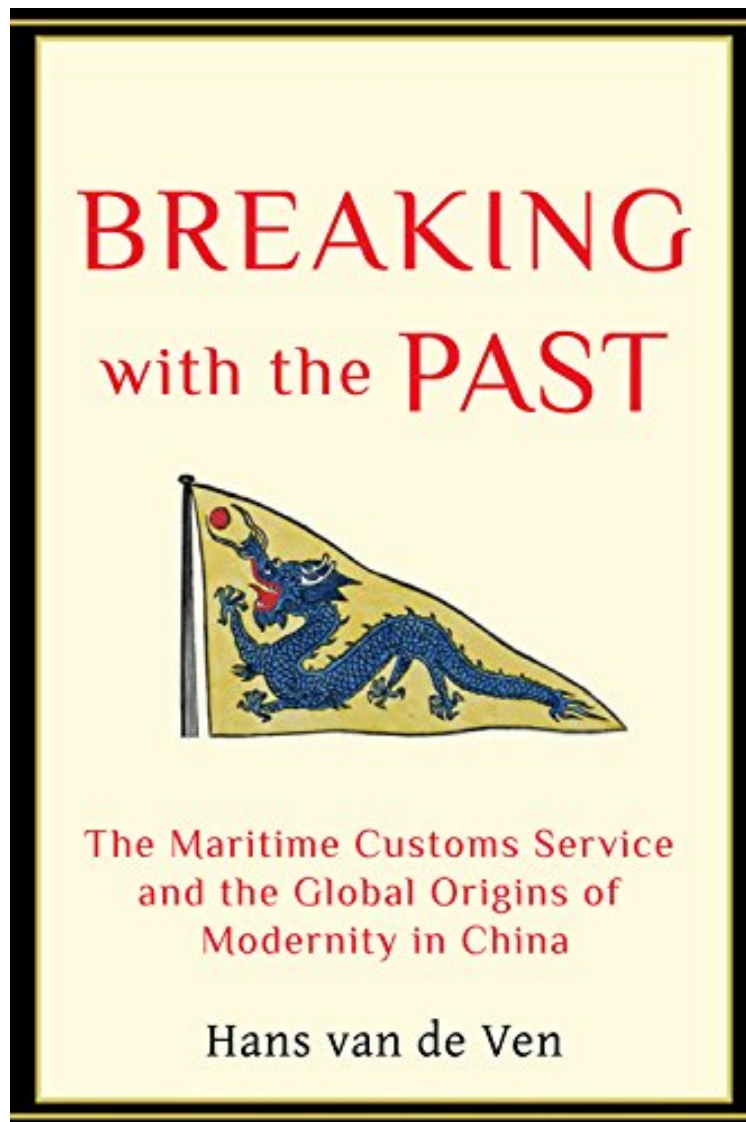


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## Breaking with the Past: The Maritime Customs Service and the Global Origins of Modernity in China

*Hans Van de Ven*

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**Hans Van de Ven : Breaking with the Past: The Maritime Customs Service and the Global Origins of Modernity in China** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Breaking with the Past: The Maritime Customs Service and the Global Origins of Modernity in China:

From 1854 to 1952, the Chinese Maritime Customs Service delivered one-third to one-half of all revenue available to China's central authorities. Much more than a tax collector, the institution managed China's harbors and surveyed the Chinese coast. It oversaw a college training Chinese diplomats; translated legal, philosophical, economic, and scientific documents; organized contributions to international exhibitions; and pioneered China's modern postal system. After the 1911 Revolution, the agency began managing China's international loans and domestic bond issues, and in the 1930s, it created a coast guard to combat smuggling. The Customs Service was central to China's post-Taiping entrance into the world of modern nation-states and twentieth-century trade and finance, and this is the first comprehensive history of the Customs Service's activities and truly cosmopolitan nature. At times, the Service kept China together when little else did.

Far more than an institutional history of the Customs Service, this book is effectively a complete new history of China's rocky entrance into the global political economy. There is no better book written at this level of historical research and archival detail on the subject of 'China and the West.' (Timothy Brook, University of British Columbia) Breaking with the Past is a superb example of a turn in history that is now coming to maturity: the challenge to bring the foreign back into Chinese history. By using an agency that was indisputably central to the operation of Chinese government for a century, Hans van de Ven makes a groundbreaking contribution that demonstrates that we cannot understand modern China without placing it in the context of globalization. Many topics we thought we knew are related by van de Ven in a fresh and convincing way. His study utilizes hard data and incorporates the human narrative at its core. This is historical writing of the highest order. (Rana Mitter, University of Oxford) The Chinese Maritime Customs Service was central to China's interaction with a world being reshaped by imperialism and globalization after 1842, and at the same time it lay at the very heart of modern Chinese state-building. Hans van de Ven's masterly account of this foreign-led Chinese state agency sheds much new light on the personalities involved, its operations and impact, and syncretic character and forces us to think afresh about China's entangled encounters with the foreign and the modern. (Robert Bickers, author of *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832–1911*) This is the story of China's economic internationalization in the century before the Communist conquest. The Maritime Customs Service was the most continuously important part of the modern Chinese state from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. It organized, promoted, and extracted revenues from China's growing foreign trade and became (by far) the most reliable source of income for the Qing court and the Republican regimes that followed it. Serving the interests of both Chinese and foreign states, it mediated the development of Shanghai and other great coastal cities and was a pioneer in China's modern financial sector. The eminent Cambridge historian, Hans van de Ven, has written this history in full for the first time, using an extraordinary array of Chinese and international sources. Today, as China looks to its pre-Communist past as a guide to its future, this is an important book. (William C. Kirby, Harvard University) In this superbly readable, meticulously documented book, Van de Ven has written the best comprehensive account of a key institution on the frontiers of China's globalization in the modern era. Highly recommended. (CHOICE) The book remains a pathbreaking work and deserves a wide audience... future graduate students are likely to explore the book to identify exciting dissertation topics. (American Historical) Breaking with the Past makes a major contribution to modern Chinese history. (Donna Brunero Asian Studies) One of the most comprehensive and ambitious historical studies of the CMC to have been written in English.... Students of Chinese modern history cannot afford to overlook Breaking with the Past. (Niv Horesh *The Journal of Asian Studies*) Brimming with new insights and a remarkable richness of details, Breaking with the Past is a must read for all students of modern China. It offers a significant contribution to our understanding of the nature of imperialism in China and imperialism's impact on the dramatic political and economic transformations that characterize modern Chinese history. (Margherita Zanasi *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*) About the Author Hans van de Ven is professor of modern Chinese history at Cambridge University. He has written extensively on China's military history and the history of the Chinese revolution.