

# Call for Sessions - WEHC 2015 [S20126]

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## **Proposed title of the session**

Political Economy of China's Modern Transition, 1840-1930

## **Abstract**

After the First Opium War (1839-1842), the age-old imperial China entered a transitional period toward modernization. While the importance of opening up (treaty ports) and Western influence in promoting China's modernization has been well-established, little effort was devoted to investigate the possible role of China's long-lasting traditional forces—in particular institutions, culture, and social conflicts—in shaping the modernization progress.

This session aims to present four new studies that address these questions in an empirical way. They respectively examine the effect of imperial examination system, Confucian culture, peasant rebellions (Taiping Rebellions), and nomadic conquests on China's political and economic modernization.

Specifically, Bai and Jia (2014) examine the effect of social mobility on the likelihood of revolution using the abolition of imperial civil service exam in 1905 as an experiment. They find that the interruption of this most important mobility channel was a contributor to the mobilization of democratic revolutionaries near 1911. By quantitatively measuring the regional difference in the strength of Confucianism at the prefectural level, Kung and Ma (work in progress) empirically test whether the durable Confucian norms and values, as suggested by the conventional Weberian hypothesis, hampered capitalist development in historical China. Li and Lin (2014) find that the Taiping Rebellion—despite its largest casualty in Chinese history—in fact improved the capital-labor ratio and human capital, which in turn may promote industrialization and urbanization. Finally, Chen (work in progress) is collecting data to examine whether there is any negative effect of nomadic invasions and conquests on economic development in the long run.

Drawing upon big data sets and sophisticated econometric methods, all these studies attempt to identify the causal effect of the outlined factors on modernization. These studies aim to not only deepen our understanding of the history of modern China, but contribute to a general economic literature that discusses the effect of institutions, culture, and conflicts on development.

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## **I. Corresponding Session Organiser**

Dr. Chicheng Ma (Shandong University [China])

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## **II. Co-Organiser(s)**

1. Corresponding Organiser.

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## **III. Expected Participant(s)**

1. same as correspondent.
2. Ying Bai (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology [China])
3. Ruixue Jia (University of California San Diego [United States of America])
4. Qiang Chen (Shandong University [China])
5. Nan Li (Shanghai University of Finance and Economics [China])