

# University Autonomy, the State, and Social Change in China

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— Britta Erickson, *The Art of Xu Bing*

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# University Autonomy, the State, and Social Change: Western and Chinese Perspectives

### **The University and Social Change: Western Perspectives**

Though Chinese higher education can be traced back to ancient dynasties, modern universities in China were established based on Western experience borrowed from Europe, America, and Japan. To understand the university's role and its relation to the state, this chapter begins by introducing the theoretical dispute regarding the university's role, pluralist perspectives on university autonomy, theories of modernization and dependency, the concept of a world system, and the controversy over the influence of globalization on the nation-state and higher education.

#### ***What Is a University?***

Scholars have attempted to define "a university" by exploring its functions and nature, as well as its relation to the state. Based on the European and American experience, a university is generally understood to be a community within which teachers and students pursue knowledge (Clark, 1994; Hetherington, 1953). It is described as "a provider of knowledge," "a powerhouse of knowledge," "a center of intellectual power," "a high protecting power of all knowledge," and "a center of knowledge creation, revision, dissemination, transfer, and application" (Newman, 1959). A university's principal functions are to transmit culture, create new knowledge, and pursue truth through teaching, study and research, which are central to the university's identity (Clark, 1984). The fundamental and distinctive mission of a university

is to pursue truth (Gasset, 1946; Wolff, 1992) by supporting teaching and research in the broadest sense. It should be a comprehensive institution, combining and offering a wide range of subjects, thus enabling it to provide professional training to meet students' vocational needs and also increase their understanding of civilization and sense of responsibility to society (Lobkowitz, 1983; Palous, 1995).

Universities can be regarded in their respective societies in two primary ways, through *idealism* or *realism* (Martin, 1972). The idealist perspective is drawn from the experience of Western universities during the medieval period. Idealism defines a university as a center of independent thinking, criticism, and creativity, and views it as a community governed in large measure by its members (Hetherington, 1965; Jaspers, 1959). For example, before the rise of the industrialized society, the university was a self-contained entity that was independent, academically free, and had no obligation to link itself with other institutions of higher education (Niblett, 1972).

This *idealistic* notion of the university is exemplified in its image as an ivory tower, within which the scholar quietly pursues knowledge (Neave, 1993). Another image views it as a "sanctuary of scholarship" (Wolff, 1992, p. 3), which suggests that the university should have little relationship with the external society, keeping very much to its own affairs and judging its activities by internal norms of scholarship rather than by social norms of productivity or usefulness. Ordorika (2003) described the university as a relatively safe political sanctuary, in which critical attitudes toward the state are tolerated, as long as the critiques are circumscribed by the university — but when political opposition expands beyond the campus, the state responds with violence and repression. Hetherington (1953) justified the university's role as a political sanctuary by explaining that its responsibility is to critically reflect on social values. Endowing it with such a responsibility enables academics to question every doctrine, dogma, judgment, assumption, and convention of human life: they can share their visions, and work toward understanding truth by searching, criticizing, making manifest differences, and moving to a mutual understanding. Hetherington claimed that if the university is not informed by the conviction that there is truth worth pursuing for its own sake that is objective and can be taught and learned, then it is not a true university. To pursue truth, the university should maintain a certain distance and independence from its surrounding culture, so that its task is not interrupted by government, business, and religion (Moor, 1993; Mori, 1993).

In contrast, a *realistic* perspective regards the university's institutional policies as being shaped by external pressures from the state, church, business, industry, and agriculture (Martin, 1972). In this view, the university

cannot escape from the societal context from which it derives its material and financial support. Despite agreeing with idealists that the university constitutes a center for research and new knowledge, and that the primary role of the Western university is to search for truth, the realist argues that the community of scholars is also responsible for “community outreach.” It regards the university as a center for applying knowledge, and takes the view that many truths are bound to some faith, cultural interest, and/or ideology (Niblett, 1972). Realism therefore defines a university as a “social service station,” a complex institution that performs educational, research, consultative, and other services for its society (Wolff, 1992, p. 28) — a role that requires it to be devoted to purposes defined by religious, political, and economic forces. The university should also train people for various professions, prepare intellectual and social elites to become future leaders, and provide scientific and technological services (Polin, 1983). In particular, as economic development after the 1960s has depended more and more on technology and specialists, the university has functioned as a productive element of the economy by training skilled personnel, developing new technology, and accumulating expertise (Husen, 1994). As universities in industrialized countries have been under pressure to produce an adequate supply of specialists (Chapman, 1983), they might be described as a “training camp for the profession” (Wolff, 1992, p. 9) by equipping students with the necessary qualifications for particular professional demands. Moreover, a university also acts as an “assembly line for the establishment man” (*ibid.*, p. 43). Such an image depicts the university as an industrial firm, within which the teachers are workers, their products are degrees, and their students are customers who buy qualifications. In the relations between the university and society, a university’s products are educated personnel; the customers for its products are corporations, governments, foundations, military services, and universities; and the students are the raw material from which the university fashions its products.

This contrast between idealistic and realistic visions of the university plays a significant role in defining university-state relations, as will be explored later.

### *Pluralist Perspectives on University Autonomy*

A key issue in this debate is university autonomy, which addresses the relationship between the state and higher education institutions. A classical definition of autonomy is “the power of a university or college ... to govern itself without outside controls” (Berdahl, Graham and Piper, 1971, p. 8). In this view, autonomy is intrinsic to the nature of the university, and the



precondition for it to fulfill effectively its roles and responsibilities towards society (Thorens, 1993).

However, the idea of university autonomy has been a subject of controversy. Part of the argument has focused on the meaning of the term, the extent to which universities should be allowed to determine their own destinies, and how far they must be accountable to the society that supports them. Views on this issue range from emphasizing absolute university autonomy to the absolute control of the state. The former refers to the university having complete freedom to pursue its own academic objectives, without any external constraints imposed by individuals, institutions, and/or political dogma (Moor, 1993; Niblett, 1972). Full autonomy also suggests that members of the academic community should have complete freedom, individually or collectively, to pursue the development and transmission of knowledge, through research, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation, teaching, lecturing, and writing (Lobkowitz, 1983).

There are three main reasons why absolute autonomy can be seen to be necessary. First, the faculty should be the only body involved in institutional decision-making (Polin, 1983). If political or ideological pressures affect education and instruction, the direction of research, or the selection of faculty and students, then the university will become a bureaucracy and, as such, lose its integrity as a self-governing community of scholars. Second, autonomy is considered necessary because political pressure will lead to academics losing the right to make their own judgments. The university's accommodation of political trends and ideologies signifies the loss of autonomy and its becoming a political tool (Cai, 1986; Lobkowitz, 1983). For this reason, according to Polin (1983), the academic community must exercise autonomy in the form of intellectual virtue, which requires scholars always to aim for the truth as, without this, it will lose its identity. Moreover, scholars should guard their academic freedom, which implies: the right to decide what to teach and research; the right to express what they regard as scientifically valid; and freedom from any political or ideological orientation established by the state (Polin, 1983; Thorens, 1993). Third, as the university is responsible for acting as a critic of society and can make its own judgments about social values, it should not co-operate with the state — as, if it becomes an instrument of national purpose, then it cannot critique that national purpose, for an instrument is a means, not an evaluator of ends (Wolff, 1992). Therefore, as Wolff asserted, even if the government wants the university to, for example, conduct war research or political stability studies or officer training, the professors and students may decide that the government is *wrong* and that its wishes should be resisted. In brief, the assertion of absolute autonomy suggests a conflict

between the university and the state in the face of the state's intervention in its own interests, the rights of academics to resist political pressures, and the university's right to govern without outside control (Berdahl, 1993).

In contrast to the assertion of absolute university autonomy, however, scholars such as Maassen and van Vught (1994) have identified two primary models of government guidance. One is the state control model, which is characterized by a ministry's strong, centralized control and high dependency on government funding, with the objective often being standardization among institutions. In this model, the institutional administration is relatively weak, with the top university executives not having much power of self-determination in the university's administration as their power is subject to two forces: the state's central control and the university's senior professors, who have a voice in managing educational affairs. Examples of this model include university-state relations in Latin American countries such as Mexico (Ordorika, 2003).

The almost absolute control of the state in shaping the extent of university autonomy can be seen when, for instance, the government has limited university autonomy by asserting the primacy of political ideology over academic freedom, stipulating highly centralized rules and implementing budget cuts (Green and Hayward, 1997). Also, it may be that the absolute university autonomy at the legal level does not manifest itself completely in reality. In this case, as Ordorika (2003) pointed out, legal autonomy has been limited through the state's mechanisms of intervention, such as: its direct influence on the choice of the university president; its control over the university budget; its toleration or promotion of external political interference in university affairs; the political allegiance or ideological conformity between the university and the state; the informal chains of command from government to university officials; the political dependency of university elites and bureaucrats in order to maintain control of the institution in the face of internal conflict; and the university officials' expectations about their future political careers. In this scenario, the political alliance between the university and government is the predominant basis for university autonomy, and so it is impossible for the university to be truly value-free or for it to be allowed unlimited academic freedom to pursue truth (Emerson, 1964).

Between these two extremes of absolute university autonomy and the state control model lies the state-supervising model which provides a perspective on limited, direct state regulation. Two types of change in university-state relations can contribute to this model. The first involves the change from a highly centralized system to loose central control, as in the former socialist countries, where the state has granted more autonomy to

universities. Alternatively, there may be a shift from loose central control to increasing the state's intervention as, for example, in the American system, in which boards of trustees and administrators have traditionally played an important role in institutional decision-making. However, such increased state intervention has arisen from, for instance: increasing demands for access and vocational training; the formation of alliances between businesses and universities; the inclusion of social forces in checking the university's quality and accountability; the need to supply highly qualified personnel to the labor market; the need to provide learning opportunities for the regular updating and renewal of knowledge; and the contribution of research to the economy (Maassen and van Vught, 1994). The government's interest in making higher education serve economic development, therefore, influenced universities to focus on serving national interests. The alliance between the university and business limits universities' autonomy to pursue truth, which requires tranquil detachment, which must arise from within and cannot be enforced. The university's utilitarian considerations — valuing immediate usefulness and the direct impact of education on productivity — do not validate its mission, however (Lobkowitz, 1983). Moreover, the economic concerns in policy-making and the quality and accountability checking by social forces make the university no longer an institute of self-determination with privileged autonomy (Tunermann, 1996).

The model of absolute autonomy, the state supervising model, and the state control model articulate three types of university-state relations: the university's total freedom from state control, limited intervention by the state, and state central control of the university, respectively. These models all theorize university-state relations based on the experience of Western universities, which has been characterized by complete separation between the university and state as distinct social institutions (Husen, 1994); and university autonomy as a Western idea emphasizes the freedom from state interference in the university's internal affairs (Hayhoe and Zhong, 1997). However, these theories are not an appropriate basis for interpreting the relations between the university and the state in China, as Chinese higher education institutions are not separated from the state, but are an integrated part of the national modernization project. To better understand the university's role in national development and its links with the state in the process of pursuing modernization in China, we turn next to theories of modernization and dependency.

### *Theories of Modernization and Dependency*

The theory of modernization predicts a path of social transition from “traditional” to “modern.” Modernization theorists have dichotomized the world into traditional society and modern society and have assumed that Western countries have already “arrived” at modernity and constitute the “industrial society paradigm.” They have also predicted that Third World countries will follow the Western pattern, seeking economic growth and modernizing their traditional or pre-modern societies (Levy, 1952; Parsons, 1951; Rostow, 1985). According to this theory, modernizing a country by following the Western pattern results in the replacement of domestic traditional values by Western ones, which are embedded in domestic, socio-economic structures created by Western countries. This arises because, according to modernization theorists, traditional attitudes, values, and institutions are obstacles to social change during the process of modernization, and the state acts as an agent for removing these barriers (Smelser, 1969).

From an alternative perspective, dependency theorists have predicted that as Third World countries link with other regions or outside societies, their economies will remain underdeveloped and their cultures will dissolve. Dependency theorists divide the world into two sectors — core and periphery — and have argued that peripheral areas’ economic dependency on core areas is caused by the core countries’ exploitation, which occurs through unequal exchanges of resources with peripheral countries. The agents of exploitation and unequal exchange are local leaders or elites in periphery countries, who hold values, attitudes, and interests consistent with those of the core countries (Frank, 1967, 1972) and play a key role in changing local sociopolitical structures in light of the core countries’ economic interests.

From the perspective of modernization and dependency theories, education, in particular higher education in a developing country, becomes an agent of cultural and economic imperialism that serves the interests of developed countries for two main reasons. First, modernization theorists perceive education in developing countries as providing skills necessary for economic development. In the process of modernization, higher education borrows from Western countries’ experiences, but in so doing transmits modern Western values because, as Inkeles and Smith (1974) suggested, a society cannot hope to develop until the majority of its population holds modern values. As a result, higher education becomes an arena for transmitting Western modern values that leads to dissolving local, traditional values (Hoogvelt, 1976). Second, some scholars have perceived education in peripheral countries (e.g. India and Vietnam) as a means of enhancing the core countries’ economic and cultural imperialism (Carnoy, 1974; Kelly,

1981). Higher education, as Arnove (1980) suggested, is a point of mutual contact with core countries, as well as a point of penetration for the core countries' values.

Despite being helpful in understanding the role of higher education institutions in national development, theories of modernization and dependency place a heavy emphasis on the influence of international factors on local higher education. They cannot explain why Chinese higher education is not an arena for economic and cultural imperialism by Western countries, but instead is the state's agent in pursuing economic modernization and national identity (Law, 1996). Moreover, they fail to explain this study's findings, as will be seen in Chapters 4 through 8, and in the concluding chapter. The theories of modernization and dependency can be supplemented by the concept of a world system, which focuses on higher education's role in the economic, political, and cultural relations among nation-states.

### *The Concept of a World System*

Wallerstein (1984, 1991) asserted that the world system consists of the capitalist world economy and the interstate system. The single, capitalist world economy comprises three tiers: core, semi-periphery, and periphery. Countries in the world system compete with each other in economic and cultural areas, and a society's development is determined by its ability to compete successfully.

In economic competition, by adjusting their strategies, countries can alter their economic status in the world system, for instance from peripheral to semi-peripheral, and from semi-peripheral to core, or vice versa. In the cultural arena, the competition between countries in the world system results in a tension between Western cultural domination and the protection of distinctive national cultures within their territories, and these countries may use powerful politico-cultures to resist ideological diffusion from the West (Arnove, 1980).

Some scholars have suggested that higher education institutions also exhibit a pattern of core, semi-periphery, and periphery (Altbach, 1998; Ginsburg et al., 1990). Higher education institutions in Western developed countries are at the core of the world higher education system, while those in developing and underdeveloped countries are at the semi-periphery or periphery. As Altbach (1998) explained, higher education in periphery countries depends on that of core countries, as demonstrated when periphery countries: (a) borrow core countries' educational models; (b) adopt core country languages (such as English or other Western languages) as the language of instruction; (c) try to publish journal articles or textbooks in the core countries; (d) send local students to train in core countries; and (e)

experience a brain drain to core countries (Ginsburg et al., 1990). As a result, as Arnove (1980) argued, higher education has permitted the penetration of Western culture and paradigms, and reinforced the world system with developed countries at the center, while developing and underdeveloped countries remain at semi-periphery or periphery positions. In other words, higher education reproduces the hierarchical economic relations between core and peripheral countries.

Although it is similar to the dependency theory in that it uses a core-periphery framework to explain worldwide educational inequality, the world system perspective is more positive in predicting the ways in which developing and underdeveloped countries may alter their position from periphery or semi-periphery to core in an unequal world economic and political system. Gopinathan and Altbach (2005) have already noted China's strength in attracting students from core countries, and thus its potential to change from being a country on the periphery to one approaching the core. However, the world system viewpoint does not explain specifically how higher education helps the state to increase its economic competency, or how higher education preserves a state's national culture as it moves toward a core position in the international community. Moreover, it is inadequate as an explanation of the role of higher education in economic competition during the age of globalization. In an effort to overcome such limitations, we turn to the literature on globalization, nation-states, and higher education.

### *Globalization, the Nation-State, and Higher Education*

Globalization became an increasingly influential and intensively debated topic in the 1990s (Featherstone, 1990), though there is not yet a commonly recognized definition. Discussion of the concept has focused on: the freer and quicker cross-border flow of materials, ideas, labor, services, information, values, technologies, people, and capital; the remarkable acceleration of trade and exchange across the globe; the compression of space and time; and the greatly increased interconnections among people in different parts of the world, which have been facilitated by the development of information and communication technologies (Beck, 2000; Comelieu, 1997; James, 1999; Robertson, 1992). The distinctive feature of globalization is the intensification of global connectedness that transcends the territorial borders of the nation-state (Eade, 1997; Edoho, 1997; Featherstone, 1990; Klak, 1998). However, a dispute has arisen about the phenomena involved, and their consequent influence on the nation-state, between two schools of scholars, whom Held (1999) has called the "hyperglobalists" and "skeptics."

Hyperglobalists, represented by such theorists as Ohmae and Fukuyama, have argued that globalization leads nation-states to lose power, and even that globalization threatens the existence of the nation-state (Fukuyama, 1992; Ohmae, 1990; Veseth, 1998). The nation-state's loss of political power is regarded as resulting from at least three forces: (a) the rapid development of information technology, which dissolves geographical territorial borders and allows cross-border flows of production, services, cultures, ideas, and even values; (b) the cross-border expansion of economic markets, which carries market ideologies, rationalities, practices, competition, and rules with a less state-directed approach (Kostecki, 1994; Maitra, 1996; McGinn, 1997); and (c) the sharing of power between government, non-government organizations, and the private sector, which forces the nation-state to follow a common set of rules and institutions made by transnational bodies (Cable, 1999; Dale, 1999).

In contrast, despite agreeing about the common problems facing all nation-states, skeptics — represented by such theorists as Hirst and Thompson (1999) — have argued that the nation-state is still powerful domestically and remains the main player in international affairs. Skeptics assert that the nation-state's political power is not lessening, but growing, because the increasing interdependence and interconnection among nation-states promotes mutual understanding and recognition, and improves the state's capacity to control internal and external problems (Golding and Harris, 1997). Though they admit that there are considerable similarities at the level of policy rhetoric and general policy objectives, they argue there is less evidence of any systematic convergence at the level of structures and processes in different countries. This argument is based on the fact that nation-states have different industrial structures, labor market arrangements, political traditions and institutions, cultures and knowledge traditions and, especially, ways of interpreting and playing by global rules. In this sense, the skeptics believe that the nation-state is still strong in shaping national policy, powerful in legislation, and able to protect its national cultural, religious, and value systems (Gills, 2000).

Within the ongoing debate between hyperglobalists and skeptics, some scholars accept that globalization has undermined the nation-state in certain respects. For example, it no longer sustains indefinitely a zone of economic and cultural isolation. This means the end of the national market as the primary theater of economic activities, because the nation-state does not control capital markets and the larger patterns of investment within its territorial borders (Marginson, 1999). Nevertheless, globalization has not replaced the nation-state, which remains the key site of law, governance, and politics. The national border is the physical signal of the state's sovereignty within its territory, and the nation-state is also the principal

actor interpreting globalization to fit global paradigms into national circumstances. Moreover, despite having less power in some areas that are shaped by transnational organizations, the nation-state is largely responsible for establishing legal frameworks that substantially affect corporate activities; and it still has access to military power for control within its territory. Therefore, globalization is a process of social transformation, in which global and local forces interplay to shape political, economic, cultural, and other activities (Held, 1999; Giddens, 2000).

Using this insight, theorists have created the neologism “glocalization,” a term that describes the assimilation of globalization forces within the context of local traditions, aspirations and interests (Satyavrata, 2004). Glocalization provides a framework that takes into account the conflicts, tensions, and interplay between the global and the local (Helvacioğlu, 2000; Robertson, 1992, 1995). In recent years, this concept, expressed as “think globally, act locally,” has been promoted around the world by transnational organizations such as the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This approach advocates the development of local and regional educational action in response to issues and problems (e.g. environmental concerns) in the global dimension (Gough, 2002).

Globalization’s influence on relations between higher education and the state has been a source of controversy between scholars who stress the global forces, and those who argue that the nation-state plays the key policy-making role in higher education. The former have suggested that, due to globalization, the links between the nation-state and higher education have weakened, with global trends in higher education having now become the major influence in shaping national policy (Urry, 2003). In their view, this has occurred for three major reasons. First, higher education worldwide is facing similar pressures to respond to the imperatives of economic globalization, such as: equipping students with transnational skills, including foreign languages and information and communication technologies; providing new disciplines that are flexible enough to meet the multiple demands of rapid economic development; increasing students’ awareness of other cultures to serve the expansion of transnational business; and speeding up international co-operation in higher education as a means to train future workers who can be mobile and serve in jobs worldwide (Altbach and Davis, 1999; Henry et al., 1999; McGinn, 1997; Poisson, 1998; Tilak, 1997; UNESCO, 1996).

Second, national education systems are affected by the paradigms and practices that rapidly spread around the globe, so that they exhibit similarities in policy-making with other nation-states. This may occur through such mechanisms as borrowing, learning, teaching, harmonization, dissemination,



standardization, interdependence, and imposition. In practice, these might include, for example, introducing business values and practices (such as competition, accountability, rationalization, and quality assurance) into institutional management; emphasizing the principle of "user pays"; promoting information technology for administration and education, thus reducing the government's financial commitment; promoting such notions as lifelong learning; blurring the distinction between public and private education, and encouraging co-operation between higher education institutions and their students' employers (Currie and Newson, 1998; Henry et al., 1999).

Third, transnational organizations, cross-national research institutes, and multinational corporations are playing increasingly important roles in shaping national higher education. For example, international organizations such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank are primarily responsible for spreading throughout the world goals such as the construction of a borderless world, the worldwide acceptance of the principles of a market economy, and an orientation of higher education to the demands of trade and markets (Sprinc, 1998). In this process, the OECD and the World Bank have shaped the direction of national higher education to relate it to worldwide economic growth and serve the needs of global capitalism. As a result, many national higher education systems have adopted goals and policies similar to those promoted by these international organizations and so the relationship between higher education and the nation-state is loosening (Little, 1996).

However, despite admitting globalization's impact on national higher education, others have argued that higher education retains a close connection with the nation-state during globalization for various reasons. For example, the higher education system is rooted in and affected by national industrial structures, labor market arrangements, political and cultural values, and educational traditions. Moreover, modern universities are essentially nation-based institutions serving the national projects of human capital formation, the creation of national elites, and other societal projects in economic and political areas (Scott, 1998). In many nation-states (e.g. Singapore, Taiwan, and countries in sub-Saharan Africa), governments still use higher education to transmit indigenous values and philosophies in order to deal with global-local cultural conflict and develop curricula and teaching methods based on national realities (Brock-Utne, 1996; Gopinathan, 1996; Law, 2003).

Also, the incorporation of global paradigms and practices of higher education is a process of openness to global influence, but nation-states can borrow selectively experience relevant to national economic and political projects. The implication is that globalization's impact on higher education

will be “filtered” by nation-states, which hold the power to choose some elements of globalization while refusing others. Watson (1995) demonstrated that, in many countries, the state has maintained an interventionist role in higher education. For instance, Singapore’s experience has shown that, even though its educational paradigms and ideas have taken on a global character, the factors that determine education policies are essentially “national” (Gopinathan, 1996).

In addition, the effects of globalization on education, including higher education, are largely indirect, rather than direct, as the state often serves as a major intermediary between education and global forces. Moreover, the mechanisms through which global influences are delivered are determined by the state within its jurisdiction, according to the demands of its national situation (Dale, 1999). For example, in Taiwan, the incorporation of global paradigms and practices are related to the government’s intention of enhancing its competitiveness in the age of globalization (Law, 2003).

Lastly, while its power is reduced in some areas, the nation-state has more power to govern higher education in other ways. For instance, the decentralization of higher education enables the state to control substantial aspects more tightly through budget allocation and accountability mechanisms (Hanson, 1998; Law, 2003). Facing the competitive international higher education market, the nation-state is the key actor in protecting its education system’s national accreditation and evaluation systems (Salmi, 2000).

Despite heated debate, the influence of global-local interplay on individual universities is still under-researched, though there are some useful guidelines for exploration. For example, Altbach (2002, p. 2) has noted that “a balanced perspective [on how globalization trends influence education] requires careful analysis of the downside — viewpoints often not articulated in the rush toward the global future.” Also, Ball (1998, p. 127) has advocated that “[p]olicy analysis requires an understanding that is based not on the generic or local, macro- or micro-constraint or agency, but on the changing relationships between them and their inter-penetration.” However, these ideas are not specific enough for interpreting how and to what extent globalization affects university-state relations in China. To address university-state relations in the process of adopting international experience of higher education, and fit this into China’s economic and political circumstances, the next section addresses the role of China’s universities in the modernization process. These ideas help to explain the university-state relationship in response to international influences, domestic economic development, and national identity.

## The University and Social Change: Chinese Perspectives

Traditional Chinese cultural heritage and theories have affected the development of Chinese higher education over the centuries. As noted in Chapter 1, these include: “being an official after being an excellent scholar,” “Chinese learning as the essence, Western learning for its usefulness,” Cai Yuanpei’s idea of university autonomy and academic freedom, and the CPC-interpreted Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought concerning education, in particular higher education.

### *The Relations between Academia and Officialdom in Imperial China*

The Chinese saying, “being an official after being an excellent scholar,” describes the path of selecting and promoting scholars to become government officials. This saying signifies the linkage between scholars and officials, as well as the ties among traditional Chinese scholarly institutions in imperial China. The development of Chinese higher education can be traced back to the later period of the Shang dynasty (1523–1027 BC), when the foundation of Chinese culture had already been laid (Cai, 1982). Throughout history, traditional higher education in China has linked knowledge transmission with scholars’ future careers (Borthwick, 1983; Gao, 1992). Except for the *shuyuan*, or academy, which originated in the Song dynasty as an alternative for those who did not wish to pursue official careers, traditional Chinese scholarly institutions have had the primary function of preparing officials to staff government. The goal of traditional Chinese higher education was not only to transmit knowledge, but also, as defined by the *Great Learning*, to “cultivate oneself, administer state affairs, and ensure national security” (*xiusheng qijia zhiguo pingtianxia*). The teaching content therefore linked knowledge closely with state-supported values, based on Confucianism, which officials should understand. During the long feudal period, high-ranking government officials were recruited through imperial examinations. The scholar-officials ruled China and the feudal higher education system, in turn, was geared toward training government officials (Du, 1992). Therefore, traditional Chinese scholarly institutions were closely tied to the state. In this sense, as Hayhoe (1996, p. 10) suggested, “[Traditional Chinese scholarly institutions] had neither autonomy nor academic freedom, and ... there was no institution in Chinese tradition that could be called a university.”

Modern Chinese universities serve the same function of training scholars for government positions. For example, Peking University has been dominated by programs in law and politics for young people aspiring to bureaucratic

careers. When Cai Yuanpei assumed the presidential position there, he tried to restructure programs and curricula and separate the university from this role as, in his view, training scholars for government posts made the university vulnerable to political influence from the state, thus reducing its autonomy and academic freedom (Qu, 1993).

### *The Struggle between Chinese Learning and Western Learning in the Qing Dynasty*

Unlike traditional Chinese higher education, modern Chinese higher education has been linked to economic development and Chinese national identity under foreign economic and cultural influences. During the Qing dynasty, particularly in the 19th century, China was caught in a dilemma between seeking Western help for economic modernization and avoiding negative effects on its national culture. One government official, Zhang Zhidong, advocated the principle of *zhong ti xi yong* — “Chinese learning as the essence, Western learning for its usefulness.” This principle reflects the strategy the Chinese government adopted in order to use higher education for two purposes: to remain open and learn from the Western knowledge needed by China for economic modernization, and to maintain the state-supported central values to defend China against Western cultural influences. According to Zhang’s (1901) definition, “the essence” means preserving national identity, the nation’s independence from foreign control, the state’s political authority within its territory and the nation’s central values. “Usefulness” refers to making use of foreign countries’ technological and financial resources to pursue China’s industrial, commercial, and educational modernization. “Chinese learning” is related specifically to the Confucian ethics and values contained in the classical literature of the Four Books and Five Doctrines (*si shu wu jing*),<sup>1</sup> Chinese history, geography, and politics. Finally, “Western learning” refers to science and technology (S&T), mathematics, medicine, chemistry, electronics, education, geography, taxation, law, military studies, and business (Ye, 1998). Zhang’s framework of *zhong ti xi yong* allows Chinese ethics and Confucian teachings to serve as the basic principles, while supplementing them through learning from the West.

The principle of *zhong ti xi yong* reflects the fact that it was the state that defined the use of Chinese higher education for both economic and political purposes in national development. Using higher education as a means of introducing Western learning, as Zhang (1901) suggested, is to accept useful external knowledge as a way of pursuing national prosperity, and to cope with changes in external circumstances. The latter phrase shows the Qing

government's awareness of the political threats from Western military forces and potential economic exploitation. From its defeat in the Opium Wars, the Qing government had learned several lessons. For instance, it saw that science and technology were important for strengthening China's national defense: as the Qing government officials stated, to learn from the West how to manufacture cannon and build steamships is the first and foremost task to safeguard the dynasty (Zeng, 1876). The government also recognized that the emphasis in higher education on training government officials was unsuitable for producing the professional experts urgently needed by China in order to strengthen the national military industry. Finally, learning Western science and technology could be a quick way to increase China's capacity to defend itself against Western military and economic threats, as seen in the Chinese saying: "Learning advanced skills from the barbarians to conquer them" (*shi yi chang ji yi zhi yi*) (Wei, 1842).

As Zhang Zhidong commented, the aim of higher education should be "to preserve popular morale to be loyal to the emperor," and "to bring up spiritual civilization in China" (Cai, 1994, p. 131). The *Mission of Education*, issued by the Qing government in 1906, defined "spiritual civilization" as two ideologies: "loyalty to the emperor" and "respect to Confucianism" (*zhongjun, shangkong*) (Zheng, 2001). Moreover, preserving Chinese learning continued the political function of Chinese higher education as a means of selecting and training government officials (Mayer, 1960). The continuity in this area was determined by government officials, who perceived the preservation of Confucianism as significant for protecting the Qing regime. For example, Wei Yuan (1842) argued that China needed to learn from Western science but emphasized that its advantages were less important than the permanent adherence to Chinese ethics. Also, Zeng Guofan (1876) suggested the need to have "a correct knowledge of the barbarians before coping with them." In their view, China should not accept the ideas embedded in Western democratic political systems — only those ideas that are consistent with Confucianism are "correct" knowledge and therefore acceptable. Kang Youwei believed that Confucian thought should be firmly preserved because Chinese culture would surely perish without it (Soled, 1995); and Zhang Zhidong (1963, p. 48) also asserted that "Chinese learning is generated from internal culture, while Western learning comes from external culture;" and "learning from the West must not fail to abide by the values and ethics of Confucianism."

The principle of *zhong ti xi yong* placed Chinese higher education in a dilemma: trying to preserve a feudal system while gaining strength from a capitalist system. The feudal system emphasized respect and loyalty to the

emperor, but the capitalist system involved not just economic modernization, but also a capitalist ideology and political system based on democracy. Preserving Chinese learning was seen as a means to both balance the influence of Western learning on students and reduce the possible threat to China's political system (Chen, 1997).

Adopting the principle of *zhong ti xi yong*, which implies that the state plays a central role in using higher education for *both* economic development *and* politico-cultural continuity, is useful for interpreting university-state relations. To understand the Western concept of university autonomy in the Chinese context, and the struggle for autonomy between China's universities and the state, we now turn to Cai Yuanpei's ideas on university autonomy and academic freedom.

### *The Coexistence of Western and Chinese Ideas of the University in the Republic of China*

The modern university was established in China in the late 19th century based on the structure of Western universities, and it developed further in the Republic of China (ROC) under the leadership of the KMT. It was influenced by the perceptions of the university held by Chinese scholars who had studied in Western universities and introduced the Western conception of the university to China. In particular, the ideas of Cai Yuanpei, which he had absorbed from Germany and France, influenced the development of China's universities in the early 20th century. Like such Western scholars as Hetherington (1953) and Newman (1959), Cai regarded the university as an institution for pursuing knowledge and training personnel. When he became the minister of education of the ROC, Cai was responsible for the 1912 Legislation for Higher Education, in which he defined the university as an "institution for exploring advanced knowledge" and identified its mission as "developing advanced knowledge, and fostering high-level talents" (Cai, 1986). Cai (1993) emphasized two important differences between a university and a specialist high school: a university should have a broad knowledge base, offering courses in at least the arts and the sciences and, if possible, law, commerce, agriculture, engineering and medicine; and it should build up its research strength for advancing knowledge.

While minister of education, Cai also introduced the ideas of university autonomy and academic freedom into China. For him (1922), university autonomy would enable professors to govern the university and provide an atmosphere where any viewpoint, as long as it was based on scholarship, could be aired, debated, and discussed. He stressed that scholars, rather than

political parties, should administer the university so that it remained an institution for advancing knowledge and pursuing truth, rather than becoming a political tool (Gao, 1992). To protect university autonomy and academic freedom as “the prerogative of universities,” the Legislation for Higher Education permitted universities to exercise control over their internal administration through a senate (*pingyi hui*). The senate, which consisted of the deans from all subject areas and representatives elected by all professors, would decide on faculty promotions, curricula, internal rules and regulations, teaching and graduation, and other aspects of internal administration. Cai later became the president of Peking University and integrated these Western academic values there as well.

In a similar vein, Mei Yiqi and Zhang Bolin introduced Western academic values into their universities when they were presidents of Tsinghua University and Nankai University respectively. They perceived the university as a scholarly institution, where academics meet to pursue advanced knowledge, generate new knowledge and culture, and pursue truth (Mei, 1993; Sun and Li, 1993). They agreed that the university should be comprehensive enough to include a range of subjects, integrate teaching and research as necessary for pursuing truth, and maintain autonomy and academic freedom (Gao, 1992; Qu, 1993). Mei (1941) suggested that the university is a democratic community of scholars, a meeting point of many types of culture, and a safe place for scholars to freely express their thoughts in the name of academic freedom. He also supported the inclusion of professors in the university’s decision-making bodies, seeing them as indispensable for advancing knowledge. During this period, China’s universities engaged in vigorous experimentation at all levels and established “the university” in terms of the defining values of autonomy and academic freedom (Hayhoe, 1996).

Nevertheless, unlike such Western academics as Neave (1993) and Wolff (1992), who suggested the pursuit of knowledge within an “ivory tower,” Chinese scholars were concerned about the university’s importance for national development. Cai (1993) considered the standard of knowledge and technology to be an indicator of national strength and the status of a nation in the world. In his view, developed countries had well-developed higher education systems, a large amount of talent, and advanced knowledge and technology, and he advocated that universities in China should develop such advanced knowledge and technology to increase the nation’s strength (Qu, 1993). Cai’s view was echoed by the presidents of other Chinese universities. For example, Mei Yiqi (of Tsinghua University) and Zhang Bolin (of Nankai University) both argued that the university should not be isolated from society, but should serve the nation; and this view was reflected in their universities’ mottoes: “self discipline

and social commitment” for Tsinghua University and “saving the country by education” for Nankai University. In addition, Mei and Zhang considered that the university should not only pursue knowledge, but also prepare the various qualified personnel China needed for national development (Gao, 1992, p. 255; Qu, 1993, p. 617). These ideals illustrated the willingness of Chinese intellectuals to develop higher education as an agent of national development. Their views on the connection between higher education and national development can be seen as a legacy of Chinese ancient higher education in terms of scholars’ responsibility to serve the nation.

Both Western academic values and Chinese intellectuals’ sense of responsibility to the nation influenced the university’s role in university-state relations in China. However, such early 20th century ideas about what constitutes a university cannot account for the university’s role in national development under the control/directives of the state in socialist China. The university’s role since 1949 can be seen in the ideological debate on the tensions between preserving collective political identity and pursuing economic modernization under the strong influence of the state, particularly the ruling party.

### *The Formula of “Red” and “Expert” in Socialist China*

Since 1949, the university’s role in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has been shaped by Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, as well as their interpretations by Mao’s successors. According to Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, higher education must relate closely to political and economic activities, never become isolated from other social activities, and always be subordinate to economics and politics (Lenin, 1972; Mao, 1958). The CPC viewed the integration of Marxist educational theory with Mao Zedong Thought as a new way of adopting foreign educational experience to suit China’s conditions. Marxist educational theory regards socialist industry as the material foundation for training well-rounded socialist personnel, so that education must be integrated with productive labor. Lenin said: “[t]he entire undertaking of fostering, educating and training modern youth should be rendered into an undertaking of cultivating the Communist morality of the youth”; “In any school, the most important thing is the political orientation of the thinking in the courses offered”; and “[w]ithout the integration of the education of the younger generation with productive labor, the ideal of future society is unimaginable” (Lenin, 1959a; 1959b, p. 438; 1972).

The connection between higher education and political and economic programs raised a fundamental question about the proper relationship between emphasizing political ideology and training highly competent scientific and



technical personnel (Lee, 1993) — an issue which involved Chinese higher education in a debate between “red” and “expert” (*hong yu zhuan*) that has continued the struggle between “Chinese learning for the essence and Western learning for its usefulness” in the 19th century. “Red” means socialist political consciousness, while “expert” means academic and technical excellence. Should “red” or “expert” be the more important task of higher education? During different periods, China’s leaders advocated various balances between the political and economic tasks of higher education, and therefore it oscillated between these two extremes.

Mao Zedong suggested “red” as the more important task, because socialist consciousness could motivate people to work hard, which would achieve economic development, and would also perpetuate the country’s socialist nature. In Mao’s view, higher education must put socialist political consciousness before academic and technical skills. In 1958, he pointed out that education must be directed by the CPC, be connected to labor, and serve the needs of the masses under the proletariat’s dictatorship. On the basis of Mao’s ideas, the state passed the Common Program (*Gongtong Gangling*), which identified the primary aims of higher education as being to serve the needs of politics, to train students ideologically, and to develop students morally, intellectually, and physically, so that they will become well-educated workers imbued with socialist consciousness (Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, 1950). However, unlike Mao, Premier Zhou Enlai (1956) argued that professional skills are just as important as political consciousness to socialist construction. According to him, if the society cannot use the intelligentsia’s full capabilities, then the plan for economic production and national construction would be seriously delayed. For higher education in particular, “expert” is more important than “red” because it is academic ability, not ideology, that is most pertinent to expanding economic modernization (Parker and Parker, 1986).

Deng Xiaoping, Mao Zedong’s successor (1978 to the early 1990s), emphasized the importance of education to modernization and particularly the training of experts to achieve this goal. Deng (1983, p. 63) suggested that “education should be geared to the needs of modernization, of the world and of the future.” He also reminded people about “respecting knowledge and respecting trained personnel” (Deng, 1977a) and argued that key universities in China should become two centers: one for teaching and the other for research. He highlighted the significance of building a strong research team, particularly in the areas of science and technology (Deng, 1977b).

Deng’s conception was translated by Chinese scholars to describe the university as “the foundation of China’s modernization program,” and “the

motor driving China into a modern society” (Liu, 1992; Zhang, 1992). However, facing the student movement of 1989, Deng advocated that “higher education should be red and expert. Red should never be removed [from higher education]”; and “educational institutions must always put the persistence in correct political direction as the first task” (Li, Fang and An, 1997, p. 222; Wu, 1992). Echoing Deng, the State Education Commission stressed that the university should be “the fortress of Marxist ideology and culture” (*sixiang wenhua zhendi*), being responsible for preserving the CPC’s leadership in higher education institutions (Ministry of Education, 1990).

In the post-Deng period, the State Council put forward the view of “reviving the country by science and education” (*kejiao xingguo*), which focused on the importance of being an “expert” in technological innovation to enhance national economic competition in the era of economic globalization. It also stressed the need for the university to act as “an incubator of advanced technology” that would be responsible for creating new knowledge to drive economic modernization (Jiang, 2000). Jiang Zemin called on university students to target innovations and encouraged universities to become the cradle of the new knowledge, ideas, and theories that are necessary to enhance national competition in the global market. However, faced with the rapid spread of Western culture into China during the process of economic reform and expanding openness, Jiang argued: “all types of educational institutions must put moral education before the transmission of knowledge and culture, and must persist in a correct political direction” (cited in Wu, 1992). At the turn of the 21st century, with the freer flow of information, partially via the Internet, the state again viewed the university as a “fortress of Marxist ideology and culture.” According to the state, the university is responsible for upholding Marxism as the dominant value, promoting ideological and political education as the excellent traditional culture of the CPC, and rejecting threats from other ideologies and values. The major function of this role is to maintain the stability of the political system (Ministry of Education, 2000).

The “red and expert” formula reflects Chinese leaders’ expectation that universities should produce red cadres well-versed in technical knowledge and technical experts imbued with political consciousness (Meisner, 1977). However, such expectations produced oscillation in Chinese higher education between “red and expert” in specific domestic political and economic contexts. For example, in the period 1964–66, Chinese higher education emphasized scientific, technical and intellectual competence, while during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) priority was given to the “correctness” of political ideology in developing higher education. In 1978, after the economic reforms,

higher education's primary task focused on "expert," but again it changed to "red" after the 1989 student movement. At the turn of the century, "expert" was re-emphasized in order to enhance national competition, but "red" was also re-emphasized to preserve the importance of CPC-defined central values during economic globalization. The issue of "red" and "expert," as Lee (1993) argued, has never been resolved in Chinese higher education.

The formula "red and expert" indicates that the university's role and the meaning of university autonomy in socialist China have been shaped by the state according to the expectations of different national leaders at different times. As Law (1996) pointed out, Chinese higher education acts as an agent for the state to pursue national economic modernization and political socialization. It is not the university, but the state, that defines, interprets, and limits university autonomy. To what extent the university has autonomy lies in the state's definition of the university's role: when the state has used the university as a nation-building machine, "neither autonomy nor academic freedom were at issue in these deliberations, with the overriding emphasis being on how higher education could be shaped to serve the new socialist economy and polity" (Hayhoe, 1996, p. 76).

The concept of "red and expert" reflects the meaning of academic freedom in socialist Chinese higher education. Wu Shuqing, the president of Peking University (1989–96), overtly opposed Cai Yuanpei's idea of academic freedom, asserting (1992, p. 4) that "academic freedom" no longer suited the condition of Peking University in socialist China: "[i]t is obvious the term [academic freedom] contains capitalist ideology and values that are opposed to Marxism and socialism." The ways in which Marxism shapes academic freedom in China's universities was revealed in the document "Internal Reference for Top Executives of Educational Institutions," which the author collected from an institution in Beijing. The document states that:

Some persons have suggested removing Marxism from education ... This is to attempt to eliminate political directives from education ... and to lead to extreme academic freedom ... If academic freedom does not accept criticism from Marxism, then it is by no means academic freedom, but laissez-faire. (Internal reference, 2001; translated from Chinese to English by the author)

This statement indicates clearly that the meaning of academic freedom in the context of socialist China differs from that in the West. For example, the Western concept allows scholars to have unlimited freedom to pursue truth, and to draw their own conclusions about truth through research, without the government's interference (Brubacher, 1978). In socialist China, however,

such freedom has been limited by the state's political intervention: it is the state, rather than the scholar, which determines what "truth" and "correctness" are in political and cultural areas.

Also, in the Western concept of academic freedom, students' independent thinking should be accepted, and professors should be protected in expressing any views which can be justified as necessary, rational, non-partisan, or appropriate in seeking truth and expanding students' understanding (Ambrams, 1970). In Western countries, the distinction between academic freedom and *laissez-faire* is judged through the obligation on scholars to document fully the thought processes by which they arrive at their conclusions (Hook, 1971). However, in socialist China, the distinction between academic freedom and *laissez-faire* is assessed by the responsibility of scholars to uphold Marxism: those who fail to do so are treated as acting in a *laissez-faire* manner. Since Marxism takes precedence over academic freedom, opposing opinions are not allowed.

Finally, the Western idea of academic freedom suggests political neutrality, advocating that scholars and the university stay away from public controversy on political issues and doctrines (Wolff, 1992). Political influence is seen as a threat to academic freedom, because adopting a political philosophy of higher education would make it impossible for a college or university to be neutral (Taylor, 1973). Therefore, it is undesirable for professors to draw students' attention to their republican, democratic, or communist sympathies, just as it would be to focus on their Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish faith, as this would affect students' judgments on politics and truth. However, in socialist China, academic freedom does not imply the university's political neutrality; rather, the university and its scholars are obligated to uphold Marxism. The predominant basis for academic freedom is the ruling party's political ideology.

### ***The Chinese Approach: "Crossing the River by Feeling for Stones" in a Global Age***

Higher education reform in China since the 1980s can be best understood through the Chinese proverb "Crossing the river by feeling for stones." This proverb describes a gradual and experimental approach, much like that adopted by the CPC leadership to test methods for managing the social transition from a centrally planned to a more market-based economy (Liu and Garino, 2001; Qian, 2000; Tao and Xu, 2006), a process that, according to CPC Central Committee member Chen Yun, "will encounter numerous, often unexpected problems." As reformers need to find solutions to these problems in the reality

of China's social conditions, rather than simply follow existing theories or other countries' models of economic reform, the state "should not enforce radical changes at the beginning," but "start with an experimental beginning for every new reform measure" (Chen, 1995, p. 279).

Deng Xiaoping expressed similar sentiments, noting that, as "[e]conomic reform is something new for China, we are bound to make mistakes"; the method for tackling the problems, he continued, "is to review our experience from time to time and correct mistakes whenever we discover them, so that minor mistakes will not grow into major ones" (Deng, 1993, p. 174). In China's Sixth Five-Year Plan for economic and social development, Deng warned that "[d]uring the beginning years of reform, we should be careful and deal with important issues safely, crossing the river by feeling for stones, moving forward after getting a safe foothold" (Academy of Macroeconomic Research of the National Development and Reform Commission, 1981).

According to the CPC leadership, the first and most important foothold to secure when crossing the river of social transition is that of political and social stability. Having experienced the turmoil of civil war (1927–49) and of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), and seeing the chaos that attended the collapse of the former socialist bloc, Chinese leaders came out strongly in favor of growth based on "stability, development and reform." Deng and his successors have insisted that "China must commit to reform and opening"; but they note the need to establish a "stable political environment for reform," in which the CPC Central Committee has ongoing authority to ensure the reforms "continue in an orderly manner." In particular, China should reject the introduction of Western-style democracy and multi-party elections in favor of "democracy with Chinese characteristics" that reflects the fact that "[t]he political party system China has adopted is multi-party co-operation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC, which is different from both the two-party or multi-party competition system of Western countries" (Deng, 1993, pp. 213, 277, 284–5; Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2005). For decades, Deng's successors have stressed the significant effects of making political and social stability a priority, which include helping the whole society to focus its resources and energies on economic development and strengthening the CPC's political leadership status (Ma, 2007).

As part of its experimental approach, the state chose the rural areas as the starting point for its economic reforms, gradually allowing the emergence of private enterprise, reform of state-owned enterprises, a shift from agriculture to manufacturing and services, increased openness to international trade and the rise of a knowledge-based economy (OECD, 2002). These

developments, however, have been introduced within the framework of a “socialist market economic system,” in which market economic methods are used to ensure the continuity of socialism (Deng, 1998). As a result, from the late 1970s onwards, China has selected some Western-style capitalist methods to transform itself from a centrally planned economy into an emerging market economy (including increased openness to trade and foreign investment, and the establishment of commercial, real estate, and stock market enterprises), but it has stopped short of allowing either complete privatization and market liberalization, or Western-style democracy (Qian, 2000).

In the area of higher education, “crossing the river by feeling for stones” describes the gradual changes in the state-university relations, and the experimental approaches adopted by both the state and universities in response to the impact of globalization and domestic economic reforms on higher education. These can be seen in five interrelated processes: decentralization, particularly of management and finances; marketization, or the introduction of market mechanisms into universities; privatization, through the development of private education; education legislation, wherein law becomes the new “rules of the game” in educational policy-making; and the world-class education movement, which strives to create world-class universities. These phenomena have been major topics of discussion in recent educational studies (e.g. Altbach, 2004; Asian Development Bank, 2005; Ball, 1998; Bridges and McLaughlin, 1994; Cheng and DeLany, 2002; Desmond, 2002; Hanson, 1998; Lieberman, 1989; Mok, 1997; Wells and Scott, 2001; Williams, Furth, and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1990). However, the initiation and development of these practices in China are not determined merely by global pressures; rather, they are mainly related to domestic demands for more and better educational opportunities.

As explained in the next chapter, these reforms reveal a gradually changing relationship between the state, the market, educational institutions, and other stakeholders in higher education, and highlight social changes in the new context of China. The state has granted educational institutions a certain degree of freedom to take the initiative in implementing the state’s policy on higher education reform. However, it is only within CPC-defined socialist political and legal frameworks that individual universities can act to meet market needs, respond to market mechanisms, and incorporate international influence into institutional policy-making. As such, while universities are no longer under the absolute control of the state, neither are they yet fully free to act outside the constraints established by state policy. What has happened is that the state has gradually decreased its administrative control over the universities, allowing individual institutions relative freedom to test their own methods of

development — but the extent to which universities may exercise that freedom is determined by the state to reflect sociopolitical and economic conditions.

### **Interpreting University-State Relations during Periods of Social Change**

The theories and concepts outlined above shed some light on university-state relations in China. For example, theories of modernization and dependency help to explain the influence of foreign cultures on Chinese universities as they pursued the country's economic modernization. While the adoption of Western experience of higher education seems to suggest that the university is an agent of foreign culture, the concept of a world system gives insights into the connection between the national economy and higher education in international competition, as well as the university's struggle to move from periphery to core status while helping the state to become more economically competitive. Also, the discourse on globalization and higher education helps to explain higher education and economic development as a new force affecting the university's role and its relation with the nation-state in a globalized world. Understanding of the intertwining of politics and academia in shaping the university-state relationship is provided by the legacy of Chinese traditional culture of "being an official after being an excellent scholar"; and the framework of "Chinese learning as the essence, Western learning for its usefulness" helps in explaining the state's role in dealing with the conflict associated with the process of learning from the West to speed up economic modernization. In addition, Cai Yuanpei's concepts of university autonomy and academic freedom aid our understanding of the university's struggle in pursuing development in the light of the Western idea of the university and at the same time fulfilling state-defined social commitments. Finally, the ideological debate on "red" and "expert" in socialist China illustrates the struggles in higher education between its economic and political tasks under the strong influence of the state; and the idea of "crossing the river by feeling for stones" helps to explain the strategy of gaining strength by catching up on global trends in economic and educational reforms, and preserving China's political system despite social changes in the age of globalization.

However, these theories do not explain the following specific aspects in the case of TU: (a) the change from being an agent of foreign culture to an agent of the nation-state for national economic modernization and political

socialization; (b) TU's struggle with the state to increase its power of governance within the university; (c) the tension between striving to break the state's policy to gain an institutional right of decision-making and the initiatives that resulted in an increase of the state's political intervention in university affairs; (d) the state's tolerance of the university's decision-making related to the economic aspects of higher education, and the university's tolerance of the state regarding decision-making on the political task of higher education; and (e) the university president being both a cause of, and a buffer in, the conflict between the university and the state in China.

The chapters which follow explore how and why TU changed from being a school which acted as an agent of Western economic and cultural expansion to become a national university acting as an agent of the state for economic modernization and politico-cultural identity. They also examine how TU actively co-operated with the state in its nation-building program, while competing with it in the area of institutional decision-making. My goal is to try to explain: how and why TU managed to attain some freedom in university administration, tolerated by the state; the relations between TU, the state, and social transformation in China; and the meaning of university autonomy in the context of TU. These issues can be summarized in two key questions: How can an individual university handle conflicts arising from the coexistence of Western ideas of the university and Chinese traditions of higher education? In addition, how have these conflicts shaped university-state relations within both domestic and international contexts during the past century?

To understand these issues, the rest of this book explores the ties between the university and the state as they pursue national economic modernization and politico-cultural identity under specific domestic economic and political circumstances and foreign influences. This assumes that the university's role in social change is affected by international, domestic, and institutional factors, and the interaction among them. In describing TU's historical development, I highlight the university's role in the struggle between maintaining its ties with the state in economic and political programs and protecting itself from outside intervention. I also examine how TU's development was affected by two traditions of higher education: the Chinese tradition of pursuing economic development and politico-cultural identity formation as defined by the state and the Western tradition of striving for university autonomy in order to fulfill its social responsibilities based on the decisions of university scholars.

TU's role has been shaped by the interplay of three groups of factors. The first comprises the state and its mechanisms of control over TU, including: stipulating economic and political tasks; appointing the university president;



prescribing central values that TU should transmit to students through the compulsory curriculum; and establishing political bodies in the administration. The next group of factors centers on the linkage between TU and Western higher education which influenced the university in particular historical periods and includes: the United States (US) government's influence as the funding provider; the model of American higher education; faculty members' strong affiliation with Western higher education; and the global trends in higher education. The third group is institutional factors, including TU's academic prestige, the faculty's and students' perceptions of the university's role, and TU's institutional strategies for attaining university autonomy. In particular, I examine how the interlinking of government officials and university scholars has affected university-state relations. Overall, the meaning of university autonomy has been shaped by TU's struggle to implement economic and political tasks given by the state and its efforts to self-govern without external intervention.

TU's striving for autonomy has been influenced for nearly a century by both the Western idea of the university and the Chinese tradition of higher education that has extended from imperial China to the contemporary globalized world. Before analyzing this issue, however, it is important to examine more than one-and-a-half centuries of change in China's society and higher education, thus providing the broad context in which TU has developed.

# Notes

## Chapter 2

- 1 Four Books and Five Doctrines, including Great Learning (*Da Xue*), Doctrine of the Mean (*Zhong Yong*), Analects of Confucius (*Lun Yu*), Mencius (*Meng Zi*), Book of Changes (*Zhou Yi*), Book of Documents (*Shang Shu*), Book of Odes (*Shi Jing*), Book of Rites (*Li Ji*), and Book of History (*Chun Qiu Zuo Zhuan*).

## Chapter 3

- 1 In 1841, the Qing government was compelled to sign the Treaty of Nanjing with the British. According to the Treaty, five ports, in addition to Guangzhou, were opened up to foreign trade and British residence. The island of Hong Kong was ceded to Britain. The tariff was fixed at 5 percent of the value of the goods and could not be changed without agreement by both sides. Coasts and parts of cities were occupied and exempt from Chinese laws. Foreign ministers and missionaries were allowed to reside and practice in China. The Treaty of Nanjing was followed by a series of other “Unequal Treaties” with Western trading nations.
- 2 The Four Cardinal Principles are: upholding the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, upholding the socialist road, upholding the people’s democratic dictatorship, and upholding Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought (Deng, 1979).
- 3 The thought of Three Represents says the CPC must always represent the most advanced productivity and culture in China as well as the fundamental interests of the maximal majority of the Chinese people (china.org.cn, 2003b).

## Chapter 4

- 1 These six subjects were world geography, mathematics, chemistry, health, painting, and music. The other three subjects taught in Chinese and with Chinese versions of textbooks were Chinese language, geography, and history.

## Chapter 5

- 1 They were Paul Langevin, a French physicist and chemist; Norbert Wiener, an American mathematician and creator of the Theory of Control; Inang Langmuir, an American chemist and the winner of the 1932 Nobel Chemistry Prize; Theodor Von Karman, an American academician in physics and engineering; P. A. M. Dirac, a German physicist; Holcombe Arthur Norman, an American academician in politics; and Robert Houghwout Jackson, an American academician in law.
- 2 Luo Jialun joined the KMT in 1927 and worked as Chiang Kai-Shek's secretary. Luo was a member of the Committee of Political Affairs in the war of North Exploration led by Chiang. Luo was approved by Chiang as TU's president. Wu Nanxuan was the vice director of the Central Political School, in which Chiang took the principal position.

## Chapter 6

- 1 In all cases where a staff number is given, the information was provided in an interview.
- 2 Wen Yiduo and Zhu Ziqing were praised by Mao Zedong as national heroes. Wen Yiduo participated in the movement "Struggle against civil war, struggle for democracy." He criticized the KMT and was murdered by the KMT in 1946. TU set up a statue on which his poem "Poet's natural talent is love, loving his country, and loving his people" was inscribed and it was colored red, which stands for ardent love. On a hill behind the statue there was a pavilion named "Wen Ting," in which there was a large copper bell made in the Qing dynasty. Near Wen Ting, a pavilion was built in memory of Zhu Ziqing. He refused to accept the "relief food" offered by the USA, and died from hunger and illness. Zhu was praised by Mao as a hero with a patriotic and anti-imperialist spirit. A statue of Zhu was placed beside the lake in Tsinghua Garden near the lotus pool, which is famous for Zhu's essay "*Hetang Yuese*" ("Moon Scenery of Lotus Pool").

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