now connect the Xia to excavations at Erlitou in central Henan province,[13] where a bronze smelter from around 2000 BC was unearthed. Early markings from this period found on pottery and shells are thought to be ancestral to modern Chinese characters.[14] With few clear records matching the Shang oracle bones or the Zhou bronze vessel writings, the Xia era remains poorly understood.

Archaeological findings providing evidence for the existence of the Shang Dynasty, c. 1600–1046 BC, are divided into two sets. The first set comes from sources at Erligang, Zhengzhou, and Shangcheng. The second set comes from the later Shang or Yin period at Anyang, in modern-day Henan, which has been confirmed as the last of the Shang's nine capitals (c. 1300–1046 BC).[citation needed] The findings at Anyang include the earliest written record of Chinese past so far discovered: inscriptions of divination records in ancient Chinese writing on the bones or shells of animals the so-called "oracle bones", dating from around 1200 BC.[15]

The Shang Dynasty featured 31 kings, from Tang of Shang to King Zhou of Shang. In this period, the Chinese worshipped many different gods weather gods and sky gods and also a supreme god, named Shangdi, who ruled over the other gods. Those who lived during the Shang Dynasty also believed that their ancestors their parents and grandparents became like gods when they died, and that their ancestors wanted to be worshipped, too, like gods. Each family worshipped its own ancestors.

The Records of the Grand Historian states that the Shang Dynasty moved its capital six times. The final (and most important) move to Yin in 1350 BC led to the dynasty's golden age. The term Yin Dynasty has been synonymous with the Shang dynasty in history, although it has lately been used to specifically refer to the latter half of the Shang Dynasty.

Chinese historians living in later periods were accustomed to the notion of one dynasty succeeding another, but the actual political situation in early China is known to have been much more complicated. Hence, as some scholars of China suggest, the Xia and the Shang can possibly refer to political entities that existed concurrently, just as the early Zhou is known to have existed at the same time as the Shang.

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