

# **The Breaking and Establishment of the History of the Boxer Movement—Based on the Analysis of the "History in Three Keys"**

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**Abstract:** The Boxer Movement had a global influence, and Chinese and foreign scholars made a lot of relevant achievements. "Three Keys of History" is an American scholar Cohen's reflection and innovation on the history of the Boxer Movement, which has an important impact on the historical circles at home and abroad. The novelty of this book lies in breaking the traditional monolithic writing mode of history books, and organically integrating three perspectives: the perspective of the end of the chronicle, the perspective of social history and the perspective of academic history, which opens up a new way for historical writing. Specifically, its frame structure is closely based on the perspective of the outside, from the inside to the inside, its writing method is not unconventional, focusing on the integration of disciplines, and its style is characterized by the integration of Chinese and Western cultures. An in-depth study of the content of this book can sort out the author's pioneering achievements in the field of history, and at the same time, the shortcomings of the book are also valuable lessons from the past. A dialectical view of its advantages and disadvantages is convenient for readers to prudently learn the research theories and paths used by Western scholars in the field of Chinese history, so as to provide assistance for more fully promoting the global value of Chinese history and promoting the development of international historiography.

**Keywords:** The Boxer Movement; Cohen; History in Three Keys

The "Boxer Rebellion," also known as the "Gengzi Incident" and the "Gengzi Rebellion," took place in China at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, and was a mass movement with a relatively large scale and a wide scope. It is

not only an important movement in China's modern history, because it has affected foreign embassies and churches, but also an international event with wide influence in the world. The account of the event forms part of historiography and is "intimately connected to reality" today. This paper intends to get a glimpse of the value and significance of this book in Chinese and Western historiography from three aspects: The History in three keys: The Boxers as Events, Experiences and Myths (hereinafter referred to as the History in three keys), an excellent historiographical monograph in the field of modern Chinese history written by foreigners.

## **1. Weeding through the Old to Bring Forth the New**

Professor Paul A. Cohen's History in three keys was first published in 1997 and published by Colombia University Press in United States. Later, he crossed the ocean and translated into China. In 2015, the Social Sciences Literature Society published "History in three keys" entitled "Collector's Edition", which supplemented the text and illustrations deleted from the 2000 Chinese translation, restored the foreign language references to the original text rather than translation, and more importantly, Professor Kohen also wrote a preface to the Chinese reprint for this purpose, comprehensively describing the evolution of his academic thought in recent years, and providing readers with a new perspective to study and study the Boxer Rebellion. Since 2002, there have been related papers on the "History in three keys", such as Chen Junjing's "On Kewen's "China-Centric View"", published in the third issue of "Historical Monthly" in 2002; Published in Zhongzhou Academic Journal on January 20, 2003, "From "China-centric View" to "History in three keys" is the earliest academic achievement specializing in the study of "History in three keys", written by Zhang Zhenli and Zhang

Zhichang of the Department of History of Fudan University; The most recently published paper with this name was published on April 15, 2022, titled "The Diverse Presentation of Media Narratives: Historiography of Journalism and Communication Studies Based on the 'History in three keys'", published in News Spring and Autumn, written by Zhou Qing'an and Wang Yuwei of Tsinghua University. In the past 20 years, a total of 31 published journal papers contain the words "History in three keys" in their titles, of which 21 titles cite "History in three keys"; A total of 20 papers were based on the keyword of "History in three keys"; In one paper with "Kewen" as the keyword, the "History in three keys" was reviewed; One master's dissertation is based on "History in three keys", that is, "Research on the 75·8 Flood Disaster under the Framework of the Narrative of History in three keys" by Zhao Zihao of Wuhan University of Technology. These papers can be roughly divided into three categories, the first type is the research type of historical structure represented by Zhang Zhenli: the study of "historical ontology, 'theoretical framework', and the role of historians" embodied in the "History in three keys", some scholars point out that "Kohen's historiographical thought has an obvious postmodernist tendency", and some views believe that the value of his works is reflected in the "humanistic tendency"; The second type is the historical methodology research type represented by Yang Qimei: "The entry point of this paper, the way of writing, and the way of handling materials are worthy of learning from later generations", which can not only help the research of academic papers, such as "The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement from the 'History in three keys': An Investigation Centered on 'Experience' and 'Myth'" (Zhang Yawen, published in the Journal of Ankang) and "Chicken Feathers for Sugar: Events, Memories and Myths: The Three Tones of the History of Yiwu Farmers" (Zhou Xiaohong, published in the Journal of China Agricultural University) and other papers are borrowed from the research paradigm of "History in three keys", and can also guide teaching practice - "The variable in this classroom is the 'History in three keys', which deeply learns, understands, and evaluates the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression from the three cognitive dimensions of events,

experiences, and cognitions"; The third type is the research type of historical writing represented by Professor Kewen: "More importantly (as I explain in this book), my main purpose is to explore a series of issues related to historical writing," "Historians usually face two worries in the process of writing historical writing: one is the sense of isolation between the author and the subject of the writing; The second is the sense of distance between the work and the reader. It is impossible for historians' writings to be equated with all the facts that happened in the past, so the way, method, path, style, and principles of writing have become a very important issue, which requires serious consideration by historical learners and researchers. On the whole, the first type of research is historical academic research, with the largest number, direction, and variety, and the most fruitful results. The second type is more practical, which can not only directly pave the way for academic research, but also open up ideas for education and teaching practice; At present, there are only two articles by Professor Kohen on CNKI, a paper by Guo Baojun of Henan University, and a paper by Hu Jing and Ouyang Enliang of Guizhou Normal University have conducted in-depth exploration of the characteristics and methods of historical writing. Similar to the degree of attention paid by domestic academic circles, overseas scholars have also explored the "History in three keys". As early as 1997, there was a related book review - "Cohen offers excellent insight into the idiosyncracics of the Boxer movement, including its ideas, origins, rituals, and development. He successfully examines and discusses the uprising in terms of its historical narrative, the participants' experiences, and the literary myths to which it gave rise. Cohen also distinguishes between historians and mythologizers. A specialized, thorough, and well-researched book with good references" Focus on the structure of the book as well as its theoretical features; In 1999, he also published a book review of "The History in three keys" in the "Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient", which paid more attention to its innovation. In addition, Greg Denning's "Enigma Variations on History in Three Keys: A Conversational Essay", published in History & Theory, No. 2, 2000, evaluates the merits of Cowen's work from a

relatively dialectical and objective perspective, rather than blindly praising it.

To sum up, the relevant research of the "History in three keys" is a relatively popular direction, and there are considerable research results at home and abroad, and it is not uncommon to see relevant academic reviews and summaries. In terms of subdivisions, the academic community has conducted in-depth analysis and comprehensive evaluation of the historical outlook and historical theories used in the book, which can be said to be fruitful. However, research on shortcomings and shortcomings is weak; In terms of influence, the predecessors paid much attention to the Western academic value disseminated by the work itself, and lacked reflection on the "international significance of Chinese history" contained in the book.

## **2. Unite to be Strong**

The main text of the History in three keys is mainly divided into three parts, namely, the study of "events", "experiences" and "myths" of the Boxers. "Events" describes the Boxer Rebellion from the perspective of the end of the chronicle; "Experience" is from the perspective of social history, showing the behavior of people closely related to the Boxer Rebellion with rich and detailed historical materials, and analyzing its implicit logic. "Mythology" is to sort out the historical renderings of different eras from the perspective of academic history and analyze their historical origins. The combination of the three research methods has not made this book "a cat not an anti-dog", but has opened the door to diversified historical writing and provided a positive demonstration for later generations.

### **2.1 The "Event" from the Perspective of Chronicle**

Compared with the relevant domestic works, the "Events" part of "History in three keys" is obviously concise and to the point. Specifically, for the Chinese historiography community, because the book is a part of the study of modern Chinese history by Western scholars, the research perspectives, methods, paths, and historical materials used in the history of events can be used for reference by the Chinese people: First, the selective adjustment of the scope of the narrative: for the historical writing of a certain event, there is essentially no standard

template, under the premise of not violating laws and regulations, do not let yourself be tied up, and fall into the cage of your own works, without any new ideas, when all history is in accordance with "Chinese history is the history of the Chinese" This template would have been lackluster when it was written, and the author has included a great deal of foreigners, including their misdeeds, in this section - "From mid-December to April of the following year, the coalition forces launched dozens of punitive expeditions under the command of Wadsey..... Although the ostensible purpose of the coalition expedition was to sweep away the remnants of the Boxers in rural areas, there was no clear standard for distinguishing between the Boxers and civilians." For example, the specific provisions of the Xinchou Treaty are introduced in a single paragraph, more than 200 words, and the last paragraph of the chapter is the impact of the Boxer Rebellion: "Compared with the great impact of the treaty on the Chinese government and people, the specific provisions of the treaty are less important." The second is the critical inheritance of the writings of the predecessors: acknowledging the excellence of the previous work, at the same time daring to question the authority, having the courage to put forward different points of view on an objective basis, finding out the shortcomings, and boldly innovating in the historical narrative, such as "Regarding the situation of the Boxer Rebellion in Shandong at its very beginning, we already have an excellent English monograph, that is, Zhou Xirui's "The Origin of the Boxer Rebellion." And "Zhou Xirui gave a figure of 179, but he said that 130 people were killed in Shanxi and 49 people in Inner Mongolia, which is a bit too accurate." The problem was that the reports of the Protestant missionaries at the time did not clearly distinguish between the two regions."

For the Western historiography community, Professor Kohen's work has also brought useful attempts for it: first, the best-selling "History in three keys" in China has brought a good example of the effective integration of historical value and economic value to the Western historiography community; Second, the study of Chinese history is not only Chinese can bear excellent results, standing on the shoulders of predecessors, foreigners can also study Chinese history in depth and have important influence in the world, which has

greatly stimulated the enthusiasm of overseas historical research, such as Jia Zhiyang (representative work "Tianhuang Nobility: History of the Song Dynasty"), Bu Zhengmin (representative work "Prayer for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Chinese Gentry Society in the Late Ming Dynasty", etc.), Ke Weilin ("Germany and the Republic of China"), Luo Lisa (representative work "Alternative Modernity: The desire for gendering in China in the era of reform and opening up", etc.), these Western scholars' in-depth research on China and the phenomenon of "Sinology fever" (there has also been a boom in overseas academic research in Chinese historiography, and the successive publication of the "Overseas China Studies Series" is one of its manifestations), etc., have also contributed to international historiography to a certain extent—local people can make rich achievements in foreign history; Furthermore, the author undertakes a self-deconstruction of historiographical theory, as the author writes in the book: "I have stated that my main purpose is to illustrate how historians understand and interpret the past. " Since the original version of this book is in English, they are the first beneficiaries of historical researchers in countries that use English as their mother tongue in Europe and the United States, and non-native English speakers with a high level of English proficiency can also benefit greatly from reading the original English version, which is conducive to English reading, writing, and historiography. Comparatively speaking, the guidance of the translated book in terms of language choice and sentence formation is very different from that of the original version, and the reader's reading experience is directly affected by the translator's writing level.

For example, the origin of the Boxer Rebellion occupies the heaviest part of the "Events", and the obvious shortcoming of this part lies in the relative weakness of the connection: it does not involve "the Battle of Dangshan in 1896 of Cao and Shan Dadaohui" and the "Battle of the Boxers in the Plains in 1899." the impact of other events on the Boxer Rebellion; In terms of citing sources, I often cite second-hand historical sources - "In the process of reconstructing the history of the Boxers in this chapter, I made more use of secondary sources." There is not enough research on the

local officials' performances, and the historical data support is insufficient, so it is a little pale when describing the attitude of the government, especially when the article mentions Yuxian many times, but does not cite his first-hand historical materials such as recitals and letters as evidence. These shortcomings cannot be completely avoided even by well-known Western historians at home and abroad, and they have brought enlightenment to Chinese and foreign historical researchers: historical research should be based on points and aspects, not a corner of safety, and should attach importance to comprehensive research, even if perfection only exists in an ideal state, but it is necessary to pursue perfection to the greatest extent; Mr. Fu Sinian once said that "every historical material says a little bit", in the process of writing history, we must always pay attention to the use of historical materials, and we must not be far-fetched, otherwise we will inevitably fall into subjective assumptions.

## **2.2 "Experience" from the Perspective of Social History**

The impact of drought on the lives of the people, the rationality of the existence of séance, the role of magic in the success or failure of the Boxers, and the guidance of rumors and death on the behavior of the people together constitute the content of the social history of the Boxer Rebellion, that is, the research center is no longer limited to the traditional upper-class political game, the narrative of the military process, the complex relationship between China and foreign countries, and the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolutionary spirit of the people, but focuses on the actions, thoughts and thoughts of ordinary Chinese and foreign people in the whirlpool of the Boxer Rebellion. Professor Ke Wen cautiously cites many oral historical materials ("Shandong Boxer Investigation", "Tianjin Boxer Investigation") and archival historical materials ("Boxer Rebellion Historical Materials", "Boxer Documents"), and has a deep grasp of the details, but does not fall into the trap of fragmented social history, which is the charm of this work.

For example, when domestic scholars analyze the background of the Boxer Rebellion, they often pay attention to the factor of drought, but rarely study the missionaries' cognition of the



widespread drought at that time, the author not only cites a large number of foreign historical materials to analyze the thoughts and behaviors of the missionaries, but also comprehensively analyzes the views of the ordinary people and the Boxer Rebellion. In his writings, the German scholar Dietman wrote: "It should be noted that the events outlined above in this chapter are the confluence of various situations in southwestern Lu. It is important to remember here that widespread drought has caused widespread hunger and anxiety among the population (see the last section of chapter 6). It was in this context that panic rumors began to circulate in the area, warning of the sinister nature of the Germans and condemning the poisoning of the wells of the parishioners. In his monumental book *The History in three keys*, Cowen has convincingly expounded the importance of such rumors in the convergence and spread of the Boxer Rebellion." As for the séance possession, Boxer spells and rumors, there have been many scholars who have studied them in depth before, but the organic combination of the three and their complementarity in series is really a valuable innovation. In addition, "death" has always been a heavy topic, especially in China, and it is a thing that needs to be avoided as much as possible, and the academic community has paid even less attention in this regard, and the author, as an outsider, carries out the study of the "death" of individuals and groups in the Boxer Rebellion with a relatively objective and calm academic attitude, which is an important contribution to Chinese and foreign historiography, providing a direct model for foreign scholars to study modern Chinese social history, and also providing reference and inspiration for the research of Chinese scholars. It should not be ignored that the content of this part still has imperfections, on the one hand, the narrative is too brief and passing, and on the other hand, the historical support is insufficient. A typical example of this is the original text, which says that "the Boxers who are caught between these two groups of people (the truly possessed and the outright deceived) are the vast majority, and they sometimes go into a trance, sometimes they can't." Throughout the text, the author did not prove the existence of the "real God-possessed person" through text, pictures or physical historical research, and its existence is

obviously contrary to historical materialism. In addition, the definition method between "those who are really possessed by gods" and "trance" is not mentioned, let alone the support of relevant historical materials, which brings a certain degree of confusion to readers and needs to attract the attention of Chinese and foreign scholars.

### **2.3 "Myth" from the Perspective of Academic History**

As the last part of the main body of the book, the word "myth" is both novel and rich in connotation (whether it is translated into Chinese or the original English word), and the author explains the meaning of the word in the introduction: "In general terms, 'myth' refers to something that is 'man-made' or 'untrue'. I use the word here, the meaning is broader and more ambiguous"; Subsequently, the relationship between "myth" and "history" is dialectically analyzed, and the author believes that history and myth have similarities, that is, they are both narratives of the past, and both are subjective products. However, the author is ingenious in selecting two important historical periods in China after the Boxer Rebellion, sorting out the main views of the academic circles on the Boxer Rebellion at that time, pointing out that there is a tendency to "mythologize" history, and paying attention to the details that are generally ignored by Chinese and foreign scholars.

In addition, after combing through the Chinese "myths", the author also describes the general situation of the Boxer Rebellion in the West, and the United Kingdom Anne Werichard quotes the historical narrative of the book in the fourth chapter of her literary history work *Lao She in London*, which "left a lasting impression on the imaginary world of the United Kingdom people" and for many years thereafter, the Boxer Rebellion vividly represented all of China's most hated and feared things in films, novels, and folklore..... The demonic version of cruelty, xenophobia, superstition. " However, the author does not make a vertical or horizontal temporal or horizontal induction, and only brushes the "Yellow Peril", the political "myth" that discredits the yellow race, without dissecting the historical origin of the Boxers and the "Yellow Peril", nor does he put forward constructive suggestions to break the Western myth.

History and politics are inseparable, and history often serves politics. The author's scholarly review of the two periods after the Boxer Rebellion clarifies the context and causes of historical "myths" for readers, and regards excessive political and cultural exaggeration as historical myths. This has broadened the horizons of Chinese and foreign readers, broken down the old barriers, broadened the research field of academic history, and provided a useful boost for the rapid development of history. One of the most innovative ideas in the "Mythology" section is the author's analysis of the "conclusive" Chinese historiography after the 80s of the 20th century, that is, in the context of the era of reform and opening up, there is still a potential risk that historical research will be subject to politics, and some conclusions about the qualitative nature of the Boxer Rebellion cannot be overturned (such as its anti-imperialist and anti-feudal nature), and the author has been able to conveniently, relatively objectively and dialectically point out these possible problems as an outsider, which is worthy of further consideration by Chinese and foreign scholars.

Since the "myth" can continue with the Chinese's ambivalent mentality towards the West, the author skips the three important historical stages of the War of Resistance Against Japan, the War of Liberation, the founding of the People's Republic of China, and the eve of the Cultural Revolution, making the work not full enough, and will also bring readers a sense of separation in reading. Objectively speaking, even a slight analysis like a brief description of the academic characteristics after the end of the Cultural Revolution will not cause regret in a corner of the country. From another point of view, it is impossible to cover all aspects of the work, and the author's move has also played a guiding and enlightening role for Chinese and foreign scholars in the research of unfinished matters, opening up a precursor for academic exploration, which is conducive to the rapid development of Chinese and foreign scholarship.

### **3. The Strong Wins the Weak**

Diversified historical outlook, innovation and integration. The author critically inherited the teacher's academic achievements and took the

lead in studying the "Sinocentric view", "starting from China rather than from the West to study Chinese history, and try to adopt internal (i.e., Chinese) rather than external (i.e., Western) criteria to determine which phenomena in Chinese history are historically important". Based on his years of research, the author gradually echoes the "global view of history", which is reflected in the "History in three keys": "What we see is a completely different kind of world history, which is not a traditional world history based on connections and influences, but a world history that is constantly reappearing, clearly similar, independently developed, and very likely rooted in some supracultural particularity of human beings—and, importantly, the universality of storytelling in the human experience." Sowing the seeds of such an understanding of global history is another aspect of my research work, and it may be said that this seed has already sprouted in the History in three keys. " For example, when describing the rituals and spells of the Boxers, the author analyzes the rationality of the similar behaviors of indigenous peoples in Africa and the Americas, investigates and sorts out the mystery of the Boxers from a global scale, and gradually unveils the mystery of the Boxers. In addition to the global view of history and the view of history as a whole, there is also a view of social history that focuses on "experience", and no longer sticks to traditional political and military struggles, but focuses on the thoughts and thoughts of the general public in society that have been ignored in the past.

In China, historical materialism is the only magic weapon for historians, and at the same time, the field of Chinese history research also needs a variety of historical views to open up their thinking. In foreign countries, the historical concepts such as the heroic view of history, the Whig view of history, and the concept of national history are very easy to lead historical research to the extreme, and they are not objective enough, so it is necessary to reconcile the views of civilization history, class history, revolutionary history, global history, and social history. The multi-faceted and comprehensive historical framework has a profound impact on the study of Chinese and foreign history.

However, also because of the historical view, the author's statements in some places in the

text also make the reader wonder, such as "in terms of the relevant developments (as shown in this chapter), the red lantern did not actually make any contribution to the history of the Boxers" If it is due to the characteristics of the text, the author's narrative immediately following this sentence in the text breaks this assumption - "in the history of the Boxers, it is almost possible to completely exclude the red light without making major changes to the main thread of this history". It can be called a rigorous "arbitrary", but it is a flaw that readers need to learn from.

The department is crossed, and the characteristics are distinct. In this article, the author repeatedly borrows research methods from psychology, biology, sociology, anthropology, art and other disciplines. For example, from a psychological perspective, we analyze the psychological pressure brought about by famine and find out the potential motivation for people's extensive participation in the Boxer Rebellion. Biological research methods were used to analyze the correlation between hunger and social séance. For example, the artistic analysis of Michelangelo's paintings in the Sistine Chapel to explain the potential negative effects of debunking historical "myths", etc. The author provides a good demonstration for the study of history through the analysis of commonalities between multiple disciplines, especially the use of biophysics to explore the possibility of séance, which builds a bridge of friendly exchanges between history and science, and opens up research methods and paths for Chinese and foreign scholars.

The historical data is extensive, and the research is corrected. In addition to extensively and objectively citing academic monographs, journal papers, newspapers, local chronicles, diaries, letters and other traditional Chinese historical materials, the author also analyzes the writings of experts and scholars from Japan, Europe and the United States, and quotes a large number of treasured Chinese and foreign archives, diaries, and letters in the United States's collection, so as to make corrections to past historical research - "According to the detailed statistics provided by Minister Conger of United States, a total of 78 foreigners were killed and 179 were injured..... Zhou Xirui (Origins, 306) said that there were only 14 foreigners killed or wounded, which is a big mistake." In the Bibliography at the end of the

work, there are 18 pages of Chinese literature and 41 pages of foreign language literature. In addition, the author has also collected a large number of valuable photographs through various means, which greatly enriches the historiographical value of the work and expands the depth and breadth.

The author's knowledge reserve is quite profound, such as the historical materials cited by Kaiser Wilhelm when sorting out the motives of the Eight-Power Alliance Germany to enter the war, and often comparative analysis is carried out in the narrative of the Boxer Rebellion, such as in the séance possession part, Palau in the western Pacific Ocean, the Christian tremors in St. Vincent in the West India Islands, and the Mayan society in the Yucatan Peninsula are placed together for readers to recognize and understand; There are also rumors, such as "In Rome, the first Christians were accused of poisoning wells and other similar crimes, and during the Black Death epidemic in the Middle Ages (1348), the Jews were the target of rumors." When cholera was epidemic in Paris in 1832, there were rumors that poisoned powder had been thrown into the bread, vegetables and water of the city", Using a series of well-known rumors in world history to provide a reasonable answer to the social background of the rumors during the Boxer Rebellion is conducive to strengthening its own persuasiveness and can be better accepted by Chinese and foreign readers.

Attaching importance to the influence of foreign historical materials on the study of domestic history is an important contribution made by the author to Chinese and foreign historiography, and on this basis, foreign historical materials related to the Boxer Rebellion have gradually been paid attention, such as France's "Bo Xi and Beijing Diary": "As a scholar, Bo Xi He not only restored the scene of the siege with subjective emotion, but also recorded the contradictions between the countries in the embassy area at that time, which helped researchers to get close to the historical truth."; Another example is India's historical material about the Boxer Rebellion - "Thirteen Months in China": "The historical and comparative literature research value of "Thirteen Months in China" is undeniable, and it is a precious and rare document for examining the history of modern Sino-Indian relations. The unique sense of community with

a shared future between China and India, which it built during the colonial period, is also a clear and valuable 'mirror' for observing and researching the complex and difficult people-to-people exchanges between China and India today. " In the past five years, Chinese scholars have yielded a lot of fruitful results in this regard, and these new historiographical studies are not only based on the comprehensive influence of the Boxer Rebellion, but also focus on new explorations of Sino-foreign relations. At the same time, for the West, the "History in three keys" also provides an excellent reference and paradigm for the excavation of historical materials such as Chinese official memoranda, archives, and local chronicles.

Close to the reader, follow the temptation. In the preface, the author said that this book is a book of historical theory, but the theory is boring, in order to facilitate the reader's learning and mastery, he expounds his own views and ideas on history through the Boxer Rebellion. In addition, the author often uses a problem-oriented approach to historical narratives: "There are many mysteries of the Boxer Rebellion that we must solve"; However, some of the questions are open-ended, and only a reasonable explanation is given that I think is more likely, such as "From the end of 1898 to the beginning of 1899, there was a drastic change in Shenquan. While we don't yet know about the other important factors that contributed to this change, one of the important reasons is clearly the Yellow River", The author regards it as an open-ended question, and does not stop at it for long, but follows the context of the Yellow River floods. At the same time, in some areas, the author is also very frank: although the topic of the Eight-Nation Alliance's retaliation against Manchuria, Shanxi, Zhili and other places has been mentioned many times, it still needs to be comprehensively studied by Western scholars. " The use of advanced research methods and rich historical materials have helped "The History in three keys" stand out in the academic community, however, there are too many advantages that often make readers ignore its shortcomings, not to mention the fact that subjective paranoia is one of the limitations of the work. What is "history"? The author believes that history is fundamentally different from the past, and that it is a scholar's

interpretation of the past. In China, the common sense of "history" includes not only what actually happened in the past, but also people's records and interpretations of the past (represented by historians such as Mr. Bai Shouyi), and the difference in core concepts brings about ambiguity in specific writing. In addition to the above-mentioned author's statement that "the red lantern did not actually make any contribution to the history of the Boxers", there is also a subjective expression of political bias: "The anti-government character of the White Lotus Sect was particularly attractive to Communist scholars who were eager to emphasize the anti-feudal overtones of the Boxer Rebellion".

The expression "anxious" and "communist scholar" here is particularly eye-catching, "anxious" is a word with obvious subjective overtones, and the author does not use strong historical data to support this view, coupled with the expression of the term "communist scholar", which attempts to carry out politically biased guidance, which is out of the category of objective scholarship, and needs to arouse a high degree of vigilance among readers. In addition, as a historical monograph that claims to be a historical theory, its concept of "history" is extremely subjective in cognition, and as the author said in the Preface to the Reprint, his concept of "history" is also constantly changing, which especially needs to attract the attention of Chinese readers—the conflict between the unknowable tendency of history in "postmodernism" and the dialectical "historical materialism". The author's "compromise between history and literature" provides a lesson for Chinese and foreign readers in the face of subjective conflicts.

#### **4. Last But not Least, Emancipate the Mind**

In this book, the author brings new enlightenment to Chinese and foreign readers: although the so-called "feudal superstition" is a folk "bad habit", it also has its academic value, and scholars should stand in an academic perspective to sort out the origin and transformation of the development of "feudal superstition", Kong Feili's "Soul Calling: The Great Witchcraft Panic in China in 1768" is one of the representatives; In addition, historiography does not need to stick to the old forms, but must be good at using new results, "and when people try to adopt and interpret



historical materials other than archival documents, they will be helpless in their methods." In this sense, Kewen's "History in three keys" should be instructive. " Historiography translation can also become a new direction, sinicizing excellent foreign works and internationalizing excellent domestic achievements, so that historiography has a new vitality and mission in the context of the new era, jumping out of barriers, using a global vision, a realistic attitude towards learning, and an all-round and comprehensive research method to fully explore the potential vertical and horizontal content of history, expand the contemporary value and influence of historiography, and better leave a legacy for future generations.

The title of the book is novel, and for foreign scholars, it can become a naming paradigm - THE 1991 INTIFADA IN THREE KEYS: WRITING THE HISTORY OF VIOLENCE (Dina Rizk Khoury) It is also an important source of historical materials and references for academic research, such as the Netherlands Tian Hai mentioned in "Guan Yu: History and Imagination from Fan to God" that "the representative works of the West in this regard are Zhou Xirui's "The Origin of the Boxer Rebellion" and Ke Wen's "History in three keys: The Boxer Rebellion as Events, Experiences and Myths" The Metaphor of Empire: Chinese Folk Religion (translated by Zhao Xudong), written by United Kingdom Wang Sifu, uses the History in three keys as a reference, and there are many similar overseas works. At the same time, the book also serves as a theoretical guide, as Zhao Shiyu said, "When we go into the field, we want to discover different voices, that is, what Ke Wen calls the 'History in three keys', but it may be far more than the 'three tones'." As a history of China written by United States historians, it can also avoid the situation of "authorities being confused" as much as possible from the perspective of an onlooker, making up for the shortcomings of traditional Chinese history written only by Chinese. The research path of "events", "experiences" and "myths" is of great significance for the emancipation of the mind, and provides a new model and model for the field of historical writing.

For foreign readers, its historical statement "justifies" the Boxer Rebellion in a certain sense, and the most obvious example is that the

English title is not the traditional "The Boxer Rebellion", but "The Boxers", which has changed the stereotype of the "Boxer Rebellion" (such as "Yellow Peril" and so on) in Westerners, and can also learn the theories and methods of historical research, which has also objectively expanded the international influence and popularity of the Boxer Rebellion. At the same time, as Chinese readers, we should also fully learn from the author's merits in governing history—a calm and dialectical view of history. Therefore, we should not shy away from the shortcomings of this book, that is, the historical "sense of alienation" brought about by foreigners' inadequate edification and research on Chinese history, but should carefully study and analyze it objectively, and strive to absorb its advantages and lessons in governing history.

It should be noted that there are many reasons for the change in Kewen's "China-centric view", but one reason that cannot be ignored is that the universality of Chinese history is embedded in particularity, and it is intersected with the universality of world history, "harmony but difference". At the same time, in the preface, Ke Wen claims that he should not overemphasize the particularity of the Boxers, and that his theory of "History in three keys" can be summarized from the historical events of any country, and to a certain extent, this is Ke Wen's outstanding attainments in historical theory, but from another point of view, "History in three keys" finally takes the Boxer Rebellion in China as the research object, which just shows that Chinese history itself has special value and charm. The History in three keys has a wide range of international academic influence, and objectively promotes the improvement of the comprehensive strength of Chinese history in the world.

The study of Chinese history by foreigners is worthy of study because of its rich heritage and connotation, and the enrichment and development of Chinese history is inseparable from the continuous, comprehensive and in-depth thinking of foreign scholars. Foreign scholars are a new force in the study of Chinese history, and Chinese scholars, who are the main force, need to make full use of divergent thinking and reverse thinking, and after learning the world's advanced historical research theories and methods, they must not be arrogant: "There has long been a tendency in

world history to be Western-centered, not only regarding the capitalist countries of Western Europe as the center of the times in modern history, but also consciously or unconsciously regarding Western Europe as a yardstick for judging other regions or countries in ancient and medieval history," still less can they "completely Westernize." After all, the Western view of history is mixed, the good and the bad, and even the perception of "history" is clear, which is not conducive to the systematic research of Chinese scholars.

Growing up in China, one of the ancient countries of the "Four Great Civilizations", historical researchers should have cultural self-confidence and historical self-confidence, and also shoulder the mission of the times - under the guidance of historical materialism, the study of Chinese history should realize the globalization of Chinese history from the history of China in global history, and realize the "going out" of Chinese history research from the "introduction" of overseas academics, give full play to their subjective initiative, continue to innovate, and actively provide historical research styles, paradigms and values with "Chinese characteristics" for global academic research, in order to "learn from the East and gradually move to the West". In order to better promote the development of Chinese and foreign historiography and the progress of global civilization, Through the excavation of the value of "History in three keys", it will help global academic research, which is the global significance of Chinese history in the present.

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