

## **Student email-interview with Insoo Park, the author of “The Age of Wars and Revolutions”**

1. Throughout the long history of China, how influential was Confucian ideology as the foundation of the political, social and economic aspects of China?

So about the Confucian foundation that had lasted in China for over 2000 years...After Qin Shi Huang united China, the previous Confucian philosophy emerged as the political ideology of the Han dynasty. Since then, Confucianism had maintained its position as the central political dogma and imposed influence on political, social, economic, cultural, and intellectual aspects of China. Thus, its social foundation had become indispensable part of China throughout the numerous dynasties. Confucian ideology had spread to other parts of East Asia and influenced multitudes of different modern East Asian nations including Korea, Vietnam, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore Indonesia, and Thailand.

2. How did the Manchu of the Qing dynasty rule differently than did the Mongols of the Yuan dynasty?

The differences in the Mongols and the Manchu in terms of their rule of China...the Mongols, one of the northern nomadic ethnic groups had despised Han China as the descendents of Xiongnu. Thus, while the Mongols ruled China, they ignored and excluded Chinese from participation in any political institutions and important political decisions. By excluding Chinese officials, the Mongols ultimately denied the Confucian foundation of China. Now, Confucian ideology has tendency to advocate the maintenance of the contemporary political environment more so than a change. As a result, the Mongols ultimately shortened the span of the Yuan dynasty by ignoring Confucian foundation of China. The Manchu had learned from the failure of the Yuan dynasty and encouraged participation of Chinese officials. They maintained the traditional bureaucracy through the civil examination system and heavily relied on Chinese officials for administrative, educational, social, and cultural duties of the (central and local) government. Meanwhile, the Manchu were able to retain their top position as the ruling class for a long period of time (300 years) by taking control of the military and diplomacy themselves.

How “big” was the humiliation of China due to the western intrusions?

Humiliation of China...it is evident in the process of decline of the Qing Empire to the status of a semi-colonial territory through the numerous military defeats and concessions. The humiliation that arises from the fact that the ruler of the Celestial Empire (tian zi, the representative of the heaven) had to surrender to Western “savages” and make series of concessions to them was unprecedented in Chinese history.

4. How did the destruction of Confucianism and Chinese culturalism influence the modernization of China?

How the destruction of Confucianism and Chinese culturalism influence the modernization of China...there is a lot of content to cover, but according to the idea of dichotomy of Chinese culturalism, the regions devoid of Chinese influence is considered as land of “savagery”. Once defeated by the “savages”, Chinese had to destroy their perception of their cultural superiority and this I see, is the starting point of the modernization of China. By the late

1800s, various ideas emerged, and many intellectuals reacted in different ways. However, they could be divided into two major factions; one advocating the empire with major reforms and the other advocating complete westernization. Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao represented the former while Sun Yat-sen and Mao Zehdong represented the latter. Ultimately, those who advocated complete modernization won as the success of the Xinhai Revolution led to the establishment of Kuo Mintang and ultimately to the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

5. The Xinhai Revolution was largely unsuccessful against Yuan Shikai and numerous warlords under his command. However, didn't Chinese intellectuals ultimately accomplish their goals and made their ideas realized by coming to political power?

In historical perspective, it is very difficult for intellectuals to realize their ideologies in reality. The fact that the intellectuals came to power does not necessarily mean that their ideas had been realized and the realization of an ideology is based on public support. But in China, reforms had been achieved based uses of force more so than based on ideology. Mao's Communist government is a good example. Although, Mao argued that his communist ideas had been realized based on the Chinese peasants' support, this had not been true after his death. Contemporary People's Republic of China has a political system that relies on oppression and force more so than public support. Most political ideologies are idealistic; this means an ideology can provide vision and motives while its realization in the real world is very difficult. The Xinhai Revolution established the republic of China, but contemporary "People's Republic of China" is not at all a democratic republic. If China is a true democratic republic, political leaders would be elected by the Chinese citizens in democratic elections. But it is not so.

6. How much is the Confucian foundation remaining in contemporary China?

After Mao Zhedong initiated the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and completely destroyed Chinese heritage and culture in a decade of chaos and frenzy, Confucian ideology was in ruins. However, since Deng Xiaoping's reform period, Confucianism is slowly reviving. At least, contemporary China does not spurn Confucianism as it had in the past. However, younger generations of Chinese strongly advocate Western ideas and the maintenance of the traditional ideas are dependent on the policies of the Chinese government. The effort to revive Confucianism is not true Confucian "Renaissance", but is nothing more than the government policies for creating a sense of unity and strengthening the political foundation.

7. How did the ideological change influence modern Chinese history?

You have repeated the 4th question, so look at my answer to the 4th question.

8. In the early 1900s, who were the major Chinese intellectuals and revolutionaries? What were their ideas?

Major Chinese intellectuals/revolutionaries include Kang Yu-wei, Liang Qichao, Tan Sitong, Sun Yat-sen, Mao Zhedong, Lu Xun, Chiang Kaisheck, and many others. You will be able to search them from my book and the Internet.