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Yunzhi Geng

# An Introductory Study on China's Cultural Transformation in Recent Times



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Yunzhi Geng  
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences  
& Institute of Modern History  
Beijing  
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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 The Purport and Conception of the Studies in This Book

China is one of the few countries in the world that has an uninterrupted history of civilized development lasting four or five millennia. Seldom seen in the world's history of civilization are the richness of its cultural accumulations and the sustained stability of its traditional value concepts. Two major transformations have taken place in the long history of the development of China's civilization. The first was the transformation from the concurrent existence of numerous states in pre-Qin times to the era of centralized power and monarchical autocracy of the unified Qin and Han dynasties, and the second, which began in the late Qing Dynasty, was the transformation from the era of unified centralized power under monarchical autocracy to a modern society based on people's self-governance. These major transformations were changes both of social patterns and of cultural patterns. This book is a study about modern cultural patterns, or in other words, a study about the transformation, since the late Qing period, of China's culture, which had been a medieval culture adapted to the monarchical autocratic system of unified centralized power, over to a modern culture of recent and modern times, suited to a democratic system based on people's self-governance. This process is still ongoing. There is a major difference between this transformation and the historical transformation of pre-Qin to Qin and Han times, in that the historical transformation of pre-Qin to Qin and Han times was driven entirely by dynamics generated by the accumulation of various changes within China's society, whereas the transformation that started in the late Qing period took place in an ambience of enormous external pressures. Seen from the angle of cultural transformation, the former transformation was a transformation of values internal to Chinese culture, whereas the latter transformation appeared to consist of a replacement of China's inherent value concepts by certain value concepts from the outside, a substitution of Chinese

culture by certain foreign cultures. (This was, of course, only a superficial perception.) A great many people, therefore, adapted poorly to this transformation. Some who tended to be conservative saw this transformation as “using foreign things to transform China,” as a violation of a categorical ancestral taboo. Others felt far less at ease with this transformation than with their previous life amid the old traditions. Many ordinary people, unaccustomed to changes tinged with foreignness, found themselves in a state of profound and prolonged perplexity. The perplexity was, first of all, about the contrasts between “Chinese” and “Western” cultures and the difficulty of reconciling the two. Secondly, it arose from the resulting enhanced perplexity about what was “old” culture and what was “new” culture, the perplexity over the relationship between material and spiritual cultures, and so forth.

If, in the past century or so, it was hardly possible to establish a sound cultural frame of mind amid the acute internal and external contradictions and conflicts resulting from China’s accumulated poverty and weaknesses and its subjection to bullying and abuse, today, in the twenty-first century, China has become more prosperous and stronger than in the past, has gained its own position in the world, and is exercising an influence that no one can ignore, and under these circumstances, it is possible for the Chinese to see themselves and understand the world in a relatively rational manner and to deal equably with various issues in the cultural aspect. I believe as long as we are able to conscientiously sum up the experience and lessons of the past century, ponder these deeply, extract wisdom therefrom, and thoroughly rid ourselves of past perplexities, we will have a real basis for establishing a sound cultural frame of mind.

Based on the above understanding, it would appear that proposing and implementing a study on the topic of cultural transformation in modern China is highly necessary and a matter of major theoretical and practical significance.

There are, to this day, no writings dedicated to systematic and in-depth studies of the issue of China’s cultural transformation, but one might well say there are an immense number of research results that touch on the issue. Moreover, not only scholars in China but also a considerable number of scholars abroad have produced highly valuable works that have a bearing on this issue. We are unable to discuss all of those research results here. We can only provide a brief summary of the basic circumstances of relevant studies in China and abroad.

In China itself, Liang Qichao (1873–1929), Hu Shih (1891–1962), and other noted scholars of the Republic of China era produced works that mentioned the problems of cultural transformation in modern China and that put forward some highly illuminating views. Due, however, to years of wartime turmoil and other reasons, their work was not properly continued. In 1949 and after, owing to commonly known reasons, studies of culture were interrupted for several decades. Starting in the 1980s, there has been a sustained spate of studies on cultural issues. At first, these were focused mainly on views regarding Chinese and Western culture, debates on modern ideology and culture, and the relationship between traditional culture and modernization. Some works on cultural history cropped up in the same period. After the 1990s, studies tended toward greater depth. The more outstanding performances were registered mainly in the following aspects: (1) case

studies of thinkers and scholars who had been fairly influential in the field of contemporary Chinese ideology and culture; (2) monographs of a summing-up nature on the ideological and cultural debates conducted since contemporary times; (3) monographic studies regarding the various disciplines in diverse fields of contemporary academics and culture, with substantial progress made in particular in studies on diverse academic histories; (4) a number of highly specific and profound studies on the influences of Western and Japanese culture on contemporary Chinese culture; and (5) scholarly writings which have paid more attention to changes within Chinese culture per se. New research results have become available in all of these aspects. All research results in these fields are beneficial for academic accumulation and are and will be indispensable for the in-depth studies we pursue on the modern transformation of Chinese culture both today and in the future.

Scholars abroad have, fairly early on, started to consciously explore this issue. As we are all aware, Western scholars who study Chinese issues are frequently good at proposing particular research models that are not lacking in enlightenment. For example, there are two research models for the issues we discuss today, and their significances are quite different. One is the so-called “impact-reaction” model, and the other is the so-called “China centrist” model. Adherents to the former vigorously emphasize the stimulatory effects of Western cultures and regard China’s modern cultural transformation as a mere reaction by China’s inherent culture to stimuli from Western cultures and to a certain extent even regard this complex process of cultural change as a process of the gradual replacement of China’s inherent culture with Western culture. They maintain that China’s inherent culture has already turned into a “museum piece.” Proponents of the latter model, on the other hand, maintain that the true motive force for cultural change rests within Chinese culture. Hence, they try to discover new qualitative factors within Chinese culture. To prove their viewpoint, they sometimes overestimate the extent and significance of certain changes within traditional culture. It is evident that both models are significantly one-sided. After all, Western scholars exist in different social and cultural environments, and when they observe and research China’s issues, they can hardly avoid some “disjunction” in terms of availability of materials, cognition of the materials, comprehension of the intrinsic relationships among the various materials, and so forth. There is nothing unusual about this. We Chinese scholars probably experience even greater “disjunctions” when we research foreign issues.

Chinese scholars abroad constitute an important academic group. Their vocations and their life environments lead them to pay constant attention to studies of Chinese culture. Some among them who specialize in philosophy lean somewhat toward conducting modern readings of and annotations to traditional culture. Their research is quite effective for the significance conversion (*yiyi zhuanhuan*) of the old classics but tends at times toward subjectivity. Others who specialize in history, on the other hand, devote their efforts to discovering and verifying the new qualitative factors generated within traditional culture itself. Their research is of considerable referential significance. My personal impression is that the general tendency among colleagues abroad is to emphasize the modern transformation of

Chinese culture per se and to take a clearly critical stance toward the so-called “impact-reaction” model.

I personally believe that on the issue of the modern transformation of Chinese culture, neither one-sided emphasis on the impacts of external cultures nor one-sided emphasis on the modern transformation of Chinese traditional culture in itself is consistent with realities. In the studies and explanations presented in this book, every effort is made to avoid dogmatic attitudes and to conduct specific analysis of specific issues.

Any research on a modern cultural transformation calls first of all for providing a fairly clear description of the basic trajectory of the cultural transformation and, secondly, for bringing to light the extrinsic conditions and intrinsic mechanisms of such transformation. Accomplishing either of these aspects is no easy matter. But my colleagues and I had to set ourselves such goals if our efforts were to be of any relevance. The extent to which these goals would be reached was, of course, impossible to predict.

As stated earlier, the cultural transformation of modern China has yet to be completed. And there was a problem of the choice of time intervals in our studies and narratives. Overall, we used the period from after the Opium Wars to the New Culture Movement as the basic time interval for our investigations. There is no need to explain why the Opium Wars were taken as the starting point. But why was the New Culture Movement taken as the lower limit? This needs some explaining. Since the contemporary transformation of culture is as yet an uncompleted process, we could not set 1949 as the lower limit, as has been done in other books on contemporary history. However, there are fairly compelling reasons for our choice of the New Culture Movement period as the lower limit. We believe that the New Culture Movement was a primary pivot in the cultural transformation of modern-day China. It was a revolutionary eruption triggered by the accumulation of all the new qualitative cultural factors since the Opium Wars. Superficially, the movement’s intent seemed to be the overthrow of the inherent traditional culture. But in essence, its intent was to conduct an overall “screening” of the traditional culture. All that was healthy, i.e., all that was adaptable to the changed times, would be allowed to pass without difficulty. All that was old and decayed and putrid would be eliminated. All that was pathologically tainted but could still be redeemed would be made well by the application of targeted remedies.

Another reason for describing the New Culture Movement as a primary pivot in the cultural transformation of contemporary times is that it put forward the basic concept of a new culture for China’s modern era and laid out the general orientation for developing a new culture in China’s modern times, as, for example, the concepts of science and democracy and the concepts of globalization (cosmopolitization) and individuality. These were both the newest and most fundamental concepts for a modern culture and also the most basic orientation for the fashioning of China’s new culture in modern times. As we look back at almost a century’s history after the New Culture Movement, we see that China’s culture has indeed developed along the path blazed by the New Culture Movement. Delays and detours have occurred during such development, but only because of wars and turmoil.

Based on the above, we have reason to regard the period from the Opium Wars to the New Culture Movement as a relatively intact time interval in the process of China's modern cultural transformation. And it is appropriate to use this time interval as the typical time interval for studying China's modern cultural transformation.

## **1.2 Mutations and Shifts Within the Traditional Culture at the Juncture of the Ming and Qing Dynasties**

There have always been some people in historical circles, and especially among those engaged in ideological history who maintain that the modernization of Chinese society started in the late Ming Dynasty. In more recent years, the majority of scholars have been inclined to regard the Opium Wars as the starting point. I myself concur with the latter opinion. Nevertheless, some changes did take place in Chinese society and Chinese culture at the juncture of the Ming and Qing dynasties, and although the nascent tendency toward change was quashed by the rulers of the Qing Dynasty, forward-thinking persons in the final years of the Qing Dynasty who initiated the tide toward modernization frequently mentioned several of the literati and ideologues of the late Ming and early Qing period who had given rise to the new tendency and regarded these as their forerunners. Hence, it is necessary to give a brief account in this book of the some of the changes that took place in China's traditional culture from the juncture of the Ming and Qing up to the time preceding the Opium Wars.

Late Ming society, in terms of its social form, was of the same strain as the societies of the Han, Tang, and late Song dynasties. But it differed from the Han, Tang, and late Song societies in that a number of new cultural factors had welled up within the parent body of society.

China's traditional systemic institutions had attained a high degree of maturity during the Song Dynasty (960–1279) as had China's cultural development. The institutions of the Yuan and Ming dynasties were basically patterned after those of the Song Dynasty and, on the whole, produced no innovative developments. But by the end of the Ming Dynasty, the long-accumulated political corruptness had begun to ferment. From the time Zhu Yuanzhang (1328–1398) suppressed all potential rivals up to the founding of the Ming Dynasty, Zhu was obsessed merely with killing off dissenters and maintaining absolute rule over the country by his own dynasty. His successors, too, gave no thought to upholding their ruling positions by means of improving the system of rule or effectively preventing abuses. After having slaughtered and stamped out innumerable dissenters, they believed that "peace now reigns under Heaven," gave themselves over to pleasure-seeking, ensconced themselves in their imperial harems, and paid no attention to state affairs. The Wanli emperor (1563–1620) set a record by failing to show up at the imperial court for 31 years in a row. The normal procedures for regulating state



affairs—i.e., ministers submitting memorials for court deliberations and the emperor passing judgments and issuing edicts for implementation—were abandoned, and power fell in the hands of court eunuchs who developed their powers, inserted their henchmen everywhere, and devised a sort of government based on spies and secret agents. The result was the emergence, beneath the emperor, of a corrupt and ineffectual bureaucratic system extending from the central level to all local levels. Worse still, corruption in the imperial household led to enormous increases in imperial expenditures. Constant demands were made upon the state treasury, which became depleted and incapable of meeting the imperial household's unrestrained splurging. Thereupon the court, eunuchs sent out henchmen who, in the guise of salt supervisors and tax collectors, levied taxes directly from the local authorities. This evolved into a situation where the dynastic household vied with the state and local officials and the common people for material benefits and where the highest ruling clique headed by the emperor came into direct conflict with all people in the realm. In previous dynasties and eras, the common people had, under normal circumstances, come into direct conflict and strife only with government officials. The corrupt among the latter had been frequently subject to condemnation and denigration, but the ordinary people had generally believed in the existence of honest officials beyond the corrupt ones and in the presence, above and beyond all officials, of a "Son of Heaven." However, in the closing years of the Ming Dynasty, the greed of the emperors and their households were laid bare before the eyes of multitudes, and whereas the people's condemnations had previously been limited to venal and corrupt officials, they were now targeted directly at the depraved emperors—a situation seldom encountered in past history. Understandably, any attacks against the emperors which survived in documentary form came from the hands of high-ranking officials and literati. One example is a memorial written by Minister of Works Wang Dexian, who criticized the Shenzong emperor (1563–1620) as follows: "(the Emperor) knows full well how much or how little wealth there is, but gives no thought to the life and death of commoners. What do the people owe the ruler? They have been preyed upon to extremes!"<sup>1</sup> Another minister made no bones about stating: "The emperor, in his addiction to wealth, sends out wolves and tigers which pounce upon and devour people. The common people are flayed, their marrow sucked out, the flesh stripped from their bones, their families destroy and killed, their tombs and coffins broken open, all for the sake of amplifying the emperor's private wealth, none of which is used in the service of the country" (Wen Bing 1984). In a memorial on the abuses of taxation, Li San, the deputy minister of the Board of Punishments, remonstrated: "His Imperial Majesty loves wealth, but the people also yearn for adequate food and clothing; His Imperial Majesty loves his sons and grandsons, but the people also love their wives and children. Why should His Imperial Majesty amass wealth but deny the common people their simple needs; why live in luxury for ten thousand years but deny the common people a brief period of happiness? There has never, since ancient times,

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<sup>1</sup>"Ming shenzong shilu" (*Annals of the Reign of the Ming Emperor Shenzong*), vol. 349.

been a dynastic government that has found itself in a situation like today's and could hope to avoid turmoil. There is too much poor governance at this time, and His Imperial Majesty's malady lies in addiction to wealth." He warned the emperor: "Disasters will occur when Heaven and man are both angered." And, "When matters deteriorate to such a pass, the common people will all turn into adversaries".<sup>2</sup> A few of these critical documents clearly reflected the resentment and anger of the ordinary people against the emperors and their dynastic households. For example, in his aide-memoire entitled "Request for Honest and Enlightened Government and Restoring Order in People's Minds," Grand Secretary Shen Yiguan during the Wanli reign described the situation in society in 1598 as follows: "In former times, private opinions on dynastic government were limited to murmurs and whispers at street corners and in back alleys. Today, storytellers and street artists everywhere openly air such opinions in their performances and converse about them without the least misgivings. All of these consist of accounts of the various malpractices at the imperial court, and which all people listen to with great relish".<sup>3</sup> Vice Minister Lü Kun of the Ministry of Penalties described the state of the country as follows: "People inside the palace are not happy with the ruler. The common people are not happy with their lives. Their groans and complaints are painful to the ear".<sup>4</sup> That is to say, a "derogate-the-rulers (*fei jun*)" concept had already arisen and become fairly universal among the populace. This shift from blindly worshiping the "rulers" as "Sons of Heaven" who tended to the people on behalf of "Heaven" to the concept of "derogating the ruler" was a transition of major significance.

It is worth noting that the doubts harbored by a number of well-known ideologues in the last years of the Ming and the early years of the Qing Dynasty with regard to sovereign autocracy and their attacks against rulers resonated with the abovementioned "derogate-the-rulers" concept. For example, Huang Zongxi (1610–1695) stated that "the country is essential and the rulers are secondary," and rulers were (originally) instituted for the sake of the country. Hence, subjects were not there to serve the rulers.

They should "serve the country, not the rulers; serve the multitudes and not just one household or one surname".<sup>5</sup> However, rulers in later times "attributed all benefits under Heaven to themselves, and all baneful things to the people." Hence, "it is none other than the rulers who bring harm to the land under Heaven".<sup>6</sup> Tang Zhen (1630–1704), an ideologue who appeared at a slightly later time than Huang Zongxi, boldly queried and excoriated sovereign autocracy. He stated: "Even the most revered rulers are not heavenly emperors or gods, they are human beings".<sup>7</sup> He pointed out that since ancient times, "only two or three out of every ten have been

<sup>2</sup> *History of the Ming Dynasty: Li Sancai Biography*, Zhonghua Book Company, 1974.

<sup>3</sup> Shen Yiguan: "Jing shi cao" 《敬事草》, vol. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *History of the Ming Dynasty: Lü Kun Biography*, Zhonghua Book Company, 1974.

<sup>5</sup> Huang Zongxi: "Ming yi dai fang lu: Yuan jun" (Waiting for the Dawn: The Original Sovereign).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Tang Zhen: "Qian shu: yi zun" (The Hidden Book: Restrained Veneration).

worthy rulers. . . All the rest have been either tyrants, nincompoops, rascals or weaklings. Weak rulers beget chaos, rascally rulers attract chaos, and tyrannical rulers incite chaos.” Hence, rulers were to blame for all of the country’s great afflictions. Tang Zhen also reviled all autocratic rulers as brigands and thieves. He declared: “He who slays one man for his cloth and millet is called a villain, but those who slay all people under Heaven and appropriate to themselves all their cloth and millet are, conversely, not called villains!” He said in conclusion: “Ever since the Qin Dynasty, all emperors and kings have been villains”.<sup>8</sup> Especially praiseworthy was Tang Zhen’s excellent analysis of why excessive exaltation of rulers inevitably resulted in rulers insulating themselves from realities. He stated: “Those above are likely to wax overbearing and those below to become obsequious. Rulers are increasingly revered, and their subjects are increasingly debased.” He said: “The high status of rulers causes rulers to resemble the Emperors in Heaven. On the rare occasions that high officials are accorded audiences, the officials are overcome with awe, dare not raise their eyes, and grovel on their knees like servants and slaves in stern households. In such times, well-meant words are not heard in the Ninth Heaven, nor do good suggestions bring light into the Ninth Abyss. Subjects are increasingly estranged, and minds are increasingly insulated. When even Yi Yin and Fu Shou can offer no advice, and Long Feng and Bi Gan may not remonstrate, the state will perish. . . It is not people who block their [the rulers’] eyes and ears. It is power and high status that insulate them”.<sup>9</sup> His statements already came quite close to being a theoretical exposé of the inevitable demise of the system of monarchical autocracy and as such were highly commendable.

As the centralized power system of monarchical autocracy gradually moved toward a dead end, quite conspicuous changes also occurred in the ideologized Confucianism that served this system.

After Confucius and Confucianism were accorded their position of sole reverence during the Han Dynasty, Confucians exerted themselves to fit in with the needs of the system of monarchical autocracy. After the Tang Dynasty, the highest rulers contrived to establish a close connection between political rule and ideological rule by means of civil service examinations. This was possible because the rulers held the power to appoint or dismiss administrative officials nationwide and used the civil service examinations to control their replacements and because the examinations for selecting replacement officials consisted entirely of exercises in Confucian dogma. Confucianism was not a religion, but under China’s special social circumstances, it played the role of a surrogate religion. In this way, ancient China was in essence turned into a unique politico-religious setup.

By the time of the Song Dynasty (960–1279), Confucianism had developed into Li Xue, or the School of Principle. The principal ideologues of the Song Dynasty were dissatisfied with the dominant position of Buddhism, but in order to overcome Buddhism, they first had to acquire its strong points. Thus, the School of Principle

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<sup>8</sup>Tang Zhen: “Qian shu: shi yu” (The Hidden Book: Opinions in Private).

<sup>9</sup>“Qian shu: yi zun” (The Hidden Book: Restrained Veneration), Zhonghua Book Company, 1955.

was formed by the brothers Cheng Yi (1033–1107) and Cheng Hao (1032–1085) of the Northern Song era, who did so by absorbing elements of the thinking of Buddhism. Subsequently, Zhu Xi (1130–1200), the great thinker of the Southern Song period, assembled all the elements of the School of Principle formed after the time of the Cheng brothers and devised a highly systematic, perfected, and profound School of Principle which was named Cheng Zhu Li Xue. At its core lay the theory that all things were governed by the Heavenly principles, and this fitted in very well with the needs of the rulers. This School of Principle was established as the orthodox Confucianism by all rulers down through the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties.

The first years of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) were the heyday of Cheng Zhu Li Xue. The Ming emperors Taizu and Chengzu vigorously promoted Zhu Xi's teachings and created an ideological autocracy where "all whose utterances do not conform to Zhu Xi shall be roundly castigated".<sup>10</sup> The Wang Xue (Wang School) initiated by Wang Yangming (1472–1529) arose after the middle period of the Ming Dynasty. Wang Yangming was at first a believer in the Cheng Zhu School of Principle but later became convinced that the attainment of knowledge was not by way of the physical world, but by way of the mind (*xin*), and he thereupon turned to Lu Xiangshan's theory that "xin ji li" (the principles lie in the mind). Lu Xiangshan (1139–1193) had been a Li Xue exponent during the Southern Song Dynasty, but after conducting debates on "the learning of ethics (*dao wen xue*)" and "respecting the moral character (*zun de xing*)" with Zhu Xi at E Hu Lake, he turned to Xin Xue, or the School of Mind. Xin Xue had gradually faded away after Zhu Xi's Li Xue was conferred orthodoxy. Wang Yangming, however, resurrected Lu Xiangshan's by then long-neglected Xin Xue, combined it with the Mind Nature Theory of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, advocated the use of "*wu xin*" (my own mind) to adjudge good and evil, and reinstated the Xin Xue system, which became known in history as "Lu Wang Xin Xue." Wang Yangming's main achievement lay in putting forward the "*zhi liangzhi*" (attainment of intuitive knowledge) theory, which was articulated as follows: "Intuitive knowledge is what Mencius called 'the knowledge of good and evil that all men possess.' Knowledge of good and evil is acquired without having to engage in deep thought or profound studies, for which reason it is called intuitive knowledge".<sup>11</sup> In his opinion, this intuitive knowledge came from within the human mind and not from outside, was the same now as in ancient times as well as among both the high-born and the lowly, and was an innate presence in all people.

The original intent of the Lu Wang Xin Xue was to have "principles govern desires," and in this, it did not differ from Cheng and Zhu. However, it disagreed with the Cheng Zhu Li Xue's excessively rigid adherence to material aspects, with

<sup>10</sup> Zhu Yizun: "Dao chuan lu xu" 《道传录序》.

<sup>11</sup> "The Complete Works of Master Wang Wencheng," vol. 26, *The Great Learning*, Commercial Press, 1934.

its seeking of principles in everyday matters and events and then turning them into high-flown abstract principles which crushed down on people's minds and thus were of no benefit for inner cultivation. It posited that the Heavenly, or cosmic, principles of ethics (*tianli*) were intuitive knowledge and that these Heavenly principles existed in the minds of all people. It ascribed the standards for good and evil and the fundamental issues of ethics and morals to the intuitive feelings of the mind. Hence, it stated: "The Heavenly principles are in people's minds," and "the mind is the principle, and when this mind is not bemused by personal desires, it is the Heavenly principle".<sup>12</sup> Wang Yangming channeled people's pursuit of the external material world toward the tempering of their inner world—a tempering aimed at "removing the trammels of personal desires," or in other words, at eliminating various desires in people's lives.

This theory pushed Lu Xiangshan's idealism to extremes and held that nothing—not even the Heavenly principles—existed outside of the mind. Intuition existed in all people's minds, and intuition was able to recognize and identify the Heavenly principles. Thus, all persons were, by means of introspection, capable of attaining the Heavenly principles, which meant that all persons were capable of becoming sages and paragons of virtue. The objective and inevitable result of this was to impact traditional idols and shake people's faith in the traditional sages and paragons of virtue. This was a sort of emancipation of the minds of people who had long been shackled by Confucianism and Li Xue, the School of Principle.

People gladly accept a given doctrine if it reflects their own needs and actual interests and if they can repose in it their ideals and yearnings for a future existence, in which case they often interpret and develop that doctrine according to their wishes. The most representative of such doctrines was the latter-day or decadent stage of the Wang School. Its founder, Wang Gen (1483–1541), started out as a tender of army cooking stoves in Taizhou and rose from the lowest levels of society. Exceedingly intelligent and uninhibited, he often vaunted his prescience and foresight. Wang Gen once visited and paid his respects, as a follower, to Wang Yangming. Wang Gen's biggest contribution to the Wang School was that he used wisdoms the common people exercised in everyday life to interpret the theory of intuitive knowledge. His theorem of everyday wisdoms (*ri yong zhi xue*) started up a new school of thought and produced a new interpretation of the Heavenly principles. He said: "Heavenly principles are principles that exist in nature. The manner in which wisdom and desire are ordered determines people's desires" (Wang Gen 2001). In terms of theory, he put forward the concept "all people are the same in having desires," which was "the natural order of things." This departed completely from the preaching that called for "safeguarding the Heavenly principles and eliminating human desires" and emphasized that human desires and the Heavenly principles were mutually compatible. In other words, he used the

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<sup>12</sup>*The Complete Works of Wang Yangming: Records of Instructions and Practices*, Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 1992.

Heavenly principles to expound and attest to the rationality of human desires. This showed that a change in orientation had taken place in the School of Principle.

From affirming human desires, Wang Gen went further to posit the thinking about “respect for the person (*zun shen*).” He maintained: “The person (*shen*) and the Way (*dao*) were originally a single entity, and both the Way and the person are to be respected. Respecting the person but not the Way does not constitute respecting the person; and respecting the Way but not the person does not constitute respecting the Way. The best course is to respect both the Way and the person.” And, “if the Way is respected, so is the person respected, and if the person is respected, so is the Way respected.” And from “respecting the person,” he further posited “protecting the person,” declaring that the home, the state, and the world could only be protected if the person were protected. “If my person is protected, I can protect the world” (Wang Gen 2001). Here, he separated the individual person from all groups small and large, from the household, the state, and the world, and manifested an embryonic thinking about “discovering the person (or individual).” This was quite an amazing way of thinking in those times. The Confucians had always laid emphasis on the group and the whole, and it was precisely from the awareness and discovery of the existence of the individual that China’s cultural enlightenment began. Wang Gen’s greatest contribution was that he emphasized the value of the individual or the self.

The importance Wang Gen placed on the person and the value of the individual ran counter to the School of Principle’s aim of eliminating personal desires. In consequence, Wang Gen became the initiator of qualitative changes in the Wang School. By the time of Li Zhi (1527–1602), Yan Shannong (1504–1596), and He Xinyin (1517–1579), the Wang School produced even stronger arguments for reasonable desires in life. Li Zhi posited that “human and material relationships consist of such things as keeping oneself clothed and fed” (Li Zhi 1959a). In terms of philosophical theory, he argued further: “People’s minds are made up of *si* (personal considerations). People must have *si* for their minds to be known. If they had no *si*, they would have no minds” (Li Zhi 1959b). He Xinyin even repudiated all the *yi* (ties and obligations) between rulers and subjects, fathers and sons, brothers, and husbands and wives and retained only the relationship between friends (Tan Sitong (1865–1898) too presented this argument during the Reform Movement of 1898). In so doing, He Xinyin openly forsook the teachings on the five cardinal relationships. He regarded relationships with teachers and friends, with whom no consanguineous ties existed, as the first and foremost relationships. This was a major challenge to the traditional patriarchal relations.

Wang Yangming had based his teachings on the intuitive-knowledge theorem of eliminating human desires, but later generations of his disciples preached that seeking benefits and desires were human nature and legitimate pursuits. This transformation was summed up by Huang Zongxi in his *Taizhou Xue An*. He wrote: “The teachings of Master [Wang] Yangming were gradually lost to the world in the time of Taizhou and Longxi. . . After Taizhou, its followers ‘fought dragons and serpents with their bare hands,’ [i.e. fought their opponents with

unparalleled tenacity] and by the time of the Yan Shannong and He Xinyin factions, they could no longer be restrained by the Confucian teachings”.<sup>13</sup>

An overview of the history of thought in the Ming Dynasty shows that the Cheng Zhu Li Xue, which once dominated the academic realm, had gradually lost control in the mid-Ming years. The rise of the Lu Wang Xin Xue, in particular, brought about a decline in the authority of the Cheng Zhu School, and the two factions became locked in bitter contests in which the Wang School attacked the Cheng Zhu and the Cheng Zhu censured the Wang. Some of the heterodoxies that arose in this period leaned either toward Buddhism or toward Daoism or strove to devise practical teachings for use in everyday life. Some even sought remedies for social ills in Christianity amid a tumultuous state of affairs where multiple elements existed side by side. In this period, heterodox theorems about the daily wisdom of the common people sprang up right and left. Some of them propagated teachings from the Confucian classics; others merged into new theories that expounded and propagated material benefits and sensual desires, hammered at the traditional bonds of the Cheng Zhu and Lu Wang schools as well as the Buddhist and Confucian precepts, and gave rise to a surge of irreverent and lawless “sensational theories and fallacies” which toppled age-old concepts of right and wrong. Literati who vaunted their heresies and attacked outdated customs and conventions “were tired of the conventional, craved the new, sought novelty, and adored the different.” They “saw the teachings of the Six Classics as obsolete and did all they could to negate and uproot them”.<sup>14</sup> In literature, the Gong An School gained much favor with their utterances which gave unconventional expression to things of the spirit. Feng Menglong (1574–1646) vaunted: “If Heaven does not waken of itself, people will awaken it. The power to awaken Heaven lies with people, and the power to awaken people rests in words” (Feng Menglong 1999). In this period, theories about “nature and spirit (*ling xing*),” “awakening the world (*xing shi*),” “confluence of worldly ways (*shi dao zhi jiao*),” “childlike innocence (*tong xin*),” “the passion theorem (*qing jiao*),” and various mammonist doctrines drew a delirious following. Marketplace literature and arts that the Confucian moralists had scorned were discussed with great gusto by the general public. Taverns and teahouses “resounded with strange and new refrains, the waves of which undulated far and wide, their seductive inflections seeping even into rural ditties and the cries of mendicants”.<sup>15</sup> “Lascivious and lustful” folk ditties became fashionable among the people. The utterly unrestrained heroes and heroines described in storyteller tales, poetic dramas, and local operas and stories about “pristine love” enjoyed universal popularity. From academic thinking to everyday life, and from officials and literati

<sup>13</sup> “Biographies of Confucian Scholars in the Ming Dynasty: The Third Scholarly Records of Taizhou,” *Complete Works of Huang Zongxi*, vol. 8; Zhejiang Ancient Books Publishing House, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Yu Shenxing: “My Understanding of Ming History from a Mountain Valley at Gucheng,” vol. 8, Zhonghua Bookstore, *Compendium of Writings on the History of the Yuan and Ming dynasties*, Zhonghua Book Company.

<sup>15</sup> *Annals of Fuping County*, vol. 4.

to the ordinary people, the dominant vogue was to spurn the classics, rebel against orthodoxy, and pursue anything that was new and novel. Such mutations in culture are often the harbingers of crises in society.

The Ming Dynasty, in its later years, gave rise to a substantial number of highly learned scientists. Li Shizhen's *Compendium of Materia Medica*, Pan Jixun's *Survey of River Defense Works*, Zhu Zaiyu's *A Clear Explanation of Equal Temperament*, Xu Guangqi's *Complete Treatise on Agriculture*, Song Yingxing's *Exploitation of the Works of Nature* and *The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake*, and so forth could be regarded as works that attained world standards in those days. Gu Yanwu (1613–1682) recommended that “scholars seek practical learning, and conduct profound studies in all subjects related to astronomy, geography, military affairs, agriculture, water conservancy, the natural sciences and current legal institutions”.<sup>16</sup> Officials and literati began shifting from “cultivation of moral character, regulating the household, governing the state, putting the country in order,” and other such subjects that often consisted of no more than empty political principles over to more substantial and practical fields of learning. Many men with high aspirations enthusiastically undertook research in science and technology, so that China's achievements in such aspects as agriculture, medicine, musicology, agriculture, technological manufacturing, etc., were no less developed than those in Europe prior to the Industrial Revolution.

The literati and scholars of those days evinced a strong need to get together and form associations. Nongovernmental organizations for which records can be found today numbered as many as 170 or more.<sup>17</sup> These were widely distributed over the coastal and inland areas, in such places as Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Guangxi, Guangdong, and Sichuan, and some of the larger ones counted several thousand members. Among the more notable were the Yinshan Convention in the second year of the Chongzhen reign (1629), the Jinling Convention in the third year of the Chongzhen reign (1630), and the Huqiu Convention in the sixth year of the Chongzhen reign (1633). All of these conventions were excellently organized. People exclaimed in astonishment that “nothing like this has ever happened over the last three hundred years”.<sup>18</sup>

All such circumstances would seem to presage a period of major change in China's traditional society. However, the factors in that society that would have brought about the birth of a new society were congenitally deficient, and their scope was limited to officials, literati, and urban residents. Rural China remained a vast natural economy with production relations and a social structure that served as the most basic social foundation for the system of monarchical autocracy, the Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues, and the Confucian teachings. Merchants in the urban and rural areas were often dependent on the powerful, colluded

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<sup>16</sup> *Miscellaneous Collection of Gu Tinglin's Writings*, Commercial Press, 1931.

<sup>17</sup> See Guo Shaoyu (1983, p. 519).

<sup>18</sup> Mei Shishi: *Miscellaneous Notes on the Fushe Society*, vol. 2; from *Collection of Books on the Unofficial History of the Ming Dynasty*, Beijing Ancient Books Publishing House, 2002.



with feudal officials, sought official rank and recognition for themselves by means of donations and contributions, and were consequently unable to develop into a self-standing social force. Commercial capital, constrained by the structure of the natural economy, could not be converted into industrial capital and was used only for buying farmland or obtaining official positions; and so it gravitated toward the land and did no more than consolidate the old relations of production. Thus, the early enlightenment at the juncture of the Ming and Qing dynasties lacked the social basis of liberation of the individual and independence of the personality. Even the criticisms of the monarchical system voiced by Huang Zongxi et al. could not break out of the category of ancient populist thinking. For this and other reasons, the enlightenment thinking of that period failed to advance toward maturity or bear fruit. In other words, it neither sufficed nor was able to guide society onto the track of modern development.

It was, however, the autocratic rule of monarchs reestablished by and during the Qing Dynasty that ultimately stamped out the enlightened trend of thought. After the Qing Dynasty set up its capital, its rulers rolled out the Cheng Zhu School of Principle, denounced the Wang School, and imposed a cultural autocracy. Starting with the writing and publication of books, they announced a series of bans that strangled all sources of distribution. In the ninth year of the Shunzhi rule (1652), it was decreed: “Book merchants may only print and sell books that are beneficial for School of Principle governance. All other trivial and specious writings, and all indiscriminate engravings of personal and non-official works, are strictly prohibited. Violators shall be heavily sanctioned”.<sup>19</sup> This ban was reiterated in the second year of the Kangxi reign (1663). Controls were also slapped on all popular ditties and ballads. When Taiwan was recovered in the 22nd year of the Kangxi reign (1683) and the entire country was unified, a literary inquisition was energetically pursued to eradicate anti-Qing ethnic feelings. Punishments were meted out for all written articles suspected of impugning the reputation of the Qing court, and statutes to this effect were formulated and distributed nationwide. The Kangxi emperor issued an edict to the Ministry of Rights which stated: “The foundations of my governance of this country are the popular morale and social customs. To rectify the popular morale and fortify the social customs, it is absolutely necessary to uphold studies of the Confucian classics and strictly terminate all blasphemous books. This is an immutable rule”.<sup>20</sup> During the Qianlong reign, even the book *Shui Hu Zhuan* (All Men Are Brothers) suffered the fate of being put out of print. A number of privately compiled histories of the late Ming period, such as *Zhuo Zhong Zhi* (Discretionary Ming Court Annals), *Nan Qian Lu* (Peregrinations to the South), *Lu He Ji Wen* (Lu River Reminiscences), *Ri Ben Qi Shi Ji* (Seeking Instruction in Japan), *Yu Yi Jing Lue* (High Commissioner Yu Yi), *Qiao*

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<sup>19</sup> Su’erne et al.: *Imperially Sponsored Collection of Writings by Education Commissioners*, vol. 7; *Rules on Works Prohibited in Bookshops*; and *Additions to the Complete Library of the Four Branches of Literature*.

<sup>20</sup> *The Factual Records of the Kangxi Reign*, vol. 258.

*Shi Yan Yi* (Romance of Qiao Shi), and so forth, were also destroyed, and anyone who had the temerity to hide away such books were charged with subversion and put to death. Each prohibition entailed a slew of untimely deaths. Under such harsh repression, the trend toward the new and the novel which had become fashionable in late Ming society soon evaporated, and at this point, the enlightened thinking that had sought to flout orthodoxy died in the womb.

### 1.3 Evolutions in Qing Dynasty Ideology, Academics, and Culture Prior to the Opium Wars

The rise of the Qing Dynasty that replaced the Ming Dynasty—an epochal change—brought about major changes in China ideology, academics, and culture. Scholars in those times could not help but reflect on the pain of the Ming Dynasty’s demise. Most believed that the Ming Dynasty fell because it could not extricate itself from social practices that had been dragged by Li Xue (the School of Principle) into a deadened and vacuous limbo. Hence, starting with a few masters who pioneered Qing Academics (*qing xue*), repudiating the spurious and searching for the truth became the objectives of scholarly research, and the pursuit of concrete facts and evidence became a prominent characteristic of Qing Academics. The fall of the Ming and the rise of the Qing Dynasty were also accompanied by a “racial” mindset in that the pioneers of Qing Academics, driven by a sense of “racial distress,” cherished the ideal of conserving, sorting out, and summing up China’s national culture. Hence, proponents of Qing Academics, imbued as they were with a spirit of pursuing concrete evidence, resurrected an academic atmosphere marked by profundity and scholasticism. In later years, when the Chinese nation was faced with national crises of even greater gravity, Qing Academics, although already in decline, had built up a potential store of intrinsic elements for the revival of the national culture.

Gu Yanwu (1613–1682) should figure as the first of the grand masters who pioneered Qing Academics. He was the first to unfurl the banner of opposing Li Xue and severely criticized proponents of Li Xue as “not studying the texts of the Six Classics, not examining the writings of the hundred monarchs, not summing up current affairs. . . and using empty blather about ‘finding one’s true self’ to replace practical learning for cultivating oneself and governing others”.<sup>21</sup> He accused them of “remaining silent about the country’s poverty and destitution and, instead, prating constantly about the theorems of ‘peril (*wei* 危),’ ‘subtlety (*wei* 微),’ ‘profundity (*jing* 精),’ and ‘constancy (*yi* 一)’.<sup>22</sup> He maintained that Li Xue should concern studies of the Confucian classics and that any talk of Li Xue in disregard of

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<sup>21</sup> *Record of Knowledge Acquired Day by Day*, vol. 7, in *Explanations for the Collected Records of Knowledge Acquired Day by Day*, p. 240, Yue Lu Bookstore, 1994.

<sup>22</sup> “Discussing Studies in a Letter to a Friend,” *Collected Poetry and Prose of Gu Tinglin*, p. 40, Zhonghua Book Company, 1983, 2nd edition.

the ancient Confucian classics was bound to give rise to fallacies. He vigorously advocated discarding the “frivolous, baseless,” and spurious Li Xue of the Song and Ming dynasties and stood for directly seeking the truth from the ancient classics. His learning was extremely profound and he made innovative contributions to literature, phonology, history, and geography. Qing Academics was most highly developed in the domain of *kaozheng* (textual research), of which Gu might well be called the forerunner. Due to the dynastic change and his feelings of “racial distress,” Gu showed especial concern for the successes and failures in ancient and modern methods of governance. The *Record of Knowledge Acquired Day by Day* he authored had a substantial influence on later generations. He traveled extensively in China’s northern provinces, everywhere investigating local geography, history, and demography and putting his findings in his book *Treatise on the Advantages and Disadvantages in Various Territories in the Country*. From the books he wrote on his studies, one sees that as well as initiating the scale and style of Qing Academics, Gu also left an important legacy for later generations in terms of politics. Because of the circumstances of those times, however, there was no one to carry on his ideas about governance, but his style of *kaozheng* research influenced that entire period. Both Yan Ruoqu’s (1638–1704) *Critical Investigations of the Old Text Book of History* and Hu Wei’s (1633–1714) *Clarifications on Diagrams Related to the Book of Changes* contained heretofore undiscovered information and inspired subsequent studies. By the time of the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns, *kaozheng* flourished, and outstanding contributions were being made to it by a large number of scholars, among them Hui Dong (1697–1758), Dai Zhen (1724–1777), Wang Mingsheng (1722–1798), Qian Daxin (1728–1804), Duan Yucan (1735–1815), Wang Niansun (1744–1832), Wang Zhong (1745–1794), Sun Xingyan (1753–1818), Ling Tingkan (1755–1809), Jiao Xun (1763–1820), and Wang Yinshi (1766–1834).

Another great master was Huang Zongxi (1610–1695). Huang’s studies also began by opposing Li Xue, and he castigated the Ming Confucians for “parroting the worst of the old sayings, departing from the Six Classics, bundling up such books, and concocting and spreading unfounded assertions”.<sup>23</sup> Huang had been profoundly influenced by his father and teachers and had a deep grounding in history. Based on his studies of the successes and failures of various political events in past history, he wrote his *Ming Yi Dai Fang Lu* (Waiting for the Dawn), which may be said to represent the highest achievement of political writing in ancient China and which carried the post-Pre-Qin Minben Ideology (People-Oriented Ideology) to its highest point. Regrettably, and also because of the environmental factors of those times, the book could not be published after it was completed and appeared in print only toward the end of the Qing Dynasty, after which, however, it exerted an enormous influence. Huang’s greatest influence on Qing Academics was in the field of historical studies. He made unique contributions to research on

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<sup>23</sup> Quan Zuwang: “Epitaph for the Late Master Lizhou”; see *The Jieqi Pavilion Collection* (鮚崎亭集), vol. 11, p. 9.

historical writings, historical methods, and the format of historical writings. Indeed, his *Biographies of Confucian Scholars in the Ming Dynasty* and *Biographies of Song and Yuan Scholars* were precursors in China's history of academics. His historical studies were developed to a higher level by his students the brothers Wan Sida and Wan Sitong, the most outstanding contribution being made by Wan Sitong's *History of the Ming Dynasty*. He also directly influenced the writing of Yan Ruoqu's *Scrutiny and Appraisal of Ancient Texts*. He was, quite evidently, the initiator of the *kaozheng* trend.

A third grand master was Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692). The most important of his innovative contributions were in the fields of philosophy and history. After reaching middle age, he lived in seclusion in the mountains where he devoted his energies to studying and writing. Among the books he completed were the philosophical works *External Commentary on the Book of Changes*, *Commentary of the Discourse for Beginners of Master Zhuang*, *Comprehending Zhuangzi*, and so forth, and the historical works *Comments after Reading Historical Events Retold as a Mirror for Government* and *A Discussion of the Song*. Wang's philosophy may be regarded as the culmination of ancient China's naïve materialism. In addition to writing his more systematic and profound *On the Monism of "Qi,"* he in particular opened up new vistas in the debate with regard to *li* (principle) and *yu* (desire). He maintained that "the Heavenly (cosmic) principle pervades the universe yet originally did not come in conflict with human desires".<sup>24</sup> Hence, one could not "distinguish principles from desires." Principles existed within the desires, and "since human desires are ubiquitous, the Heavenly principles are also ubiquitous".<sup>25</sup> Wang Fuzhi's theorem on principles and desires was more amply elaborated by Dai Zhen (1724–1777). Wang's historical studies contained a substantial number of splendid expositions in terms of setting up historical conceptions, thanks to his deep foundation in philosophy. On the basis criticizing earlier theories about historical cycles, he posited an evolutionary view of history. He also put forward many expositions with regard to methods of writing about history. He emphasized that one should "pass on faithful accounts of history" and that history should "serve as a means for devising governance." His writings *On Reading the Chronicles* and *On the Song Dynasty* were held in high esteem by later generations.

A fourth grand master was Yan Yuan (1635–1704). His foremost characteristic was that he placed importance on "straightforward and down-to-earth" philosophy. This philosophy was first of all founded on a materialist understanding of human nature. He criticized the Song Confucians' contention that *li* (principles) are good while *qi* (energy and its concrete manifestations) are not and maintained that *li* and *qi* are unitary (integrated). From here, he further pointed out that a person's *qizhi* (external *qi*) and his *xinxing* (internal nature) are unitary. He emphasized: "If not for the *qizhi*, there would be no *xing*, and if not for the *qizhi* there would be nothing to

<sup>24</sup> *Discussions after Reading the Great Collection of Commentaries on the Four Books*, vol 6.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 8.

manifest the *xing*".<sup>26</sup> Such being the case, the preservation, development, and sensibility of the *xing* depended not on "assiduous and persistent perusal of numerous books" but on "personal learning" and "personal practice".<sup>27</sup> Because of placing importance on personal learning and practice, one had to pay attention to all affairs and matters in society and in people's lives. He believed that all such activities as warfare, working the land, managing finances, building dams, digging waterways, making firearms, manufacturing products, practicing the arts, and engaging in astronomy and geography constituted learning. Hence, one had to recognize the legitimacy of *gong li* (utilitarian pursuits). He strongly opposed the Confucians' predilection for empty prating about morals and ethics and their disregard for utilitarian pursuits, and he unequivocally suggested that they "amend their ethics and define their morals to serve utilitarian objectives".<sup>28</sup> Yan Yuan's philosophy had a substantial influence on the fervent desire for practical statecraft that imbued civil service candidates in the later years of the Qing Dynasty.

All of the grand masters of the last years of the Ming and early years of the Qing Dynasty—all except Yan Yuan who was still young when the Ming Dynasty fell—personally experienced the dynastic succession and the disastrous events in their country, took part in the struggles against the Qing, and, when these struggles failed, devoted their minds and energies to scholastics. Their studies were poles apart from the far-fetched and empty Li Xue scholastics pursued since the Song and Ming dynasties and vigorously promoted a practical and realistic style of learning. When applied to academics, this style of learning brought about a great flourishing of *kaozheng* research and major advances in historical studies; when applied to worldly affairs, it aroused concern about past and present ways of governance (statecraft) and promoted learning in the course of practice; and when applied to human relations, it gave rise to vigorous debates about the respective merits of the "fulfillment of desires" and the "ideal Way (*sheng dao*)" and drew people's attention closer to the "emancipation of man." Qing Academics may be seen as a conscious, deliberate effort to preserve, sort out, and critically sum up China's national culture. It was therefore extremely broad and profound, and it assembled the conditions necessary for the eventual transformation and modernization of China's culture.

There are a substantial number of earlier studies on *kaozheng* research during the Qing Dynasty. Liang Qichao (1873–1929), in his books *An Outline of Scholarship in the Qing Era* and *A History of Chinese Scholarship in the Past Three Hundred Years*, has given ample accounts of the reasons for the thriving development, achievements, and substance and methods of Qing Dynasty *kaozheng* research. When discussing the background to the development of *kaozheng* research, he noted that, firstly, after the Qing Dynasty had consolidated its rule over the country,

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<sup>26</sup> *Treatise on Preserving Human Nature*, vol. 1.

<sup>27</sup> *On the Preservation of the (Neo-Confucian) Teachings: Letter to Taicang Master Lu Futing*.

<sup>28</sup> *Correction of Errors in the Four Books*, vol. 1.

scholastics showed a gradual trend toward professionalism. For instance, scholars took to teaching the scions of the wealthy and powerful, worked as instructors at private schools and academies, served as aides and assistants to erudite high officials, kept records and annals for provincial, *fu*, prefectural, and county administrations, wrote up genealogies for large family clans, or appraised and collated books for printing and publishing establishments and so on and so forth. All of these occupations provided substantial remunerations, were more or less professional in nature, and attracted many scholars to their ranks. A second aspect was encouragement from and promotion by official quarters, the most representative being the building of book repositories and large-scale compiling and revising of ancient books. No few high officials both in and outside the imperial court donated munificent rewards to support academics. Wealthy households, salt merchants, and book merchants, too, added fuel to the flames.<sup>29</sup> These were among the reasons for the flourishing of *kaozheng* research—the most highly developed of all scholastics during the Qing Dynasty. Liang Qichao went so far as to declare: “There would be no Qing Academics without *kaozheng* research”.<sup>30</sup> Though this claim was somewhat exaggerated, *kaozheng* research was indeed the most prolific of the Qing Academics and the most characteristic. We stated earlier that Qing Academics set their sights on preserving, sorting out, and summing up China’s national culture, and this is clearly seen when one reviews the achievements of *kaozheng* research. The relevant fields of ancient Chinese academics and culture and their main writings and records were subjected to special *kaozheng* research and to studies by first-rate experts and scholars who first and foremost differentiated between the spurious and the authentic. All suspicious ancient books passed down by the instructors of Confucian classics since the Han Dynasty were rigorously scrutinized, and the spurious discarded. Those that were regarded as authentic underwent careful phonological and *kaozheng* examination and *kaozheng* criticism so as to make the ancient texts more readable and understandable. This work made up the nuclear and most effective portion of Qing *kaozheng* research. The third aspect consisted of compilations of “lost” books, i.e., ancient books that had long gone out of circulation, or compilations of relevant writings to make up parts of books that had long been missing. Objectively speaking, the Si Ku Quan Shu (Complete Library in the Four Branches of Literature) also was a large-scale project for compiling lost books. The scholars compiled numerous important ancient books and records from the *Yong Le Da Dian* (Yongle Encyclopedia) of previous dynasties. They also gleaned a number of lost books or writings that could make up the missing portions of books from the *Lei Shu* (reference books with material taken from various sources and arranged according to subjects) of preceding dynasties. The contributions made by the Qing Dynasty *kaozheng* researchers to the compiling of ancient books and writings were extremely important. Without their work to

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<sup>29</sup> See *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Special Collection No. 34*, pp. 47–48.

<sup>30</sup> “Outline of Qing Dynasty Academics,” *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Special Collection No. 34*, p. 23.

serve as a basis, any later summing up and innovations in terms of traditional culture would have been out of the question.

*Kaozheng* research served as an engine for major developments in such fields as historiography, geography, and calendar computation, as large numbers of first-rate scholars flocked to *kaozheng* research and their talents frequently transcended the boundaries of *kaozheng*. Their work of compiling stacks of ancient books and discovering, differentiating, and sorting out historical works inevitably stoked advances and improvements in historiography. Many outstanding scholars were enlisted for the work of revising and amending the *History of the Ming Dynasty* or compiling local annals for various provinces, *fu*, prefectures, and counties, and the results were of very high standard. The writing of genealogical trees for well-known households and clans and of chronicles for their forbears promoted the development of genealogical skills. Even more scholars engaged in personal efforts to investigate history fill in gaps in history and recount history. Particularly worth noting was the emergence of grand masters of historiography who specialized in the writing and compiling of special histories of academics and in summing up and devising historiographic theory and methods. Similar advances and improvements in geographical studies also benefited greatly from the flourishing of *kaozheng* research. Ancient China's geographical studies, which had been regarded as an appendage to historiography, began to develop in an independent manner during the Qing Dynasty. Calendrical calculations had come under the direct influence of Western missionaries, but their development also benefited from the thriving of *kaozheng* research during the Qing Dynasty.

The highest achievement of the *kaozheng* research of the Qianlong and Jiaqing eras was its spirit of seeking academic truths and the related methods for doing so.

Liang Qichao and Hu Shih (1891–1962), both of whom were among the most influential of the modern-day scholars in China, stated at about the same time that the Qing Dynasty's *kaozheng* research possessed a “scientific spirit” and “scientific methods.” Liang Qichao said that scholars of the Qianlong and Jiaqing eras “actually formed their own style of academics, which comes quite close to the research methods of modern science”.<sup>31</sup> Hu Shih pointed out: “The Qing Dynasty's Pu Xue (i.e. “plain learning,” or *kaozheng* studies of the Chinese classics) is indeed scientific in spirit.” The scholastic method of “bold assumptions and careful verification” which Hu Shih advocated was summed up in his descriptions of the academic methods of the Qing Dynasty scholars.<sup>32</sup>

In the pursuit of their studies, *kaozheng* researchers of the Qing Dynasty paid special attention to seeking “*yi li*” and “*lei li*” (significance comparisons and categorical comparisons), a procedure most frequently used by scholars of the Qianlong and Jiaqing eras. This procedure combined the methods of induction

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<sup>31</sup> Liang Qichao: “History of Chinese Academics in the Last Three Hundred Years,” *Collected Works of Yinbingshi, Special Collection No. 75*, p. 22.

<sup>32</sup> See Hu Shih: “Scholarly Methods of Qing Dynasty Scholars,” *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 2, pp. 220–221.

(*gui na*) and deduction (*yan yi*), i.e., finding similar examples among the ancient writings and then “thoroughly comprehending the examples and interconnecting them.” Ling Tingkan’s (1755–1809) handling of the *Yi Li* (Han Dynasty *Rituals*) is a good example. When describing what he had gained from his studies, he wrote: “The seventeen articles of the *Yi Li* are the original classics on the rituals. Their manner of writing is high-flown, indirect and ponderous. Upon a first reading, they appear to be tangled and convoluted, but after careful examination one discerns lines of reasoning. At first sight they are like trackless mountains, but one gradually sees paths of access. Hence, if one does not detect these lines of reasoning and these paths of access, even the wisest will be vexed by their difficulty; but if one succeeds in finding these, even mediocre persons can deal with them. How does one find these lines of reasoning and paths of access? By means of comparisons” (Ling Tingkan 1998). Ling’s account was an excellent description of the methods of induction and deduction used in those days.

The way in which scholars after the Western and Eastern Han dynasties studied the classics consisted mainly of writing commentaries and sub-commentaries; few displayed any spirit of research. After the Song Dynasty, a few individual scholars occasionally voiced some doubts about the classics but left it at that. And so when scholars Hu Wei and Yan Ruoqu respectively discovered falsities in the *Book of Changes* and *Book of History*, they gave rise to queries about the classics even though they wrote only ten or so articles on the subject. All *kaozheng* scholars began to harbor doubts about the classics and started up research based on such doubts. Delving through all of the many ancient classics to establish the truth, they found and confirmed errors in the works of the Han Dynasty Confucians and gradually lost faith in the veracity of such works. The scholastic practices prevalent among Han-venerating scholars of the mid-Qianlong era, who would “rather attribute mistakes to the Duke of Zhou and Confucius than intimate that [the Han scholars] Zheng Hai and Fu Qian had erred,” fell into desuetude. When discussing benevolence (*ren*) and life (*xing ming*), Ruan Yuan (1764–1849) directly quoted materials dating from the time of Zi Si (i.e., Kong Ji, BC 482–402) and earlier to expound his theories and attached much importance to the original Confucian *Shi Jing* (*Classic of Poetry*) and the *Shang Shu* (*Collection of Ancient Texts*). When Jiao Xun researched the *Yi Jing*, he did use some theories from the Han Confucians but placed greater emphasis on conducting reciprocal verifications among classical texts passed down from earlier historical eras. When studying the *Li Ji*, Ling Tingkan felt that the *Zhou Li* and *Li Ji* which had been regarded as classics for more than a thousand years were no longer reliable. In fact, the attitude of many researching scholars now was one of skepticism. Jiao Xun even based his theories on a historical perspective of academic evolution and maintained it was quite natural that understandings of the classics should change with the times. He further posited that “studying the classics is out of the question if one does not have the natural disposition and intelligence for doing so” and thought one should “interpret the classics according to one’s own understanding.” Indeed, the rise of the Gong Yang School after Jiao Xun’s time was not unrelated to Jiao Xun’s evolutionary



historical perspective of academics and his proposition to “interpret the classics according to one’s own ideas and understanding.”

The doubts engendered by *kaozheng* research had become quite universal in the later periods of the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns. Cui Shu (1740–1816), in his *Kao Xin Lu*, quite clearly expressed his doubts in the ancient classics. By this time, disbelieving the classics and ancient writings was no longer a personal act on the part of individual scholars. According to the *Xu Han Diaries*, Tao Si, a native of Shaoxing, who wrote *Shi Kao Kao* (诗考考: A Study on the Studies of the Book of Songs) and *Shu Yi Yi* (书疑疑: A Query about the Queries on the Collection of Ancient Texts) and other books exposing spurious works among the classics, submitted these books to the examining official before he took the local civil service examinations.<sup>33</sup> This shows that doubts with regard to the classics and spurious ancient writings were nothing new even among ordinary scholars. The fact that Ruan Yuan (1764–1849), a scholar of position and fame, even “highly praised” Tao and his books is an indication of the academic atmosphere of those times.

Scientific doubting is different from negative skepticism. Hegel once said that a skeptic cannot be cured, just as it is impossible to make a paralytic stand up. The doubting by the Qing Dynasty scholars was justified doubting—it was doubting that searched for the truth. Thus, their first concern was finding concrete evidence. They sought extensive references, disregarded unsupported evidence, and strove for complete proof. Scholars of the later Qianlong and Jiaqing eras upheld this tradition and were even more rigorous in pursuing research of the classics and seeking historical evidence. They emphasized that each word should be verified and each fact should be proven; they exerted themselves to the utmost when researching texts or seeking evidence in order to avoid any oversights and omissions, and only when they had obtained ample proof did they cautiously produce judgments and conclusions.

Their academic attitude of scientific querying and earnest quest for concrete evidence inevitably gave rise to respect for the rational. Jiao Xun declared: “The rationality of all methods must be examined, and the significance of all social responsibilities must be ascertained”.<sup>34</sup> This statement broadly coincides with the value orientation of rationalism. In his writings, Jiao Xun repeatedly emphasized the world’s inconstancy and fluidity and held that matters should not be examined from a static perspective or fixed point of view. Ideologies, cultures, institutions, and systems were all products of changing times and circumstances. Due to his evolutionary view of history, Jiao Xun was convinced that each era had its own academic thinking, and if individual intelligence were given sufficient latitude, latecomers would outdo their predecessors.

As *kaozheng* researchers conducted extensive searches among all books, it was inevitable that they should study the philosophical writings. In the latter periods of

<sup>33</sup> See *Diary of Xu Han*, the thirteenth day of the 2nd lunar month of the Daoguang reign, Hebei Education Printing House, 2001.

<sup>34</sup> “Discussions on the Book of Changes,” vol. 1, *Posthumous Writings of Master Jiao*, reproduced block-printed edition in the Bing Zi year of the Guangxu reign.

the Qianlong and Jiaqing eras, top-notch scholars gradually tended to verify the classics by means of the philosophies of the ancient sages (*yi zi zheng jing*), and academics gravitated from studying the Confucian classics to studying the ancient philosophies. After Wang Zhong (1744–1794), Bi Yuan (1730–1797), Sun Xingyan (1753–1818), and Zhang Huiyan (1761–1802) studied *Mo Zi*; Sun Xingyan studied *Yan Zi Chun Qiu* (*Spring and Autumn of Master Yan*); father and son Wang Niansun (1744–1832) and Wang Yinzhi (1766–1834) extensively examined and corrected the philosophers’ writings; and Qian Daxin (1728–1804), Ling Tingkan, and Jiao Xun paid much attention to the activities and thoughts of the philosophers. By the later years of the Qianlong and Jiaqing eras, scholars began to devote more and more attention to the philosopher’s academics per se, and studies of the philosophers tended to separate out from studies of the classics. The rise of philosophical studies, as well as being a reaction to the tendency toward trivial and nugatory examinations and corrections of the classics and a rising quest for new vistas for academic development, was also an inevitable product of the *kaozheng* examiners’ efforts to sort out and summarize China’s national culture. These philosophical studies brought the long-neglected pre-Qin philosophers and their theories back to their former glory. The books, theories, and essays of Lao Zi, Zhuang Zi, Mo Zi, Han Fei Zi, and even Yang Zi (Yang Zhu 370–319 BC) were now being sorted out by top-notch scholars, their writings and theories were finding wide circulation, and the essence of their teachings was being expounded and propagated. This did much to cancel out the dominant position of Confucianism and the Confucian classics.

The increased studies of the philosophies inevitably loosened up the academic environment, and it might well be said that the rise of the philosophical studies marked a sort of ideological and academic emancipation.

*Kaozheng* research scholars of the Qianlong and Jiaqing eras had long been the butt of disparaging and sarcastic remarks, as people accused them of burrowing into stacks of papers and paying no heed to worldly matters. In reality, however, the intention of most scholars who examined the classics, history, and the philosophers was to find the essence of the classics and the true meaning of the sages’ teachings, all of which would inevitably reflect back on matters concerning people and people’s lives. Dai Zhen (1724–1777), a grand master of *kaozheng* research as well as founder and leader of the Wan (Anhui) School of *kaozheng* research, was highly accomplished in phonology, exegesis, astronomy, chronology, historical studies, geography, and the nominalizing system (*mingwu zhidu*). Yet he was never satisfied with *kaozheng* research per se and saw it as means for theoretical speculations about the meanings and principles of the classics (*yi li*). Describing his own studies, Dai declared: “The most important work I have completed in my lifetime is *An Evidential Study of the Meanings and Terms in the Mencius*” (*Meng ziyi shuzheng*).<sup>35</sup> In this book, he expounded the rationality of people’s passions (feelings) and desires, notably by rising to the height of philosophical theory and

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<sup>35</sup> “Correspondence with Duan Ruoying”; see *Complete Works of Dai Zhen*, vol. 1, p. 228; Tsinghua University Press, 1991.

eschewing the falsehoods of Li Xue (the School of Principle). Another of his works, entitled *On the Good* (Yuan Shan), also distinguished between *li* and *yu*, argued on behalf of all mortal beings, and presented a strong case for “fulfilling nature and attaining desires (*sui qing da yi*).” This may indeed be seen as the ultimate flowering of Qing Academics.

Dai Zhen maintained that Dao and Li had to be seen in terms of actual entities and affairs and that human nature also had to be manifested in the everyday matters of people’s lives. The Dao and Li of Heaven (cosmic Way and cosmic principles) and the nature and lives of human beings were not abstract matters as claimed by the Song Dynasty Confucians, and all of these could be discussed and studied in terms of actual entities and affairs. Hence, *ren dao* (people’s ethics and Heaven’s Way) existed in “people’s everyday ethics and actions”.<sup>36</sup> He was against the manner in which Li Xue proponents split a person’s nature into two parts—the “nature of the *qi zhi* (the temperament)” and the “nature of righteousness and principle.” He maintained that human nature is dictated by *da zi ran* (i.e., cosmic nature, or Mother Nature). He contended that all natural human beings evince desires with regard to food, sex, wealth, and benefits and such passions (feelings) as love, hate, joy, anger, grief, and pleasure. Thus, human desires and passions (feelings) are intrinsic to human nature and are not, in themselves, incompatible with Dao or Li. However, they are moderated by human intelligence so that they remain within appropriate bounds or limits. Dai Zhen stated: “Li prevails when the passions (feelings) do not err. Li is never present when passions (feelings) are abused . . . Fairness and justice will always prevail when one’s own passions (feelings) accept and understand other people’s passions (feelings).” Passions (feelings) conform to the Li where there is fairness and justice. Since desires are inherent in human nature, there is no reason why they should be incompatible with the cosmic principles. Dai Zhen stated: “All desires are but matters required for existence and self-preservation”.<sup>37</sup> “The cosmic principles constrain desires and do not give them full rein. And so, desires may not be given full rein, yet are not to be interdicted”.<sup>38</sup> And “Li countenances desires”.<sup>39</sup> Proceeding from the profound understanding of Dao and Li and of people’s passions (feelings) and desires, Dai Zhen put forward his well-known theory that “*ti qing sui yu* (understanding people’s natures and falling in with their desires)” is the “highest Dao.” He pointed out: “Benevolent governance is achieved when the rulers of the land understand the people’s feelings and fall in with the people’s desires”.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

As a grand master of *kaozheng* research, and based on his profound studies of nature and human affairs, Dai Zhen developed an entirely new theory about Dao and Li and about *qing* (feelings, passions) and *yu* (desires). He strove to build up a new system of philosophy within the traditional culture and using traditional cultural resources. His ideology and theories indeed constituted the acme of Qing Academics. Hu Shih, in his book *The Philosophy of Dai Dongyuan* (i.e., Dai Zhen), laments the fact that post-Dai studies could only transmit and enhance his *kaozheng* studies but were unable to pass on his philosophy. However, a closer examination of post-Dai scholars will show that some scholars manifested a sincere belief in his philosophy although they themselves produced no works worthy of mention. Hong Bang (1745–1779), in an obituary for Dai Zhen, attached great importance to Dai's achievements in the aspect of philosophy and even included the complete text of a well-known 5,000-character missive by Dai Zhen entitled "Letter in Reply to *Jinshi* Peng Yunchu" in which Dai summarized his philosophical thinking. And when some people took issue with Dai's thinking, Hong wrote long letters in rebuttal. Zhang Xuecheng (1738–1801), a scholar of the same period as Dai Zhen, also greatly admired Dai's philosophy. He wrote: "Dai's works *On Nature* and *On the Good* have indeed discovered things never before discovered in terms of Heaven, man, Li and Qi. Today's people, however, spout empty words about the meanings and principles of the classics and produce nothing useful, for which reason they know nothing about Dai's learning".<sup>41</sup> Jiao Xun (1763–1820) stated: "Having perused Dongyuan's works, I am most sincerely convinced by his *Evidential Study of the Meanings and Terms in the Mencius*".<sup>42</sup> He believed that this book "discloses the facts about Li, Dao, Heaven, fate, nature and feelings as clearly as the sun shines in the skies".<sup>43</sup> Ling Tingkan, the master of *kaozheng* and favorite disciple of Dai Zheng, did not create anything new with regard to his teacher's philosophy, but he did realize that "the master's argumentations in his later years are extremely profound, and those who have not reached his standards are incapable of knowing whether they are right or wrong. His books are there, and will be adjudged by later generations".<sup>44</sup>

Dai Zhen and his scholastic successors developed the theory on feelings and desires as a sharp protest against the "blight of Li Xue," and their main intent was to provide a rational ideological platform for good governance. Dai's contention that the best way of doing so was to "experience the people's feelings and fall in with the people's desires" and gave concentrated expression to his social ideal of devising good statecraft. One might say the most significant thing about Dai Zhen's and his successors' new theory centered on feelings and desires lay in its making the

<sup>41</sup> "Zhu Lu Pian Shu Hou (朱陆篇书后)," *General Principles of Literature and History*, vol. 2, Inner Chapter II, p. 53; Liaoning Education Publishing House, 1998.

<sup>42</sup> "A Letter to the Scholar Zhu Xiucheng," *The Diaogu Mansion Literary Collection*, vol. 13.

<sup>43</sup> "Lun Yu Tong Shi Zi Xu (论语通释自序)," *The Diaogu Mansion Literary Collection*, vol. 16.

<sup>44</sup> "Dai Dong Yuan Xian Sheng Shi Lue Zhuang (戴东原先生事略状)," *The Xiaolintang Literary Collection*, vol. 317; Zhonghua Book Company, 1998.

maximum use of the resources of traditional culture, concentrating all of ancient China's rational thinking about human nature, and advancing these to their highest point, right up to the verge of discovering the individual and emancipating the individual.

In past years, scholars have often unduly reproached scholars of the Qianlong, Jiaqing, and subsequent eras of divorcing themselves from social realities, evading practical issues, and burying themselves in musty old papers. Such criticism is not entirely justified. In fact, hidden behind the latter's self-immersion in *kaozheng* studies of the classics was a warm concern for social realities and the people's woes, and it is regrettable that scant attention has been paid to this aspect by later generations. The well-known master of Qing Academics Qian Daxin stated: "The Sages made use of the classics *Changes*, *History*, *Songs* and *Rites* and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* to establish order in the country at every level, from harmonizing the country's affairs down to governing personal affairs, and in so doing abided by the Dao and embraced the Yi (standards of ethics) in all matters".<sup>45</sup> Qian's observations that rulers should treat their subjects kindly were of contemporary significance and were closely related to the theory about feelings and desires and the views about ways of governance developed by Dai Zhen and scholars in the later years of the Qianlong and Jiaqing eras.

By the time of the Jiaqing and Daoguang eras, *kaozheng* research had effectively passed its prime, and, amid the waves of criticism directed at "Han Xue (the Han school of classical philology)," the New Text School (*Jin wen jing xue*) gained ground. Zhuang Cunyu (1719–1788) and his two grandsons, Liu Fenglu (1774–1829) and Song Xiangfang (1776–1860), raised the banner of New Text studies, advertized themselves as elucidating the sages' *wei yan da yi* (subtle words and profound messages), and talked about researching the Dao. However, they eventually devoted their attention to issues of ruler-subject relations and lifting restrictions on speech, just as the later-stage *kaozheng* practitioners had done.

The Qing Dynasty had begun to wane in the later years of the Qianlong era, and its manifest deterioration during the Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns deepened the anxieties of China's scholars and literati about the times. Some who evinced an active interest in social matters began to take a direct part in studies for reforming maladministration, as, for instance, in salt taxation, grain transportation, and civil matters. It became a trend among scholars to concern themselves about the management of state affairs, and a number of scholars gained renown for their sound studies in this respect, as, for example, Hong Liangji (1746–1809), Bao Shichen (1775–1855), Wei Yuan (1794–1857), and so on. On the eve of the Opium Wars, it became increasingly obvious that a crisis was looming. Scholars such as Gong Zizhen (1792–1841) raised loud warnings in this respect. Born in a scholar-official family and highly erudite, Gong was well versed in both the so-called Han Learning and New Text, brimmed with talent and dynamism, and was well qualified for

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<sup>45</sup> Qian Daxin: "Notes from the Hall of Devotion to Studies," *Collected Writings from Qianxuetang*, vol. 21.

attempting a summing up of traditional academics. From the New Text learning, he assimilated the *Spring and Autumn* “Zhang San Shi” theorem (Note: The theoretical basis of the Gong Yang School and a naïve view held by the ancients on evolution) and worked out an evolutionist view of history which he used as a theoretical tool for criticizing the political situation of those times. From the *kaozheng* school, he also inherited the method of rigorous argumentation. Hence, his social criticisms and aspersions were highly pertinent and as well as rousing and convincing.

Gong Zizhen sensed that an enormous crisis was brewing in Qing society. He had a premonition that “people in the mountains would rise up with a roar, Heaven and Earth would belabor bells and drums for them, and gods and men would throw up great waves in their support”.<sup>46</sup> The later-day scholar Hou Wailu (1903–1987) maintained that Gong Zizhen’s words foretold of a popular revolution, which they hewed very closely to realities, and could well be regarded as a sharp warning to the rulers. Gong Zizhen clearly identified the reason for this crisis as the rulers’ extreme centralization of powers. He pointed out that the result of excessive centralization of sovereign powers and excessive autarchy was that the rulers bullied and tyrannized the country. “Sense of morality is suppressed to facilitate enforcement of their edicts, and sense of humility is repressed to enable their own aggrandizement.” And so “one person becomes powerful and all others are enfeebled,” and all sense of morality and humility in the country is “shaken, crushed, and rooted out” by monarchical power.<sup>47</sup> The outcome was a situation where upstanding talent throughout the nation was smothered and eliminated, divesting society of its vitality and any future prospects.

Gong was aggrieved and indignant but did not lose hope. Lifting his voice, he called for reforms for the sake of survival. He stated: “The laws of a single ruler are never perfect; the opinions of the multitudes never go unheard. Rather than furnish other people with reasons to conduct reforms, would not self-reform be better?” The “self-reform” proposition was of major significance. On the one hand, it forecast that any society which failed to conduct reforms on its own initiative would sooner or later break down. On the other hand, it implied that replacements were bound to come forward in societies that were incapable of conducting “self-reform.” Gong Zizhen’s anxieties were by and large limited in those times to “people in the mountains” and rebels in the marshlands. In later times, however, as the danger loomed of China perishing at the hands of the Western Powers and as Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao took over Gong’s “self-reform” slogan, the issue was no longer one of maintaining the existence of a single monarchical dynasty but of a vast endeavor which simultaneously involved saving the country, saving the nation, and saving China’s civilization.

Worth noting is that while Gong took an interest in national affairs to save the country and protect its people, he also carried on the ideological legacy of such

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<sup>46</sup> “Honoring the Recluses,” *The Complete Works of Gong Zizhen*, pp. 87–88; Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 1975.

<sup>47</sup> “A Discourse on Probing Ancient History,” same book as above, p. 20.

outstanding ideologues as Li Zhi and Dai Zhen and vigorously propagated the rationality of “each person having concerns for the self.” He expressly wrote a paper entitled “On the Self” to elucidate his theorem. He pointed out that the ancient sages had never denied the rationality of the Self, but that the concept *da gong wu si* (“great impartiality and no thought for the self”; usually translated today as “selflessness”—Trans.) was actually taken over to meet the needs of autocratic sovereigns and quell as far as possible the desires and demands of the common folk. Proceeding from the rationality of the Self, Gong further expounded the value of the individual and of independent individuality. In an especially arresting article entitled “Notes from the Hall of Sick Plum Trees,” Gong protests against those persons who from personal predilection require plum tree vendors to “hack off the main stems, retain side branches only, cut away thick foliage, twist the tender shoots, remove the straight and suppress the spirited in order to increase their worth.” He stood for “releasing them, letting them develop, restoring them, and making them whole”.<sup>48</sup> His ideas came quite close to the humanism of modern times and acknowledged the value of the individual and the independence of the personality.

It is evident from the above that Gong Zizhen’s thinking contained many elements of modernity; he may well be said to have emerged from traditional academics and culture to knock on the door of modern times. Liang Qichao stated: “Zizhen indeed rendered meritorious services to the emancipation of thought in the late Qing period. Virtually all proponents of the so-called New Learning went through a period of worshipping Gong during the Guangxu reign and were as though electrified when they first read his *Ding An Anthology*.”<sup>49</sup> This was a fair and just assessment.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 186.

<sup>49</sup> “An Outline of Scholarship of the Qing Era,” *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection no. 34*, p. 54.

## Chapter 2

# Evolution in Ideology and Culture After the Opium Wars and Up To the Westernization Movement

At the juncture of the Ming and Qing dynasties, a certain amount of Western learning had spread through the upper levels of Chinese society and some slight changes had taken place in the ideological concepts of a small number of scholar-officials. An ideological tendency to criticize autocratic monarchical power and patriarchal ethics had emerged in the final years of the Ming Dynasty in response to the accumulated malpractices and abuses by the centralized state power of monarchical despotism, and hints of gradual change had appeared within the traditional culture during the Qing Dynasty. In the final analysis, however, limitations in social conditions had prevented these changes from posing any fundamental challenges to tradition. The outbreak of the Opium Wars and the consequences of those wars profoundly shook China's traditional society and traditional culture. The Chinese had come up against foreign peoples whom they had never seen before and who were radically different from themselves, and Chinese culture encountered alien cultures which posed challenges that China was as yet unable to deal with. Yet the "Heavenly Kingdom" complex and the overweening mentality nurtured over thousands of years prevented the Chinese from correctly understanding the Westerners and their mental, social, and political characteristics. Over an extended period of time, therefore, the Chinese were unable either to adjust their relationships with foreign countries and peoples in general and the relationship between Chinese and Western culture in particular, or to resolve issues of the modern transformation of Chinese culture. Below, we present some brief discussions corresponding by and large to phases in history on the evolution of the Chinese people's ideological and cultural state of mind and their cultural mentality in the period from the Opium Wars to the Westernization Movement (1840–1894).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Westernization Movement period generally refers to the years from the 1860s to the first half of the 1890s (i.e., prior to the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895). Some historians call this the Self-Strengthening Period. However, for years already historical circles in China have been in the habit of calling it the Westernization Movement period. The habitual version is used in this chapter to comply with popular practice.



## 2.1 The Strange “Barbarians”

Westerners, led by the British and bolstered by the might of their warships, ventured to the East, launched wars against China for the sake of their nefarious opium trade, and forced China to sign the humiliating Nanjing Treaty, cede territories, and pay indemnities. The Chinese were fully justified in regarding these invaders with hostility. However, merely hating and vilifying their enemies was of no avail. They should have tried to understand them and draw on their strong points to make up for their own deficiencies, and in so doing erase their humiliations and recover their territories and sovereign rights. “The one who knows his own strengths and those of the enemy is invincible in battle.” The ancient military strategist’s words made good sense, let alone the reality that besides opium and encroachments the Westerners also brought some useful things to the East. The Chinese, however, bound by their Heavenly Kingdom complex and infuriated by their government’s ineptness, were unable to deal with this matter in a rational manner. A peculiar situation ensued: people who learned Western ways and consorted with Westerners were likely to be seen as traitors, while government officials who quailed before and toadied to Westerners yet played around with Western gadgets preened themselves self-righteously.

In the first 20 or so years after the Opium Wars, most Chinese officials, gentry, and commoners regarded the Westerners as creatures less than human. This is well documented in *A Collection of Opium War Literature*, edited by A Ying (1900–1977). For example, it is stated in the “Public Call to Arms to All High-Minded Persons in Guangdong”: “The rulers of the English are sometimes women and sometimes men, they themselves are like beasts of a greater savagery than tigers and wolves and of a rapaciousness no less than that of snakes and venomous reptiles (Ying 1957, p. 781).” In a memorial, Imperial Commissioner Qiying (1787–1858) stated: “People speak of all barbarians, whether women or children, as ‘foreign devils’ and do not see them as worthy of being humans.”<sup>2</sup> In those times, people saw Westerners as barbaric foreigners on account of their outlandish appearances, incomprehensible languages, and behavior so unlike that of the Chinese. Many were the comments of this nature. Even persons in the official/literati stratum frequently circulated erroneous reports and did not know what to make of Westerners. For example, the well-known scholar Fang Dongshu (1772–1851), in his “Sickbed Confessions” quoted statements by Ye Zhongjin alleging that Westerners “cannot see into the distance and therefore cannot hit any mark with bow and arrow, and have legs so weak they are unable to walk on land upon coming ashore.”<sup>3</sup> Apparently, a very common piece of misinformation in those days was that Westerners’ legs and feet differed from those of normal people in that their knees

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<sup>2</sup>“First and Second Memorial by Qi Ying et al. Regarding the Memorial by Cao Lutai on the Circumstances of the Disturbances Caused by the People in Guangdong,” *Foreign Affairs in Their Entirety* (26th year of the Daoguang reign), vol. 75, p. 2994; Zhonghua Book Company, 1964.

<sup>3</sup>Fang Dongshu: *Collected Works* by Yi Weixuan, vol. 4, p. 13.

could not bend and their feet had no strength, making it impossible to walk fast. For example, Wang Wentai’s (1796–1844) “A Short Study of the English Red-haired Barbarians” also stated that Englishmen “walk like the wind on their ships but cannot stride rapidly on land, and they have difficulty flexing their legs and feet so that they cannot get up once they fall to the ground,”<sup>4</sup> and so forth. I often think it quite possible such misinformation was circulated because British emissaries refused to kowtow during audiences with the Chinese emperor. Arrogant Chinese then deduced that the British and all other Westerners were unable to genuflect and walked with difficulty because their knees could not bend. This also gave rise to an absurd contention that Westerners were good at fighting at sea only and not on land.

Such was the disdain in which Westerners were held and the many misunderstandings about Western matters. Various subjective assumptions and all sorts of misinformation abounded.

Starting with the Opium Wars, Chinese officials and gentry had had dealings with the British for 10 or more years yet still had no idea about Britain’s geographical location and size. Wei Yuan (1794–1897) was reputed to be a pioneer among those who looked afield at the world outside China. Yet in his description of Britain in his *Illustrated Treatises on the Maritime Kingdoms* he stated: “Those three faraway islands that constitute England are no more than a cluster of rocks in the Western Ocean. In size, they are estimated to be about the same as Fujian, Taiwan or Qiongzhou [i.e., Hainan Island].”<sup>5</sup> His assumption that England’s territory was no larger than those of Taiwan and Hainan Island strayed too far from reality. He Qiutao (1824–1862) claimed in his *Shuo fang bei cheng* (Peregrinations in the North): “England and the two islands attached to it are not even as big as China’s Huguang Province.”<sup>6</sup> In Feng Guifen’s (1809–1874) *Protestations from the Xiaobin Studio*, it was written: “The territory of our China is eight times that of Russia, ten times that of Mi (America), a hundred times that of France, and two hundred times that of England.”<sup>7</sup> Such egregious fallacies were the result, firstly, of long years of self-immurement and, secondly, of habitual self-aggrandizement and little inclination to seek deeper understandings.

Another factor was their unwillingness to look squarely at the Western powers for fear of facing challenges to their self-esteem and self-glorification. Zhang Xi, who was attached to the Ilibu garrison forces during the Opium Wars and frequently proceeded to Dinghai to negotiate with foreigners, wrote an account entitled “Talking Points when Visiting the Foreigners.” In it he described how some Englishmen took him on a tour of a British warship, and how he praised the ship’s skillful construction. An Englishman asked: “Are your country’s people

<sup>4</sup> See “A Collection of Opium War Literature,” (vol. 2), p. 758.

<sup>5</sup> See *Illustrated Treatises on the Maritime Kingdoms*, vol. 52; *Complete Writings of Wei Yuan*, Qiulu Book Company, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> *Collected Notes on Russia: Peregrinations in the North*, vol. 40, p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> *Protestations from Xiaobin Studio: Opinions on Manufacturing Western Products*, vol. 2, p. 42, engraved in the 10th year of the Guangxu reign.

capable of doing the same?” Zhang Xi replied: “The techniques are clever, but the Heavenly Kingdom’s people do not apply their minds to such things.” “To what, then, do they apply their minds?” Zhang Xi stated: “To essays.”<sup>8</sup> Such was the typical state of mind of China’s officials-cum-literati: Essays were everlasting, and all else was not worth mentioning.

There was even less understanding of Western religions. Wei Yuan’s *Illustrated Treatises on the Maritime Kingdoms* included an article entitled “Catholicism: A Study,” which more or less claimed that Western religions had simply borrowed contents from Buddhism and which drew false analogies with the Confucian teachings. A footnote at the end of the article cited a rumor that Western missionaries had at first induced Chinese to become believers by offering them a certain sum of silver, and that after the believers died their eyes were removed, as it was claimed that Chinese eyes could be used to convert lead into silver. There were also absurd tales about male and female believers cohabiting in the same accommodations. Many allegations defaming Western religions were concocted on the basis of such rumors. *Chronicles of the Relations Between China and the West* by Xia Xie (1800–1875) contained an article also entitled “Catholicism: A Study” which cited the referential footnotes in Wei Yuan’s book as established facts and then incorporated these “facts” in his own treatise’s main text. It was unavoidable that wayward missionaries should have committed some unlawful and immoral acts after the advent of Western religions in China, but the partial ought not to have been seen as the whole nor rumors stated as facts.

Both Lin Zexu (1785–1850) and Wei Yuan should of course be counted among the most rational and open-minded personages of this period. The fact that Lin organized personnel to compile the *Annals of Four Continents* and that Wei wrote and compiled his *Illustrated Treatises on the Maritime Kingdoms* on that basis goes to show their desire to understand the West and the world. Especially noteworthy were Wei’s proposals about learning from the West and about instituting reforms. His proposal to “learn the best of foreign skills to overcome the foreigners” became a common trend among enterprising spirits in China at the time and for many years to come. The great majority of Chinese in those years had yet to wake up from their “Heavenly Kingdom” illusions and regarded Western technologies as exotic and specious skills not worth mentioning. Wei Yuan pointed out: “If we are to overcome the foreigners we must first know the state of affairs abroad, and if we are to know the state of affairs abroad we must set up translation houses to translate foreign books.”<sup>9</sup> Contrary to the disdain most people felt for “exotic and specious skills,” he recommended that China set up its own factories to manufacture warships and guns. However, he did not proceed wholly from considerations of resisting foreign invaders. He stated: “All that is useful for civil purposes could

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<sup>8</sup> Zhang Xi: “Talking Points when Visiting the Foreigners”, *Opium Wars* (5) p. 337 in *Collection of Writings on Modern Chinese History*, Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 1957.

<sup>9</sup> *Illustrated Treatises on the Maritime Kingdoms*, vol. 2, “Chapter on Maritime Defense,” *Complete Works of Wei Yuan*, vol. 4, p. 27.

also be made here.”<sup>10</sup> He also proposed: “All coastal merchants who would wish to establish similar factories for building ships and machinery, either for their own use or for sale, should be allowed to do so.”<sup>11</sup> One may well say that Wei Yuan was already aware of the need to develop a modern industry, which also means he had initially recognized the need for capitalist modernization. That, too, was quite remarkable. By 1852, when writing an epilogue for his hundred-volume *Illustrated Treatises on the Maritime Kingdoms*, he expressed esteem for the democratic constitutional government in the USA and stated: “The northern part of the American continent has replaced sovereign rulers with states, and their rules and regulations can be passed on in their entirety to later generations.”

Wei Yuan already realized that China had to institute needed internal reforms, otherwise “learning from the foreigners to overcome the foreigners” would be out of the question. His suggestions for reform zeroed in by and large on the most vital issues of the accumulated malpractices in China: First, doing away with the “torpidity in people’s minds” (i.e., fatuousness) and secondly, doing away with “ineffectual use of talent” (i.e., obsession with impractical abstractions).<sup>12</sup> It is regrettable that amid the lethargy and muddle-headedness which in those times permeated all quarters—high and low and governmental and nongovernmental alike—none of his valuable thoughts and suggestions were ever put into practice. Conversely, when his book was later taken to Japan it had an important driving effect on that country’s Meiji Reform.

An overview of the first two decades after the Opium Wars shows that a small minority of persons, including Lin Zexu and Wei Yuan, had begun to understand something about Western affairs and were aware that invigorating China required learning from foreign countries.

However, most Chinese disdained, distrusted, or were unwilling to face up to Westerners or Western affairs and Western learning, and there arose various fallacies and erroneous views that prevented the Chinese from adjusting their concepts in good time. This had something to do with the resentment engendered by the Western powers’ brutal invasions, but there is no denying that it was also caused by the self-exaggerated, self-embellished, insular, and pompous “Heavenly Kingdom” mentality formed during too many years of being cut off from the rest of world.

## 2.2 Learning the Best of Foreign Skills

The 20 years after the Opium Wars were times of intermittent war and peace between China and the West. For China, the wars ended in defeat, and peace was synonymous with humiliation and loss of rights. The second Opium War of 1856–

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<sup>10</sup> Same as above, p. 31.

<sup>11</sup> Same as above, p. 33.

<sup>12</sup> See *Original Preface to Illustrated Treatises on the Maritime Kingdoms*, same as above, p. 2.

1850 brought even greater shocks to China's governmental and nongovernmental quarters than the first one. This time around, the British and French Allied Forces invaded China's capital city, forced the Xianfeng emperor to flee to Rehe (Jehol), defiled his ancestral temples, devastated the populace, and seized historical relics and priceless treasures. After the British and French forces sacked the Yuan Ming Yuan—China's world-famous Imperial Garden, they torched it and reduced it to rubble. This unprecedented defeat and humiliation brought utter loss of "face" to the rulers and subjects of the Heavenly Kingdom. In his later recollections, Yixin (1833–1898), the chief peace negotiator, wrote: "In the twenty years after the Daoguang reign, every one of our dealings in foreign affairs turned out worse than the preceding one. In the tenth year of the Xianfeng reign we could no longer fight or defend ourselves and, in the absence of any other choices, were reduced to measures of last resort."<sup>13</sup> These "measures of last resort" were, for one, having the emperor seek refuge in Rehe and, for another, signing a humiliating treaty with Britain and France and—because of having asked Russia to act as intermediary—suffering the pain and disgrace of concluding a new unequal treaty with Russia. The shocks dealt by these wars and treaties began to weaken the "Heavenly Kingdom" concept vaunted by Qing rulers and subjects. For the first time, the Qing authorities permitted foreign countries to station emissaries in the capital. They were also compelled to establish a yamen (government office) dedicated to handling foreign affairs and conducting negotiations with other countries and, in so doing, picked up a tiny inkling of the concept of modern diplomacy. Wiped from the minds of most people who gained any understanding of foreign affairs was the perception that foreign diplomats were no more than tribute-paying emissaries.

At the close of the second Opium War, the Qing government was in the process of fighting a bitter war against the Taiping forces (Boxers). In 1860, Chinese gentry and merchants in Shanghai, where relatively large numbers of foreigners had congregated, contributed funds and engaged foreign military officers to direct an army of foreign mercenaries in battles against the Taiping. That army generally won its battles, thanks to its superior arms and equipment and rigorous training. In 1862, the Qing court issued an order recognizing this force and conferring on it the title "Ever-Victorious Army." Making use of foreign forces to kill Chinese added another episode to the Qing rulers' record of shame. Yet great humiliations and great shame often have the effect of arousing the unawakened. At the time when the Qing government was permitting and using foreign soldiery to slaughter Chinese, a scholar-intellectual fled from Suzhou to Shanghai to escape the ravages of war and, with more opportunities for reflection in Shanghai's somewhat less turbulent surroundings, he started to write. More occasions to observe the workings of Western affairs also triggered in him various thoughts about reform. His name was Feng Guifen (1809–1874), and his *Protestations from the Xiaobin Studio* was

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<sup>13</sup> Yi Yin: "Memorial by Prince Gong et al on the Yi Chou day of the 9th Lunar Month of the 6th Year of the Tongzhi Reign on the Overall Management of Affairs Related to Other Countries", *Foreign Affairs in their Entirety (Tongzhi Reign)*, vol. 50, p. 25.

completed in Shanghai in November 1861. Once the book was completed, it was presented to Zeng Guofan (1811–1872) with a request that Zeng write a preface. Copies of the book were passed around and perused by not a few officials and intellectuals engaged in Western affairs. Thus, while the book was officially published and distributed only in 1876, the main ideas in it had already influenced some officials and intellectuals before that year.

Feng Guifen carried on and further developed Wei Yuan's thinking on "learning the best of foreign skills."

Feng was one of those who had been awakened by the shame suffered by the country and people. He said China had always been known as great country "unrivalled in the world as regards natural, geographical and material factors," but its "shameful submission to the Four Powers is not because it is inferior as regards natural, geographical and material factors, but because its people are indeed inferior." And in what way were the people inferior? "They are inferior not because of that which Heaven has or has not conferred upon them, but because they themselves are inferior. One may be shamed because of what Heaven has or has not conferred, but one can do nothing about that. One is especially shamed when the people themselves are inferior, and when one can do something about such shame. Better than feeling shame is to strive for self-strengthening."<sup>14</sup>

Knowing shame and striving for self-strengthening was a most important concept. In the first 20 years, the great majority of officials and scholars did not know shame and refused to admit they were inferior to others. Lin Zexu and Wei Yuan were willing to examine the world and evinced some desire to understand the Western countries, yet they experienced no feelings of shame. One strives for self-strengthening only if one knows shame. One might well say that Feng Guifen took this thinking a big step forward. He said if one knows one is "indeed inferior" to others, "there is no benefit in enviousness, no possibility of dissimulation, and no sense in trying to make do." Hence "The thing to do is find out where the inferiority lies; to understand why others are small yet strong, and why we are big yet weak. And then to find ways of measuring up to them." He summed up China's inferiority to the Western countries in four respects: "We are inferior to the foreigners in respect of making good use of people's talents, in respect of taking full advantage of the resources of the land, in respect of the absence of estrangement between rulers and the people, and in respect of the name living up to the reality."<sup>15</sup> This statement might figure as a fairly accurate summing up of China's shortcomings and the foreigners' strengths in those days. China's system and institutions did not favor the training of talent or the use of talented people. China's economy was based on agriculture on which it relied for sources of tax money and on which its people depended for their livelihood, but China had never developed a lucid concept of exploiting the resources on or under its lands. China's top rulers and decision

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<sup>14</sup> *Protestations from Xiaobin Studio: On Manufacturing Foreign Things*, vol. 2, p. 40, engraved in the 10th year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41.

makers seated up on high utilized a massive bureaucratic system to rule the people while the people were distantly separated from the imperial court and the emperor by tier upon tier of mendacious officials rife with malpractices. And inconsistencies between claims and realities were the outcome of thousands of years of a degenerate style of academics in China, in which scholars studied books merely to cope with the imperial examinations and much of what they learned served no useful purpose. Feng's understandings had indeed grasped some of the most important problems, and fundamental reforms in those four respects would have been the only way to bring about China's self-strengthening. Feng put forward a very important concept, i.e., "To use China's moral principles and ethical teachings as the basis and supplement these with the methods that other countries employ for attaining strength and well-being."<sup>16</sup> This was the earliest expression of the Zhong Ti Xi Yong (i.e., Chinese learning for fundamental principles and Western learning for practical applications) theorem which later became mainstream thinking. He also put forward numerous proposals for specific reforms, such as paying attention to manufacturing, setting up factories, opening up mines, making use of machinery, changing the civil examinations system, laying stress on practical learning, training translators and foreign affairs personnel, energetically translating Western books, renovating civil administration, and so forth. Feng's thinking and proposals to no small extent influenced such government officials as Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang (1823–1901) as well as other thinkers in those times who sought reform, such as Zheng Guanying (1842–1922/3) and Wang Tao (1828–1897). Feng himself was aware that "some of these proposals evidently cannot be implanted," and stated that "it is not the fault of the speaker if they cannot put into practice."<sup>17</sup> After Zeng Guofan had read Feng's writings, he too said: "I see many difficulties in putting these into practice." Nonetheless, most persons who eventually researched this period in history maintained that Feng Guifeng's thinking furnished ideological guidance for the Westernization Movement, and many of his specific proposals were to varying extents put into practice by government officials of the Westernization school. And that was not all. Feng's *Protestations* also played an inspirational role in the Reform Movement of 1898. Weng Tonghe (1830–1904) submitted a portion of its contents to the Guangxu emperor for his perusal, and many persons of the Reformist school were influenced by the book. In the words of Xiang Xue Bao (the Hunan Studies Journal), the book *Protestations* was "the embryo of thirty years of political reform."<sup>18</sup> We may put it this way: the thinking in the book *Protestations* represented the overall level of understanding of Western culture on the part of Chinese personages during the Westernization Movement.

<sup>16</sup> *Protestations from Xiaobin Studio*, vol. 2, p. 39, engraved in the 10th year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>17</sup> *Protestations from Xiaobin Studio: My Own Preface*, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted from Dai Yangben: "Feng Guifen and the 'Protestations from Xiaobin Studio'," see *Protestations from Xiaobin Studio*, published in 1998 by the Zhongzhou Ancient Books Press, p. 58.

Feng Guifen did not approve much of Wei Yuan's theorem about "tackling foreigners with foreign things and negotiating peace with the foreigners through the use of foreign methods," as he believed Wei's theorem "stemmed solely from the idea of 'learning foreign things to overcome the foreigners'." And it was only after the 1860s that Wei's theorem was gradually put into practice, by which time people had begun to realize the urgency of learning about Western skills and products. On December 19, 1860 (the eighth day of the 11th lunar month in the 10th year of the Xianfeng reign), Zeng Guofan, in his "Memorial in Response to the Imperial Edicts on Making Use of Russian Troops to Help Quell Uprisings and Assist in Shipping Grain from the South", stated: "The current use of foreign forces to assist in the quelling of uprisings and help with transportation attenuates difficulties for the time being. [However,] permanent benefits may be anticipated in the future by acquiring foreign knowledge about manufacturing cannon and ships."<sup>19</sup> Most academics regard this as the starting point of the Westernization trend of thinking. The next year, Zeng arranged for the Anqing Armaments Works under his jurisdiction to trial produce a small steamboat. At first the Works had no foreign equipment and its craftsmen, using Western drawings as reference, made the boat entirely by hand. In 1863, they completed a small mechanically driven boat "approximately two *zhang* and eight or nine *chi* in length (i.e., 30-some feet long)." On Zeng Guofan's orders, the next year they carried out "expanded" construction and completed a larger steamship approximately five *zhang* (55 ft) in length and 25 tonnes in weight. It was named the *Yellow Swan*, apparently an allusion to "the staying power of the yellow swan." However, it was technologically backward and of little practical use, whereupon Zeng Guofan dispatched Rong Hong (1828–1912)—the first Chinese to study in the USA and at that time an official under Zeng's authority—to the USA to purchase machinery. The machinery Rong Hong bought arrived in Shanghai in 1865. Zeng, in consultation with Li Hongzhang, combined the former Shanghai Ordnance Bureau, the Suzhou Ordnance Bureau, and an ironworks newly purchased from the Americans, and established the Jiangnan Machine Manufacturing Office (Jiangnan Manufacturing Office for short) in Shanghai. Once established, this office held an important position in Zeng's and Li's national self-strengthening undertakings. In addition to rifles, cannon, and munitions, the office now manufactured ships and did much to promote the modernization of Chinese military forces. Of even greater significance was the office's establishment in 1868 of a translation institution which sponsored the translation and publication of Western books. Verbal translations were performed by John Fryer (1839–1928), Alexander Wylie (1815–1887), and Daniel Jerome MacGowan (1814–1893), and then written out in book form by Xu Shou (1818–1884), Hua Hengfang (1833–1902), Xu Jianyin (1845–1901), and other Chinese. In addition to books on science and technology they also translated works on the social sciences, mainly history,

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<sup>19</sup> "Zeng Guofan's Memorial in Response to the Imperial Edicts on Making Use of Russian Troops to Help Quell Uprisings and Assist in Shipping Grain from the South", *Foreign Affairs in their Entirety* (Xianfeng Reign), vol. 71, p. 2669.



geography, and law. Over 40 years time, the institute translated and published 160 Western books,<sup>20</sup> making contributions to the introduction of Western learning to China. The institute also put together and published a “Compilation of Recent Affairs in Western Countries” and thereby served as a news medium.

In 1862, Huai Army Commander Li Hongzhang, who distinguished himself during the suppression of the Taiping (Boxer) forces, came to Beijing and personally examined the efficacy of the armaments of various countries. In a letter to Zeng Guofan, he wrote: “I am deeply shamed by the vast inferiority of China’s military equipment as compared to that of foreign countries, and every day I admonish my officers and men to be open-minded and swallow humiliation in order to learn a few of the Westerners’ secrets, which would bring us benefits and enable us to fight them. . . It would be very much to my regret if, after being stationed in Shanghai for a period of time, I would be incapable of learning some of the Westerners’ strong points.”<sup>21</sup> From then on he made great efforts to purchase foreign-style firearms and guns with which to arm his troops and to enhance training for them. His forces later played a major role in quelling the Taipings and the Nian Army [i.e., the Torch Bearers, a peasant army that rose against the Qing Dynasty in the mid-nineteenth century]. Subsequent to Zeng Guofan, Li Hongzhang became the leader of the Westernization Movement as well as a person most heavily relied on by the Qing court.

Highly noteworthy is the fact that, after the second Opium War, discussions of “Westernization,” as represented by Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang, took place with great frequency,<sup>22</sup> more so than in the preceding 20 years. *Yang wu*, i.e., “Westernization,” meant the same thing as *yi wu*, or “barbarian affairs” (*yi wu*), but *yang* (Western) was a more neutral term than the contemptuous *yi* and, while the term *yi wu* (barbarian affairs) was restricted to negotiations with foreign powers, *yang wu* included emulating or imitating foreign practices, such as setting up factories, manufacturing machinery, and running schools.

There has, over the decades, been a great deal of controversy over the Westernization Movement; some people have praised it, others decry it. Those who praise it see it as the starting point of China’s modernization. Those who decry it call it selling out the country. Those who praise it emphasize the objective historical effects of the movement. Those who decry it emphasize the subjective motives of the movement’s leaders. I believe that when commenting on a specific historical activity of a certain historical personage, one should take into account both the motive and the effect, and when commenting on a historical movement in which

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<sup>20</sup> Accounts about the number of Western books published by the Jiangnan Manufacturing Office differ and vary from 160 to 199. There are no less than five different versions. Used here are the records of Xiong Yuezhi in *Summary of the Books Translated by the Jiangnan Manufacturing Office*, see Xiong Yuezhi (1994, p. 499, footnote (1)).

<sup>21</sup> *Complete Writings of Li Wenzhong: Letters to Peng Liao* (2), p. 47, Jinling engraving, Yi Si year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>22</sup> After the first year of the Tongzhi reign, Li Hongzhang frequently mentioned “Westernization” in his memorials and correspondence.

many people participate and which produces major results one should take both into account and examine both the activity's contents and its objective effects. The subjective motive or motives of its personages is of no importance. Hegel once said that evil is capable of producing a major progressive effect on history. This opinion was fully endorsed by Marx and Engels. As regards the Westernization Movement, the actual considerations harbored by Zeng Guofan, Li Hongzhang and others at the time were highly important to them as individuals, but were unimportant to the historical movement that had already taken shape. We attach importance to what they actually did and to the actual historical effects that their activities produced then and at a later time.

As everyone is clearly aware of the endeavors initiated during the Westernization Movement, it is not necessary to detail them here. We wish, however, to dwell upon the effects produced by these endeavors, and especially the effects these endeavors caused and triggered in terms of culture.

We all know that the Westernization Movement started with the setting up of military supplies factories, such as the Jiangnan Manufacturing Office (1865), the Mawei Shipyard (1866), the Jinling Machinery Bureau (1865), the Tianjin Machinery Bureau (1867), the Shandong Machinery Bureau (1875), the Lanzhou Machinery Bureau (1872), and so forth. These bureaus/factories were set up first and foremost in the service of providing military equipment and supplies, but as enterprises they manufactured products that generated value, and they had to make goods on this value. Records show that some of the products turned out by these bureaus/factories were allocated and put to use by the government, others were sold to local military units. Still others were ordinary mechanical products that went to civilian enterprises through commercial channels. Thus there are grounds for claiming that these military supplies industries served as engines for the civilian industry as well. In fact, when Li Hongzhang, Zuo Zongtang, and others set up their military supplies industries, they were quite aware that these would have the effect of driving forward the civilian industry. As Li Hongzhang stated: "Machinery manufacturing serves us today as a means for resisting aggression and oppression and for strengthening the nation. . . . However, I am also of the opinion that foreign machinery may also be used to manufacture implements for tilling, weaving, printing, making pottery and ceramics and so forth used in the everyday lives of the populace, and not merely for manufacturing munitions. . . . I anticipate that in a few decades, China's wealthy peasants and big merchants will surely be manufacturing foreign machinery to create benefits for themselves, and official regulations will no longer be able to exercise such differentiations."<sup>23</sup> Zuo Zongtang also realized that setting up factories to make China's own steamships

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<sup>23</sup> Li Hongzhang: "Memorial on Purchasing Foreign Ironworks Machinery," (First day of the 8th lunar month in the 4th year Tongzhi reign), *Complete Works of Li Wenzhong: Texts of Memorials*, vol. 9, p. 34.

and “learning their methods of making ship’s engines will be of long-term benefit for China and will bring benefits in other aspects as well.”<sup>24</sup> When the first proposals were made to set up manufacturing factories, Rong Hong, the Westernization activist who was the first Chinese to study abroad, had said to Zeng Guofan: “If China intends to set up machinery factories now, it must begin in the main by laying a general foundation, and not by setting up factories dedicated to a particular purpose. By a general foundation, I mean factories capable of building up diverse branch factories that will specialize in making particular machines. Simply stated, such factories should have machines for making machines, and serve as the foundation for all other manufactories (Rong Hong 1981, p. 75).” Rong was obviously envisaging the development of a national industry in China. Subsequent developments showed that the estimations and calculations voiced by Rong Hong, Li Hongzhang and Zuo Zhongtang were consistent with the logical and inevitable train of events. There is no denying that the Westernization Movement threw open the sluice gates for the modernization of China.

The rise of modern industry inevitably launched the emergence and development of modern education.

The higher pursuits of China’s previous educational setup, in terms of its actual effects, consisted of winning promotions, getting rich, bringing glory to one’s forefathers, and benefiting one’s posterity; its lesser pursuits consisted of little more than writing letters, doing secretarial work, and keeping accounts. Modern industry gave rise to a need for engineering and technical talent, the training of which was entirely beyond the competence of the existing educational system. A new type of education was needed, and its contents had to include science and technology. But science and technology had to be brought in from the West. This called for the training of translators and gave rise to the need for sending students abroad. And so the Tongwenguan, or “schools of combined learning,” were set up, and discussions began about dispatching students to other countries.

In 1862, Prince Gong Yixin, the minister in charge of Westernization, sent up a memorial requesting the establishment of a Tongwenguan in Beijing. It would teach the English, French, and Russian languages as well as provide instruction in the Han language. Its students would be recruited mainly from among scions of the Eight Banners. The next year, Li Hongzhang set up the Guangfang Tongwenguan in Shanghai. Student recruitment was not limited to the Eight Banners, and age limitations were also relaxed. In 1864, a Tongwenguan was started up in Guangzhou for teaching English, and later French and German as well.

Strictly speaking, Yixin had first set up the Tongwenguan merely for the needs of diplomatic negotiations, whereas Li Hongzhang established the Shanghai Tongwenguan for the sake of translating books on foreign learning so that the Chinese might gradually become acquainted with Western knowledge of mathematics, the natural sciences, and manufacturing skills. These, in his view, were crucial for China’s self-strengthening. The Shanghai Tongwenguan was later

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<sup>24</sup> See *The Westernization Movement* (5), p. 45.

merged with the translation institute of the Jiangnan Manufacturing Office to become a center for translations. In 1866, Yixin sent up a petition requesting that an astronomical calculations academy be added to the Beijing Tongwenguan for considerations somewhat similar to Li Hongzhang's. Despite being vigorously opposed by conservative elements, this initiative was not shelved, but it failed to produce any substantial results.

The Tongwenguan in Beijing and other places achieved little, thanks to the degeneracy of the Qing Dynasty. However, they did train a number of persons conversant with foreign languages. Some of these persons later entered the diplomatic service and made contributions to the development of modern diplomacy in China. Others became translators and teachers of foreign languages. Still others went to work in business circles. Irrespective of their vocations and the departments in which they served, all, in essence, played a part in establishing links between the cultures of China and the West. The translation institute of the Shanghai Manufacturing Bureau played an especially important role in the early dissemination of Western science and technology and modern culture. Many persons who came to the fore during the Westernization Movement had gained some idea of Western learning from books translated by the Jiangnan Manufacturing Office.

Another innovation in education during the Westernization Movement was the sending of young children for studies in the USA. This matter was initiated by Rong Hong in 1872, actively promoted by Ding Richang (1823–1882), and carried out by Li Hongzhang and Zeng Guofan. Children would be instructed abroad for the same considerations as the Western-style factories and the Tongwenguan had been set up. On why they should study abroad, Zeng and Li stated in their memorials that while setting up factories and Tongwenguan was “for the sake of establishing a basis for invigorating the country,” sending children to study in that distant land was “for the sake of long-term and better results.” China could not purchase all of the West's books and equipment, and if the children were not sent abroad they would not be able to “gain a thorough understanding of Western learning at its source, and comprehend all of its intricacies.” This, they said, was precisely what the ancients had meant when they said “those who would learn the Qi parlance should be placed amidst the Zhuang and the Yue.” The imperial court consented to sending children abroad for studies, and in 1872, 30 bright and intelligent youngsters were chosen from each province and sent to the USA. Altogether 120 of them were dispatched over 4 years, until the practice was discontinued due to opposition against it within China. These 120 youngsters were divided up among different educational institutions, stayed with American families, were exposed to local customs and habits, and merged into the local cultural environment. Not a few of them scored substantial achievements after returning to China from such studies. Examples are Zhan Tianyou (1861–1919), the railway engineering expert of Chinese and even worldwide renown; Tang Shaoyi (1862–1938), the noted politician; Liang Dunyan (1857–1924), the famous diplomat, and so forth. It is worth noting that studying abroad at an early age and living directly in foreign households, all devoutly religious, very much benefited the youngsters by giving them a substantial understanding of Western culture. However, their roots in Chinese learning were

too shallow for them to synthesize the Chinese and Western cultures and master these in a more profound sense.

Running factories, setting up language academies, and sending out students showed that at least some Chinese officials and literati, both in and outside the government establishment, were convinced that Western learning was indispensable if China was to stand on its feet and strengthen itself. Perceptions had changed considerably from those of the 1840s and 1850s. From despising the “barbarians” and strictly warding off anything “barbarian,” to learning from foreigners and feeling ashamed for being inferior to them—a major change in perceptions had indeed taken place.

Also changing were the perceptions of the general populace and in particular among the mid-level strata in the cities. Translations of Western books had spread to a certain extent, and missionary schools run by foreigners also played a part in disseminating Western culture. More important, however, was the massive influx of foreign Western goods which did much to change the everyday lives of the people, especially of the inhabitants of coastal cities. This probably played a bigger role in changing their perceptions than anything else. By the 1860s, China’s coastal cities were already awash with Western products, such as machine-made piece goods, “foreign fire-makers” (safety matches), woolen textiles, foreign blankets, foreign needles and thread, foreign-style paper, foreign-type pens and ink, foreign-made umbrellas, iron nails, glass, clocks and watches, and so forth. There were also the spinning and weaving machines, sewing machines, steam engines, scales, alcohol lamps, gas lamps, microscopes, etc. Even bicycles, which had only just emerged in the West, made their appearance in Shanghai.<sup>25</sup> Ordinary Chinese at first saw all these things as curiosities, but soon realized they were convenient and practical and superior to their existing counterparts in China. These novel life experiences did much to shake people’s former disdain for the “barbarians.”

Not a few dignitaries, however, still held Westerners in contempt and resolutely resisted Western culture. Representative of these was Secretary of the Grand Council Woren (1804–1871), who was against the Tongwenguan’s recruitment of official personnel for studies of the natural sciences and mathematics, and who even argued with the emperor about this matter. However, Woren did not specifically oppose having Chinese learn the natural sciences and mathematics, for in his opinion these things did not qualify as fundamental fields of knowledge and were no more than clever artifices not worth learning by official personnel trained in the teachings of Confucius. In his view, official personnel should adhere strictly to the Confucian teachings and take the rituals and rules as the basis of governance. In a memorial disputing the views of Yixin et al he asserted: “The natural sciences and mathematics are of very little use, and teaching Western things to official personnel is extremely harmful.” That was because “to maintain a country, one relies on the Rituals and Rules rather than on devices and schemes; and the fundamental means for doing so rests in people’s minds and not in techniques and skills.” And, “never

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<sup>25</sup> See Li Changli (1998a, pp. 257–260).

since ancient times has one heard of proficiency in techniques and numbers being used to resuscitate and revive the weak.” He believed that since the natural sciences and mathematics were unrelated to the fundamentals for building up strength, having persons who were “on the correct path” learn from the barbarians would make “useful persons cultivated by the state switch allegiance to the barbarians, in consequence of which healthy forces will decline and perverse trends will flare up and, in a few years time, all people in China will go over to the barbarians.”<sup>26</sup> Woren sent up three memorials in succession, all of them replete with arguments like these that made no sense. However, one can see in them the state of mind of the conservatives: (1) They still believed the Confucian rituals and rules to be fundamental principles, and saw science and technology as nonessentials. (2) Yet they had begun to lose confidence in the Confucian teachings and were therefore anxious lest official personnel would start learning from foreigners, forsake their former convictions, and be used by the foreigners. This was a reflection of the reality that the traditional classics and canons were of no help in those critical times, but that people did not know of anything dependable that might take the place of those traditional classics and canons. Woren’s weak rebuttals revealed the frustrations felt by the dynastic officials and literati. In fact, Woren’s opponents—Yixin et al.—too, had no idea of what constituted the fundamental means for strengthening China. They outdid Woren et al. only in their realization that China was no match for the Western countries and in their willingness to learn from the latter. Criticizing Woren, Yixin said: “I truly cannot believe statements to the effect that we can outmaneuver and subdue our enemies simply by using loyalty as armor and propriety as shields.”<sup>27</sup> This was an indication of his realism, his willingness to learn from other people’s strong points, and his sagacity. Yet he also said: “The way for China’s self-strengthening lies in acquiring practical expertise in and learning all the subtleties of the rules of mathematics and the natural sciences, the skills of devising machines and utensils, and the methods of designing and building waterways.”<sup>28</sup> This was clearly a theory with no basis in reality. There was reason in Woren’s assertion that “never since ancient times has one heard of proficiency in techniques and numbers being used to resuscitate and reinvigorate the weak.” However, Woren erred in his belief that self-strengthening could be brought about by relying solely on the rules and rituals of the ancients.

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<sup>26</sup> “Memorials to the Throne from Secretary Woren of the Grand Council,” *Foreign Affairs in Their Entirety (Tongzhi Reign)*, vol. 47, pp. 24–25.

<sup>27</sup> “Memorial by the First Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Gong et al. on the Bing Chen Day in the Ding Mou Third Month of the Sixth Year of the Tongzhi Reign”, *Foreign Affairs in Their Entirety (Tongzhi Reign)*, vol. 48, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> “Memorial by the First Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Gong et al on the Geng Shen Day,” *Foreign Affairs in Their Entirety (Tongzhi Reign)*, vol. 46, p. 4.

### 2.3 The Culture of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom

While the Qing government was taking a severe drubbing from those strange “foreign barbarians” and finding no way to defend itself, a force arose which began to deal blows at the Qing from within. In 1851, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom uprising led by Hong Xiuquan (1814–1864) erupted in Jintian village of Guangxi’s Guiping County and, in a decade of hard-fought battles, took over half of China, set up its capital in Nanjing, and became the greatest inner threat to the Qing court. Ultimately, however, the political regime of this peasant uprising collapsed under joint attacks by both the internal and external forces of reaction.

The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom uprising was the most extensive peasant rebellion in China’s history and the last one prior to the birth of the Chinese Communist Party. In many respects, it differed substantially from previous peasant uprisings in Chinese history, and this was most prominently manifested in terms of its ideology and culture.

As against all previous peasant uprisings, which had attracted the masses merely by raising slogans about equality or touting the “Ways of Heaven,” the leaders of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom devised a God-fearing church modeled on Western Christianity. They proclaimed that all people were equal before the Lord in Heaven and that all should worship the Lord just as children in a family serve their father. The father would not be authoritarian nor partial (“Wherefore should the Lord show partiality?”<sup>29</sup>), and all were brothers and sisters who should till the land together and share their food, clothing, and wealth. People were equal in all aspects, and all would be fed and clothed. Two things here were worth noting: (1) In the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, everyone should believe in the Lord as the one and only true God and should not worship any other deity. This differed radically from the Chinese peasants’ customary polytheist beliefs and benefited the Taiping Kingdom by enabling it to unify its decrees, unify its command structure, strengthen discipline, and enhance cohesion. (2) The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom’s claim that there was only one true God—the one God that people in China and all “foreign countries” should worship in common. This was an important feature, one in which the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom transcended all peasant uprisings in previous Chinese history and which hinted at the germination of a vague global, or cosmopolitan, awareness among the leaders of the rebels. This phenomenon could only have occurred after the Opium Wars. Both prior to the uprising and after the establishment of their Heavenly Capital in Nanjing, leaders of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom had had extensive contacts with Western personages including missionaries, journalists, and other travelers, for which reason their “cosmopolitan awareness” was somewhat more pronounced than that of the general run of Chinese officials and literati. This cosmopolitan awareness was forcefully expressed in

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<sup>29</sup> Hong Xiuquan: “Hymn of the Original Way to Save the World”, see *Collected Papers on China’s Modern History: Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, vol. 1, p. 47, published by the Shenzhen Guoguang Society, 1952.

several documents written out by Hong Xiuquan. In his Hymn of the Original Way to Save the World, for example, he wrote: “Since the beginning of time there has been only one true God whom everyone high or low should piously revere; the Heavenly Father and Lord is the same for all people and has been passed down in the one family under Heaven since ancient times.”<sup>30</sup> In his Instructions on the Original Way to Awaken the World, he wrote: “The Lord God is the common father of all people under Heaven. Here in China the Lord God ordains the laws of creation, and this is also true in distant foreign lands. In distant foreign lands the Lord God creates and protects, and this is also true here in China. All men in all lands under Heaven are brothers, and all women in all lands under Heaven are sisters, so why should there be those unfair borders and boundaries? So why should there be thoughts of devouring our lands?” The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom’s ideal was that “All under Heaven are of one family and together share peace and tranquility.” In Hong Xiuquan’s view, people’s horizons and spirits should best be broad, not narrow, for “when spirits are broad, all are as though of one country.”<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that the “lands under Heaven” referred to here were quite different from the “nine *zhou* of Yu’s domains” that the ancients called the “lands under Heaven.” The “lands under Heaven” here referred to the lands of all nations in the world, and what Hong called “broad spiritedness” actually meant “cosmopolitan awareness.”

The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom’s God-worshipping church was created by Hong Xiuquan and others for the purpose of organizing and mobilizing the masses for an uprising.<sup>32</sup> But since the peasant masses they addressed were basically uneducated, they could not replicate the Christianity of the West in its original form, nor could they themselves have accepted an unrevised Christianity. This was clearly acknowledged both by Westerners who came in contact with the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in those days and by Chinese scholars who later studied the Taiping. However, this matter in itself shows that in the wake of the Opium Wars, practically all of China’s intellectuals of any sensitivity realized that sole reliance on the resources of tradition would by no means suffice if a way out were to be sought for a moribund China, and that some Western things would have to be learned or referenced. As for which things should be learned and how to learn them—that would call for a lengthy process of trial and error. The same applied to the leaders of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, and would apply to the subsequent Westernization factions.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 92.

<sup>32</sup> Opinions differ on this matter. Based on Hong Rengan’s accounts, some people maintain that Hong Xiuquan et al. had no intention of staging an uprising when they first set up their God-worshipping church, and were later compelled to resist when the authorities arrested and killed members of the church. Luo Ergang does not agree with this version and is convinced that Hong Xiuquan et al. created the God-worshipping church to serve the needs of the uprising. I am inclined to agree with Luo Ergang.



While learning from the Christianity of the West, Hong Xiuquan and others displayed a number of anti-traditionalist tendencies which found concentrated expression in their attitude toward Confucius.

In earlier years, Hong had several times sat for the imperial civil service exams, and each time failed. This history of setbacks, plus his contacts with Christian religious tracts and the revolutionary thinking he gradually developed, gave rise to his anti-Confucian proclivities. In 1843, prior to the uprising, Hong Xiuquan had already performed acts of “casting out Confucian memorial tablets” and Hong Xiuquan and others launched a campaign to get rid of idols after setting up their God-worshipping church, all of the sake of emphasizing faith in the One True God. This campaign included the smashing of material idols made of clay and wood as well as the extirpation of idols in people’s ideology and minds, and one of the most important among the latter was Confucius. The book *Taiping Heavenly Days* (*taiping tian ri*) written by Hong Xiuquan before the 1848 uprising contains a story in the form of a legend which recounts how Confucius was put to great humiliation. The story goes that the Heavenly Brother Jesus Christ assembles all angels in Heaven before God the Heavenly Father. The Heavenly Father points at three books displayed on the table before him and admonishes Hong Xiuquan by saying that one of the books has been passed down by the Heavenly Father and that “this book is true and without errors.” The second book has been passed down by the Heavenly Brother Jesus Christ and “this book is also true and without errors.” The third book, however, has been passed down by Confucius and “contains a great many errors.” The story’s climax: God the Heavenly Father rebukes Confucius, asking: “Why is it that you befuddle people’s thoughts in this manner so that the common folk know not about me and your reputation surpasses mine?” Confucius attempts to remonstrate at first, but finally falls silent for lack of arguments. The Heavenly Brother Jesus Christ also reproves Confucius, saying: “By concocting such a book for teaching others, even my brethren have been misled!” All of the assembled angels, too, bring charges against him, and The Master also castigates him: “Did you write this book for teaching people? How could do such a thing?” Seeing that everyone in Heaven is castigating him, Confucius attempts to flee from Heaven together with a band of devils and demons. Then God the Heavenly Father dispatches The Master (meaning Hong Xiuquan—the Author) and some angels to apprehend Confucius. They truss up Confucius with ropes and bring him into the presence of the Heavenly Father. Sorely angered, the Heavenly Father orders the angels to whip Confucius, who falls on his knees before Brother Jesus Christ and begs again and again for mercy. There is much flogging, and much pleading by Confucius. Eventually, the Heavenly Father, considering that Confucius’ merits outweigh his errors, permits him to stay in Heaven to enjoy its ease and comforts, but forbids him from descending to the mortal world.<sup>33</sup> This story indeed vented some of Hong Xiuquan’s mortification as a scholar who had time and again failed

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<sup>33</sup> “Taiping Heavenly Days,” see *Materials on Modern Chinese History Series: Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* vol. 2, pp. 635–636.

the civil service examinations. Yet it was entirely devoid of academic value as it failed to point out where Confucius' teachings were wrong. It showed, on the one hand, that Hong Xiuquan evinced more resentment than rationality and, on the other, that in his heart of hearts he had not freed himself from the influences of Confucius' teachings. There was also a third aspect, i.e., that all of the publicity materials he authored were written for the peasant masses, and as such could not, and did not need to, hold much in the way of academic theory. This circumstance determined that, whereas the thinking of Hong Xiuquan and his associates commanded authority in a highly militarized milieu, it hardly brought any influence to bear on the mainstream ideology of Chinese society.

Admixed among several documents compiled or written by Hong Xiuquan prior to the Boxer uprising were some elements of the ideology of Confucius, Mencius, and other Confucians. However, these were eliminated as far as possible when the documents were reprinted in the Taiping Manifesto after the founding of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, which enforced very strict laws on destroying the ancient classics of Confucius and Mencius and banned the perusal or concealment of such books. I believe that this does not necessarily mean that Hong Xiuquan and his cronies had developed a more profound critical understanding of the teachings of Confucius and Mencius. It is quite possible that Hong Xiuquan adopted this measure in order to get on closer terms with Christian countries in the West.

The leaders of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom did more than their forefathers to express their social ideal of pursuing equality. "Most men under Heaven are brothers, and most women under Heaven are sisters." Based on the social principle of equality, women enjoyed a fair degree of respect within the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, which clearly stipulated that men and women were to be apportioned equal amounts of farmland and that men and women were equal in terms of attending church services, listening to sermons, and worshipping God—in contrast to the Chinese tradition which forbade women from setting foot in places of worship. The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's rules on marriage were also quite enlightened, in that nuptials were not to be restricted to contracts based on "wealth" or "equal social standing" and therefore came quite close to advocating freedom of marriage. One very important matter was that girls no longer had to have their feet bound, which indubitably constituted a sort of emancipation for them. Objectively speaking, however, this matter was closely connected with the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's wars and military needs. After the kingdom's capital city was established, Hong Xiuquan and other leaders, who conferred royal and ministerial titles on themselves, all acquired bevy of concubines—behavior that quite substantially discounted their professed respect for women.

The brightest spot in the Heavenly Kingdom's ideology was Hong Rengan's (1822–1864) *New Essays on Government and Politics*. This book was written during the days that Hong Rengan lived in Hong Kong, maintained extensive contacts with Westerners and Western books, acquired a general comprehension of the economic, political and cultural development of the advanced Western countries, and came to understand that the reason for their state of development was *fa shan* (the practice of good laws). When, in 1859, he finally arrived in the

capital city Nanjing and was given an important position by Hong Xiuquan, he presented his *New Essays* to Hong Xiuquan in the hope that the latter would adopt some of his ideas about learning Western law. The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom had already fallen into decline at this time. After reading the book, Hong Xiuquan, except for annotating a few suggestions with the words “not feasible at this time” or “implementing this can wait until all demons are annihilated,” in most cases wrote such comments as “yes” or “I approve of this”—which, however, did not mean he accepted the *New Essays on Government and Politics* as a new program for the Heavenly Kingdom. Luo Ergang (1901–1997) maintained that Hong Xiuquan’s renewed promulgation of the *Arable Land System of the Heavenly Kingdom* in 1861 showed that Hong did not approve of replacing the *Arable Land System* with the *New Suggestions*. It is quite evident that the *Arable Land System of the Heavenly Kingdom*, which reflected the small-peasant mentality, and the *New Essays on Government and Politics*, which advocated the development of capitalism, could not be promoted concurrently without coming into conflict. Hence I believe that Luo Ergang’s view is correct.<sup>34</sup> The *New Essays* neither represented the ideology of the Heavenly Kingdom’s main leaders nor was it a product of the Heavenly Kingdom’s revolutionary practice. It was merely a list of suggestions brought into the Kingdom by Hong Rengan who maintained personal connections with Hong Xiuquan but had long been absent from the Heavenly Kingdom and had never taken part in the Heavenly Kingdom’s revolutionary activities. What these suggestions did indicate was that virtually all persons sensitive to the trend of the times were aware of the need to learn and draw lessons from the “good laws” in the West if a weak China was to be made strong.

The greatest contribution the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom to modern Chinese history, rather than bringing in any input of its own, was that it dealt a crippling blow to and fundamentally rattled the rule of the Qing imperial monarchy. The Qing Dynasty never succeeded in restoring its ruling powers after the Taiping revolution, and became permanently mired in internal and external crises and in an unraveling of its monarchical authority—a process which, once begun, became irreversible. It was during this process of unraveling monarchical authority that diverse elements of reform and revolution gradually accumulated and prepared the gravediggers of the Qing Dynasty.

## 2.4 The Initial Foundations of Modern Culture

The mid-1870s coincided with the Tongzhi and Guangxu reigns, and some historians talk of “China’s revitalization during the Tongzhi reign,” which in reality consisted of the Westernization Movement. In the decades from the early 1860s to the mid-1890s, a number of changes indeed took place in Chinese society. First, a

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<sup>34</sup> See Luo Ergang (1991, pp. 859–865).

heretofore nonexistent modern industry had emerged. We have mentioned earlier that when Li Hongzhang and others began to set up a modern industry which primarily served military needs, they had already foreseen that the new manufacturing techniques were bound to spread to civil society. Actually, that would have happened whether or not they foresaw it since it was the inevitable logic of development. The year 1873 saw the emergence of the China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company, the first modern enterprise of a civilian nature. It was followed by a series of civilian industries. Between 1874 and 1876, telegraph lines were strung up in Taiwan and Fujian. These were first destined for military use, but were soon converted "mainly for the benefit of commerce." In the words of Sheng Xuanhuai (1844–1916), the basic purpose of setting up the telegraph business was to "bring big benefits to merchants and the civilian population."<sup>35</sup> The earliest coal mines were started up in 1875, the first among them being the Cizhou Coal and Iron Mine in Hebei, the Guangji Xing Guo Colliery in Hubei, and the Keelung Coal Mine in Taiwan (1876). After these, coal mining industries were set up in Anhui, Guangxi, Shandong, and Fengtian successively. In 1881, other industries which exploited metallic mineral resources were set up, among them the Pingquan Copper Mine in Jehol, the Hefeng Copper Mine in Hubei, the Zhaoyuan Gold Mine in Shandong, the Qingxi Iron Mine in Guizhou, the Mohe Gold Mine in Heilongjiang, the Daye Iron Mine in Hubei, and so forth. The rise of modern industries, and especially the setting up of military factories, mining, and other heavy industries, inevitably promoted the development of the transportation industry. Foreigners had long ago raised numerous proposals about building railways, but these proposals were opposed by the great majority of Qing government officials who feared, firstly, that railways would provide conveniences for foreign aggression and expansion and, secondly, that railway construction would damage people's farmland, housing, and graveyards and squeeze their means of livelihood, and thus cause unrest among the populace and controversies with the foreigners. As time passed, however, some Westernization officials thought railways should be operated by the Chinese themselves. In 1876, the British arbitrarily built a Shanghai-to-Jiangwang rail line which, however, was subsequently bought over by the Chinese government and dismantled. In the same year, a light railway was built in Jilong (Keelung), Taiwan. In 1880, Tang Tingshu (1832–1892) constructed the Tangshan to Xugezhuang Railway which was urgently needed for shipping coal. In 1887, this railway was extended to Dagu (Taku) to Tianjin and onward to Tongzhou.

By 1894, before the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, construction on a railway to the Three Northeastern Provinces had already reached the Jiayuguan Pass.

In the 1880s, construction started on a modern textile industry which was more closely tied in with the people's livelihood. This included the Lanzhou Textile Bureau (1880), the Shanghai Mechanical Textile Bureau (first set up in 1878,

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<sup>35</sup> "The Sheng Xuanhuai Archives", *Telegraphy Bureau Business Charter*, 7th year of the Guangxu reign; quoted from Xia Dongyuan: *History of the Westernization Movement*, p. 223, Huadong Normal University Press, 1992.

reestablished in 1880, again reestablished in 1887, and put in scale production in 1889), and the Huasheng Chief Textile Mill, the Yuyuan Silk Factory, the Huaxin, Dadun, and Yujin factories and the subsequent Hubei Textiles Bureau.<sup>36</sup>

The development of modern industries inevitably created concentrations of urban inhabitants, which gave rise to large populations. These again inevitably generated a series of public undertakings in such fields as transportation, health, education, culture, and so forth which in fact served as seedbeds for the rise and development of modern culture.

China's modern industry grew and developed in contention with foreigners for China's economic rights, yet at the same time could not do entirely without the selfsame foreigners. Technology, equipment, and so forth had to be imported via foreigners and their services. China's relations with other countries extensively involved such fields as politics, military affairs, and trade and commerce, and China urgently needed to understand those countries. The Western powers had for many years requested that China, while receiving foreign emissaries, also send emissaries abroad. Despite repeated deliberations, however, this matter had never been resolved. It was only in 1875 that China for the first time decided to send emissaries to Europe, and even then this decision came up against opposition and even scorn. Nonetheless, from then on the number of emissaries going abroad grew apace, and China's foreign diplomacy took to a road that was more or less consistent with modern international relations, whereas only a short while earlier Chinese officials had regarded the stationing of emissaries abroad as something akin to providing hostages.<sup>37</sup> It was evident that people's understanding of the outside world was widening and their concepts had begun to change.

China was still a long way from gaining any sort of leverage in terms of diplomatic negotiations and, in most cases, remained as the underdog. Still, the fact that the central government had set up a department dedicated to foreign relations and was sending emissaries and stationing diplomatic envoys abroad denoted some sort of progress. Chinese emissaries and diplomatic envoys acquired wider perspectives and greater understanding of foreign countries by personally witnessing the state of affairs in the Western countries. Many of the timely ideas and suggestions for promoting progress in China in the final decades of the Qing Dynasty were generated by emissaries to other countries and by envoys stationed in those countries. This was a matter of major significance.

In earlier works, such as Wei Yuan's *Treatises on the Maritime Kingdoms*, Xu Jishe's (1795–1893) *A Short Account of the Maritime Circuit* (Ying huan zhi lue), and Liang Tingnan's (1796–1861) *Assembled Descriptions of Various Countries*

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<sup>36</sup> Regarding the development of modern industries during the Westernization Movement, refer also to Xia Dongyuan: *History of the Westernization Movement*, chapters 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, and 16.

<sup>37</sup> It was averred in the "Memorial in the Jiazhen Year by Grand Coordinator Liu Kun" that "diplomats should not be dispatched to other countries upon the orders of those countries; emplacing important ministers in distant lands is tantamount to sending out hostages." *Foreign Affairs in Their Entirety*, (*Tongzhi Reign*), 18th and 20th day of 11th lunar month of the Guangxu reign.

(He xing guo shuo), one found little more than very sketchy descriptions of society and politics in the Western countries, and it was impossible to visualize the true features of their organizations, institutions, or operations. After the direct observations by Guo Songtao's (1818–1891), Xue Fucheng (1838–1894), and other diplomatic envoys abroad became available, people gained a somewhat more authentic view of the various advantages of Western society in terms of their social organizations and systems as well as the reasons thereof, and gradually conceived the desire to emulate their examples instead of merely applauding the Westerners for “carrying forward the legacies of the Three dynasties.”

These envoys' understandings of the Western world surpassed those of earlier officials mainly in the following aspects:

- (a) They recognized that the Western political and educational systems had taken shape and developed over an extended period of time and had not come about incidentally. In his diaries, Guo Songtao's extensively recorded sequences of events in Britain's political, economic and cultural development over the preceding millennium in order to demonstrate the reasons for the current maturity and stability of Britain's institutions, the prosperity of its people and its national strength. He convincingly showed that the West stood where it was now not because it had inherited anything from China's past but “due to intrinsic reasons of its own.”<sup>38</sup>
- (b) Their specific observations of the organization of the Western parliamentary system, the division of work between the upper and lower houses, the mutual safeguards and constraints in parliaments and governments, the relationships between political parties, and parliamentary politics showed they had acquired some understanding of the separation-of-powers principle and the party politics of Western political systems and so forth.<sup>39</sup>
- (c) The effects of emphasizing rule of law. China had always esteemed “the rule of virtue.” But there was no way of ensuring all rulers would be virtuous and that had resulted in abrupt reversals in political situations and unpredictable eras of alternate stability and unrest. The envoys found that in Western political systems rulers could not treat countries as their private domains but had to regard these as the public property of all of their subjects. Rulers and subjects were both constrained by the legal system. Hence rulers dared not defy the public will, nor could the people transgress the law. This gave rise to societies that were orderly and governed by law.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> See *Diaries of Guo Songtao's*, 18th and 20th days of the 11th lunar month in the 3rd year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>39</sup> Same as above, 18th day of the 12th lunar month in the 3rd year of the Guangxu reign; and Zhang Deli: *Accompanying Emissaries on Missions to Britain and Russia*, 8th day of the 1st lunar month in the 3rd year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>40</sup> See *Diaries of Guo Songtao's*, 18th day of the 12th lunar month in the 3rd year of the Guangxu reign.

The notes taken by these diplomatic envoys abroad found limited circulation and at times were even subjected to proscriptions. Yet they were like new seeds, and once sown and disseminated in China would find, sometime and somewhere, suitable soil to germinate and grow like the hardy pines and cypresses that rear aloft on steep cliffs and mountain peaks. Later, during the Reform Movement, not a few outstanding persons of insight gained intellectual inspiration from the records and narrations produced by these emissaries and envoys.

Training new-type personnel became an urgent task for the requirements of diplomatic negotiations and the need to develop modern industries. Personnel cultivated by China's old-type education were only good at reading the so-called Confucian classics. But such things as the Four Books and Five Classics, commentaries on ancient texts, poetry and prose, textual criticisms, and so forth were utterly impractical. It had become imperative to develop a new type of education and cultivate new talent.

The first new-type schools run by China itself were the Tongwenguan language academies. The direct consideration for setting up these schools at the time was the need to train foreign language talent used during negotiations. This was dictated entirely by necessity. In his memorial on this matter, Yixin stated: "We must become proficient in their spoken and written languages if we wish to know the circumstances of various countries and not be misled."<sup>41</sup> Li Hongzhang put it more bluntly when he sent up his memorial on setting up language schools in Shanghai and Guangdong.

He wrote: "In twenty years of contacts between countries, many foreigners have learned to speak and write our language. The more proficient among them are able to read our classics and history books and have a good grasp of our governmental decrees, laws, official documents and civil circumstances, whereas very few of our officials and gentry have any fluency in foreign languages or writing." When engaging in negotiations, "everyone depends on renditions by foreign translators and interpreters, yet no one can guarantee that these are not biased, fabricated or otherwise flawed." The only persons in China who knew foreign languages were the "*tong shi*" [i.e., translators or interpreters], but many of these *tong shi* were of a highly complex nature, coming as they did from commercial circles or missionary schools. "These two types of persons are intellectually vapid and mentally despicable, and their interests extend to nothing more than material benefits and sensual pleasures. Furthermore, they understand only eighty to ninety percent of a spoken language and a mere ten to twenty percent of a written language. . . . In the course of negotiations, they frequently miss the import or nuances of words, or know only how to take advantage of the foreigners' strengths to sow discord for their own interests." Negotiations were a matter of major importance, yet "translators meddle in them and collude with the foreigners in order to share ill-gotten gains and satisfy their insatiable greed. They are able to wantonly sow discord and promote

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<sup>41</sup> "Another Memorial by Prince Gong," *Foreign Affairs in Their Entirety (Tongzhi Reign)*, vol. 8, p. 30; Hunan People's Publishing House, 1982.

exorbitant expenses because they can treat us like deaf-mutes and exercise their skills to inflate trifling matters into major contentions. Relations with foreign countries are important means for a country's long-term exchanges and interactions, and placing such important matters in the hands of persons of this sort only leads to lack of mutual understanding, inability to tell the true from the false, and inappropriate choices when making important decisions. This is no small matter!"<sup>42</sup> Thus, it was necessary to set up schools to train foreign language personnel. The Beijing Tongwenguan was established in 1862, after which the Shanghai Guangfang Language School and the Guangdong Language School were set up in 1863 and 1864, respectively. Li Hongzhang, in a memorial on running the Shanghai language school, pointed out that the training of foreign language personnel would not be limited to the needs of diplomatic talks; such persons could also do extensive translations of Western books, which "would conceivably be of benefit for China's self-improvement."<sup>43</sup> Later, the Shanghai Guangfang Language School was amalgamated with the Translation Institute of the Jiangnan Manufacturing Office to become a major translation center in China in those years. It played an important role in disseminating Western learning.

It should also be noted that a large number of privately run foreign language schools (probably in the nature of short-term training classes) emerged in Shanghai, the most important venue for diplomatic negotiations at the time. Statistics show that as many as 14 such foreign language schools advertised student recruitments in the newspaper *Shen Bao* between 1872 and 1875.<sup>44</sup>

Assessments differ as to the role and influence of the Tongwenguan as China's first modern educational institutions. Claims by some that they possessed virtually no saving graces<sup>45</sup> are excessively biased. Objectively speaking, it was no easy matter for these newly initiated undertakings to struggle along under the stare of various critical, derisive and discriminatory eyes. Among the students they turned out were some of China's earliest diplomats and translators, such as Lu Zhengxiang (1871–1949), Yang Shu (1844–1917), Tang Zaifu (1878–1962), Yang Zhaojun (1854–?), Liu Jingren (1866–?), Liu Shixun (1868–?), and others who on many occasions served as envoys stationed abroad. Lu Zhengxiang also served as Chief Minister of Foreign Affairs during Nationalist times.

Another important measure adopted by the officially run new-type education was to send students for studies overseas. In 1872, the first group of 30 youngsters was sent to the USA. Four groups totaling 120 persons were sent out before opposition forced the termination of the initiative. There was also some highly useful talent among those who received such training. Many turned out remarkable performances in their own vocations. Records show that apart from three who fell ill and died in the USA, the rest who returned to China to serve in the political field

<sup>42</sup> *Complete Writings of Li Wenzhong: Memorials*, vol. 3, pp. 11–12.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> See Li Changli (1998b, p. 301).

<sup>45</sup> See *Reminiscences of Qi Rushan*, pp. 27–44, Baowentang Bookstore, 1989.



gave rise to a prime minister of state affairs, two foreign ministers, 2 ambassadors, and 12 other diplomats of other ranks. These students also produced two navy admirals, three ministers of railways, six railway experts, nine mining and metallurgy specialists, and other such personnel. When these youngsters returned to China, the *New York Times*, in a special commentary, spoke highly of the learning abilities of these Chinese youngsters and maintained that the implementation of the overseas studies policy was “outstandingly successful.” It also remarked that while emulating American science and technology and industrial and material civilization, China would also be taking back “elements of political reform.”<sup>46</sup> All of the students sent out to Europe by the Fujian School of Naval Administration took courses in military technologies and produced quite a number of outstanding persons who contributed to the construction of China’s modern navy. Especially memorable is the emergence among them of the eminent thinker Yan Fu (1894–1921). He was the first to translate and introduce to China the most representative classical works of Europe and thereby bring to the Chinese a deeper level of understanding of Western thought and culture.

During the Westernization Movement, a number of professional schools of various types were set up in various localities, as for example the School of Telegraphy in Fuzhou (1877), the School of Telegraphy in Tianjin (1880), the Academy of Western Learning in Guangzhou (in early 1880; later renamed the Naval Academy), the Biao Zheng Academy of Classical Learning in Jilin (1883), the School of Western Learning in Taiwan (1887), the School of Self-Strengthening in Hubei (1893), and the School of Pilotage at the China Merchants’ Steam Navigation Company (1894). There were also a number of military academies, such as the Tianjin Beiyang Naval Officers’ School (1880), the Guangdong Provincial Army-Navy Academy (1887), the Nanjing Naval Officers’ School (1890), the Weihai Naval Academy (1889), and so forth. These schools were directly established for the needs of various specialized undertakings, and the personnel they trained would of course serve the undertakings. These were China’s first group of persons to serve society by means of their professional knowledge. They differed entirely from the book learners who, under the old system of education, had studied the writings of the sages merely for the sake of coping with the civil service examinations.

In this period, old-type schools of classical learning were reformed and a number of new-type academies were set up. These began to teach new forms of knowledge, such as history, geography, mathematics, and various natural science disciplines. The better-known among these were the Long Men Academy in Shanghai (1864), the Shanghai Polytechnic Institution (1876), the Zheng Meng School (1878), the Nan Jing School in Jiangsu Province (1883), the Guang Ya Academy in Guangzhou (1889), and the Hubei-Hunan Academy of Classical Learning in Wuchang (1891).

The Shanghai Polytechnic Institution deserves special mention, since it may be regarded as a model for the new-type education in this period. Its contents and

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<sup>46</sup> See *Biographical Literature* (Zhuan ji wen xue), vol. 34, no 6.

methods of education stood in sharp contrast with those of China's traditional education.

The institution was founded by the Englishman Sir Walter Henry Medhurst (1823–1885), and by numerous Chinese gentry who joined in this initiative. Formally started up in 1876, the institution was a special educational institute that combined a museum with a science-technology school. The abundance of displays in the museum included small machines, instruments, and artifacts donated by diverse European countries. The institution was in general open to the public and could be visited at any time. In later days, it also organized lectures to which persons who specialized in Western learning were invited to discuss and demonstrate various kinds of scientific and technical knowhow. The lectures were very well attended and met with excellent response. During the course exams taken by the institution's students, various celebrities in China including important government officials were frequently invited to participate in devising questions, reviewing test papers and deciding on awards. This practice was somewhat akin to what is today called "open-door school operations." The method established good communication between educational institutions and society and, while it kept students from being tied down to textbooks and laid them open to social scrutiny, it also exposed society to the influences of the new education.

From the teaching methods and the examination contents at the Polytechnic Institution, one can see how various types of new knowledge were being disseminated in those years and gain an approximate idea of the changes wrought in the ideological concepts of people who came in contact with the new knowledge.

For example, among the exam questions devised by Li Hongzhang (1823–1901) was this one:

Q: Of the theories pertaining to the natural sciences mentioned in *Da Xue* (The Great Learning), at least several tens appeared after the time of Zheng Kangcheng. Do these theories coincide in any way with the more recent Western learning? The natural sciences in Western learning began with Greece's Aristotle. These evolved and became more refined in the time of the Englishman [Francis] Bacon, and reached greater perfection with the widespread publication of the works of Darwin and Spencer. Can you give a detailed account of their origins and development?

This question involved the history of Western science, and all the personalities mentioned had played key roles in this history. Here we see the attention paid by leading officials of the Westernization Movement to Western learning as well as the extent of their understanding of Western learning.

Other questions devised by Li Hongzhang were extremely broad-ranging and touched upon such matters as international relations, developments in other countries, international trade, physics, chemistry, mathematics, geography, and so forth. Some also had to do with ancient Chinese learning, such as that of Guan Zi of China's Spring and Autumn Period and Yang Xiong of the Western Han era.

Among the exam topics devised by other personages were, for instance, Xue Fucheng's (1838–1894) questions about naval construction, the silk and tea trade; Cheng Xuanhuai's (1844–1916) questions regarding ship-building and telegraphy; Gong Zhaoyuan's (1835–?) questions regarding the pros and cons of building

railways, about floods and droughts, and evaluations of translated science-technology books; and Wu Fuci's questions about currencies, financing, tax levies on transferred goods, and the citizenship of overseas Chinese. Notably, among Liu Kun's questions was one on paddy rice varieties and, among Zheng Guangying's questions, one on the feasibility of setting up a parliament in China.<sup>47</sup>

From the examples given above, one sees some of the salient characteristics of the Polytechnic Institution's education: (1) Special attention to science and technology; (2) attention to current affairs in other countries; (3) concern for the people's livelihood and things useful for China; and (4) no attempt to avoid sensitive issues. One might say that education as practiced at the Polytechnic Institution was a model of the most leading-edge education in China. The great majority of the teachers and students and the personages who took part in the school's management, education, and assessments were persons who shared the most up-and-coming ideology and concepts in China in those days. Hence, one might say that this academy and others like or similar to it and the new-type schools were experimental gardens for sowing the seeds of China's modernization.

When discussing new-type education, one must not overlook the missionary schools. They not only surpassed other new-type education in terms of scale (records show that students in missionary schools throughout China numbered 16,800 in 1890), but they played a demonstration role for other types of new education and even for social undertakings because they had undergone a longer period of development. These missionary schools also turned out a substantial number of outstanding talents, such as Rong Hong, Ma Xiangbo (1840–1939), Wu Tingfang (1870–1929), Tang Tingshu (1832–1892), and others. Although the schools run by missionaries were oriented first and foremost toward the spreading of religion, their teachings were not limited to religious content and their effects went beyond the scope of religion. In the 1840s, a student at a school run by a British missionary wrote a composition on a theme assigned by his teacher and compared British and Chinese education. He stated: "I used to study at a Chinese school and, after wasting four years of time and money, learned nothing but a few names. I have now been studying for two and a half years at this British school, and what I have gained in this time is, I feel, no less than ten thousand times what I acquired in those four long years. . . . That is because she [sic] teaches much useful knowledge, such as astronomy, geometry, algebra and religious truths. . . . whereas China's schools never teach these things." This student also described the differences between Chinese and British schools and noted: "A major difference is that Chinese books are about ancient times, while English books are about the present

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<sup>47</sup> Regarding the circumstances of the Polytechnic Institution, refer also to Xiong Yuezhi: *The Dissemination of Western Learning and Late Qing Dynasty Society*, Chapter IV; Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1994.

and the future and about discovering truths. For this reason alone, all Chinese books follow the same pattern, while English books constantly strive for perfection.”<sup>48</sup>

We, for now, do not say whether this student’s comparisons of the two education systems were comprehensive or correct; we only say these were the personal feelings of a young student, i.e., that one system taught useful knowledge while the other did not; that one system focused on antiquity while the other focused on the present and the future; that one was stereotyped while the other sought the truth and constantly strove for perfection. It is immediately evident which kind of education turned out the more useful talent.

Persons of insight in China very soon recognized the superiority of Western-type schools, which was why—as we have mentioned earlier—the 1860s witnessed the emergence of such things as the reform of China’s old academies or the setting up of new ones and the introduction of new-type teaching materials.

And as mentioned earlier, the emergence and development of a modern economy stimulated a need for information, whereupon news media undertakings rose up in response to this need. Foreign churches were again the first to set up news undertakings within China. The earliest Chinese-language newspaper was the *Chashisu Meiyue Tongji Zhuan* (Chinese Monthly Magazine), which was published in Malacca, Malaysia entirely in the service of missionary work. It was started up in 1815 and stopped publication in 1821. Later, between 1823 and 1826, there was the *Te Xuan Cuo Yao Mei Yue Ji Zhuan* (A Monthly Record of Important Selections) and the *Tian Xian Xin Wen* (Universal Gazette) (1828–1829). The first Chinese language newspaper printed within China’s borders was probably the *Dong Xi Yang Kao Mei Yue Tong Ji Zhuan* (Eastern and Western Ocean’s Monthly Investigation), started up in Guangzhou in 1833 by the German missionary Karl Friedrich August Gutzlaff (1803–1851). The chief characteristic of this magazine was its vigorous descriptions of Western culture aimed at showing the Chinese that people in the Western countries were not barbarians and had many things worth emulating by the Chinese. Another characteristic was that it contained a substantial amount of news and economic information, and that it had already taken on the features of a genuine news publication. This magazine went out of publication in 1838. That year, another missionary, Walter Henry Medhurst (1796–1857), started up a magazine entitled *Ge Guo Xiao Xi* (News from All Lands) but it soon ceased publication.

After the Opium Wars, the more important Chinese language newspapers operated by Westerners were the *Xia Er Guan Zhen* (Chinese Serial) (1853–1856, published in Hongkong), the *Liu He Cong Tan* (Shanghai Serial) (1857–1858,

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<sup>48</sup> Original text from George H. Danton: *The Culture Contacts of the United States and China*, pp. 64 and 66; quoted from Zheng Shiqu: “Missionaries in China in the 1840s to 1860s and the Dissemination of Western Learning,” carried in *Cultural Problems in China in Modern Times*, Zhonghua Book Company, 1989, pp. 99–100.

Shanghai), the Hongkong Chinese and Foreign News (c. 1875),<sup>49</sup> the Zhong Guo Jiao Hui Xin Bao (Chinese Church News) (started up in 1868 by Young John Allen [1836–1907], renamed the Jiao Hui Xin Bao [Church News] in 1872, and again renamed the Wan Guo Gong Bao [A Review of The Times, or The Globe Magazine] in 1874), and the best-known Shanghai Shun Pao (Shen Bao) (1872). The first Chinese language publication initiated by a Chinese was the one run by Chen Ai-ting (?–1905) called Xiang Gang Hua Zi Ri Bao (The Hongkong Chinese Mail) (1872), and the second one was Xun Huan Ri Bao (Universal Circulating Herald) set up in Hongkong and run by Wang Tao (1828–1897). There was another one that specialized in reporting scientific information, Ge Zhi Hui Bian (The Chinese Scientific Magazine), started up in 1876. Of these, Wan Guo Gong Bao and Shen Bao were the most widely circulated and most influential within China. Although Shen Bao was set up by an American, its chief manager and writers were Chinese, and it eventually landed in the hands of its Chinese manager. These newspapers and publications provided society with commercial information, reported important news from China and other countries, transmitted information on the natural and social sciences, and provided other cultural content. Shen Bao, for instance, in addition to reporting large amounts of commercial information and Chinese, foreign and local news, also provided some information on Darwin's evolution theory, printed serialized translated novels, initiated women's studies, promoted the setting up of anti-foot-binding societies, and even published statements about setting up a parliament.<sup>50</sup> These were unquestionably contents of highly contemporary significance, the dissemination of which was bound to exert an influence on society.

A modern publishing business also emerged and developed. The earliest new-type publishers were also set up by foreigners. The British missionary Walter Henry Medhurst set up the Mo Hai Shu Guan (Sea-of-Ink Library) in Shanghai in December 1843. After that, the American missionary William Gamble (1830–1886) operated the Mei Hua Shu Guan (American Presbyterian Press) (1860), William Martin (1827–1916) and others set up the Yi Zhi Shu Hui (Educational Association of China) (1877), Alexander Williamson (1829–1890) set up the Guang Xue Hui, the predecessor of which was the Tong Wen Shu Hui (Christian Literature Society for China) (1887), and so forth. These institutions were at first engaged mainly in the translation and publication of religious books, but later gradually increased their translations and publications of books on the natural sciences, history, geography, and so forth. Chief among the translating and publishing institutions operated by China's official quarters was the translation institute

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<sup>49</sup> Opinions differ about the date of establishment of the Hongkong Chinese and Foreign News. At first Ge Gongzhen said that took place in 1858. According to recent textual research by Zhuo Nansheng—the Singaporean scholar who specializes in research on the history of early Chinese-language publications—the date should be November 3, 1857. Others claim the newspaper was set up by Wu Tingfang. However, Zhuo Nansheng points out that this newspaper was converted from the Xiang Gang Chuan Tou Huo Jia Zhi (Hong Kong Ship Price Newspaper) attached to The Daily Press (an English language newspaper).

<sup>50</sup> See Shen Bao, 29th day of the 5th lunar month in the 14th year of the Guangxu reign.

of the Jiangnan Manufacturing Office. This was the most prolific and influential one. A few machine-building factories and bureaus and new-type schools in other places did some translating and publishing work, partly because they needed some specialized knowhow for their own development, and partly because there was a need for it in society.

Worth mentioning is an institution that engaged mainly in the translation and publication of medical books—the Guangzhou Pok Tsai Hospital (1859). This had been a conventional hospital, but in addition to treating patients and dispensing medicines it began to translate and compile medical books on its own. Since the Chinese used to believe solely in traditional Chinese medicine, the emergence of Western medicine and Western medical publications opened a new world of knowledge for the Chinese.

The translation and publication of Western books was a major event in late Qing society. Dissemination of culture takes place through multiple channels, one of which consists of everyday things in people's lives—i.e., things that change people's way of life, gradually affect their concepts, and then change the way in which they create and enjoy culture. Another is through direct contacts between people and through gaining knowledge of other people's language, behavior, thoughts, and concepts in different life environments. This is a process of subtle influencing, reciprocal absorption, and mutual change. Still another channel—one which would seem to be relatively indirect but that promotes changes in the spirit and content of culture at a deeper level—is the translation of foreign classics and writings. Prior to the eastern advance of Western culture, Buddhist culture exerted a major influence on China's culture and a most important role in the dissemination of Buddhist culture was played by the translation of the Buddhist scriptures. It is no coincidence that the stories about the Tang Dynasty monk who traveled to the Western Heavens to obtain the Buddhist sutras struck such a deep chord in people's hearts. The translation and publication of books on Western learning during the late Qing era similarly played a significant role in bringing about changes in China's culture.

Most of the earliest translations were rendered verbally by missionaries and taken down in writing by Chinese scholars. Large numbers of science-technology and social science books were translated in this way. Even literary works for a time underwent such a process. For instance, Lin Qinnan's (1852–1924) translations of Western novels were first translated verbally by persons conversant with foreign languages and then written down by Lin. Although this method hardly ensured accurate conveyance of ideas and concepts, it was the only feasible method in those times of acute shortages of translators. These works played a major role in that start-up period. We have previously mentioned a number of important translation institutions at that time. Statistics have been made of the books they translated and published. The Sea-of-Ink Library, for instance, turned out a total of 171 kinds of books between 1844 and 1860, the majority (138) of which were of the religious category, and a minority (33) of which fell in the science-technology and social

science category.<sup>51</sup> However, a good many of the latter were highly influential. For example, *Xu Ji He Yuan Ben* (Supplementary Elements of Geometry, containing the last nine volumes of Euclid's Geometry), *Zhong Xue* (An Elementary Treatise on Mechanics), *Tan Tian* (Outline of Astronomy), *Di Li Quan Zhi* (Universal Geography), the reprint of *Quan Ti Xin Lun* (A New Theory of the Body), and others served Chinese scholars as important lines of access to Western learning. As stated earlier, the largest translating and publishing institution at the time was the Jiangnan Manufacturing Office's translation institute. Some statistics show that the academy had translated 126 kinds of books by 1899, a good many of which were widely distributed and highly influential. Most of these were science-technology books on mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, and medicine. Several books in the social-science category were much welcomed by scholars, as for example *Zuo Zhi Chu Yan* (Homely Words to Aid Governance), *Lie Guo Si Ji Zheng Yao* (The Statesman's Year Book), and so forth, both of which exerted a very strong influence on progressive personages in the last years of the Qing Dynasty. Liang Qichao frequently cited these books, the dissemination of which provided forward-thinking intellectuals with general information on Western political and ideological theories and political operations and played an important role in the forming of their thinking on reform. *Kang You Wei Zi Bian Nian Pu* (Chronicle of Kang Youwei's Life) records how, in 1879, he "obtained The Statesman's Yearbook . . . perused several kinds of Western books . . . gradually accumulated books on Western learning which served him as the basis for the teaching of Western learning." In 1882, he wrote: "Passing through Shanghai. . . purchased a large amount of Western books to be used for teaching and research purposes after coming back. . . From then on I concentrated on Western studies and began to discard all of my old views." In 1883, he wrote: "I purchased the *Wan Guo Gong Bao* and spent much time studying books on Western learning, which involved such things as sonics, optics, chemistry, electric power, mechanics, the histories of various countries and the travel memoirs of various personages." Kang Youwei felt he had benefitted greatly from these Western books and, through a mutual friend, opined to Zhang Zhidong (1837–1909): "There are too few Western books in China, and greater part of the translations by Fryer [the Englishman John Fryer, 1839–1928] are on military and medical subjects and of little practical value, whereas his books on politics are most vital. Western learning contains many new things that are not known in China. Setting up institutions to translate these is a matter of the greatest importance."<sup>52</sup> Kang's reactions indicate, on the one hand, that Western books were exerting an enormous influence on Chinese intellectuals and, on the other, that progressive persons were dissatisfied with the then state of Western book translation and publication and eagerly looked forward to seeing books on political studies. Kang's view that "Western learning contains many new things that are not known

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<sup>51</sup> See Xiong Yuezhi (1994, p. 188).

<sup>52</sup> *Chronicle of Kang Youwei's Life*, see *Reform Movement of 1989* (4), pp. 115, 116 and 119; Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1957.

in China” was already a far cry from his contention in the 1840s and 1850s that with the exception of technical skills, the Westerners were greatly inferior to China in terms of politics, education, and ethical matters. One might well say that the translation, publication, and dissemination of Western books had to a considerable extent already changed the ideology and concepts of China’s intelligentsia.

When discussing the translation and publication of Western books in the late years of the Qing Dynasty, Liang Qichao stated: “As maritime embargoes were lifted and foreign encroachments intensified by the day, orders were issued to the Jiangnan Manufacturing Office to regard the translation of Western books as its first duty. A hundred books have been completed over the last few years. The foreign language academies and the churches set up by Westerners in China have also engaged in translation work. In twenty or more years, approximately three hundred kinds of books have become available for studies.” That was about the achievements. Liang also declared: “What the Westerners know in the fields of phonics, optics, chemistry, electricity, agriculture, mining, industry, and commerce is, in terms of the simplicity or complexity of their knowledge, a far cry from our Chinese textual research, literature and *tie kuo jia yan* (literary sundries)!” That was his conclusion about the difference between China’s traditional learning and the Western learning; a conclusion which was of course quite shallow. However, Liang did come to the conclusion that, “If our country hopes to improve itself, the solution lies in translating more Western books, and if our men of learning wish to gain in stature, they should strive to read more Western books (Liang Qichao 1989, pp. 122–123).” And, “if China wishes to regard self-strengthening as its first strategy, then it should regard translating books as its first duty.”<sup>53</sup> He also stated: “Book translation is truly a matter of urgency today,” and “the Reform will be no more than empty talk if the translation of books is not speeded up now.”<sup>54</sup> Liang Qichao had already been highly dissatisfied with the state of Western book translations and publications when the Reform Movement started up. He had complained: “Of the hundreds of books translated from Western languages into Chinese, those on statecraft can be counted on one’s fingers.” And he said reproachfully: “All are convinced that China is weaker than the Westerners because it has not paid attention to its weapons and equipment, has not improved its ships, and has not refined its manufacturing. They have turned a blind eye to the real substance of the methods used by Westerners to build up their countries.”<sup>55</sup> This, after the 1870s and 1880s, was the unanimous opinion of forward-looking persons, and it reflected the general state of mind of China’s intellectuals on the eve of the political reforms.

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<sup>53</sup> Liang Qichao: “On Reading ‘A Bibliography of Japanese Works’,” *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Second Collection*, p. 52.

<sup>54</sup> Liang Qichao: “Preface and Notes to the Works Published by the Datong Translation Bureau,” *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Second Collection*, p. 57.

<sup>55</sup> Liang Qichao: “Preface to ‘The Collectanea of Western Government’,” *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Second Collection*, p. 63.



## 2.5 The Conceptual Framework of “Zhong Ti Xi Yong”

Previously, all historians have used China’s defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 to define the ultimate failure of the 30-odd years of the Westernization Movement from the early 1860s to the mid-1890s. This may not be wrong from the political point of view. However, from the perspective of the hundred or more years of China’s ideological and cultural transformation, one cannot use the term “failure” to simplistically sum up those 30 years of history.

In those 30-odd years, apart from experiencing that major event—the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom movement, the Chinese people accomplished in the main three things:

1. The creation of a modern industry. Although limited in scope, it had after all been started up from scratch. As the saying goes, “everything is hard in the beginning.” China had never had anything else but agriculture and handicrafts and had never known what “modern industry” meant. Now it was doing such things as building ships, manufacturing machinery, weaving textiles, digging mines, and running railways. These things represented new forces of production and new modes of production and, once in existence, would place Chinese society irreversibly on a new track.
2. The creation of a new type of education. Although this education started out as a sort of contingency education in foreign languages and sending students abroad for studies, it nonetheless had an exemplary effect as a new type of education. It stimulated the rise of vocational education, new-type schools and new-type academies.
3. The start-up of modern diplomacy. The beginning of the Westernization Movement was directly related to changes in the way and form in which the Qing government negotiated with the Western powers. During the second Opium War, the Tianjin Treaty which Britain forced the Qing government to sign in 1858 stipulated that foreign envoys could move into Beijing (actually, this provision took effect only after the complete cessation of the second Opium War). In 1861, the Qing government set up a yamen dedicated to the overall administration of affairs with other countries and to conducting diplomatic negotiations. The foreign powers then demanded that China send emissaries abroad. By the mid-1870s, the Qing government finally decided to station envoys in other countries. Now that China had a yamen specializing in foreign diplomacy and a system for stationing envoys abroad, China’s diplomatic relations were gradually put on the right track. This was quite important for a country that was in the process of opening up to the world. Meanwhile, the direct observations and information concerning the Western powers obtained by China’s first group of resident envoys abroad had a substantial effect on increasing China’s understanding of the world and changing the concepts of the Chinese.

A direct result of the rise of modern industry was the genesis of new social strata, i.e., capitalists and industrial workers. These were forces new to Chinese society, and the succession of changes that took place thereafter in China all had to do with these forces. Urban industrial development, while attracting rural wealth and funds, also drew large segments of the rural population to the cities. Growing urban populations gave rise to various urban needs. Service and entertainment trades sprang up. The rapidly expanding urban populations promoted the development of urban public undertakings. Cities and towns in the coastal areas and along rivers and railways gradually became places where people arriving from diverse directions lived together, and the conglomeration of populations promoted the need for unified spoken languages. The subsequent emergence of the Chinese common language (Mandarin) and the devising of Mandarin-language alphabets were new phenomena with important significance for China’s culture.

The development of urban industry and commerce expedited the birth of modern cultural and educational undertakings. The development of the newspaper and publications industry created unprecedented means for the transmission of various types of social information, which also accelerated the emergence of groups of new-type intellectuals, including journalists, reporters, news writers, and other heretofore nonexistent free-lance professionals. These, in turn, further advanced the development of the news and publishing industries and promoted the dissemination of new knowledge and thinking. Such disseminations had the effect of imperceptibly changing society, of bridging the chasm that had for more than a thousand years separated the elite from the ordinary masses. The gathering trend toward the plebification of culture gradually exerted a broad and profound effect on social change.

Another change, not to be overlooked, was the gradual advent of Western utensils and articles into the lives of the Chinese—all kinds of foreign-labeled goods of daily use which were of good quality, cheap, practical, and attractive. No matter how rabidly people had previously despised and detested foreigners, they could not resist the temptations these things presented. Slightly better-off and slightly more open-minded people in large and small cities and towns, and even in villages with large concentrations of inhabitants on the eastern seaboard and along rivers and railroads, gradually joined the ranks of those who used foreign goods. This, on the one hand, modified the concepts that had caused these people to scorn and reject Westerners and Western affairs and, on the other, slowly transformed their way of life and improved their quality of life. And this inevitably brought changes to their cultural concepts.

As regards students turned out by missionary schools and new-type schools, their knowledge structure had already undergone distinct changes and consisted of an ever larger share of knowledge about nature and society and for everyday use. Such knowledge was directly or indirectly related to Western culture. Hence, it goes without saying that any aversion in their mentality against Western culture was bound to abate considerably and even be replaced to varying extents by respect and admiration.

Given the various tendencies mentioned above, the Chinese gradually began, in increasing numbers, to a rising degree, and more and more actively, to approach and accept Western culture, including various specific aspects of its knowledge, its ideology, its ways of dealing with affairs, and so forth.

As the Chinese came in greater contact with Western knowledge, some could no longer deny the strong points of Western culture. Back in the early 1860s, Feng Guifen had already concluded that China was inferior to the foreigners in respect of making full use of people's talents, of taking full advantage of the resources of the land, of the absence of estrangement between rulers and people, and of nomenclature tallying with realities. The Westernization Movement produced more of such forward-looking persons capable of understanding and appreciating the strengths of Western culture.

Forward-looking personages already recognized that behind the excellence of Western material goods and skills lay ideologies and systems that deserved conscientious exploration by the Chinese. Xue Fucheng, for instance, saw how education flourished in the Western countries where there were certain formulae as regards elementary, secondary and higher education for all males and females and from youth to old age: "For civil servants there are civil service academies, for the military there are army academies, for farmers there are schools of agriculture, for workers there are technical schools, and for merchants there are trade schools. Not only do officials and scholars attend schools; everyone, whether soldier, worker, farmer or merchant, goes to school. . . When gauging the rises or declines of countries as a whole, one must examine the root causes that brought these about. Today's proliferation of schools is the root cause for the vigorous growth of the Western countries!"<sup>56</sup> There may be differing opinions about education being the root cause for a country's prosperity and strength, but Xue had evidently seen something more profound behind the excellent products and ingenious techniques. Again for example, Zheng Guanying (1842–1921) believed: "Prosperity and strength is not due wholly to strong ships and powerful cannon. It is also due to setting up parliaments; to achieving unity of purpose and providing proper education; to setting up schools and academies, emphasizing skills, diversifying the subjects for examinations, and enabling people to give full play to their abilities; to paying attention to agricultural science, building water channels, converting infertile soil into good farmland, and deriving the most benefits from the land; to building railways, putting up power lines, reducing taxes, protecting commerce, and enabling free flow of goods."<sup>57</sup> Ma Jianzhong (1845–1900), after personally visiting and surveying some Western countries, saw the superficiality of the contention that "the prosperity and strength of the European countries lies in the skill of their manufacturing and the discipline of their armies." And, "examinations

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<sup>56</sup> *Complete Works of Yong'an: Diary of a Mission to the Four Countries of England, France, Italy and Belgium*, vol. 6, p. 3, engraved in the Ji Chou year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>57</sup> *Words of Warning in Times of Prosperity: Author's Preface*, p. 5, lithographic printing by the Shanghai Book Company in the Bing Shen year of the Guangxu reign.

of their laws and regulations and perusals of their documentation show that those who seek to be prosperous must protect their commercial institutions, and those who wish to be strong must win the hearts of their people.” Therein lay the roots of their prosperity and strength. “Their manufacturing skills, their armies, and their navies are, by and large, of secondary importance.”<sup>58</sup>

In sum, tens of years after the Westernization Movement was launched, China’s forward-looking persons had transcended not only the mindless assumption that Westerners were mere barbarians but also the view that the West was strong only in its material aspects. They had begun to comprehend Western culture in its entirety, and to understand matters from the perspective of “diverse new formulations.” They believed that the most basic of these “formulations” was the relationship between the state and the people and between the ruler and the subjects; and that these relationships were best embodied in the parliamentary system. This had become a common understanding among no small number of forward-looking persons between the late 1870s and the early 1890s.

Still, the extent of the understandings reached by forward-looking persons was one matter, while inherent cultural traditions and their dominance over the broad masses—a dominance supported by inherent institutions—was another matter. At the time, the majority of gentry and the populace still regarded Westerners as barbarians and even found it hard to countenance material objects from the West. Zeng Jize (1839–1890)—Zeng Guofan’s son and a well-known diplomat in those days—came under sharp public criticism because he took a small steamboat to return to his hometown for a funeral. Guo Songtao’s, sent on a mission to Europe, made notes of what he saw and heard on the way and wrote down some of his impressions, and then submitted these back to his superiors, whereupon someone published these notes under the title “Notes on a Trip by an Emissary to the West” purely for informational purposes. Guo was censured, and the imperial court ordered the proofs destroyed. A well-known scholar, Li Ciming (1830–1894), who had always despised Guo for taking pleasure in discussing Western affairs, wrote in his diary: “When [Guo] Songtao’s was called back to Fujian the year before last, he sent up a memorial viciously criticizing Shuying, the governor-general of Yunnan Province, for which action he was greatly disparaged by public opinion. After he returned to the capital, growing public invective became so demeaning as to be virtually insupportable. Last year, when the barbarians came to Changsha with the intention of building a Catholic church, the locals believed that Songtao had a hand in this matter and a mob threatened to burn down his house. The local civil service examinations in Hunan at this time were virtually boycotted. When those memoirs (“Notes on a Trip by an Emissary to the West”—the Author) came out and the Yamen of Commerce published them, all righteous persons gnashed their teeth in anger.”<sup>59</sup> It is evident any discussion of, or any expression of admiration for,

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<sup>58</sup> “Letter to Li Hongzhang on Raising the Standards of Studies Abroad,” *Essays from the Shike Studio* (vol. 1), in *Ten Discussions from the Studio of Self-Strengthening Studies*, lithographic printing by Wenruilou in the Ding You year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>59</sup> *Diary of Zhao Mantang*, 18th day of the 6th lunar month in the 3rd year of the Guangxu reign.

Western affairs were very likely to be met with hostility. Hence, at the outset of the Westernization Movement scholars as a whole abstained from such things. When Guo Songtao's was recalled to China a year after being censured, friends advised him to keep silent about matters in other countries for his own safety's sake. Admirably, Guo refused to do so; all he had in mind was the good of his country.<sup>60</sup> Zheng Guangying, in his *Words of Warning in Times of Prosperity*, stated: "In this book I speak frankly about various matters and frequently touch upon tabooed subjects. Although driven by righteous indignation, my comments inevitably sound like audacious ravings which are quite likely to offend the powers that be. Hence I hesitated before putting them in print."<sup>61</sup> Wang Fengzao (1851–1918), who once served as an envoy to Japan, wrote: "The only way to discuss matters as they are in foreign countries today is by writing books. It is most difficult to discuss these during conversations in daily life."<sup>62</sup> In his "Preface to Homely Words to Aid Governance," Xue Fucheng very circumspectly stated: "These are but personal opinions of a personal nature on important subjects which should be thoroughly explored but have been barely touched upon, and rash pronouncements on which would be swiftly condemned."<sup>63</sup> The term "would be swiftly condemned" implied that open publication of such views would invite trouble. All people were aware of the controversy generated by the planned addition of an academy of astronomy and mathematics to the Tongwenguan. Even Li Hongzhang, a highly placed and powerful man who led the Westernization Movement, was not impervious to attacks by conservative elements. One of the latter openly accused Li Hongzhang and Ding Richang of "never relenting on their desire to use barbarian things to convert China," and scolded them, saying: "Learning from and serving the foreigners is shameful in the extreme, is it not? It leads first and foremost to the downright disgrace of abruptly losing all sense of propriety, righteousness, honesty and shame, and is utterly impermissible."<sup>64</sup> This was tantamount to accusing Li Hongzhang and all other officials of the Westernization Movement of being scoundrels who had lost their sense of propriety, righteousness, honesty, and shame. It was in these circumstances that Zheng Guangying angrily lamented: "Those who claim to be upright persons today pride themselves on not speaking about Western affairs, and when they see persons seeking Western learning they accuse these persons of being malefactors before the Confucian ethical code and

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<sup>60</sup> See Zhong Xuhe (1985, p. 196).

<sup>61</sup> See *Words of Warning in Times of Prosperity* p. 54; lithographic edition by the Shanghai Bookstore in the Bing Shen year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>62</sup> See Luo Sen et al. (1983, p. 257).

<sup>63</sup> See *Preliminary Proposals Concerning Western Affairs*, p. 1, in the *Ten Discussions from the Studio of Self-Strengthening Studies*, Wenruilou lithographic edition in the Ding You year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>64</sup> See "Memorial to the Throne by Minister of Office of Transmission Yu Lingchen," *The Westernization Movement* (1), p. 121.

scum of the literati.”<sup>65</sup> Still, it should be remarked that the Qing court on the whole leaned toward the Westernization faction in those days, as its rulers had forebodings of serious crises to come. They had been deeply shaken in particular by the heavy blows they had sustained at the hands of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and by the efficaciousness of foreign-made rifles and cannon in quashing the Taiping. To save their tottering dynastic rule, they felt compelled to listen to the opinions of the Westernization faction and do some reforming. However, that did not mean the Qing court and the ministers of the Westernization faction were entirely at one in their understandings.

Since the Qing court leaned toward the Westernization faction, why were the conservatives so bold and brazen in their attacks against the Westernization faction? That is worth contemplating. In the entire course of the Westernization movement, the conservative faction never gained the upper hand in terms of the arguments they presented on how to treat Westerners and Western learning. The most acute conflict took place over the question of whether to send official personnel to study at the astronomy and mathematics academy appended to the Tongwenguan. Since Woren, the ringleader of the then conservative faction, was unable to put forward any convincing reasons against doing so, he went so far as to play down astronomy and mathematics and even insisted there were persons already proficient at such studies in China. Egged on by the Westernization faction, the Tongzhi Emperor then issued an edict ordering Woren to recommend such proficient persons and set up a separate academy. Incapable of responding, Woren found himself in a very embarrassing position. This was a typical example of the conservative faction finding itself at a complete disadvantage in theoretical terms. And so why was it that Woren’s memorials were able nonetheless to exert so strong an influence that the astronomy and mathematics academy found it difficult to enroll an adequate complement of students? And again, why was it that some forward-looking people were so apprehensive about discussing Westernization whereas the conservatives dared attack it so relentlessly? I feel the chief reason was the inherent monarchical institution.

This matter may be addressed from two aspects.

The system of imperial power. Since ancient times it had been acknowledged that “the ruler governs the subject.” Although a tiny minority of people had talked, during the Westernization Movement, about the Western system of “the ruler and people governing together,” or in other words the democratic system, and even expressed admiration for this system, they had not been able to stand up against the “sanctity of monarchical rule”—a concept ingrained in people’s minds for more than 2,000 years. And the great majority of people dared not offend the emperor. If, at times, they inadvertently offended him, and even if the emperor happened to be in an indulgent mood, they would be punished. Before Guo Songtao’s went out as ambassador, he had reached an agreement with his superiors that he would write a

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<sup>65</sup> See *Words of Warnings in Times of Prosperity: Western Learning*, p. 7, lithographic edition by the Shanghai Bookstore in the Bing Shen year of the Guangxu reign.

monthly report on his observations abroad and submit it to the administration for reference purposes. And so both he and the administration's officials were surprised when his first "Notes on a Trip by an Emissary to the West" were censured and the proofs destroyed. This matter did not mean any change in the imperial court's Westernization policy, but it did show that the court wished to maintain a balance in the struggle between the newly emergent and conservative factions and to uphold its authority.

The objective effect of this episode was to compel caution in all matters on the part of ordinary officials and intellectuals; they dared not say or do anything that even slightly overstepped the line.

The second was the imperial civil service examinations system. For a thousand years, literati had depended on this system for their careers and livelihoods. Although in every dynasty and era there had been a few persons who refused to be bound by this institution, it still constituted an inviolable "cage" as far as the great majority was concerned. Literati fostered by this institution were accorded respect; the rest were barely tolerated by mainstream officials and literati. Proof of this is seen in a statement made by Zhang Deyi (1847–1918) who accompanied Guo Songtao as an envoy to Europe. He said: "The country deems those who have studied books and learned to write in the classical manner as pertaining to the 'proper path' (*zheng tu*). . . I myself am not learned, did not take the proper path and, to my regret, do not figure among those of the proper path."<sup>66</sup> Zhang's words show that tradition laid great emphasis on being turned out by the imperial examinations system, and that a sharp divide and deep rifts existed between those of, and those not of, the proper path. That was why Woren adamantly opposed adding to the Tongwenguan an academy of astronomy and mathematics which would recruit proper-path personnel for the studies it would offer. In his view, "having the Tongwenguan invite barbarians to teach proper-path students will be bad for China's prestige and unwelcome with the populace." Proper-path personnel were "persons whom the country fosters and reserves for its own uses." Furthermore, "a country is governed by means of rituals and etiquette and not by means of tactics and stratagems; and the fundamental Way lies in people's hearts and not in mechanical skills and artifices" The country relied on proper-path personnel to "expound the principles of righteousness and keep people's minds on the right track."<sup>67</sup> By having such personnel taught by foreign teachers, one ran the risk of placing China's literati at the service of foreigners.

By means of the imperial examinations, candidates obtained merit and honor, became officials through conventional channels, and strove for promotions to high positions. Those with lofty ideals aspired to "serve famous rulers like [the legendary] Yao and Shun"; those with more commonplace ideals sought glory for their clans and wealth and fame for their families. Such were the goals pursued by literati for thousands of years. As long as the imperial exams existed, there was no way the

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<sup>66</sup> See "Collected Writings of the Senior Official Jianwei General Zhang: Last Words," vol. 4, p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> See *Foreign Affairs in Their Entirety (Tongzhi reign)* vol. 47, pp. 24, 25.

overwhelming majority of scholars would deviate from this path, because once they did so they would forfeit all of those fine prospects. Hence even though Woren could not produce any convincing arguments, the fact that such important matters as careers and livelihoods were at stake sufficed to make the great majority of scholars hesitate, and deterred them from enrolling in the astronomy and mathematics academy.

Yet another matter demonstrated the “cage” effect of that institutional system of imperial examinations: to wit, the fact that numerous intellectuals produced by Western-type schools also attempted to pass the imperial examinations in their pursuit of scholarly honor and official rank. Records show that by 1896, more than ten persons turned out by the Tongwenguan had obtained official positions as *ju ren* and *jinshi* by taking the imperial examinations. Even on the eve of the collapse of the Qing Dynasty, many students returning from studies abroad still hoped to take part in special examinations held by the central government in order to secure the rank of a natural sciences *jinshi*. It is evident that the old imperial examinations system to a large extent continued to prevent intellectuals from being freed from old concepts and institutions, from turning to new ways, and from engaging in more useful studies. The effect was to hamper and hold back the pace of social and cultural change.

Because of these severe institutional hindrances, forward-looking persons who hoped to place their ideologies and propositions on a relatively stable foundation were forced to seek rationalizations for the Western learning they brought in and to avoid coming too obviously in conflict with traditional views and concepts.

Being a tiny minority, forward-looking persons could not afford to disregard the state of mind of the great majority of gentry and officials. Had they done so, they would even be denied any opportunity to give expression to their thoughts. The fate of Guo Songtao’s “Notes on a Trip by an Emissary to the West” inevitably filled them with trepidation. Confronted with such a social reality, and whether out of a sense of self-preservation or because of the difficulty of escaping from under the crushing weight of the traditional culture, forward-looking persons were compelled to devise an ideological framework for handling questions of Chinese and Western culture that would more likely be accepted by other people.

There was a well-known formulation articulated as “Western learning has its roots in China” and widely subscribed to among forward-looking persons. For example, Xue Fucheng stated: “The definition of the four seasons in the *Book of Yao*, the mathematics passed down by *Zhou Bi*, and the Westerners’ astronomical algorithms probably all derive from the same roots. It is quite possible that other things beneficial to the country and the people originated in China as well.” Hence, “since the Westerners have imitated and improved upon the creations by the Sages, why can China not do the same?”<sup>68</sup> Zheng Guanying wrote: “Starting with the *gezhi* (physical sciences) writings in *Great Learning* and the *Winter Offices* volume in

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<sup>68</sup> *Diary of a Mission to the Four Countries of Britain, France, Italy and Belgium*, p. 133, Qiu Li Bookstore, 1985.



*Zhou Li*, much of the learning of the ancients on physics and mathematics has spread to the Occident.” He further asserted that all branches of learning in the West had actually originated in Chinese learning, and it was only because of the decadence of China’s political culture that “scholars have pursued the abstract rather than the concrete, spent their time on ornate but vacuous Eight-part Essays and calligraphic works, curbed their creativity, misspent their time and led everyone in useless directions, so that Chinese learning has become increasingly barren while Western learning has not been able to fathom its profundities. Today, things which were once ours have been taken up by the Westerners, studied assiduously and perseveringly, and rendered meticulous and immeasurably profound.” Actually, however, Western learning “is learning that originally existed in China.” The Western learning which was being studied in China was like “rituals that have been lost and then rediscovered among the populace,” and in fact like “returning to China learning that was originally Chinese.”<sup>69</sup> Huang Zunxian (1848–1905), in his *Annals of Japan*, expressed the same sentiments. He said: “All learning in the West originated with Mo Zi. The Westerners’ claims that all persons have the right to determine their own lives are the same as Mo Zi’s. Their exhortation to love thy neighbor like thyself is Mo Zi’s advocacy of universal love. They talk about sole reverence for God and saving one’s soul while Mo Zi talked about respecting Heaven and understanding the soul and the spirit (*ming gui*). As for the making of intricate machines and the skills in attack and defense, Mo Zi was adept at military strategies, and making flying devices was but one of his inventions. And the natural sciences all find their beginnings in Mo Zi’s first and second classics.” He also asserted, the Western countries “use laws similar to those of Shen and Han, the official positions they institute are similar to those in the *Zhou Rituals*, and their statecraft is approximately the same as that envisioned by Guan Zi. As for the natural sciences, most of these are to be found among the Sages of the Zhou and Qin dynasties.” His conclusion was that “the Westerners’ learning does not go beyond the scope of our writings.”<sup>70</sup> Again for example, Wang Tao, in his dissertation entitled *Yuan xue* (The Genesis of Learning), describes Western learning as having all of its beginnings in Chinese learning, and draws the conclusion: “China pre-saged the culture and education of the Western lands.”<sup>71</sup> Tang Shouqian (1856–1907), another forward-looking personage who also wrote a book entitled *Words of Warning* and was well-known among the gentry in Zhejiang, also strongly supported the theory that “Western learning has its roots in China.” He maintained that “none of the Western methods exceed our undertakings.” He declared: “Records of studies on Nature, materials, conversions, air, light, electricity, mechanics, mining, warfare, law, hydraulics, phonics, medicine, letters,

<sup>69</sup> *Words of Warning in Times of Prosperity*, vol. 1, pp. 2 and 9; Bing Shen year of the Guangxu reign; lithographic copy by the Shanghai Bookstore.

<sup>70</sup> “Annals of Japan: Annals of Academics (1)” *Annals of Japan*, vol. 32, pp. 1, 11; printed by the Shanghai Jicheng Bookstore, in the 24th year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>71</sup> “Additional Essays of Wang Tao,” vol. 1.; *Genesis of Learning*, p. 3, Shanghai Bookstore, 2002.

manufacturing and so forth are all to be found in Chinese books (Tang Shouqian 1993, p. 225).” Still another man named Chen Qiu (1851–1904) wrote a treatise entitled “Extensive Discussions of Statecraft” and declared that Westerners “all employ their intelligence and skill to vie with us for renown and material magnificence, yet an examination of their endeavors shows that all of these fall within scope of the Six Classics and the various Sages.”<sup>72</sup>

The above theorem that “Western learning has its roots in China” was seriously flawed, both factually and in theory, and statements of this type certainly fail to convince anyone today. Recent studies on the history of mankind’s culture and new archeological discoveries increasingly show that human culture has had multi-elemental origins. There is no theoretical support for the claim that all Western cultures originated in the undertakings of the Chinese. However, we should not thereupon declare that the scholars cited above deliberately fabricated deceptive and self-deceptive theories. All were men of excellent scholarship and morals, and they came to their conclusions under different circumstances and at different times and on the basis of their personal studies and experiences. As it is said, “great minds think alike.” There must be some explanation for that. They were well versed in the Chinese classics and, since some of the contents therein could be related to Western learning, they assumed that Western learning had originated in China. Their conclusions were wrong. However, such mental associations are actually rooted in the identity of mankind’s cultures. It is true that the environments in which people exist are not quite the same, but there are more similarities than differences. Hence there have also been more similarities than differences in the way the challenges presented by the environment have been handled. In “seeking sustenance from the land,” people lived on what they grew on the land, including animals and plants; and for “journeying across the land,” people built roads through mountains and bridges over rivers, and made vehicles for traveling on land and boats for moving over water. In other matters, too, things were done as the need arose. In terms of the physical sciences, such phenomena as sound, light, physical changes, electricity etc. that are present in all environments sooner or later came to people’s attention, triggered reflections, gave rise to studies and generated learning, the only difference being in their profundity and acuity. That is what Xue Fucheng meant when he asserted “China and other countries are the same in that all exercise the spirit of creation for the benefit of people’s lives.” The identicalness of human cultures is an obvious fact. Thus, even though the cultures of each country and people in the world each possess their own characteristics, in the end they are capable of mutual communication and mutual correlation. And it is through such mutual communication and mutual correlation that people attempt to comprehend the cultures of other nations. That is why when people strive to understand something new, they invariably start with aspects of their own knowledge that correspond with the new thing, and from there proceed step by step with further

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<sup>72</sup> “Extensive Discussion of Statecraft,” p. 1, in the *Ten Discussions from the Studio of Self-Strengthening Studies*, Wenruilou lithographic edition in the Ding You year of the Guangxu reign.

inquiries. If no correlation is possible between the new thing and their existing knowledge or experience, they cannot understand the new thing. It is evident that China's forward-looking persons would compare China's existing records and writings with Western learning and thereby determine that Western learning could be learned and used. Doing so was an inevitable process in the history of knowledge. Hence the theorem that "Western learning has its roots in China" was a reflection of the identicalness of mankind's cultures as well as an inevitable phase in the Chinese people's contacts with, and understanding of, Western learning.

We all know there was a proposition during the Westernization Movement period that became all the rage and that scholars of the history of Chinese culture have discussed at great length, i.e., *Zhong Ti Xi Yong* (or, *Zhong xue wei ti, xi xue wei yong*: "Chinese learning for fundamental principles and Western learning for practical applications.")

Twenty or 30 years ago, discussions on *Zhong Ti Xi Yong* frequently consisted of criticisms by people who regarded *Zhong Ti Xi Yong* as the antithesis of the progressive Reform Movement. Actually, *Zhong Ti Xi Yong* had been around for a long time already. One may at least assert that the *Zhong Ti Xi Yong* theorem was already extant when the Westernization Movement came into being. For example, Feng Guifen had already explicitly stated in his *Protestations from Xiaobin Studio* that "China's teachings on the traditional relationships should serve as the basis and should be supplemented by the techniques used in other countries for achieving prosperity and strength."<sup>73</sup> Thereafter, and up to the early 1890s, some people never stopped touting this theorem. Wang Tao, for example, stated: "The *qi* (the means, the tools) may be obtained from the Western countries, but we ourselves shall furnish the *dao* (the Way, the principles)."<sup>74</sup> He also said: "In non-material matters, China's Way prevails; in material matters, the Westerners' means prevail."<sup>75</sup> "China's Way and Western means" was obviously another formulation for *Zhong Ti Xi Yong*. Again for example, Xue Fucheng stated in his *Preliminary Proposals Concerning Western Affairs*: "If we avail ourselves of the Westerners' learning in terms of manufacturing goods and conducting calculations, it is to protect the Way of our Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, Wu, Zhougong and Confucius."<sup>76</sup> Shao Zuozhou's (1851–1898) *Shao's Words of Caution* also advocated "relying on

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<sup>73</sup> *Protestations from Xiaobin Studio: Discussions on Adopting Western Learning*, vol. 2, p. 39; engraved in the 19th year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>74</sup> "Postscript to Qi Yousheng's 'Dissertation on Change'," *Additional Essays of Wang Tao*, p. 266; Shanghai Bookstore, 2002.

<sup>75</sup> *Tao yuan chi du*, (Correspondence of Taoyuan), p. 30; Zhonghua Book Company, 1959.

<sup>76</sup> *Preliminary Proposals Concerning Western Affairs*, p. 17, in the *Ten Discussions from the Studio of Self-Strengthening Studies*, Wenruilou lithographic edition in the Ding You year of the Guangxu reign.

China’s Way and making use of Western means.”<sup>77</sup> Tang Shouqian, on the other hand, states: “Seek material means to protect the abstract ways.”<sup>78</sup> All of these were diverse formulations for Zhong Ti Xi Yong. Zhang Guanying was a reformist ideologue of the highest order during the Westernization period but he, too, took the position that “Chinese learning is the roots and trunk (*ben*) and Western learning is the branches and the foliage (*mo*); Chinese learning is to serve as the principal and be supplemented with Western learning.”<sup>79</sup>

The advocacy “Chinese learning for fundamental principles and Western learning for practical applications” was explicitly put forward in the 1890s. In 1895, the newspaper *Wan Guo Gong Bao* carried an article entitled “Strategy for Rescuing the Times” by Shen Shoukang (1807–1907), in which he wrote: “Since there are advantages and disadvantages to both Chinese and Western learning, the best course for the Chinese is to use Chinese learning for fundamental principles and Western learning for practical applications.”<sup>80</sup> This formulation gained wide popularity.

We shall attempt to discuss why the Zhong Ti Xi Yong concept was put forward, what it signified, and what effects it exerted objectively.

First of all, we may affirm that “Chinese learning for fundamental principles and Western learning for practical applications” was put forward as a slogan for promoting Western learning and opening the way for Westernization. As mentioned earlier, the quality and attractiveness of Western material goods and implements was manifestly evident to the great majority of people, but because of institutional hindrances, most persons still had misgivings about openly advocating the emulation or importation of Western things. “Chinese learning for fundamental principles and Western learning for practical applications” was put forward precisely for the sake of allaying the misgivings of persons who desired to learn from the West. The implication was that China’s Cardinal Guides and Constant Virtues would be retained in their entirety, and that bringing in Western learning would be beneficial and cause no harm. The core slogans voiced by the conservatives opposed the use of foreign things to change Chinese things, and opposed any weakening of the traditional learning that served as the basis of governance. Placing emphasis on “Chinese learning for fundamental principles” would help to ease the force and effects of the conservatives’ onslaughts. Hence, for a fairly long period of time the advocates of change were only too glad to talk about “Chinese learning for fundamental principles and Western learning for practical applications,” whereas the conservatives in general did not dispute it.

<sup>77</sup> “Shao’s Words of Caution: Guides for Discipline and Rules of Conduct,” *Reform Movement of 1898* (1), p. 182; Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 1957.

<sup>78</sup> See Tang’s “Words of Caution,” vol. 1, *Sixth Article on Discussions of Chinese Scholastics; Selected Xiao Shan Historical Accounts: Special Collection of Tang Shouqian’s Historical Materials*, p. 226.

<sup>79</sup> *Words of Warning in Times of Prosperity: Western Learning*, p. 10, Bing Shen year of the Guangxu reign; lithographic copy by the Shanghai Bookstore.

<sup>80</sup> See *Wan Guo Gong Bao*, vol. 75, 3rd lunar month of 21st year in the Guangxu reign.

Zhong Ti Xi Yong was admittedly a compromise slogan but, in the conditions of those times, it was beneficial for promoting Western learning. China's traditional culture was a massive institution with deep roots and thick foliage. For centuries it had been self-sustaining and self-sufficient, and it had never encountered any serious challenges. Western learning, attended as it was by brutal invasions and a pernicious opium trade, met with instinctive opposition from the Chinese. Against this background—one that involved national sentiment, it was most difficult at the time to dissociate the West's advanced culture from the Western powers' aggressive malfeasances. Calls to learn from and import things from the West would trigger even greater resistance. Thus it was necessary to devise an acceptable conceptual framework which would turn Western learning into something that could be admitted into Chinese culture. The theorem "China is the source of Western learning" was a very practicable conceptual framework. However, Western learning had after all been generated by Westerners, and it was still questionable whether bringing in such learning posed the risk of eroding or shaking China's intrinsic institutions. The Zhong Ti Xi Yong theorem was put forward precisely with this in mind. Beyond a few die-hards, the general run of Chinese was ready to accept that formulation in those days. As Xue Fucheng averred, using Western learning to defend China's ways "might very well serve to resurrect Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, Wu, Zhougong and Confucius."<sup>81</sup>

The connotations of Zhong Ti Xi Yong are not very clear or certain. For one thing, "ti" [translated here as "fundamental principle"] and "yong" [translated here as "practical application"] are categories unique to Chinese ideological history and were quite vague or fuzzy in the first place. There has always been controversy over what constitutes "ti" and what constitutes "yong," and how the two are related. Moreover, there were, in those times, different means of conveying the Zhong Ti Xi Yong concept, such as by using the relative concepts "ti" and "yong"; or "dao" (Way) and "qi" (means, tools); or "ben" (root) and "mo" (foliage); or "zhu" (principal) and "fu" (complementary), etc. Take "dao" and "qi" for example—these would seem to correlate as "xu" (abstract) and "shi" (concrete), or as "jingshen" (spiritual) and "wuzhi" (material). Meanwhile, both "zhu" and "fu" possess the connotations of "xu" and "shi" or "ti" and "yong." The same goes for "ben" and "mo." "Ben" means "roots and trunk" and "mo" means "branches and leaves," and both possess the qualities of "xu" and "shi" or "ti" and "yong." Hence, it was very hard, or even impossible, to produce an accurate definition for Zhong Ti Xi Yong. And so, this slogan or this conceptual framework often took on different meanings in different periods, in different environments and with different people, yet was so ambiguous that it might equally serve people both a 150 years earlier and a 150 years later.

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<sup>81</sup> *Preliminary Proposals Concerning Western Affairs: Reform*, p. 17; from *Ten Discussions from the Studio of Self-Strengthening Studies*, Wenruilou lithographic edition in the Ding You year of the Guangxu reign.

A general overview of the formulations people used at the time to express Zhong Ti Xi Yong indicates by and large that the Zhong Ti they referred to might have meant the following: According to Wang Tao’s formulation, “the *qi* (means, appliances) may be obtained from the Western countries, but we ourselves shall provide the *dao* (the Way, the principles).” The *dao* he referred to was China’s *dao* (Way), or in other words, “the Dao of Confucius, the Confucian Dao, which is also the Dao of mankind.”<sup>82</sup> This Dao was immutable. In that case, what was meant by the Dao of Confucius? As we know, the most nuclear content of the Confucian teachings was the Dao of name and status, i.e., “let the ruler be ruler, the subject be subject, the father be father, and the son be son.” The cardinal guide for rulers and subjects was the system of monarchical power, and the cardinal guide for fathers and sons was the ethics system based on the family clan. In fact, the Dao of Confucius consisted of what the literati spoke of as the Three Cardinal Guides and the Five Constant Virtues, or in other words, the systems of monarchical and patriarchal rule. And it is evident that the Zhong Ti referred to by Wang Dao was none other than the Three Cardinal Guides and the Five Constant Virtues, the systems of monarchical and patriarchal rule. These were the “thing-in-themselves” that he saw as being permanent and immutable. The first expounder of Westernization thinking Feng Guifen, in his statement “China’s teachings on the traditional relationships should serve as the basis and should be supplemented by the techniques used in other countries for achieving prosperity and strength,” had already made it clear that Zhong Ti consisted of the *lun chang ming jiao*—the teachings on the constant and unchangeable order of importance or seniority in human relationships. Again for example, the Zhong Ti referred to by Xue Fucheng was essentially the Way of Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, Wu, Zhougong, and Confucius, although stated less specifically. There were substantial differences between Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, Wu, Zhougong, and Confucius per se, but we may safely infer that Xue intended to home in on China’s Cardinal Guides and Constant Virtues as expounded by Confucius. Shao Zuozhou had advocated “relying on China’s Way and making use of Western means” in which—according to his own explanation—“Way” meant “*gang ji fa du* (guides for discipline and rules of conduct).” He stated: “Our guides for discipline and rules of conduct are superior to ordinary rules and regulations and undergo few or no changes, and for that reason may be used for governance.” And, “today’s guides for discipline and rules of conduct embrace the wisdom of four or five thousand years—wisdom that lags behind that of the Western countries only as regards certain material goods, calculations and technical skills.”<sup>83</sup> He maintained that Zhong Ti consisted of China’s guides for discipline and its rules of conduct, that the guides for discipline were the Confucian Way, and

<sup>82</sup> “Postscript to Qi Yousheng’s ‘Dissertation on Change,’” *Additional Essays of Wang Tao*, p. 266; Shanghai Bookstore, 2002.

<sup>83</sup> “Shao’s Words of Caution: Guides for discipline and Rules of Conduct,” *Reform Movement of 1898* (1), p. 181; Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 1957.

that the rules of conduct were none other than the basic norms of conduct for rulers, subjects, fathers and sons, which too pertained to the Confucian Way.

One might well say that the Zhong Ti touted by the Westernization ideologues simply meant China's Cardinal Guides and Constant Virtues and the system of monarchical power and patriarchal discipline.

Of interest is the fact that among those in the Westernization faction who strongly advocated learning from the West, there were some who said nothing about Zhong Ti Xi Yong, but instead went on field investigations in an effort to acquire a deeper understanding of the true reasons for Western prosperity and strength and to use these as reference. In the second year of the Guangxu reign, Guo Songtao's already recognized that "the Western countries have worked out a complete, concise and systematic political creed in their two thousand years of existence."<sup>84</sup> He had taken a step further than other forward-looking persons who did no more than recommend Western goods and technology. Upon arriving in Britain, and after conducting numerous consultations and visits, making careful observations, and studying books and publications, Guo gradually gained some deeper understandings, to wit: "An examination of the entire process of its (Britain's—the Author) establishment as nation shows that the reason for its permanence and growing strength lies in the sustaining powers of the Parliament, and in the establishment of mayors for governing the populace and complying with the public sentiment. The two aspects are independent of each other, but the rulers and people maintain close contact, and despite the country's frequent ups and downs in the thousand and more years since its establishment, it has not fallen. Talented persons and learning have risen in tandem, and both have been put to effective use. Such is the basis of its rise as a nation."<sup>85</sup> He also pointed out: "The opposite is true in China ever since the Qin and Han dynasties," and he implied that the reason for this was to be found in China's system per se. Guo maintained that under the parliamentary system "a country's politics are completely open to the subjects and the populace," that with governance by political parties, rights and wrongs are brought to light through argumentation—a practice formed over the years—and "all practices are open and aboveboard." Such was the reason for their clean and honest political culture and commendable practices. This understanding effectively impugned the consistently boastful vaunting by, and superstitious belief among, China's literati and officialdom in the superiority of China's political culture over that of the West, and was therefore inadmissible under the conceptual framework of Zhong Ti Xi Yong.

Of course, Guo Songtao's was quite exceptional in those times and few could compare with him. But one indeed sees other forward-looking persons who already felt ill at ease with the Zhong Ti Xi Yong framework. To them, Zhong Ti was no longer sacred and inviolable, and Xi Yong should no longer be limited to such things as tools and technology and superior goods. They were beginning to

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<sup>84</sup> *Diaries of Guo Songtao*. vol. 3, p. 124; Hunan People's Publishing House, 1982.

<sup>85</sup> *Diaries of Guo Songtao*. vol. 3, p. 373; Hunan People's Publishing House, 1982.

understand that the rise of the Western countries was due both to fundamental and incidental causes and to principles and practical applications, and one would be squandering one's time by limiting oneself to emulating or imitating merely the incidental causes and the applications. For instance, Zheng Guanying had clearly stated that "the main reason" for the Western countries' "prosperity and strength rests in their parliaments and not merely in their powerful warships and cannon."<sup>86</sup> Wang Tao also said: "The Western countries are prospering by the day, dispose of ample wealth, and possess powerful military forces because their rulers and people are one at heart. Political matters big and small are appropriately deliberated in parliaments before being put into practice." But "such is not the case in China."<sup>87</sup> Ma Jianzhong, too, had seen that "when parliaments are established, the circumstances at the lower levels are fully understood" and that this was a most crucial aspect of Western political life. Chen Chi (1855–1900) extolled the Western countries' "parliamentary method... (which) combines rulers and people into a whole, and links together the hearts of the high and the low." This, in his opinion, was "the fundamental reason why Britain and the United States are so strong and prosperous and able to rule the four seas."<sup>88</sup> Noteworthy was the fact that Zhang Shusheng, a high-placed minister at the imperial court and then governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi, could clearly see that because the Westernization Movement "ignores the Ti (fundamentals) and strives only for the Yong (applications), we shall never catch up no matter how hard we try. Even if we were to build entire fleets of iron ships and railways reaching out in all directions, it is doubtful whether we could count upon such things!"<sup>89</sup>

The above data show that China's forward-looking elements involved in the activities of the Westernization Movement were gradually losing confidence in and dissociating themselves from the Zhong Ti Xi Yong conceptual framework. Their thinking was coming into conflict with the Zhong Ti concept, manifested a desire to bring in Western political systems, and presaged the coming of a period of cultural transformation focused on political reform.

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<sup>86</sup> *Words of Warning in Times of Prosperity: Author's Preface*, p. 5, Bing Shen year of the Guangxu reign, lithographic copy by the Shanghai Bookstore.

<sup>87</sup> *Additional Essays of Wang Tao: Comprehending the Public Sentiment*, vol. 3, p. 54, Shanghai Bookstore, 2002.

<sup>88</sup> "Parliaments," *Collected Writings of Chen Chi*, p. 107, Zhonghua Book Company, 1997.

<sup>89</sup> *Zhang Jingda gong zou yi*, vol. 8, p. 33.



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## Chapter 3

# The Leading Roles of Reform and Revolution in the Sociocultural Trends of the Final Years of the Qing Dynasty

In 20 years of bitter reflection after the Opium Wars, the Chinese began to gain some comprehension of the main trends in the world and to realize they had to learn something from the strong points of the adversaries who had defeated them. And so there ensued 30 years of Westernization (*yang wu*), during which the concept of *Zhongji Ti Xi Yong* (i.e., *Zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*: “Chinese learning for fundamental principles and Western learning for practical applications”—See Chap. 2) gradually took shape. China’s crushing defeat in the 1894–1895 Sino-Japanese War further awakened forward-looking persons in China to the fact that merely learning from the West’s ship-building, gun-making, machinery manufacturing, science and technology, technical skills, and so forth was far from enough to extricate China from poverty and weakness and bring it prosperity and strength. China’s political system had to be reformed before there could be any hope of completely staving off danger and destruction and gradually attaining independence, wealth, and strength. This realization initiated the Reform Movement and anti-Manchu revolutions, which were followed by movements for new governance and constitutional government as well as wave after wave of revolutionary uprisings. In the end, since the Qing Dynasty refused to conscientiously implement reforms, people lost all confidence in it and revolutionary parties and constitutional factions together acted as the dynasty’s grave diggers. In the 17 or 18 years between 1895 and 1911, men and women of high ideals in China focused on political reform and took to either violent revolution or peaceful reform in the ultimate hope of replacing China’s 2,000-year-old system of sovereign autocracy with a Western-style political system that might save the country and the nation and take China onto a modern road of independence, democracy, prosperity, and strength. This was a period of momentous change centered on political revolution, a period of intermittent reforms and revolutions in which all cultural phenomena mirrored the revolutionary changes and embodied the all-pervading thoughts and anxieties and yearnings of the Chinese people. Industry and commerce, education, science, and technology and other such endeavors were oriented toward the cause

of national salvation. Yet the key to saving the nation lay in doing away with authoritarianism and promoting civil rights. Constitutional monarchy and democratic republicanism were but options for realizing those ends.

All previous teaching materials and various relevant historical writings have drawn a dividing line between the Constitutional Reform of 1898 and the Revolution of 1911 and regard these as two entirely different phases. It has been claimed that the 1911 Revolution took place only because the 1898 Constitutional Reform merely sought political reform and proved ineffective, and because only the 1911 Revolution was a political revolution. This claim might seem plausible. As a matter of fact, however, it has no basis in theory, nor is it consistent with historical realities. Sun Yat-sen had already begun making revolution in 1885, without waiting for the miscarriage of the 1898 Reform. I am of the opinion that after the Sino-Japanese War, China had already begun to transcend the Westernization Movement to enter a historical period centered on reforming the political system, including both peaceful reform and violent revolution, and that it is more rational to examine these in continuity, at least in terms of their ideological and cultural evolutions and trajectories, since doing so appears to be more logical.

Although this period is briefer in time than the Westernization Movement, content-wise it is much more abundant and complex. We shall deal with this period in three sections.

### **3.1 The Acute Challenges Faced by “Zhong Ti”**

In the preceding chapter, we stated that during the practice of the Westernization movement, officials and gentry had formed the cultural concept called Zhong Ti Xi Yong. We also pointed out that by the latter period of the Westernization movement, a few forward-looking persons had already realized that by adhering rigidly to the Zhong Ti Xi Yong framework, China could neither take to the path of independence or self-strengthening nor could its culture rise out of the Middle Ages, revitalize itself, or modernize in keeping with the times. However, these forward-looking persons were but a small minority, and their views were for the most part dispersed among a few private writings and far from formed any sort of consensus.

As an outcome of the Sino-Japanese War, China was defeated, sued for peace, ceded territories, paid indemnities, and suffered unprecedented humiliations. The coming of the Western powers had been completely unexpected to the Chinese, and they had no previous comprehension of these foreign races from distant lands. It might seem excusable that China should be defeated at the hands of these strange, unknown enemies. Yet the invaders during the Sino-Japanese War were Japanese from three small islands just across the Eastern Sea. Japan had, since the Tang Dynasty, regarded China as its teacher, its people were a yellow-skinned race and, although their spoken language was different, their written language was comprehensible to the Chinese. One might say no one would have expected China to be beaten by such a small country, and so ignominiously at that. This was, for the

Chinese, utterly insufferable! The pain and the shame of it forced the Chinese to ask themselves: Why was the small Japan so strong, and why was the big China so weak? And what had ordained the big but weak China to defeat at the hands of the small but strong Japan? What should China do to wipe out this disgrace and make itself strong? All of these were matters of life and death, and all had loomed so suddenly and ominously that no one, unless he was completely benumbed and apathetic, could keep from giving them deep thought and seeking answers thereto.

Virtually all of the high-ranking officials at the imperial court and the majority of the gentry were convinced that China was inferior to the West merely in terms of warships, guns, machinery, and technical skills, whereas the West could not compare with China as regards the Cardinal Guides and Constant Virtues. In the preceding chapter, we showed that the so-called Cardinal Guides and Constant Virtues actually referred to China’s systems of sovereign autocracy and patriarchal ethics. In a memorial to the throne in the fourth year of the Tongzhi reign (1862–1874), Li Hongzhang had said: “China’s cultural system differs entirely from the customs of the foreign barbarians, and it is due to this cultural system that our country has been successfully governed and safeguarded and that its foundations have never been damaged. Some insist it is necessary to learn Western technology in order to avert danger and to replace weakness with strength, but I do not hold to such a narrow and short-sighted view.”<sup>1</sup> Here he clearly states that, fundamentally speaking, to achieve proper governance and safeguard the country one should depend on China’s existing Cardinal Guides and Constant Virtues. However, it would also appear that he did not see the matter quite so simply. According to a discourse of his, delivered in England and translated in the *Wan Guo Gong Bao*, he stated: “Due to the sheer numbers of the Chinese, it is not possible to change the present state of affairs and achieve parity with the West within one generation. Even stupid people in this country dare not insist this can be no sooner said than done. Pretentious efforts could be made to take to this path by mandatory means. However, would that not be the same as placing a cold glass container in hot water, causing it to shatter all at once? Hence, when the Chinese learn Western methods, they should do so slowly and patiently and by gradual increments, like the coming of spring after a cold winter. I would like to make a suggestion that should not surprise anyone: The Western countries have their accustomed paths, and when all people travel along them, everything goes smoothly. We Chinese, too, devise our perceptions, experience and foundations which must be absorbed in a leisurely fashion and entered into subtly and gradually. This process may appear to be slow, but its eventual realization may then be all the more swift.”<sup>2</sup> Here, Li Hongzhang emphasized that one ought not to seek excessively rapid reform and evolution in China, yet he reserved substantial latitude for the breadth, depth, and the prospects of China’s reforms and evolution, and that was well worth pondering. But on the

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<sup>1</sup> “Memorial to the Throne on Purchasing Foreign Iron Mine Machinery,” *Complete Works of Li Wenzhong: Memorial No. 9*, p. 35, Jinling engraving in the Yi Si year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>2</sup> See *Wan Guo Gong Bao* vol. 95, overall p. no. 16,546 (December 1896).

whole, the great majority of Chinese officials and gentry at that time did not yet suspect anything inappropriate in China's system of political teachings.

After China's defeat by Japan in the War of 1894–1895, however, people were assailed by doubts: For 30 years they had learned from the West, bought ships and guns, built warships, made firearms, trained land and naval forces, and in fact had tried to learn all that should be learned, so why had they sustained such a crushing defeat at the hands of a small island country like Japan? This compelled further thought. Liang Qichao stated: "It was actually the 1894 war that awakened our country from its four-thousand-year-old dream."<sup>3</sup> One had but to witness the so-called Gong Ju Petition, which took place just as the Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty was being signed and which shook both China and other countries, to understand that Liang Qichao was speaking the truth.

This Gong Ju Petition was signed by more than 1,300 candidates for the imperial examinations. Some candidates claimed later that they had not signed in person, but even if these are excluded, about a thousand persons had taken part in this event and its political impact is in no way diminished. This happened to be the second of the petitions by Kang Youwei, yet its significance was quite different from the first because it was a collective action involving more than a thousand intellectual elitists. It marked the beginning of political reform in modern China.

There were four main contents to this petition, i.e., refusing to sign a peace treaty, moving away the capital city, political reform, and military training. Of the content on political reform, the most important was, in essence, the demand for setting up parliaments (*yi hui*: parliament, congress, legislative assembly). We say "in essence," because the term "parliament" did not appear in the Petition, but the meaning was essentially to set up parliaments. We know that proposals for setting up parliaments or congresses had long been present in private writings. However, the specifics of such parliaments or congresses had been quite limited or sketchy. Some writers merely mentioned the designation without going into any specifics. In this petition, however, Kang Youwei, when referring to the *yi hui* issue, went into many details and specifics. It was written in the petition: "To have the people publicly elect personages who are versed in matters ancient and contemporary, in things Chinese and foreign, and in matters of government, and who are honest and forthright. This should be done by and large in all *fu* [a former administrative division] and counties, and by choosing one person from approximately one hundred thousand households. All, whether officials or otherwise, should be chosen in this manner. Since the Han (language) system would be used, these persons would be called *yi lang* (speakers). The emperor would open the doors of the Wuying Hall in which all manner of documents and books would be displayed and the speakers would take office by turns to render counseling. They would also be allowed at all times to seek audiences with the emperor, rebut edicts from above and send notices down to the populace. All matters related to internal and external

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<sup>3</sup> *Records of the Coup D'Etat of 1898: Appendix One: The Origins of the Reform*, see *Collected Works of Yinbingshi, Special Collection No. 1*, p. 113.

reforms, governance and fund-raising would be discussed at the Tai He Men (Gate of Supreme Harmony), and the opinion of two out of every three persons would prevail and be carried out at the lower levels. All persons would be replaced after one year. If popular opinion would require continued service, those remaining would lead the groups, be permanently registered, and their names announced throughout the country. Doing so would augment the divine wisdom of the emperor, who would sit in his chambers and know all that transpires in his domains, and would unite the minds and wills of all the people, who would then share weal and woe and disregard their personal gains. If the emperor is to act according to these principles and implement these important procedures, the people in the country will be greatly inspired, the capable will begrudge no efforts, the rich will contribute their wealth, all will assist in achieving prosperity and strength, the ruler and the people will be at one, there will be amity and trust, China will become one family, and all will be bound together by common interests.”<sup>4</sup> It was said here that, (1) one person would be chosen from a hundred thousand families, which meant that some sort of election process would be implemented to choose the “speakers”—another name for parliamentarians; (2) the speakers would be ready at all times to counsel the emperor; (3) where major events were concerned, meetings of speakers would be convened, and decisions would adopted by two-thirds majority vote and implemented by subordinates; (4) the speakers would be replaced by yearly elections, and those who were re-elected would serve as leading parliamentarians; and (5) this would be registered as a fixed system for permanent implementation. This “speaker” system formulated by Kang Youwei was none other than a parliament. As to why the term “parliament” was not used, we may understand this as Kang Youwei’s forgoing the appellation but retaining the essence in a bid to avoid obstruction from conservative forces. Petitions to the emperor, collective petitions in particular, differed from private writings and extra caution had to be taken with their wording. When Kang Youwei later wrote his fourth personal petition to the emperor, he explicitly proposed that “parliaments be set up for accessing information about the situation at lower levels,” and that “all provinces, prefectures, *fu*, and counties should be ordered to establish these.”<sup>5</sup>

This was quite clearly a request to change the political system of sovereign authoritarianism.

Just at the time when Kang Youwei was engineering the Gong Ju Petition in Beijing and challenging the political system of monarchical autocracy (China’s traditional political system which had always been regarded as sacred and inviolable), revolutionary party personages headed by Sun Yat-sen in Hong Kong and Guangzhou in South China were making intense preparations for an armed uprising. Their intention was more direct and radical and expressed as “driving out the northern barbarians, restoring China, and creating a united government.” Their goal

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<sup>4</sup> *Collected Political Dissertations by Kang Youwei* (vol. 1) p. 135, Zhonghua Bookstore, 1981.

<sup>5</sup> *Collected Political Dissertations by Kang Youwei* (vol. 1), pp. 150 and 158, Zhonghua Bookstore, 1981.

was stated as “doing away with the system of monarchial autocracy” but bore heavy anti-Manchu overtones.

The Gong Ju Petition in Beijing and the armed insurrection in the South signaled China’s entry into a period of political revolution focused on bringing down the system of monarchial autocracy.

After the defeat of the Guangzhou Uprising, Sun Yat-sen went into exile abroad where he came in contact with Western and Japanese governmental and nongovernmental personages, extensively perused Western books, gradually expanded his political horizons, and deepened his understanding of democratic politics, ultimately to form his Three People’s Principles political program. In these years, he developed extensive relations with prominent figures, contacted anti-Qing secret societies, and continuously organized armed uprisings aimed at overthrowing the Qing government. Meanwhile, reformers within China slowly coalesced as a political force. They operated newspapers, published books and magazines, ran schools, and established academic societies. In so doing, they publicized thought about reforming the political system on the one hand and, on the other, prepared to launch still larger movements for political reform. *Shi Wu Bao* (Current Affairs Journal), the newspaper they operated, held a special place in the propagation of statements on political reform, the most spectacular being those that agitated for civil rights. Examples are Wang Kangnian’s articles “Strategy for China’s Self-Improvement” (See *Shi Wu Bao*, no. 4) and “On the Benefits of China’s Exercising Civil Rights” (See *Shi Wu Bao*, no. 9), both of which argued strongly for promoting civil rights and stating that starting up parliaments [congresses] would be beneficial for turning China from a weak country into a strong one. Meanwhile, the newspaper *Xiang Bao* (Hunan) discussed, in the form of questions and answers, the issue of democracy. In one of his answers, Tan Sitong stated: “When attention is focused on the people and on how to bring relief to the people, or on how to carry such things out, all matters become plausible and all opinions are workable.”<sup>6</sup> The statement “when attention is focused on the people” comes very close to the spirit and essence of democracy. That Tan Sitong could form such an opinion in those days was quite exceptional. (The teachings on) rejecting autocracy and promoting people’s rights at the Shiwu School sponsored by Liang Qichao were even more remarkable. When referring to these activities, Liang said the teachers and students at the school found nothing strange about their daily discussions on such matters. And students returning to their native places during vacations greatly perturbed and shocked the local gentry when they recounted what they had learned at school. Representative of their utterances were, for instance, such declarations as “In none of the 24 dynasties have there been any rulers who attained the standards of Confucius. A number of strong rulers have emerged among them, but the others have all been traitors to the people.” And, “To sum things up, the difference between a good and bad ruler rests solely in the force of morals, in which regard [George] Washington

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<sup>6</sup> See *Xiang Bao Lei Cuan* (Selections from Hunan Journal), Collection C, vol. 2, p.5; also see *Complete Works of Tan Sitong*, p. 406, Zhonghua Bookstore, 1981.

certainly deserves respect.” It was clear that they regarded American-style democratic politics as a worthy example. Some also stated: “All studies of the Great Unity era during the Spring and Autumn period mention people’s rights. Why not take all the references to people’s rights in the Six Classics and compile these into a book? This would be a major work well-worth reading.” (It should be mentioned that this suggestion by Liang Qichao was realized a few years later by Liu Shipēi [1884–1919], an anarchist who leaned toward the anti-Manchu revolution. Liu examined the ancient classics for contents related to *Min Ben* thinking [i.e., the thinking that the people constitute the basis of society] and published these in a book entitled *Essence of the Chinese Social Contract*, which played a part in propagating Western civil rights thinking.) On the matter of China’s perilous circumstances, Liang also stated: “If civil rights are promoted, there is definitely no reason for perishing.”<sup>7</sup> He clearly meant that to avert [national] peril and subjugation, people’s rights had to be promoted and autocracy had to be replaced with a constitutional system. In a paper entitled *Shuo qun xu* (Preface to the Treatise on Collectivity), Liang Qichao also stated: “Those who do well at governing the country are aware that rulers and people alike are constituents of the populace.”<sup>8</sup> He maintained that both rulers and people were “constituents of the populace,” that rulers were originally members of the populace and were supported as rulers because they could unite with the people. This was clearly a proclamation for democracy and a negation of sovereign autocracy.

Demands for people’s rights and the increasing calls for setting up a parliament were regarded by old-school officials and gentry as violations of the cardinal guides and virtues and as incitements to chaos, and they rose up to reject such demands, either by sending memorials to the throne or by writing dissertations in rebuttal. For example, a memorial condemning Kang, written by Wenti (?–c. 1900), stated: “His arguments on political matters are based exclusively on Western learning, are intended to trash the important classics and laws that have been handed down in China for thousands of years, and regard learning from the Japanese in all matters as a long-term strategy.” It fulminated: “Recently, such newspapers as *Shi Wu* and *Zhi Xin* have discussed showing respect for maverick elements, instituting people’s rights, setting up parties and organizations and changing current institutions; they even intend to do away with ceremonial prostrations, abolish the Manchu-Han writing, equalize the status of rulers and subjects and reverse the order of conjugal precedence between husband and wife. They insist that China can instantly become prosperous and strong if it changes over to practicing foreign ways of governance, education and behavior.”<sup>9</sup> Zeng Lian (1857–?) submitted a memorial on Kang’s and Liang’s “iniquities” and quoting their statements criticizing sovereign

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<sup>7</sup> For all of the above quotes, see *Yi Jiao Cong Bian* (Anthology of Writings on Heterodox Teachings), vol. 5, pp. 7, 8 and 9; engraved in Wuchang in the eighth lunar month of the 24th year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>8</sup> See *Collected Works of Yinbingshi*, Collection No. 2, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> See *Anthology of Writings on Heterodox Teachings*, vol. 2, p. 8.



autocracy as evidence of their treasonous behavior. For instance, he cited them as having “declared that the rule of sovereigns has been excessively long, and said that the reform should start by de-reverencing the Sons of Heaven. . . and stated that the imperial court has reduced taxation but that the difference is only that between heavy and slightly-less-heavy taxes. With regard to the Yangzhou 10-day incident they have accused the court of deploying its troops against the populace in a most treacherous and outrageous manner etc.”<sup>10</sup> This clearly showed that conservative officials saw Kang and Liang as being disloyal elements, in that their statements endangered sovereign autocracy.

Zhang Zhidong (1837–1909) differed from other conservative bureaucrats in that he did not violently attack Kang and Liang but directly stated that the Reform Movement in China involved some aspects that could be reformed and others that could not. His views, however, served the purpose of criticizing Kang and Liang. Zhang Zhidong expressly wrote his *Quan xue pian* (Exhortation to Study) with a dictum that Western learning might be studied but only within limits, and that Chinese learning should serve as the country’s fundamental principles. He insisted that the Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues could not be violated, and that these were “the real reasons for the Sage being the Sage, and for China being China.” Hence, “If one knows the cardinal guide which governs rulers and subjects, one knows that the doctrine on people’s rights is untenable; if one knows the cardinal guide governing father and son, one knows that abolishing funerary and sacrificial ceremonies is impermissible even when father and son have both been subjected to criminal sanctions; and if one knows the cardinal guide which governs husband and wife, one knows that the doctrine on equality between men and women is untenable.”<sup>11</sup> He also emphasized that “the doctrine on people’s rights brings no benefits and only causes endless harm.”<sup>12</sup> He stated: “If all people did as they wished, if households acted as they pleased, if villages acted as they pleased, if scholars idled their time away, if peasants refused to pay land rents, if merchants only sought to make profits, if laborers charged exorbitant prices, if the unemployed poor resorted to robbery; and if sons did not obey their fathers, if students did not respect their teachers, if wives did not obey their husbands, if the lowly did not obey the high-placed, and if the arrogant preyed on the weak, the only result would be to destroy mankind.”<sup>13</sup> His conclusion was: “If the intention is to strengthen China and retain Chinese learning, then it is necessary to pay attention to learning from the West. However, if Chinese learning is not used to strengthen people’s roots and regulate their comportment, the strong will become the first to cause trouble, the weak will become slaves, and the resulting turmoil will be worse than if Western

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<sup>10</sup> Zeng Lian: “Attachment Exposing the Iniquities of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao,” *Reform Movement of 1898*, (2), p. 501.

<sup>11</sup> *Exhortation to Study: The Cardinal Guides*, engraving made in the 7th lunar month of the 24th year of the Guangxu reign, p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> *Exhortation to Study: Centralization of Power*, same as above, p. 28.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30–31.

learning had not been acquired.”<sup>14</sup> About his work *Exhortation to Study*, Zhang Zhidong stated: “The Inner Chapters concern fundamental principles for rectifying people’s minds.” All of the above quotations are to be found in the Inner Chapters and were intended to “rectify people’s minds.” He also stated: “The Outer Chapters concern general matters and are aimed at shaping social behavior.” Zhang Taiyan (1869–1936), after having read the *Exhortation to Study*, opined: “Most of the contents of the first few chapters (i.e., the Inner Chapters) are about being loyal to the Qing court,” and, “the subsequent chapters (i.e., the Outer Chapters) are more detailed and substantive.” He obviously took exception to the Inner Chapters. However, Zhang Taiyan’s view that Zhang Zhidong was merely “expressing loyalty to the Qing court” was, to say the least, excessively narrow. The Three Cardinal Guides and Five Virtues had not been established by the Qing Dynasty; they constituted the core of China’s 2,000-year-old political creed. Zhang Zhidong was defending China’s entire system of traditional political teachings and not merely the Qing dynastic household. Likewise, Zeng Guofan’s (1811–1872) “Proclamation on Suppressing the Brigands from Guangdong and Guangxi” (*Tao yue fei xi*) ought not to be understood as a display of support merely for the Qing Dynasty. The problem facing the Qing at end of that dynasty was, as stated by Li Hongzhang, a major change without precedent in thousands of years, a change that signified breaking away from old traditions and advancing toward a modern society. The change did not involve just one dynasty; it involved a fundamental change of institutions. The “institution” was the basis of the livelihoods and careers of the traditional literati and officialdom of China, and as long as the latter remained under the old institution they could hardly be expected to countenance any thinking, utterance or action that might shake or endanger that institution. As regards Zhang Zhidong, one should on the whole affirm that he was a fairly enlightened high official and did much to start up and develop China’s contemporary education and endeavors. If these endeavors had seen sufficient development, they might have laid the foundations for a new society. However, people who engage in such endeavors often fail to fully understand the deeper significances and long-term effects of their endeavors. Such is the remorselessness of history.

Zhang Zhidong was a fairly moderate high official. He did not send up individual memorials against Kang Youwei and other reformists, nor did he join his colleagues in conducting collective punitive actions. Instead, he used writings to openly state his unwavering position in favor of the traditional system of political teachings and never “overtly denounced” Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao. However, in Hunan Province, where the Reform Movement was most active, conservative literati and gentry who regarded the reform as “utterly intolerable” mounted ferocious attacks against Kang and Liang. After the coup d’état, Su Yu (1874–1914) compiled a book on the conservatives’ verbal attacks against Kang and Liang, entitled it *Yi jiao cong bian* (Collection of Heterodoxies) and explicitly stated his intention to defend the Rites and the sacred teachings. By “sacred teachings” he meant the Confucian Way,

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<sup>14</sup> *Exhortation to Study: The Proper Sequence of Things*, p. 34.

and the core of the Confucian Way was the system of sovereign autocracy and the system of patriarchal ethics. The conservatives maintained that Kang and Liang “employ in the main *A Study on the New Learning and the False Classics* and *Studies on Confucian Reform*, supplemented with such fallacies as equal civil rights and a Confucian calendar (*kong zi ji nian*), to falsify the Six Books and blot out the Sacred Classics, use systemic changes to confuse established rules and regulations, advocate equality to denigrate the Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues, promote people’s rights to do away with rulers, and devise a Confucian calendar to divert people’s attention away from the present dynasty.”<sup>15</sup>

The *Collection of Heterodoxies* also contained letters by Zhu Yixin (1846–1894) and Hong Liangpin (?–1897) rebutting Kang and Liang; memorials to the throne from Xu Yingkui (1832–1903), Wenti, and others; relevant contents from Zhang Zhidong’s *Exhortation to Study*; letters by Wang Renjun (1866–1913), Ye Dehui (1864–1927), and Wang Xianqian (1842–1917) castigating Kang and Liang; and petitions openly denouncing Kang and Liang. This *Collection* assembled the most rabid attacks against Kang and Liang at that time. The writers used extremely violent language, leveled the most serious accusations, left no stone unturned, and fell in the category described by Su Yu as “overt denunciations.”

Extracts from Wenti’s accusations have been cited above. Let us look now at statements made by a few other personages. In his *Shi xue ping yi* (Comments on Actual Studies), Wang Renjun wrote: “How should one do away with those malpractices? One should continue to use the classical teachings as the criteria. One must rigorously exercise the guides for rulers over their subjects, and absolutely refrain from instituting democracy, absolutely refrain from attaching any importance to people’s rights, and absolutely refrain from countenancing any parliaments. The alternative will be the forming of diehard cliques and secret societies as took place in Rome, the repudiation of new rulers as in France, and the struggles for power as in South America, and in less than ten years all of the twenty-three provinces will have become dens for robbers and thieves.”<sup>16</sup> In his *You xuan jin yu ping* (Commentaries from a Horse-Drawn Carriage), Ye Dehui stated: “Kang Youwei’s followers agitate people’s minds, attempt to institute democracy and change the current institutions, and make use of unfounded demagoguery to fulfill their factional and personal ambitions.”<sup>17</sup> In his “Introduction to Setting Proper Boundaries” he accuses Liang Qichao of “setting up his own theories that would equalize the powers of rulers and ordinary people, and thereby break down the boundaries between the higher and the lower.”<sup>18</sup> In his *Refutation of the Notes on the Changxing Academy*, he denounces Liang Qichao for emulating his mentor by “propagating democratic theories throughout the country.”<sup>19</sup> He asserts:

<sup>15</sup> *Collection of Heterodoxies: Preface*, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 16.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Same as above, p. 24.

<sup>19</sup> *Collection of Heterodoxies*, vol. 4, p. 36.

“By propagating these theories with regard to fallacious classics, changing the system, and giving people equal rights, the greater part of the Six Classics are negated and studies thereof would require no more than a year, and all people, whether wise or ignorant, could demand that they be given powers and could rebel against their superiors.” He thereupon accused Kang and Liang of being “arch-criminals under Heaven.”<sup>20</sup> In his *Du xi xue shu fa shu hou* (Remarks after Perusing the Methods of Studying Western Learning), Ye also assailed Kang and Liang, saying: “the Sage’s Cardinal Guides and Constant Virtues cannot be changed and will only be confused by spurious allegations about equality; the majesty of Heavenly authority cannot be violated and will only be wrested away by advocacies of people’s rights.”<sup>21</sup> From his conservative standpoint, Ye Dehui could see very clearly that Kang, Liang, and other reformers were challenging the thousands-of-years-old traditional systems of political culture and posed a threat to the systems of sovereign autocracy and patriarchal ethics. Conservative literati and officials as a whole were also clearly aware of this. In a “Memorial to the Throne by Bin Fenyang et al against Principal Wang Yiwu,” they cited a number of responses employed in the teaching method used at the Shiwu School, and in a footnote stated: “Promoting people’s rights will only hasten unrest, and will certainly cause the country to perish.” And, “their contention that ‘it is regrettable that sovereigns remain in power for too a long time’ is utterly disloyal. They want all people to rise up in rebellion and cause constant unrest, as this would fit in with their fond expectations.”<sup>22</sup>

We have taken pains to assemble the above quotations simply to show that, from the very outset of the 1898 Reform Movement, forward-looking persons in China had gradually begun to target the system of sovereign autocracy.

*Collection of Heterodoxies* was published after the coup d’état, and Su Yu et al. applied themselves assiduously to assailing Kang and Liang even after the two had already been deposed. However, also after the coup d’état, He Qi (1858–1914) and Hu Liyuan (1847–1916) published their work *Quan xue pian shu hou* (Postscript to Exhortation to Study), rebutting Zhang Zhidong and defending the Reform Movement. Although they disagreed with Kang and Liang on certain matters, they had no objections to the overall orientation of the political reform.

He Qi and Hu Liyuan had long resided in Hong Kong and were fairly knowledgeable about the Western system of politics. In their book *Xin zheng zhen quan* (True Explanation of the New Reforms), they first of all pointed out: “Under Western systems of government, the acceptability or otherwise of the decisions of the highest authorities are decided by parliaments, and the members of these parliaments come from among the people. The rights and wrongs of all court cases among the common people are adjudged by juries, and the jurors are chosen from among the multitudes. There are clear and open-minded laws above, and a fair

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 39.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 64.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, vol. 5, p. 8.

and forbearing public sentiment below, all of which makes for a structure conducive to prosperity and strength.”<sup>23</sup> He and Hu clearly negated the Zhong Ti (Chinese structure) of the system of sovereign autocracy which had been exercised for a thousand years in China, and pinned their hopes on the setting up a structure conducive to prosperity and strength similar to that in the West, or in other words, a structure of constitutional government in which rulers and the people exercise joint governance. They maintained: “When rulers and the people are united, countries gain in strength; when rulers and people are divided, countries lose strength. Where there are people’s rights, a country’s ruler and people are joined together and the hearts of those above and below are at one.”<sup>24</sup> In order to promote people’s rights, one had to set up parliaments. As they said: “Restoration of people’s rights rests first and foremost in setting up parliaments and electing parliamentarians.”<sup>25</sup> They also refuted the claim that the ordinary Chinese were so intellectually underdeveloped that it was impossible to elect them as members of parliament. They pointed out: “Members of parliament only need to know how to apply the major rules to their own affairs and the major laws that ensure security at all levels and what should be done to promote the beneficial and what should be done to eliminate the harmful. All that is beneficial for the localities has to be properly planned and implemented. All that is harmful to the people has to be weeded out and eliminated. That which is practicable and that which is appropriate has to be retained.”<sup>26</sup> What was so difficult about that? Besides, members of parliament were to be elected by the populace “without any nit-picking or demands for perfection, and simply for their ability to make fair judgments, to be loyal to the ruler and the people, to promote all that is good, and to courageously carry out all that is righteous.”<sup>27</sup> The argument that ordinary Chinese were intellectually underdeveloped—an argument which was used to oppose both the elimination of autocracy and the practice of constitutional government—was closely tied in with arguments which in those times gave China a reputation of being rigidly conservative, and both He and Hu were among the first to level criticism against such arguments. They conducted a point-by-point rebuttal of Zhang Zhidong’s *Exhortation to Study* in their book, and their rebuttals of *The Cardinal Guides* and *Centralization of Power* were especially detailed and rational.

In their criticisms of *The Cardinal Guides* and *Centralization of Power*, they pointed out: “The Three Cardinal Principles originated in *Li Wei*, were quoted in *Bai Hu Tong* [White Tiger Hall], expounded by Dong Zi (Dong Zhongshu), assembled by Ma Rong, and interpreted by Zhu Xi, and one and all were wrong. Most of the materials in the book *Li Wei* have been culled from the Chen Wei interpretations of the classics [i.e., divinations combined with mystical Confucian

<sup>23</sup> *Xin zheng zhen quan* (True Explanation of the New Reforms). p. 270; Liaoning People’s Publishing House, 1994.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 397.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 398.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 398.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 399.

or Taoist beliefs], possess absolutely no value, and are completely unfounded.”<sup>28</sup> All knew that the Chen Wei writings had no grounding in reason, they argued. Zhang Zhidong et al also knew this; they were clearly aware that the writings were nonsensical but used them anyway, purely to pander to the sermonizing by those in power. Hence, He and Hu stated: “If rulers and subjects stand on the Cardinal Guides instead of on justice, then rulers can slay their subjects even though these have done nothing wrong, and there will henceforth be no more bold and outspoken remonstrations. If fathers and sons stand on the Cardinal Guides instead of on kinship, the father can kill his son even though the son has done nothing wrong, and there will henceforth be no more harmony or forbearance between them. If husbands and wives stand on the Cardinal Principles instead of on love, then the husband may kill the wife even though she has done nothing wrong, and there will henceforth be no more connubial affection and dignity. If that is the case, officials may kill people who have done nothing wrong, elder brothers may kill younger brothers who have done nothing wrong, and elders may kill their young who have done nothing wrong. The arrogant will threaten the timid, the many will brutalize the few, the high-placed will maltreat the low-born, and the wealthy will bully the poor, and all will use the three Cardinal Guides as their excuse. It is the Three Cardinal Guides doctrine that has turned China into a land of backward barbarians.”<sup>29</sup> This, at the time, was the most forceful critique of the Three Cardinal Guides and the most forceful rebuttal of Zhang Zidong’s *Exhortation to Study*. The criticisms leveled at Zhang in *True Explanation of the New Reforms* are especially brilliant. When castigating Zhang’s absurd theory that promoting people’s rights was a surefire way for creating chaos, the book pointed out that China’s chaotic situation in those times was due precisely to the lack of people’s rights. “Were the people to have rights, outsiders would fear us, officers and men would fight courageously, government ministers would govern by law, schools would flourish, industry and commerce would prosper, and no efforts to create chaos would succeed. People’s rights would in fact prevent confusion and chaos.”<sup>30</sup> Besides averting chaos, people’s rights would also have a direct bearing on good governance, security and prosperity in China. The authors of the book stated: “When and where the need for people’s rights is disregarded, rulers and the people become estranged and those above and below part ways.” With such an estrangement and parting of ways, no country could prosper or become strong. Hence, “when people have rights, their country will certainly prosper, and when people have no rights, their country will certainly fall. This is as logical as the sun and moon navigating the Heavens and like the rivers and streams traversing the Earth, and nowhere can there be any exception.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 349.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 354.

<sup>30</sup> *True Explanation of the New Reform*, p. 396.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 412.

If we start with the violent attacks against Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao in the *Collection of Heterodoxies*, then look at Zhang Zhidong's purport in compiling the *Exhortation to Study*, and then check these with the counterattacks against the conservatives and the arguments for political reform in the book *True Explanation of the New Reforms*, we will see that people at the forefront of the debate were fully aware that Zhong Ti with the Three Cardinal Principles at its core was already facing fatal challenges. This, in the years between the 1898 Reform and the 1911 Revolution, was a matter of great concern for all intellectuals and politicians in China who evinced any concern for their country's destiny. One might well say that the challenges to the system of monarchical autocracy and the responses thereto were the central issue that dominated the ideology and culture of the last dozen or so years of the Qing Dynasty. Although there were other debates of varying depths, breadths, or intensities, all took second place to this central issue. In past years, people fettered by leftist dogmatism have been wont to use revolutionary ideology to examine all matters; they have excessively exaggerated the differences between the proponents of violent revolution and peaceful reform, and conversely neglected to sort out, relate, and comment upon the central issue described above. In so doing, they have quite inappropriately circumvented the primary issue and fixated on the secondary.

During the 1898 Reform, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao and other reformists focused on "changing the system," by which they meant doing away with the system of monarchical autocracy, reducing the powers of rulers and promoting the rights of the people. Setting up some sort of parliament (legislative body) had originally been regarded as the cornerstone of promoting people's rights, but the Hundred Days Reform was hurriedly discontinued amid acute confrontations between reform and conservatism, between the emperor and the empress dowager and between the new activists and the old guard and, most regrettably, never managed to place the parliament issue on the agenda in a fitting manner. There have been grounds in recent years to claim that the so-called memorial drafted on behalf of [the Manchu scholar-official] Kuoputongwu requesting the opening of a parliament, published in Kang Youwei's own compilation of memorials to the emperor, was actually a later-day fabrication. Even so, there is no denying that the main purpose of the reformists was to set up a constitutional monarchy.

After the 1898 Reform, no parties or factions that examined China's issues could divert the focus away from political revolution. There were no exceptions, whether they were revolutionary parties, constitutional factions, or even conservative ministers and liberal high officials in the Qing government itself. All political histories and annals and even thematic histories and the biographies of important personages testify to the fact that the emphasis of all movements in this phase of history lay on attempts to resolve the issue of political regime. Revolutionary parties rallied forces outside the regime to destroy the Qing Dynasty's autocracy while constitutional factions cultivated and organized forces within the regime to undermine monarchical autocracy. The last dynasty of China's system of monarchical autocracy finally collapsed under the concerted attacks of these two forces. The great majority of historians today agree with this interpretation, and there is no need here to go once

more into the details of this phase of history.<sup>32</sup> I have just given a brief account of the 1898 Reform period because, firstly, I want people to understand that, starting in 1898, the evolution of Chinese society and culture had entered a period centered on resolving the political system. As Liang Qichao once stated, earlier so-called reformists had focused on reforming specific aspects rather than the political aspect while later reformists genuinely grasped the core issue, i.e., political revolution. Hence, that specific phase in history (from the 1898 Reform to the 1911 Revolution) ought to be regarded as a single entity and examined as a continuous whole. Secondly, I wish to make it clear that because of the failure of the 1898 Reform, people have to some extent disparaged the political significance of that movement and placed more importance on its significance in terms of ideological enlightenment. Any such contention is somewhat biased. True, the core of ideological enlightenment is the discovery and the emancipation of the person, whereas political reform concerns itself with the destiny of a country or nation as a whole and aspires to resolve fundamental issues of social system. Nor can we deny that the writings of some of the advanced elements of the 1898 Reform Movement, such as Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Yan Fu and Tan Sitong, were abundant in enlightened thinking. Basically speaking, however, their attention was directed mainly on the state and nation as a whole and on the political system.

## 3.2 Politics Guide Cultural Trends

We have indicated earlier that, starting with the Reform Movement, the thinking of forward-looking persons in China gradually focused on the issue of how to reform China's political system for the sake of saving their country and eventually making it prosperous and strong. They realized that unless the political system issue was resolved, all other reforms would be of no avail. With this matter clear in their minds, they applied themselves accordingly. And so, during the 10 or more years toward the end of the Qing Dynasty, in a situation marked by complex internal and external contradictions, various aspects of society gave clear reflection to the guiding effects of the political culture, as we will demonstrate below from several aspects.

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<sup>32</sup> See Geng Yunzhi (1980, 1982). In the early 1980s, only a few persons could accept the view that the constitutionalists, like the revolutionaries, pertained to the forces which would ultimately terminate the Qing Dynasty's autocratic rule. Since that time, however, an increasing number of scholars have been studying the new governance and constitutional reform of the late Qing period, and more and more of them hold views similar or close to mine.



### 3.2.1 Translation and Writing of Books

Prior to the Reform, Liang Qichao had lamented that books translated at the time dealt mostly with science and technology and that very few were about the political sciences. That was indeed the case. For example, among the translations produced by the Jiangnan Manufacturing Office in 1894, only four fell in the category of politics and law. The Guangxue Society turned out a total of 291 translated works in 1900, yet only 29 of these, or 9.9 %, could be counted as works on politics and law.<sup>33</sup>

Change began with the initiation of the Reform Movement. Hidemi Onogawa, the Japanese scholar who made substantial contributions to the study of China's late Qing history, observed that the translation business shifted from books about bringing prosperity to the nation over to works related to politics after Kang Youwei put forward his ideas about reform.<sup>34</sup> Subsequently, the *Overseas Students' Translations* and the *Journal of Collected Translations* put out by Chinese students in Japan focused on translating and introducing Western theory on law and politics, much of which was re-translated from the Japanese language. In those days, a number of establishments in Shanghai—the Zuoxin Society, Guoxue Society, Guangzhi Press, Shangwu (Commercial) Press, Jingjin Press, Dongdalu Publishing House, etc.—vied with each other in the translation and publication of new books, a large proportion of which pertained to politics and law.<sup>35</sup> Of the catalogs of translated books dating from 1902 to 1904 and compiled in the *Translated Books I Have Read* by Gu Xieguang (1875–1949), there were 71 types of political and legal books (or more than hundred, if books of a political nature among the historical, philosophical, and polemical types are included), accounting for 548, or 18.6 %, of all the catalogued books.<sup>36</sup> It is evident that a major change had taken place. The books translated by Yan Fu (1854–1921), known as the first of China's great contemporary translators, are called the Eight Famous Works. Three of them—*On the Distinction between the Rights of the Community and the Self*, *A History of Politics*, and *The Spirit of Laws*—accounting for 37 %, are of the politics and law category. Worth noting is the fact that some of his books, even if they were not of the politics and law category, clearly took on a political character in terms of their influence on readers once they were translated and published. For instance, the book *Evolution and Ethics* actually dealt with the theory of bio-evolution. But once his translation came out, it acted as a political rallying call that urged the Chinese to wake up and strengthen their country without delay in order to prevent national subjugation and extinction. Strong evidence of this is to be found in Hu Shih's memoirs. Hu stated: “Soon after the publication of *Evolution and Ethics*, the book gained popularity nationwide, and even became required reading for middle school

<sup>33</sup> See *Catalog of Modern Book Translations*, pp. 717–724. Xeroxed copy by the Beijing Library Press, 2003.

<sup>34</sup> See Hidemi Onogawa (1982, p. 82).

<sup>35</sup> See Feng Ziyou (1981, p. 115).

<sup>36</sup> See *Catalog of Modern Book Translations*, pp. 407–615.

students. Few of those who read the book were able to understand Huxley's contributions to the history of science and thinking. What they did understand was the significance of the formula 'the fittest win while the inferior lose' in international politics. After China's repeated military defeats and its humiliations of (the Boxer Indemnity of) 1900 and (the Treaty of) 1901, this 'survival of the fittest' formula had the effect of a head-on blow, stunning and upsetting countless people. Within a few years, such thinking spread like wildfire in the minds and hearts of many young people."<sup>37</sup> Hu Shih's memories are quite correct. In those years of impending national disaster, high-minded young people were inevitably impassioned by their perusal of such books as *Evolution and Ethics*.

One of China's most influential publishing houses in modern times—the Commercial Press (*Shang wu yin shu guan*)—was started up during the 1898 Reform Movement. A review of its activities provides indirect evidence of the guiding role of politics in the last 10 or more years of the Qing Dynasty. One set of statistics shows that the Commercial Press turned out a total of 865 books between 1902 and 1910, of which 279, or 32 %, were of the social sciences category. Regrettably, these statistics do not indicate the specific number of books in the politics and law category, but the heavy emphasis on social sciences to a certain extent shows the importance that was placed on politics, ideology and culture.<sup>38</sup> After the Qing imperial court announced its intention in 1906 to set up a constitution, the number of translated books on politics and law rocketed. Regrettably again, no one has yet made any statistics of these. Especially noteworthy was the emergence of large numbers of politics and law books written and compiled by the Chinese themselves in line with current needs. Key members of a single constitutional society—the Preparatory Council for Constitutionalism—alone wrote more than ten books on constitutional government.<sup>39</sup> Especially numerous in this period were books, both translated and newly written, on such subjects as constitutions, parliaments, and congresses, police administration, finances, and local self-government—subjects most closely related to changes in political systems. Issues regarding local self-government, in particular, drew a great deal of attention among the gentry, merchants, scholars, and ordinary people. We have seen some 10 or more books on regional self-government; and in most provinces in Southeast and Central China self-government research societies and official newspapers on self-government were operated, not to mention various lecture and study groups on constitutional government and on law and politics.

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<sup>37</sup> Geng Yunzhi and Li Guotong (1999, p. 44).

<sup>38</sup> See Li Jiaju (2005, p. 147).

<sup>39</sup> See Li Xin (1982, p. 48).

### 3.2.2 Newspapers

Another outstanding feature of the last dozen or so years of the Qing Dynasty was the emergence of an abundance of politically oriented newspapers and periodicals. According to the “Index of Names of Newspapers and Periodicals” attached to the *China News Media Annals* compiled by Fang Hanqi, some 1,520 newspapers and periodicals were started up in the years 1895–1911 and, apart from a few that specialized on art and culture or professional subjects, the great majority dealt with current affairs. The most well-known and influential among them attracted readers with their political comments. Examples were the Qiang Xue Bao, Shi Wu Bao, Zhi Xin Bao, Xiang Xue Bao, Guo Wen Zhou Bao, Qing Yi Bao, Xin Min Cong Bao, Min Bao, Jiang Su, Su Bao, Zhe Jiang Chao, Zheng Lun, Xin Zhong Guo Bao, Shi Bao, Da Gong Bao, Dong Fang Za Zhi, Guo Feng Bao and so forth. Even Shen Bao, normally a commercial newspaper, frequently published politics-related articles in this period. Chen Leng, a well-known editor-in-chief, created a new literary genre for modern newspaper writing with his trenchant commentaries on current affairs. Ding Shouhe edited the *Introduction to Periodicals of the 1911 Era*, in which he presented information about more than 170 newspapers and periodicals published in the last years of the Qing Dynasty, most of which (approximately 88 %) were political in nature. Even publications of a nonpolitical nature, such as Xin Xiao Shuo (New Novels), published many novels of manifestly political purport. Moreover, Liang Qichao explicitly pointed out in the first issue of Xin Xiao Shuo that the relationship between novels and public governance was mainly one of politics. There is no arguing the fact that media opinion and consensus in this period was dominated by politics. Whether the discussion was about anti-Manchu revolution or about setting up a constitution, and whether the attitude taken happened to be radical or moderate, the focus was invariably on replacing the current system of monarchical autocracy with some sort of modern democracy, be it a constitutional monarchy or a democratic republic.

People in those days were clearly aware of the vigor and political influence of the newspapers and publications of that period. Feng Ziyou (1882–1958), the revolutionary who had personally participated in the 1911 Revolution and gained note as a revolutionary historian, described the effects of newspapers in a monograph entitled “Overview of Revolutionary Books and Newspapers In and Outside China before the Republic” in volume 3 of his *Unofficial History of the Revolution*. Feng listed 67 revolutionary newspapers, 50 revolutionary magazines, and 115 special pamphlets, and included in this list newspapers and magazines put out by many constitutionalists. He evidently was little affected by partisan views. This also shows that in that era publicity on anti-Manchu revolution and publicity on constitutional monarchy both played a political role in either destroying or undermining the system of monarchical autocracy. Feng stated: “Credit for the creation of the Republic of China should go to both practice and publicity—the two major aspects of the work done by revolutionary parties prior to the 1911 Revolution. Moreover, the effects of written publicity have been more powerful and widespread than the

effects of military practice. Jiang Guanyun (Zhi You) has said in an ode: ‘With the success of the written word; revolution shall sweep the nation.’ This is indeed true.”<sup>40</sup> Jiang Guanyun’s (1865–1929) ode was quoted by all literate young people at those days, and few if any had not heard it. Another witness was Liang Qichao, the acknowledged leader of public opinion in those days. When he returned to China after the 1911 Revolution, he said in an address to Beijing’s press circles: “After the Hunan Uprising took place last autumn, immense changes have occurred in the state system within a few months time, and the rapidity of the successes has never been witnessed heretofore in China or abroad. . . If asked why this is so, one should give the most credit to the publicity performed by newspaper offices. This is commonly acknowledged nationwide. Given the magnitude of this country and the thousands of years of revolts against imperial governments, all people are astonished that so little blood was shed and so small a price has been paid. Yet is it possible to measure just how much of their sweat and blood literary people expended on newspapers before and during the military actions? One might well say that black blood [i.e., ink—Trans.] took the place of red blood in the revolution that established the Republic of China.”<sup>41</sup> Huang Xing (1874–1916), the well-known revolutionary leader, also maintained that “[China’s] five major ethnic groups have acted in concert, but the present reform of the government system should in fact be attributed to the publicity performed by press circles.”<sup>42</sup> Even the Qing Dynasty official Tao Xiang (1871–1940) acknowledged that “the Qing actually perished at the hands of newspaper offices.”<sup>43</sup>

The accounts by these witnesses to history are compelling evidence of the important role played by the public opinion generated by newspapers and publications in the last years of the Ming Dynasty by means of propagating revolution and reform, criticizing autocracy, and promoting constitutional government.

### 3.2.3 Education

The two biggest events in terms of education at the end of the Qing Dynasty were the abolishing of the imperial examinations system and the promotion of new-type schools (*xue tang*). Fundamentally speaking, officials, gentry, and their scions who so urgently demanded the abolishing of the imperial examinations system and the

<sup>40</sup> Feng Ziyou: *Unofficial History of the Revolution*, vol. 3, p. 136.

<sup>41</sup> Liang Qichao: “*Bi ren dui yu yan lun jie zhi guo qu ji jiang lai*” (My Views on the Past and Future of Language Media); “*Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 29*,” p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> “Text of Speech by Huang Xing at the Press Circles Welcoming Meeting in Beijing,” *Zhong Hua Xin Bao* (Shanghai), September 20, 1912.

<sup>43</sup> Tao Xiang’s letter to Sheng Xuanhuai, *Before and After the 1911 Revolution—Selection 1 from the Archives of Sheng Xuanhuai*, p. 340, Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 1979.

setting up of new-type schools at the time did so from the political perspective of national salvation.

New-type education had already emerged long before the abolishing of the imperial examinations. People went for the new-type education because only that kind of education could help awaken the people, because it was what people at the time referred to as “the people’s mind-opener.” This, first of all, meant opening up people’s political minds. Back in 1896, Liang Qichao, in a letter to Zhang Zhidong, had pointed out that first consideration should be given to setting up political academies when initiating new-type education. He said: “Schools in the Western countries are of diverse types and their methods are highly complex. Only one type—the political academy—is the most feasible in China and the most useful today.” He criticized previous attitudes toward Western learning as “imitating only the superficial and being enamored of technological skills but overlooking the important rules and laws of statecraft,” and, “for today’s purposes, it is best to promote the political academy concept in our country.”<sup>44</sup> It is evident that long before the 1898 Reform, Liang Qichao had already given political education a priority position in education as a whole. By 1902, the year in which the rules and regulations for the first new-type schools were produced, Liang Qichao wrote a paper entitled “On the Goals To Be Set for Education,” in which he specified: “What we should do is equip these people with a personality (an adult personality which would include comportment, intelligence and physical fitness—Note in the original text), let them enjoy human rights, enable them to act of their own volition instead of as puppets, behave independently rather than as lackeys, govern themselves instead of acting like crude savages, be self-standing instead of conducting themselves as vassals, be subjects of their own country rather than like those of some other country, be contemporary persons rather than old and outmoded persons, and be people of the world rather than denizens of some remote retreat. These goals are the same for education all in civilized states worldwide, and our country should be no exception.”<sup>45</sup> Liang was the most influential political commentator in those times, especially among young people. When we read statements regarding the goals and functions of education as published in *Hubei Students*, a journal operated by Chinese students abroad, we see that these statements were in basic agreement with those of Liang Qichao. An article entitled “Why Education Concerns a Country’s Existence” in the journal’s first issue stated: “Education is great indeed! In terms of the abstract and the intangible, it has given rise to the sciences of politics, jurisprudence, economics, warfare and so forth. In terms of the concrete and the tangible, it has produced the sciences of phonology, optics, electricity, chemistry, industry, medicine, astronomy and so forth. It enables countries in the world to maintain their sovereignty and stand firm amidst the tempests of competition. It enables people within a country to safeguard their rights and resist

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<sup>44</sup> Liang Qichao: “A Letter to his Excellency Zhang of Nanpi County,” *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 1*, pp. 105 and 106.

<sup>45</sup> *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 10*, p. 61.

encroachments by the high and mighty.” It also stated: “In countries where there is education people are strong, whereas in countries where there is no education people are weak. In countries where there is education people are intelligent, whereas in countries where there is no education people are benighted. In countries where there is education the people gain in strength and may extend the nation’s strength abroad, whereas in countries where there is no education the people’s strength withers and they cannot stand up against other nations.”<sup>46</sup>

From the above, it is evident that the rise of education was based on political judgments, and that education flourished in the wake of political reforms and the unrest brought by political revolution.

The ideological state of students abroad and in China’s new-type schools was even more indicative of the political trends of thought and the political unrest that overshadowed the students’ lives.

In a preceding paragraph, we have mentioned the circumstances of children being sent to school in the United States in 1872 and of students being dispatched to Europe in that period. Very few students studied politics and law at that time. After 1898, when there was an upsurge in the number of students going to Japan, the majority went for military studies, a lesser number took up pedagogy, and a still lesser number studied industry and commerce. Most of those in various other disciplines—accounting for 10.71 %—chose politics and law, whereas all other disciplines added together accounted for only 5.4 %.<sup>47</sup> This, too, was a reflection of politics taking the lead over culture. However, I believe the political tendency and political unrest which affected and enveloped the educational field were best reflected in the swift burgeoning of student movements.

Student movements occurred in the greatest concentrations among Chinese students in Japan and in various locations along China’s southeastern coast centered on Shanghai. One of the earliest and most influential of these was the “Criminal Case of the Essays about Queues (*Zui bian wen an*)” at Hangzhou’s Qiushi Academy in the early summer of 1901. Members of a student organization known as the Lizhi Society (also call the Zhejiang Society or Zhejiang Student Society) at the academy had asked a tutor named Sun Yizhong to designate some essay topics. The upshot was that the essay many students chose to write sharply criticized the Qing Dynasty’s symbol of ethnic subjugation—the pigtail. This matter was reported to the authorities who launched an investigation, and Sun was forced to seek refuge in Japan. The case morphed into an anti-Qing political event that rocked public opinion in China’s southeastern region. In April, 1904, Zhang Taiyan and Qin Lishan (1877–1906) who were in Japan at the time called for holding activities at Tokyo’s Ueno Park to mark the so-called 242nd Anniversary of the Subjugation of China. Most Chinese students in Japan responded to the call. The meeting was cancelled due to Japanese police interference. However, Sun Yat-sen

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<sup>46</sup> Zhang Jixu: *Jiao yu guan xi guo jia zhi cun li shuo* (On the Theory that Education Concerns the Existence of the State); *Hubei Student Circles*, no. 1.

<sup>47</sup> See Zhang Yufa (1975, pp. 44–51).

subsequently got some students to hold a surrogate commemorative meeting in Yokohama, and Zhang Taiyan's vehemently anti-Manchu "Declaration at the 242nd Anniversary of the Subjugation of China" was released by the *Xin Min Cong Bao*, and so the matter produced major repercussions nonetheless. In July, some Chinese students in Japan asked to be recommended for admission to the Japanese Army School for studies but were turned down by Cai Jun, the Chinese consul in Japan, whereupon a large number of students surrounded the embassy in protest. Cai went so far as to request that the Japanese police send the trouble-making students back to China under escort. This further enraged the students. On August 22, a meeting was held at the Zhangyuan Park in Shanghai to voice support for the students in Japan, initiating a trend toward concerted action by student movements in China and abroad. On November 16, the most influential incident at the time took place in Shanghai when students at the Nanyang Public School collectively quit school. The incident began with a conservative-minded teacher's request that the school expel a student purely out of personal animosity. Other students protested, but the school, instead of appropriately interceding in the matter, arrogantly decided to expel the entire class. This enraged students in other classes, and as a result more than 200 students collectively left the school. These students, with assistance from the China Education Society organized by Cai Yuanpei and others, set up the Patriotic Study Society to continue their studies. Thanks to the fury generated by this incident, the students became even more radicalized. Their animosity toward autocracy grew, as did their yearning for freedom and a republic. Having received funding support from Su Bao, the students wrote articles for that newspaper and their anti-Manchu revolutionary statements began to appear in press articles. They also held weekly lecture meetings at the Zhangyuan Park. By this time, the modern patriotic and revolutionary student movement had taken initial shape.

On the first day of the Lunar New Year in 1903, Chinese students in Tokyo held a collective greetings assembly at the Students Guild Hall, at which Liu Chengyu, Ma Junwu, and others delivered speeches with explicit anti-Manchu revolutionary content. Word about this matter spread within China and immensely stimulated a great many young people in China. In April, it was reported that Wang Zhichun (1842–1906), governor of Yunnan, had invited French forces into China to quell disorders, and in exchange had ceded railway and mining rights to the French. Because of this, Chinese students in Japan initiated an anti-French campaign, sent out telegrams denouncing Wang Zhichun, and demanded that he be dismissed from office and investigated. Soon after that, an even larger campaign against Russia took place. Russian imperialism had taken advantage of the suppression of the Boxers to dispatch troops to China's northeastern provinces. When the deadline came in 1903 for Russia to withdraw its troops, however, it had not only refused to pull these out, but raised seven highly aggressive demands. Incensed by the news, overseas students launched an anti-Russian campaign and set up an anti-Russian volunteer force. Student circles in China also voiced support for them. Although the campaign soon subsided because of internal dissension, it figured as an important link in the gradual growth of the entire anti-Manchu revolutionary movement

among Chinese students. Just at this juncture, another collective school dropout incident involving more 30 students took place at the Nanjing Lushi School. The school's dropout students went to Shanghai, further intensifying the anti-Manchu revolutionary atmosphere that was gathering strength in that city. A bit later, the "Su Bao Case" that shocked people at home and abroad erupted against this background. Apart from the owners of that newspaper Chen Fan and Zhang Taiyan, the main actors in the Su Bao Case included Zhang Shijian, one of the original dropouts from the Nanjing Lushi School, Zou Rong, a student in Japan who had returned to China, and numerous members of the Patriotic Student Society who had contributed anti-Manchu articles to the newspaper. Hence, one might well say that the Su Bao Case was the outcome of a series of student movements and in itself contained elements of the revolutionary student movement.

In and around the year 1903, the student movement began to display clear characteristics of a political revolution. Students studying in Japan became one of the centers of China's student movement for the simple reason that the great majority of China's exiled politicians had congregated in Japan after 1898. Sun Yat-sen, Kang Youwei, and Liang Qichao all engaged in activities in Japan at one time or another. Liang Qichao, in particular, settled down in Japan after briefly conducting activities in Australia and the USA. Sun Yat-sen, on his part, frequently travelled to and from Japan, Europe, and the USA. A group of mettlesome young students in Japan gradually coalesced around these exiled political leaders—young people who harbored zealous ambitions of saving their country, constantly hoped to manifest these ambitions in speech or action, and refused to suffer in silence as their country went from crisis to crisis. Someone wrote about the Hirofumi Institute, which took in the largest number of Chinese students, as follows: "Every evening, students in the self-study classrooms discuss issues of setting up a constitution and launching revolutions."<sup>48</sup>

In 1905, Chinese students in Japan staged a collective strike against "Regulations on Banning Qing and Korean Students" issued by the Japanese Ministry of Education. This action played a major role in further revolutionizing the students. Most of those who left Japanese schools returned to China where they received assistance from various quarters in society. A China Public School was set up in Shanghai for them to continue their studies. A highly revolutionary atmosphere pervaded this school. According to a study by Liang Jinghe (b. 1956), student upheavals in various localities gradually adopted class boycotts as their main form of action after 1905. At the end of 1905, for instance, Jiangsu students at new-type school in the provincial capital Jiangning boycotted classes in a bid for larger enrolment quotas. In July, 1907, students in all new-type schools in the capital city of Anhui Province went on strike to protest an arbitrary judicial summons of local college teachers by the authorities of Anqing Prefecture. In November of the same year, students in intermediary classes at Shanxi College boycotted classes in

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<sup>48</sup> Li Shucheng: "Revolutionary Activities of Huang Keqiang before and after the 1911 Revolution," *Memoirs of the 1911 Revolution*, 1st Collection, p. 181.



protest against the college authorities' decision to put off their graduation dates (Liang Jinghe 1999, p. 89). According to statistics compiled by Liang Jinghe, figures for class boycotts showed a tendency to rise as compared to those for collective school dropouts in the years from 1905 to 1911. For example, in 1905 there were nine incidents of school dropouts as against four class boycotts. In 1906, there were five incidents of school dropouts as against eight class boycotts, and in each succeeding year, the number of class boycotts exceeded that of school dropouts (Liang Jinghe 1999, p. 90).

Most of these incidents were triggered by very specific matters. But all incidents in essence reflected the students' opposition to the authoritarianism of government and educational authorities. One may state without exaggeration that the new education at the close of the Qing Dynasty progressed by twists and turns in a political atmosphere imbued with various forms and degrees of anti-authoritarianism.

In *Unrest in Educational Circles*, a book that in the main described the student drop-out disturbances at the Nanyang Public School, the author wrote that it was the vehemently expressed new thinking in such newspapers as the *Xin Min Cong Bao* that electrified young students and goaded them to action. The young students felt that "existing as we do in the grand arena of the twentieth century where countries are new, continents are new, ideology is new, learning is new, where everything that meets our eyes and minds is new. . . when all other people are new but only we remain old, is that not most shameful? When people are new but are forced to remain old, is that not most painful? When I wish to be new but am forced to remain old, is that not most lamentable? When these shameful, painful and lamentable things meet our eyes and ears, and we do not even think of doing away with the shameful, the painful and the lamentable, we are not persons of firm resolve. . . we are not even human beings." Such misgivings stoked "innumerable moods and anxieties" in the students and "fill their breasts with grievances they cannot vent."<sup>49</sup> These grievances were bound to erupt whenever the students came up against matters that incensed them. "Stimulated by the unrest and goaded by their experiences. . . big changes take place in their thinking."<sup>50</sup> "Today, when new truths are being vigorously promoted, students strive for freedom, discuss revolution, detest autocracy, repudiate the old and the putrid, and welcome republicanism. . . Any attempt to take from students what they like and force upon them what they detest will only arouse their resentment." "If we do not free ourselves from our sufferings under monarchical autocracy, we will not be able to escape the sufferings of being enslaved by other nations; and to free ourselves from our sufferings under monarchical autocracy, we must first of all free ourselves from our sufferings under old-type school autocracy."<sup>51</sup> These statements expressed the fundamental reasons for the rise of student unrest in China.

<sup>49</sup> "Patriotic Youth" in *Unrest in Educational Circles*, vol. 4, p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> *Jiao yu jie zhi feng chao* (Unrest in Educational Circles), vol. 3, p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> Same as above, vol. 5, p. 15.

Whereas student movements before and after 1903 were characterized mainly by the venting of revolutionary sentiments, those after 1905 were directed at fairly specific objectives. For example, the 1905 struggles of Chinese students in Japan against the “banning regulations” bore some characteristics of opposing imperialist power. Chen Tianhua (1875–1905), the well-known revolutionary publicist, drowned himself in the sea during this movement. His last will and testament focused on two central issues: (1) inability to put up with discrimination and oppression and (2) raising one’s consciousness and attributes as the basis for becoming citizens of a republic.

Subsequent student movements were characterized by closer links with other social strata, as for example participation in the struggle against the US exclusion of Chinese laborers and for boycotting US goods. Arrests of some radical students in Guangdong occurred during these struggles. There was also their participation in campaigns to recover economic rights. Students became increasingly involved in politics, especially after the preparations for setting up a constitution began. During the well-known parliamentary petition movement, young students served as the vanguard and played the leading role in petitions, demonstrations, class boycotts and publicity. Cases of them slashing their fingers and arms frequently took place as expressions of their fervent opposition to authoritarianism and desire for constitutional government. The student movements of this period were no longer limited to overseas students and the southeastern coastal areas; extensive student movements had also started up in the provinces of central China and in the Three Northeastern Provinces. Well worth noting was that students were agitating not only in the cities but in the rural areas as well.

The rapid succession and widespread nature of the student movements showed that educational circles were closely tied in with political disturbances. Educational circles had become highly politicized.

### ***3.2.4 Industry and Commerce Serving the Country and the Movement to Recover Economic Rights***

All social endeavors at the end of the Qing Dynasty were, without exception, enveloped in a heavy layer of politics. Previously, during the Westernization movement, officials and gentry had devoted their attention to strengthening the military in the belief that national salvation urgently needed strong armed forces. Industry, commerce, and education were, at the time, entirely focused on this central objective. China’s crushing defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, however, proclaimed the failure of the Westernization policy and its chief objective of strengthening China’s military capability. People came to understand that building up military strength required improvements to education. However, a solid foundation for education and a strong military could be realized only if the people were lifted out of poverty and the nation’s overall strengths enhanced. As

Zhang Jian (1853–1926) said: “Agriculture and industry must flourish before education can be popularized, and education must be popularized before the people will understand the meaning of patriotism and before there can be any talk of successfully training an army.”<sup>52</sup> In the wake of advances in the movement for national salvation through industry and commerce, and especially with the rise of the constitutional movement, people acquired a deeper understanding of the relationship between the development of industry and commerce and the nation’s destiny. The following are some examples of people’s observations at that time: “All of the many measures taken so far have only resulted in poverty. Those above who engage in farming are distraught with anxiety, and the multitudes below know not which way to turn. The wealthy become increasingly poor while the poor are being reduced to beggary. Hungry people roam the countryside and brigands and thieves infest the mountains. As it is said, the entire country is being reduced to destitution and all things provided by Heaven for its sustenance are being forever lost. Are these random impressions and observations of mine not self-evident? . . . Thus, as regards the ways for averting disaster, the first and only thing to do is to invigorate industry and commerce.” And, “all of the cultural, material and military endeavors by the populace and the government to raise the prestige of our country and defend its lands can succeed only if they are supported by popular strength.” Hence it was said: “Industry and commerce is that which the people depend on for their livelihood and which provides the nation’s life-blood and nutrients. The thriving or the decline of industry and commerce concerns the well-being or misery of the people’s livelihood, the flourishing or tarnishing of the country’s governance, and the permanence or transience of the nation’s future.”<sup>53</sup>

Toward the end of the Qing Dynasty, national salvation through industry and education, just like the thinking about national salvation through strengthened military power, national salvation through science, or national salvation through education, became a major trend of thought among insightful persons nationwide and, in the minds of many, came closer to the roots of the matter than the other ways of thinking about national salvation. It was for this reason that many insightful persons went around calling on people to engage in industry and commerce and setting personal examples in this respect. Zhang Jian, for instance, who was a *zhuangyuan* [holder of the highest degree at the imperial examinations], gave up his career as a scholar and despite many setbacks mustered up support to set up factories and businesses. Reminiscing on his experiences in setting up industrial and commercial institutions, he said: “Ever since the defeat of China’s forces in the War of 1894–1895 and the signing of the Maguan Treaty [Treaty of Shimonoseki], China’s prestige has plummeted, much to the mortification of people of insight.

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<sup>52</sup> “Merorandum Advising Tongzhou’s Joint Commercial Savings Deposits to Serve Concurrently as Ordinary Commercial Banks,” *Zhang Jizi’s Nine Records: Industrial Records*, vol. 2, p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> Sheng Yin: “Conjectures on National Salvations through Industry and Commerce,” *The Eastern Miscellany*, 6th issue in its 7th year, quoted from *Selected Political Commentaries from the Decade before the 1911 Revolution*. pp. 511–512.

They realize that it is first of all necessary to popularize education, and that to popularize education it is first of all necessary to train teachers and set up schools for training teachers. Setting up teacher training schools requires no small amount of funds. In other countries, teacher training schools are supported by national or local construction. At this time the imperial examinations have yet to be terminated, and the people's minds have yet to be developed. The state has made plans in this respect but has not yet had time to act on them. Meanwhile, the local authorities stick to their old ways of using public funds and are loath to give the matter any attention. In view of this situation, I believe the only recourse is to engage in industry and commerce."<sup>54</sup> That was Zhang's own account of the motive and the thinking that led him to engage in industry and commerce. If that was so for himself, it might very well have been the same for other personages who believed in saving the nation by means of industry and commerce. For saving the nation, people's minds had to be opened up; to open up people's minds, education had to be developed; and to develop education, funds were needed. How would one obtain the funds? By promoting industry and commerce. There was no other way.

There have been many writings and discussions on the thinking with regard to saving the nation by means of industry and commerce, and there is no need to go into further detail here. What we wish to show is that people of foresight at that time laid special emphasis on the relationship between promoting industry and commerce and the country's political reform. As Liang Qichao pointed out in his article entitled "Notice to Those in China Who Discuss Industry and Commerce," if development of industry and commerce was desired, some basic political conditions had to be met, such as improving the legal system, improving the attributes of administrators, perfecting the related institutions and corresponding systems and so forth. He said in conclusion: "Hence, if China intends to invigorate industry and commerce, what should it do? I say it should first establish a system of constitutional government, become a country governed by law, and accustom its people to a state of legality. Next, it should set up an education program, cultivate public morals in its people, and increasingly promote morality. Next, it should make ready all the institutions needed for business enterprises so that none are lacking. And then it should take steps to improve the capabilities of citizens' enterprises. If even one of these things is omitted, all prating about invigorating industry and commerce will be no more than talking in one's sleep. Moreover, all such endeavors as cultivating public morals, setting up institutions and improving capabilities cannot succeed unless there is good governance." He further summed things up, saying: "If the political organization can indeed be improved, all things that should be done will be done in good time; but if the political organization cannot be improved, doing one more thing will only give rise to one more malpractice. . . . By what means should the so-called improvement of the political

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<sup>54</sup> Zang Jian: "Brief Explanation of Ten Years of Expenses at the Nantong Normal School," *Nine Records of Zhang Jizi: Records of Education*, vol. 3, p. 15.

organization be effected? By means of a parliament or a responsible cabinet (*zeren neige*).”<sup>55</sup>

The rise of the thinking about national salvation by means of industry and commerce began with the political intent to save the nation, and the realization of this objective depended on the realization of constitutional government. There was no disputing the fact that these matters should be guided by politics.

Any discussion about the issue of national salvation by means of industry and commerce at the end of the Qing Dynasty inevitably involved the movement for recovering economic rights.

China’s defeat in the war of 1894–1895 culminated in the signing of the humiliating Maguan Treaty, which among other things allowed Japan to set up factories in China’s interior regions. Thereafter, foreign powers flocked to China to grab economic rights. The situation had become increasingly grave by the early years of the twentieth century. Rights to build railways and open up mines had in quick succession fallen into the hands of foreigners. The journal *Wai Jiao Bao* (Diplomacy) stated: “Almost every inch of land in China today is owned by a landowner, and virtually every person is dominated by someone else. And even if the encroachments by foreigners cease at this time, our state is no longer a state. Moreover, in a few years time matters will have become compounded, foreigners will have intruded themselves into all matters and we will not be able to do anything on our own even if we wanted to!”<sup>56</sup> The same journal stated in another article: “Innumerable economic rights, such as those of leasing land, building railroads and exploiting mines, have been seized. But the foreign powers are insatiable; they divide up our territories and call these ‘spheres of influence’ whereby to fulfill their colonial strategies. Alas! The increasing losses of rights are closely attended by diplomatic defeats. It is time people in our country wake up to such things.”<sup>57</sup> Gentry, merchants, scholars, and the common people alike were worried and incensed by these losses of economic rights to the outsiders. “Year after year foreign aggressors keep muscling in, and matters get worse by the day. Country A covets our territory, Country B schemes to wrest away our railroads, Country C helps seize our mines. . . Russia casts greedy eyes on us from the northwest, Japan glares at us from the east and Britain spies on us from the south, closely watching and plotting against us from all directions.”<sup>58</sup> China had to rise up in struggles to safeguard its economic rights and save the country from extinction. A Shi Bao commentary stated: “One might assume that the intention of those foreigners who day after day cast covetous and rapacious eyes on us is no more than to obtain some

<sup>55</sup> Guo Feng Bao, issue no. 27 in its first year.

<sup>56</sup> *Wai Jiao Bao* (Diplomacy Journal), issue no. 100, “Diverse Ways of Carving Us Up,” December 1904.

<sup>57</sup> “On the Need for Fundamental Resolutions when Recovering Economic Rights,” *Wai Jiao Bao*, issues nos. 263–264 (February 1909).

<sup>58</sup> “Text of a Memorandum to the Emperor from Gentry and People in Guangdong Requesting the Convening of a Popularly Elected Legislative Assembly,” *Shi Bao*, 15th day of the 6th lunar month of the Wushen year.

salient benefits, such as important railways and the best of mining concessions, and to hold power over them. However, we should know that our construction of railroads and mines today is not merely for the sake of alleviating poverty but, more importantly, to save our country from extinction.” “All people with patriotic sentiments should vigorously respond to the companies’ calls to purchase shares, since the purchase of one more share means recovering one more economic right.”<sup>59</sup> Outsiders who grabbed economic rights relied on the aggressive arrogance of their mother countries, took advantage of China’s diplomatic forbearance and concessions, seized opportunities to collude with officials and evil gentry and, at almost no cost to themselves, signed agreements that gave them the power to construct this or that railway or mine. In fact, most of those outsiders were opportunists who had no capital or any real capabilities. After obtaining rights, they would take no action other than wait for opportunities to resell the rights to a third party at a substantial profit for themselves. In this way, the land and wealth on which a nation’s people depended for their livelihood was seized by a band of marauder-like opportunists. The Chinese very soon woke up to this fact. The *Wai Jiao Bao* stated: “An overview of the events in the Jia Chen and Yi Si years (1904 and 1905) shows that the first of them vied for the Canton-Hankow railroad. After that came those who took the mining rights in Zhejiang’s Quzhou, Yanzhou, Wenzhou, and Chuzhou. Still later were those who contended for mining concessions in Anhui Province. They flocked to every province to jockey for railway and mining rights, and the local people actually felt slighted if these foreigners did not show up in their province. Eventually, foreigners even vied for rights to the Shanghai-Nanjing Railway which had already been built. . . By this time calls for preserving economic rights had emerged among the Chinese and spread across the entire nation, and were heard even in the lower levels of society.”<sup>60</sup> The campaign to recover economic rights was manifestly an anti-imperialist patriotic movement with a strong political hue.

In the course of fighting for the recovery of economic rights, people in all localities personally witnessed the weakness and incompetence of the Qing Dynasty and its officials, their fear of foreigners, and their disrespect for their own people. Whenever controversies arose during negotiations between local people and foreign businessmen, the officials often defended the foreigners against the locals, as they were afraid of matters developing into diplomatic imbroglios which inevitably ended up with losses of rights by China. Many of the disputes over recovering economic rights had to do with foreign businessmen shrugging off signed agreements and failing to start up construction within stipulated deadlines, which of course constituted breaches of contract. According to international practice, where there were breaches of contract, the original contracts should have been declared null and void, the rights involved recovered without remuneration and fines imposed on the contract violators. In China, however, no cases that involved

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<sup>59</sup> *Survey of Railways and Mines*, Shi Bao, 25th day of the 2nd lunar month of the Yisi year.

<sup>60</sup> “Preparations Must Be Made for Excluding Foreign Things,” *Wai Jiao Bao*, issue no. 131 (December 1905).

foreigners were handled in this way. Foreign businessmen obtained rights at virtually no cost to themselves but demanded that the Chinese people pay vast sums of money to redeem rights that belonged to the Chinese in the first place.

The practice and experience of recovering economic rights awakened Chinese gentry and businessmen politically. They eventually understood that the recovery of economic rights called for struggles not only with foreigners who were backed by forces of aggression but also with the corrupt government and its officials. If their country's economic rights were truly to be protected, people had to fight with the government for political rights and not allow government officials to compromise and make concessions at will, suppress the people at will, or obsequiously submit to the foreigners' demands. The people should organize themselves to protect their rights and prevent such behavior on the part of government officials. The Shi Bao issued an editorial on the campaign during which Suzhou, Hangzhou and Ningbo refused to accept foreign loans in an attempt to protect their railway rights. It said: "Today's refusal to accept loans has been starting point of a dispute between the rulers and the people. Heretofore, the powerful have suppressed the people. . . Should people below fail to set up a base today for future action, or fritter their time away on discussions and let this good opportunity slip by, they will be caught unprepared when any sudden change takes place and will rue their erstwhile injudiciousness. Is that not clear? And so, what is that so-called 'base'? As stated in yesterday's editorial, it consists of assembling businesspeople throughout the country to establish a nationwide general association for railways and mines."<sup>61</sup> Although this did not happen, it shows that China's gentry-merchant class, after undergoing tempering in the movement to recover economic rights, were substantially more aware of protecting those rights.

In the course of their struggles to recover economic rights, people became deeply aware that the corrupt government and the great majority of its officials did not side with the country and its people or try to stand up to the foreigners, that they were afraid of negotiating with foreigners and of the foreigners' threats; that they frequently compromised, gave in, or felt no compunction about surrendering economic rights, and were incapable of using the law to punish foreigners for breaches of contract or of warning them against such behavior, so that local people were forced to pay exorbitant sums of money to redeem economic rights that originally pertained to the Chinese. Bitter experience taught the people that the government could not be relied on, and that that they themselves had to rise up, take over the reins of power and supervise the government if China's economic and national rights were to be protected. This awareness on the part of the gentry/merchants became a force that powered the movement for setting up a constitution. Shi Bao stated in an editorial: "When small people who have little or no power wish to acquire real powers with which to supervise the government, they must have something that serves them as a basis for maneuvering. 'To benefit from the land

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<sup>61</sup> "On Assembling Citizens to Establish a National General Association of Railways and Mines," Shi Bao, ninth day of the 10th lunar month in the 33rd year of the Guangxu reign.

one must first till the land,' must one not? In this case, self-operation of railways and mines has been the only basis available to our people as they prepare for constitutional government".<sup>62</sup> Precisely for this reason, leaders and key persons of the constitutional faction paid very close attention to the campaigns to recover economic rights and to the actions of the gentry and merchants in these campaigns. At the time, Sun Zhiceng, an activist of the constitutional faction, wrote a letter to Liang Qichao, saying: "I pay the greatest attention to the Citizen's Association of Railways and Mines . . . Railways and mines inspire among the people thoughts about rights, which with guidance can quickly be formed into a force. In time, extraordinary results will be obtained as large numbers of commercial associations and banks are established and increase in size and application. Thanks to their overwhelming strength, these financial groups will be able to control the country's finances, influence and control the whole country, overturn the government's mandatory edicts, and restrain the authority and power of the officials."<sup>63</sup> The *Zhong Guo Xin Bao* directly linked this movement with the efforts to set up a parliament, and explained the reasons for requesting a parliament as follows: "Setting up a parliament must not be delayed if we are to safeguard our national rights. China's diplomats have, over the past decades, always sought to steer clear of trouble, and it is not known how much life and property the Chinese people have forfeited due to their ineptness and indifference. Just recently the people of Liangjiang have been coerced into incurring foreign debts, people in Guangdong have been forced to abandon supervisory and judiciary powers in Xi Jiang, the Ren Fu Company has been allowed to seize mining rights in Shanxi Province, and countless other people have been complaining about such matters. Yet these are but small matters. There are also the Russians in Mongolia, the Japanese in Manchuria, the French in Yunnan and the British in Tibet. Do any of these territories not concern the life and death of our people? Yet our elders and brethren see only the small and the immediate and ignore the important and the far-reaching, and entrust such lands to the ministrations of a corrupt and inept government, and in so doing they have indirectly ceded these territories to hostile countries. Is there any shame greater than that? We submit to other people's might, and we retreat before other people's interventions. The government flings opens its doors and bows in thieves and robbers and sees no shame in selling out the country, while the people bow their heads and would seem to find glory in being slaves. Truly, anyone with the least gumption should rise up in protest. Only a parliament can express the nation's unified consensus, which would shore up the government's foreign diplomacy, stiffen its stance toward foreign countries, and enable it fight for equal rights. If ministers of foreign affairs violate orders and disgrace their country, citizens could,

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<sup>62</sup> "Citizens Should Take Active Measures on the Railways Issue," *Shi Bao*, 21st day of the fifth lunar month in the 34th year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>63</sup> Letter from Sun Zhiceng to Liang Qichao, see *A Chronological Biography of Liang Qichao*, p. 459, Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1983.



in accordance with statutory procedures, call for their impeachment. This goes for all countries that have constitutions.”<sup>64</sup>

It was evident that the so-called movement to recover economic rights sought to save the nation by political means. Or in other words, national salvation through industry and commerce was, in the final analysis, inextricably linked with political revolution.

### 3.2.5 *The Politicization of Literature as Represented by Novels*

The political transformation (including both revolution and reform) which began in 1898 became the leading factor in society as a whole toward the end of the Qing Dynasty. Politics encompassed and dominated all else, and this circumstance naturally found expression in another important aspect of culture, i.e., literature.

Literature comes in many forms, including novels, poetry, plays, prose and so forth. However, as far as relations with various social strata are concerned, the most important are novels and plays, especially novels. As we are not dealing with the history of literature, there is no need here to go into an all-round description of the development and evolution of all domains of literature in this period. We will only cite novels to show the politicization of literature, or in other words, the leading role of politics in the development of literature.

A special circumstance toward the end of the Qing Dynasty was the importance placed on political novels.

The term “political novel” was first used by Liang Qichao. Scholars generally believe the term was brought in from Japan, but political novels as a genre first appeared in Europe. After the Meiji Restoration in Japan, the emergence and development of the civil rights movement that accompanied political reform saw some people writing political novels, the best known of which were *The Adventures of a Beauty* and *On the Nation*. Soon after Liang Qichao fled to Japan following the 1898 coup d’etat in China, he started up the Qing Yi Bao (Ching Yee News), and in the first issue of that newspaper printed the Japanese political novel *The Adventures of a Beauty* which he had read while aboard the Japanese ship that took him to Japan, and which had profoundly impressed him. The Qing Yi Bao subsequently ran a special column on political novels, for which Liang wrote an article entitled “Preface to the Translation and Printing of Political Novels.” In it, Liang quoted a passage written by Kang Youwei: “Not all literate persons read the classics, but all of them do read novels. Hence, where the Six Classics cannot be taught, use novels; where history books gain no access, use novels; where quotations fail to instruct, use novels; and where laws and statutes provide no governance, use novels.” He

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<sup>64</sup> “Memorial on the Reasons for Requesting the Establishment of a Parliament,” Zhong Guo Xin Bao, no. 9, January 1908.

also said: “In the past when countries in Europe began to change, their best and most learned scholars and their public-minded people would often write down their personal experiences and recollected political discussions in the form of novels, which persons who sought learning would peruse during intervals in their studies. Persons of the lower orders, such as soldiers, merchants, peasants, craftsmen, carriage drivers and hostlers as well as women and children spent much time leafing through and reading them. The books that came out could sometimes change the opinions of people nationwide. Political novels have had the biggest effect on advances in the politics of such countries as the United States, Britain, Germany, France, Austria, Italy and Japan.”<sup>65</sup>

Although Liang Qichao had met with failure in the Reform Movement, his ambition to reform China’s politics was undiminished. Racking his brains, he strove by all possible means to awaken the masses and create conditions for reforming the political system, and even pinned his hopes on novels for transforming people’s political inclinations. In 1902, after setting up the newspaper *Xin Min Cong Bao*, he started up a magazine called *Xin Xiao Shuo* (New Novels) and advocated using it as a tool for “renovating the people.” In an article entitled “The Relationship between Novels and Popular Governance,” he further developed his argument about the social function of the novel. He stated: “Novels possess inconceivable powers in terms of controlling people’s ways,” for which reason “if one hopes to renovate a country’s people, one must first renovate the country’s novels. Hence, if one wishes to renovate morals, novels must be renovated; if one wishes to renovate a religion, novels must be renovated; if one wishes to renovate customs and habits, novels must be renovated; and if one wishes to renovate learning skills, novels must be renovated. Even if one wishes to renovate people’s hearts and personalities, novels must also be renovated.”<sup>66</sup> He said novels had the power to sway, saturate, or stimulate groups of people and to uplift people’s mentalities. Thus, they were fully capable of affecting people’s minds and mores and of affecting political morals. He maintained that the Chinese people’s mental images of topnotch literati and politicians, talented scholars and beautiful women, chivalrous adventurers and bandits, sorcerers and demons, and so forth were all derived from novels. Hence, good and bad social mores all found their sources in novels. And since novels were so closely linked with public governance, “if one wishes to improve public governance, one must start by revolutionizing the field of novels; and if one wishes to renovate the people, one must start by renovating novels.”<sup>67</sup>

Liang clearly overexaggerated the social function of novels—an assessment in which literary theorists and scholars of the history of literature both concur. However, this only goes to show the state of mind among people who were engaged in all-out efforts to reform the political system. Liang was not the only person who subscribed to that view. In fact, in the year before the Reform, when Yan Fu and

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<sup>65</sup> See *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 3*, pp. 34–35.

<sup>66</sup> See *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 10*, p. 6.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

others had begun to reprint novels in Tianjin's Guo Wen Bao (National Information Newspaper), they published an article entitled "The Origins of the Novels Genre Published by Guo Wen Bao" in which they stated: "The new novels genre profoundly affects people and is spreading extensively in society—almost more so than the classics and historical works. It is inevitable that this genre will hold sway over the minds and mores of people throughout the country."<sup>68</sup> A high degree of importance is already attached here to the social function of novels. Even more opinions of this nature were expressed after Liang Qichao set up the Xin Xiao Shuo (New Novels). For example, Di Chuqing (1873–1941) published an article entitled "On the Position of Novels in Literature" (Xin Xiao Shuo vol. 1, issue no. 7), in which he stated: "Novels are, in reality, the acme of literature." He believed that novels were "fully capable of dominating people's morals and controlling public governance." Hence, he stated: "Hereafter, there will be immeasurable advances in our country's thinking and language, and these great events will certainly be brought about by novelists."<sup>69</sup> A writer who used the name "Song Cen" made a special point of the fact that novels played a special role in linking up Eastern and Western cultures. He said: "Eastern and Western nations are alike in that sentiments form the roots and tendrils of people's lives, and Eastern and Western nations are also the same in that their literary worlds give expression to such sentiments. Since the two societies are cut off from, and at odds with, one another, it is the bounden duty of literary writers to establish communication between them via the force of novels and kindred sentiments."<sup>70</sup> Tian Lusheng (1880–1913) wrote a paper in which he analyzed China's past novels. He maintained that the main motivations of their writers were three: "First, anger over political oppression," "Second, distress over social turbidity," and "Third, grief over matrimonial inequality." This was an indication of the responsibilities of novelists in those days. He described his aspirations as follows: "The only thing I am good at is that I know a little about literature, and as long as I am alive, I shall devote all of my energies and thoughts to the writing of novels, by means of which I shall strive to save the people of my country and serve as a foot soldier for the world of novels."<sup>71</sup> He also stated: "That would not matter, had I no desire to save the nation. But since I do harbor such a desire, I can only start by writing novels and improving the writing of novels." For, "saving the nation and seeking its survival cannot be done by just one or two talented persons. These aims will be accomplished only when patriotic thinking is popularized among the great majority of the citizenry, and to popularize patriotism and attain quick results in these matters there is no better medium than the novel."<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Originally published in Tianjin's Guo Wen Bao of October 16 to November 18, 1897; quoted from Ying (1960, p. 12).

<sup>69</sup> A Ying: *A Compendium of Late Qing Literature: Materials on Fiction and Drama*, pp. 28 and 30.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p. 32.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, pp. 35, 36 and 37.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, pp. 38 and 39.

Another person named Tao Youceng (1866–1927) went to great lengths to describe how enchanting and fearful and efficacious novels could be. He said “There is nothing more enchanting and more fear-inspiring than novels. On them depends advances in academics and the civilizing of society. The individual depends on them to maintain life, and the country depends on them for development.” He went so far as to declare: “To do away with all corrupt phenomena in China, what better way than to draw aside the curtain on corruption by means of novels? Novels must first be extended if politics and law are to be extended, novels must first be promoted if education is to be promoted, novels must first be invigorated if industry and commerce are to be invigorated, novels must first be well-organized if military affairs are to be well-organized, and novels must first be improved if habits and customs are to be improved.”<sup>73</sup> Exaggeration of the social function of novels was carried to extremes.

Of course, there were also those who disagreed with such overexaggerations of the social function of novels and who wrote articles to criticize and rectify such statements. For example, Xu Nianci, who founded the publication *Xiao Shuo Lin* (Collected Novels), in his article “My Views about Novels,” declared: “Today, as we translate and sell books, it is inappropriate to claim that improvements in customs and habits and advances among our citizens are somehow dependent on novels.”<sup>74</sup> Such comments and opinions, however, had little effect and only proved that circumstances are stronger than people. In those years marked by tempestuous revolutions and reforms, determined persons racked their brains for ways to contribute to social reform and national advancement. For well-meaning literati who had neither power nor wealth, the best thing they could do was to awaken the people, and their most handy tool for doing so was the novel. Such was the atmosphere that gave rise to a large quantity of novels which exposed the dark side of politics and the corruptness of officials and which castigated the iniquities of an authoritarian system that kept the people in ignorance and misery. The most acclaimed of these novels included *The Current State of Officialdom* (Guan chang xian xing ji), *Weird Situations Witnessed over Two Decades* (Er shi nian mu du zhi guai xian zhuang), *Evil Sea Flowers* (Nie hai hua), and *Travels of the Old and Infirm* (Lao can you ji). Others, such as *Mini-History of Civilization* (Wen ming xiao shi) and *Extreme Injustices of Nine Lives* (Jiu ming qi yuan) were also quite effective. All of these novels were political novels, and the criticisms and exposés in them left no stone unturned. For example, *The Current State of Officialdom*, publication of which began in the *Shi Jie Fan Hua Bao* (World Prosperity Journal) in 1903, described some 200 officials, ranging from ministers of military affairs to deputy department chiefs in prefectures and counties. Some were in charge of internal administration, others had to do with external affairs, some were military, others civil, all held different positions and played different roles, but they were

<sup>73</sup> “On the Power and Influence of Novels,” *You Xi Shi Jie* (World of Games), no. 10, 1907; quoted from the above book, pp. 40–41.

<sup>74</sup> Quoted from the same book as above, p. 42.

surprisingly alike in their shameless venality and despicable immorality. Those who read this book could not but despise and detest the ruling group, and could not but long for a revolution. The book *Weird Situations Witnessed over Two Decades*, published in Xin Xiao Shuo (New Novels) in 1903, involved an even broader spectrum: officialdom, business circles, foreigners, several hundred personages, and several hundred stories. It amply revealed the various vile aspects and malpractices in society which, in the words of the author, “made the world a domain of devils,” a domain teeming with snakes, vermin, jackals, wolves, devils, and monsters. This was a merciless criticism and repudiation of society as a whole. Although the book contained a small number of what might be called positive actors, all ended up tragically. Hence, the entire book constituted a negation of current realities. *Travels of the Old and Infirm* (published in Xiu Xiang Xiao Shuo [Illustrated Novels] in 1903) bore heavy overtones of a political warning. A dedicated reformist, the author compared China at the time with a decrepit ship cruising amid raging billows without a direction finder. Lacking any sense of security, the passengers rose up against the ship’s owner and grappled with the helmsman, only to be killed or flung into the ocean. Some of the passengers suggested using a foreign compass, but people on the ship neither understood the compass nor wanted to use one—a metaphor for the unpredictability of the ship’s fate. The book *Evil Sea Flowers*, published by Xiao Shuo Lin in 1905, contained an extremely bold criticism of the imperial examination system and the autocratic system, and provides gratifying reading even for today’s readers. It is regrettable that the book was never completed.

The four aforementioned books, which came to be known as the “four major condemnatory novels” (the term “condemnatory novel” was coined by Lu Xun), were the most influential political novels of that period and gave full vent to people’s dissatisfaction with the political setup of those times and to their anger with the ruling clique. Calls for reform and revolution were the keynote and the objective import of their contents. A great many magazines carried novels in those days. Examples are the Xin Xiao Shuo (New Novels) (1902), Xiu Xiang Xiao Shuo (Illustrated Novels) (1903), Xin Xin Xiao Shuo (Newest Novels) (1904), Yue Yue Xiao Shuo (Monthly Novels) (1906), Xin Shi Jie Xiao Shuo She Bao (Journal of the New World Novels Agency) (1906), Xiao Shuo Qi Ri Bao (Novels Seven-Day Journal) (1906), Xiao Shuo Lin (Collected Novels) (1907), Zhong Wai Xiao Shuo Lin (Collected Chinese and Foreign Novels) (1907), Jing Li She Xiao Shuo Yue Bao (Novels Monthly of the Jingli Agency) (1907), Xin Xiao Shuo Cong (Collection of New Novels) (1907), Yang Zi Jiang Xiao Shuo Bao (Yangtze River Novels Journal) (1909), Shi Ri Xiao Shuo (Ten Day Novels) (1909), Xiao Shuo Shi Bao (Current Journal on Novels) (1909), Xiao Shuo Yue Bao (Monthly Journal on Novels) (1910), and so forth. According to some statistics, approximately 120 newly written novels were published between 1900 and 1905, and 357 were published between 1906 and 1911.<sup>75</sup> Some of these, of course, were recreational in

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<sup>75</sup> See Zhu Wenhua (2004, p. 150).

nature, but a substantial majority of them were political works imbued with satirical and admonitory implications, and they exercised extensive social effects.

Our emphasis here on the effects of political novels is not to say that other forms of literature, such as poetry, drama, and so forth did not evince tendencies toward politicization. In fact, all domains in the literary arena toward the end of the Qing Dynasty were permeated with content that sought reform and called for revolution. It is generally known that the Nan She (Southern Society), one of the largest groups of poets in the last years of the Qing Dynasty, consisted in the main of anti-Manchu revolutionary intellectuals, and a large part of their poems contained outpourings of their anti-Manchu revolutionary sentiments. In the domain of drama, new-type plays had only just begun to germinate in this period, and people imbued with revolutionary aspirations went about renovating Chinese drama. *The Grand Twentieth Century Stage*, established in 1904, was sponsored by Chen Qubing (1874–1933) and Liu Yazhi (1887–1958), both of whom displayed revolutionary tendencies and belonged to Nan She. This was China's first publication dedicated to drama reform; it came under official suspicion and was shut down because of its anti-Manchu and revolutionary leanings. That in itself was a reflection of the high degree of politicization of the literary and art fields in the last years of the Ming Dynasty. All people engaged in theatrical reform at the time harbored the intention of going out into the world and, by means of plays, change people's thinking, reform society, and invigorate China. Some said: "Since the acting business is so tightly linked with a country's customs and cultivation, one certainly must not treat actors and actresses casually or lightly." Others averred: "The country is facing a crisis and many regions remain unenlightened," and although setting up schools, writing novels, and publishing newspapers was useful, doing those things "does not open the minds of the illiterate." "However, reformed plays are able to strike a chord in society as a whole. Since even the deaf can watch them and the blind can hear them, they are in truth the one and only way to reform society."<sup>76</sup> Tian Lusheng was of the same mind and said: "There is nothing better than the play as a means to inculcate national thinking in all people whether old or young or high or lowly, and to remold them." A writer named Chen Peiren wrote an article entitled "On the Benefits of Plays" in which he directly called on drama reform to serve the anti-Manchu revolution.

From the above, it is clear that China's literary and art circles in the final decade or more of the Qing Dynasty were in fact both dominated by the trends of thought of political reform and political revolution.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> A Ying: *A Compendium of Late Qing Literature: Materials on Fiction and Drama*, pp. 53 and 55.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

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## Chapter 4

# Initial Shaping of Social Public Cultural Spaces at the End of the Qing Dynasty

The formulation “social public space” is frequently encountered in the writings of modern figures, and the concept is basically taken from Western scholars. It refers to social spheres outside governmental and private domains and is used in the sense of political studies. The “social public cultural space” I refer to here differs in meaning from the above, and is used in the sense of cultural studies. It denotes spaces formed in society for the dissemination, exchange, convergence, and innovation of culture. Social public cultural spaces gradually took shape in the wake of the proliferation of social contacts in modern times, and the formation of social public cultural spaces is a major issue in the modern transformation of culture. The culture of China’s old, traditional society basically consisted of two systems. One was the cultural system dominated by the government, such as the loyalty-to-the-ruler and reverence-for-Confucius cultures that basically served the needs of government rule. The other was the nongovernmental [folk] system consisting mainly of traditions, beliefs, customs, and habits which played a dominant role in households, clans, township communities, and indigenous villages. One cannot say that public cultural spaces did not exist beyond the two systems mentioned above. There were, for instance, the urban teahouses, theaters, and markets, and in rural areas there were the various religious ceremonies and processions, festival activities, and so forth. There were also the contacts during the general and provincial triennial civil service examinations, the contacts among small coteries of literati in certain localities, and so on. However, none of these possessed modern social characteristics, and their participants were incapable of cohering into groups with constraining capabilities. Moreover, the groups had no clear-cut objectives and were devoid of innovative mechanisms. Modern social public cultural spaces were formed by certain organized groups and had common objectives based on common understandings. These communities or groups were, among themselves,



competitive and mutually complementary, and possessed innovative mechanisms. Examples of these are newspaper offices, scholarly associations and various social groups, public cultural facilities, and cultural activities as well as libraries, newspaper-reading societies, lecture meetings, performing arts venues, and so forth. (The performance venues were of a truly socialized nature, unlike the performing arts activities of traditional society which were held for the most part only in private venues or in temporary facilities during temple fairs and religious processions; only the storytellers' venues were relatively permanent.) The forming of these social public cultural spaces had an important effect on the dissemination, exchange and creation of culture, as well as on changing the concepts of the majority of people and shaping new concepts, and thereby directly or indirectly played an indispensable role in social advance.

The formation of modern public cultural spaces depended first of all on the development of modern education. Secondly, it required backing from social and communal organizations. And it also required the presence of a social media system. Here, we will primarily examine the development of China's modern education between the 1898 Reform Movement and the 1911 Republican Revolution, and the development of social groups and organizations and social media systems.

## **4.1 Development of Modern Education Between 1898 and 1911**

This issue may be examined by and large as three phases: (1) Before and after 1898; (2) the interval from the Qing government's establishment of the policy for developing modern-type schools (*xue tang*) up to just before the abolishing of the imperial examinations system, that is, from 1902 to 1905; and (3) the interval from the abolishing of the imperial examinations system up to the eve of the 1911 Revolution.

### ***4.1.1 Before and After 1898***

Prior to the 1898 Reform Movement, new-type education in modern China was first set up and run by foreign missionaries arriving in China. After the rise of the Westernization Movement, China's officials and gentry gradually encouraged the running of new-type schools (*xue tang*). Except for the Tongwenguan (language academies) and the Guangfangyanguan which were set up for training diplomatic and foreign language personnel, most were military-industry or business-type schools that provided only a narrow range of options and were few in number. After the rise of the 1898 Reform Movement, a number of schools adapted to the

needs of the Reform sprang up successively in various places, among them the Shiwu School in Changsha, the Suanxue Academy in Liuyang, the Jiangnan Chucai School in Shanghai, the Shimin School in Guangzhou, and the Sanyuanli Studio in Shaanxi. There were also the Huiwen School, the Tongyi School, and the Eight Banner Fengzhi Primary School and so forth in Beijing, the Lianghu Academy and Jingxin Academy in Wuhan, the Datong School in Hengbin, and a few others. Loud demands were voiced in this period for reforming the imperial civil-service examination system. These demands were directed mainly at doing away with the Eight-part Essay [a stereotyped form of essay writing required for the imperial examinations during the Ming and Qing dynasties, so named because it was to be presented as eight sections], the Tie Kuo writing style, and the Kai Fa calligraphy, all of which were far removed from actual needs, and at moving toward a more practical orientation. Kang Youwei, for instance, proposed discourses on politics (*ce lun*), and Yan Xiu (1860–1929) recommended setting up economics specializations and so forth.

During the 1898 Reform Movement, the imperial court issued an ordinance to all provinces that “large *shuyuan* (academies) in the provincial capitals are to be high-level schools, academies in the prefectural capitals shall be mid-level schools, and academies in the *zhou* (a former administrative division – Trans.) and counties shall be primary schools” and that “all memorial temples which are not listed in the Sacrificial Rites Register. . . shall without exception be converted into new-type schools.”<sup>1</sup> These orders were, amid the calls to reform the civil examinations system, intended to create a new kind of education. Before long, however, the 1898 coup d’état took place, the Reform Movement was aborted and most school constructions were abandoned, the only outstanding survivor being a university in Beijing. But the imperial court, after the severe mauling it sustained during the Boxer incident of 1900, reflected somewhat on its ways and behavior and in 1901 again broached the subject of reforms, and also spoke of building up new-type schools. In 1902, noted educator Zhang Baixi (1847–1907) drew up rules and regulations for schools of various levels. These, after revisions, were released in 1903, and the business of setting up schools was placed more or less on the right track.

#### ***4.1.2 Advances in New Education from 1902 to 1905 Prior to the Abolishing of the Imperial Examinations System***

By this time, the imperial court had resolved to build new-type schools, and rules and regulations had been more or less made ready. A few schools were eventually built, but inspired little optimism because the literati were still sentimentally

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<sup>1</sup> Imperial edict of the 24th day of the 5th lunar month of the 24th year of the Guangxu Reign; see *Reform of 1898*, (2) p. 34.

attached to the imperial examinations system, officials and gentry balked at large-scale construction of the new schools, and most literati adopted a wait-and-see attitude. And so in the first part of 1904, Zhang Zhidong and Rong Qing (1859–1917) proposed to the imperial court that civil examinations be decreased by stages. In a Memorial Requesting Trial Implementation of a Progressive Reduction of Civil Examinations, they stated: “More than 2 years have elapsed since schools have been constructed upon imperial orders, yet few schools have been built in the various provinces, and raising funds is difficult. . . . The reason for the lack of donations and small accumulations of funds is that the civil examinations system has not been discontinued and all literati in the country allege the court is not focusing its full attention on schools. If arrangements are not made for curtailing the imperial examinations, people are bound to take a wait-and-see attitude and the wealthy gentry will certainly be unwilling to make donations. There must be no waiting for funds, and there can never be too many schools.” The memorial also stated that the civil examinations could serve as an alternative option, since there were those who were unwilling to devote all of their energies to studies in the new schools. The memorial went on: “Most of the writing done at civil examinations is plagiarized, whereas schoolwork requires solid learning. Civil examinations hinge upon a single day’s performance, whereas schools call for year upon year of studies. A civil examinee is judged by a single piece of writing which provides no clue as to his moral makeup, whereas schools place concurrent emphasis on examining student conduct, and the students’ mental qualities are abundantly clear. Comparison shows that the one is much easier and the other is much more difficult, and it is in human nature to choose the easier over the more difficult. . . . In these critical times, it falls upon people to save the situation, and there is no way other than setting up schools for training talented people to save the nation. However, if matters continue as before and time is wasted in idleness, the nation will end up in a crisis for which there will be no succor.” Hence it was proposed that, starting with the examinations in the Bing Wu year (1906), the number of candidates for the general and provincial civil service examinations should be reduced by one third, and that the general and provincial examinations would be terminated when the number of candidates was reduced to zero. This should apply as well to the provincial education administrations’ yearly examinations, and it should be ensured that all talent would henceforth be turned out by the new schools.<sup>2</sup>

It was quite evident that the intention behind the memorial’s request for progressive reductions in the number of civil examination candidates was to ultimately abolish the imperial examinations system, and this was warmly welcomed by all open-minded officials and gentry. Less than a year later, the imperial court decreed that the progressive reductions should be completed before three civil examinations were up, and that starting from the Bing Wu year exams the civil examinations be

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<sup>2</sup>“Memorial Requesting the Trial Implementation of Progressive Reductions in the Examinations System” (26th day of the 11th lunar month in the 29th year of the Guangxu reign), *Complete Works of Zhang Zhidong*, vol. 3, pp. 1596–1586; Hebei People’s Publishing House, 1998.

completely abolished. This was a clear indication of the determination to build new-type schools. There was a highly commendable statement in this edict, to wit: “Moreover, the purpose of setting up schools is not merely to accumulate talent, but mainly to enlighten people’s minds and enable all to obtain a popularized education and ordinary abilities, so that people acquire knowledge which ranges from ways of loyally serving their county to making their own living, and so that the highly talented may assist with governance while the less talented may yet be regarded as qualified citizens.” The most important mission of general education is to train qualified citizens. This should be the fundamental objective of modern education, and it was the most significant aspect of replacing the imperial examinations with new-type schools.

The imperial examinations system had been in use for more than a thousand years. The lives of millions of literati were tied to it, and the abolishing of that system was bound to produce a tremendous shock and other effects on the literati. Of the reforms toward the end of the Qing Dynasty, only this one was carried out in earnest and achieved genuine success without causing serious upheavals in society, and it might well be cited as a model for peaceful reform. The reason for this was, firstly, it was preceded by decades of preliminary preparation. Back in the 1870s, people had begun to propose appropriate reforms of the imperial examinations system, such as adding exams in mathematics, initiating courses in crafts and economics, replacing the Eight-part Essay with questions and themes on politics, and so forth. This, plus the frequent pressures of internal and external turmoil, stoked increasing dissatisfaction over the impracticality of selecting officials by means of the imperial examinations. The 1898 Reform Movement and 1900 Boxer Incident brought people ever closer to a common understanding, and conditions were by then ripe for abolishing the imperial examinations. Secondly, a series of regulatory expedients were adopted before and after the system was abolished, such as giving candidates who had undergone the examinations and thereby gained honors the option of a well-paid exit. Students in the new-type schools who wished to do so could also be granted substantial rank and honor by taking the imperial exams. These measures did much to mitigate friction between the old and the new and avert social turmoil. Previous criticisms against such “debugging” expedients, frequently voiced from negative aspects by people influenced by leftist dogmatism, are one-sided and should be amended.

In sum, abolishing the imperial examinations system and promoting schools was one of the most successful and well-executed endeavors during the reforms at the end of the Qing Dynasty. The depth and scope of its effects equaled those of the constitutional reform and the anti-Manchu revolution, yet it did not trigger any turmoil. It deserves serious review and earnest summing up, to serve as reference for all who genuinely aspire for reform.

There were differences of substance between education under the imperial examinations system and the new type of education. To begin with, the objectives of education were entirely different. The official (governmental) educational sector under the imperial examinations system was intended solely to train officials big and small for the imperial court and to serve the rulers. A portion of the private

educational sector (old-style private schools and tutoring venues) was also designed to meet the needs of the imperial examination system, while another part was run by heads of households for family business requirements. The objective of the new-type education, i.e., its general education (secondary and primary school) was to produce qualified citizens, and its specialized schools and higher educational institutions were designed to train specialized talent in various fields. In sum, it was oriented toward society and served society. Two, the contents of education differed. The fundamental teaching materials of education under the imperial examinations system were comprised entirely of the Four Books and Five Classics (a few touched upon astronomy and mathematics), had remained unchanged for a thousand years, and had never strayed from the beaten track. The new-type education was comprehensive education – moral, intellectual, and physical. Apart from retaining some traditional content in terms of intellectual education, it consisted in large part of knowledge from the domains of the natural, social, and human sciences. Three, education under the imperial examinations system was of a highly closed and exclusionary nature and minimally interactive with society. At new-type schools, a communal character was, to a certain extent, present in the selection of teaching materials and the recruitment of teachers. There was frequent communication among schools and between schools and society, which gave the schools an open and social character. Four, the teacher–student relationship was different. The core values system of the old, traditional society was ordained by “Heaven, Earth, rulers, parents, and teachers,” of which those decreed by “Heaven and Earth” were phantasmal, and those by rulers and parents and teachers were real and tangible. Teachers wielded absolute authority in the old tutoring venues and academies. Students could only obey and submit, and had little or no opportunity to exercise any initiative. In the new-type schools, teachers were teachers-cum-friends to their students, and the students had many self-motivated organizations and activities. Five, for the reasons cited above, the new-type education and especially higher education possessed mechanisms for innovation. This was something beyond compare for the old imperial examinations system. These characteristics, in which the new-type education excelled over the old education, enabled schools that offered new-type education to serve as a sort of social public cultural space – places that assembled knowledge, disseminated knowledge, and changed people’s ideas and concepts. More importantly, they served society as a constant source of talent with renewed knowledge. Hence we say that the modern new-type education played an extremely important role in promoting the transformation and renovation of culture.

And so, what were the circumstances of the development of new-type education toward the end of the Qing Dynasty? How much new talent was it conveying to society? And how was it playing its role in the process of constructing public cultural spaces and spurring new cultural transformation?

Based on information carried in the book *Thirty-five years of Elementary School Education* by Wu Yanyin and Weng Zhida, the 1902–1905 statistics are as follows:

1902	No. of elementary school pupils	5,000–6,000
	No. of students in diverse types of schools	6,912
1903	No. of elementary school pupils about	20,000 plus
	No. of students in diverse types of schools	31,428
1904	No. of elementary school pupils about	80,000 plus
	No. of students in diverse types of schools	99,475
1905	No. of elementary school pupils about	230,000 <sup>3</sup>
	No. of students in diverse types of schools	258,836

At the beginning of 1904, when Zhang Zhidong et al submitted their memorial proposing a progressive reduction in imperial examinations, the total number of students nationwide was no more than 30,000 plus. In the year prior to the abolishment of the imperial examinations, the number of students in diverse types of schools nationwide reached more than 250,000, increasing sevenfold over 1903, and growing at a significantly higher rate. Yet this figure was next to nothing in relation to China's population of more than four hundred million.

After the 1906 abolishment of the imperial examination system, the development of education from 1907 to 1909 was as indicated in the following table:

No. of students	Elementary schools		Secondary schools		Specialized schools		Tertiary schools		Totals	
	Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students
1907	34,650	918,586	398	30,734	87	14,185	13	2,838	35,148	966,343
1908	41,739	1,192,921	420	25,006	115	43,323	19	4,492	42,293	1,265,742
1909	51,678	1,532,746	438	38,881	127	23,735	24	4,127	52,267	1,599,489

It must be explained that these statistics are not very reliable, and that a good many of the figures are questionable. (1) We do not know the sources from which the original compiler obtained the information. (2) In 1908, the number of secondary school students abruptly decreased by some 5,000, which is impossible to explain. Similarly, the number of specialized schools increased by 12 in 1909, but the number of students fell by almost 20,000, which also defies explanation. (3) The table omits figures for teachers' schools and vocational schools. As recorded in the same book, there were 254 vocational schools with 16,649 students in 1909.<sup>4</sup> Records in Chen Qitian's (1893–1984) *History of Modern Chinese Education* alone show that there were 514 teachers' schools with 28,572 students in 1909.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the total number of schools of various categories throughout China in 1909 should be 53,035, or 768 more than shown in the above table, and the total number of students should be 1,644,690, or 45,221 more than shown in the table.

<sup>3</sup> As recorded by Shu Xincheng: *Information on China's Modern History of Education* (People's Education Publishing House) vol. 1, the number of pupils in public and private elementary schools in 1902 through 1905 respectively was 859, 22866, 85213, and 173847.

<sup>4</sup> See *First Chinese Education Yearbook*, p. 375; Kaiming Bookstore, 1934.

<sup>5</sup> *History of Modern Chinese Education*, p. 176; Taiwan Chunghwa Bookstore.

(4) The Xian Zhi Daily Journal run by the Public Society for Preparations for Setting Up a Constitution published a report on the 21st day of the 10th month in the second year (1910) of the Xuantong reign claiming that Ministry of Education investigations had turned up a total of 35,198 schools of various levels throughout China with a total of 875,760 students. These figures differ enormously from the 1909 figures in the above table. In my opinion, the Xian Zhi Daily Journal report is most likely based on fact, since Zhang Jian (1853–1926), the driving spirit of the Public Society for Preparations for Setting up a Constitution that operated the said publication, had close connections with the Ministry of Education, and Zhang Jian himself showed close concern for issues of education. Hence, it is quite certain that the report had a factual basis. Given the points mentioned above, I believe we should not give too much credence to the information provided in various data publications. These should serve only as reference. Appropriate comparisons could be made of the various figures, and conjectures could be advanced about which of them might come closer to actualities. We may broadly state that in 1909–1910 – the year that witnessed the highest wave of reform at the end of the Qing Dynasty – there were, give or take, a million students in schools nationwide. From such an estimate, it may be inferred that there should have been somewhere between two or three million studying in, or graduated from, the new-type schools in that and previous years.

Consideration should also be given to the circumstance that mission schools operated in China by Western churches had attained considerable dimensions and must also have had several tens of thousands of students in attendance. In those years, there were also increases in the number of Chinese students studying abroad, for the most part in Japan. A memorial in the third lunar month of the 32nd year of the Guangxu reign stated that Chinese students in Japan had increased from approximately 1,000 in 1903 to 8,000 in the spring of 1906. Huang Yanpei (1878–1965) believed that Chinese students in Japan numbered about 20,000 on the eve of the 1911 Revolution.<sup>6</sup> Among the Chinese students in the USA studying at government expense (Boxer Indemnity funds) after 1909, 47 were admitted by exams in the first year, 71 in the second year, and 63 in the third. However, more were self-funded students. According to a report in the Shi Bao published on the 27th day in the fourth lunar month in the 3rd year of the Xuantong reign, 598 were studying in the USA in that year. Also reported were the number of students from various provinces: Guangdong ranked first with 251 and Jiangsu came second with 108 (all these numbers are probably authentic). A lesser number were studying in Europe. Zhang Yufa (Chang Yu-fa, 1936–) puts the number at 300 persons in 1910 in his book *Qing ji de li xian tuan ti* (Constitutional Groups toward the End of the Qing Dynasty), but the source of his information is not known. It is estimated that most of the students returning from abroad were from Japan (including graduates and nongraduates from regular schools as well as from various irregular crash-course schools). These perhaps exceeded 10,000, whereas no more than a few

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<sup>6</sup> See Huang Yanpei (1919).

hundred came back from Europe and the USA. Thus, at the end of the Qing Dynasty approximately two or three million persons had been exposed in varying degrees to new-type education and, except for those in the political, military, and business domains, a substantial number served in various aspects of social public culture. Chief among these were the domains of education, news and publication, and literature and art. These played an important part in the transformation of China's modern culture.

## 4.2 Development of Modern Social Groups During the 1898–1911 Period

When describing the formation of the social public cultural spaces toward the end of the Qing dynasty, one must give ample attention to one aspect – the social group (*shehui tuanti*). In the process of (China's) transformation from a traditional to a modern society, public organizations were the most important of the social factors that grew out of the autocratic state power and the inherent and rigid social structures centered on the family clan. Traditional Chinese society was a nation consisting of an agglomeration of various clan blocs held together by imperial power and controlled by a sovereign, and in essence was equivalent to a supersized clan system composed of diverse clan blocs. This was a quite thoroughly centralized structure which in 2,000 years had experienced some so-called court [palace] revolutions during which new rulers replaced old rulers, but had never undergone changes in which new social structures replaced old social structures. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the Qing Dynasty, battered as it was by internal and external strife, showed signs of disintegrating. Significant changes had taken place in economic life, and advances in the new-type education had generated batch after batch of intellectuals whose thinking and concepts had changed somewhat and who wished to find new development space for themselves. Meanwhile, the new economic life and new cultural life needed these intellectuals for advances and expansion. The frequent inroads by foreign aggressors in this period, the numerous unsuccessful attempts at resistance against the foreigners, and the many setbacks suffered by popular revolutions also taught these intellectuals that national salvation and a strong nation required changing the sociopolitical system, and for this, new forces had to be assembled in all quarters of society. This was the basic background to the rise of the social groups, and the primary motivation for the organization of such groups.

The emergence of social groups in the China of modern times was closely linked to the 1898 Reform Movement. All of the leaders and key persons who launched the Reform Movement were literati and intellectuals. If they were to start up reforms, they would have to pull their forces together. The way to pull forces together was by organizing social bodies. They began by setting up various scholarly societies. In 1895, Kang Youwei began by setting up the Strengthen China Study Society (*Qiang*



*xue hui*) in the capital city Beijing. In his *Jing shi qiang xue hui xu* (Preface to the Beijing Strengthen China Study Society), he wrote: “Scholastics are achieved through application, and talent is produced by steeling oneself.”<sup>7</sup> His main intent was to encourage the forming of groups, i.e., bringing together all reform-minded elements for the sake of advancing the cause of reform. In his “Preface to the Shanghai Strengthen China Study Society,” he again stated: “Saving and transforming the world depends on talent, (talent is formed) through scholastics, and scholastics is promoted by forming groups.”<sup>8</sup> His conclusion: “Become strong by learning, become strong by forming groups.”<sup>9</sup> Liang Qichao, in *Shuo qun xu* (Preface to the Treatise on Collectivity), said he had once asked Kang Youwei about the way to govern a country, and Kang Youwei stated: “Form groups [of devotees] as the basis, and initiate changes to serve practical purposes”<sup>10</sup> Clearly, Kang, Liang and other associates believed at the time that the only feasible way to promote the cause of reform was by forming groups.

Before and after the 1899 Reform Movement, on the initiative of Kang, Liang and others, and thanks to enthusiastic efforts on the part of reform devotees, a large number of societies of a simultaneously scholastic and political character were set up in rapid succession in Beijing, Shanghai and Hunan. Statistics compiled by Wang Ermin (Wang Erh-min) (1927–) list 63 such groups<sup>11</sup>; Zhang Yufa’s (Chang Yu-fa’s) (1936–) statistics came up with 68 (Zhang Yufa 1971, pp. 109–206); and after conducting investigations, Min Jie (1949–) maintains there were 72 (Min Jie 1995). Most of those societies which had direct connections with Kang Youwei and his principal followers bore political overtones. Hence, basically all of them suspended operations and dispersed after the 1898 coup d’état took place.

The domestic atmosphere was one of despondency after 1898, and only a few purely scholastic groups which had had nothing or little to do with Kang and Liang continued to exist. Kang, Liang and their friends and students set up a few groups abroad, but these were not very active. In 1901, the Qing government, having suffered heavily at the hands of the Boxers and the Eight-Power Allied Forces, once again put forward slogans about reform, whereupon the social atmosphere gradually livened up again. This was especially so in 1903 and subsequent years, which witnessed a booming development in diverse types of social groups. It is still very hard to provide a precise description of the development of China’s social groups in this period and up to the outbreak of the 1911 Republican Revolution. Some scholars can only provide statistical data based on materials they themselves have perused – data that may serve as reference but are not very accurate. Probably the first scholar to engage in such work was Zhang Yufa (Chang Yu-fa). He wrote

<sup>7</sup> *Collected Political Comments by Kang Youwei*, p. 166; Zhonghua Bookstore, 1981.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>10</sup> *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 2*, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Wang Ermin: *Study Societies toward the End of the Qing Dynasty*, Da Lu Za Zhi (Continental Journal), vol. 24, issues 2–3.

two books, one entitled *Revolutionary Groups at the End of the Qing Dynasty*, and the other, *Constitutional Groups at the End of the Qing Dynasty*. In the book *Constitutional Groups at the End of the Qing Dynasty*, Zhang drew up a detailed table of the information he had seen with regard to social groups, and he recorded the forming of 85 in the political category, 50 in the foreign diplomacy category, 265 in the commerce category, four in the industry category, 26 in the agriculture category, 103 in the education category, 65 in the academics category, 17 in the youth category, 17 in the arts and literature category, 26 in the customs and habits category, 4 in the charitable institutions category, and 6 in the religions category, for a total of 668.<sup>12</sup>

Zhang Yufa's book was published in 1971, and since that time not a few scholars have frequently touched upon this matter and expressed different opinions regarding the statistical data on the diverse types of social groups. The most important opinions have to do with the chamber-of-commerce groups and the education groups, which some people maintain were much more numerous than indicated in Zhang's statistics. Wang Di, in his article "A Discussion about the Statistics on Chambers of Commerce at the End of the Qing Dynasty," also drew up a table when correcting errors in Xu Dingxin's article "Tracing the Sources of Chambers of Commerce in Old China." According to the statistical data he cites, there were, toward the end of the Qing Dynasty, 178 chamber of commerce organizations in 1906, 651 in 1910, and 761 in 1911.<sup>13</sup> His figures for 1911 show 496 more of such organizations than Zhang Yufa's figures. Sang Bing (1956–) quotes writings by French scholars and points out that by the year 1909 there were 723 education societies throughout China. This figure is 620 more than the figures for the years up to 1911 given in Zhang Yufa's book.<sup>14</sup> And again, according to studies by Zhu Ying (1956–), there were 295 peasant association organizations by 1911, 269 more than indicated by Zhang Yufa's figures.<sup>15</sup> Actually, apart from the chambers of commerce and education associations, there are many other types of social groups that were neither recorded in Zhang Yufa's book nor included in its statistics. Judging from a review of the mass organizations reported between 1905 and 1901 in Shi Bao alone, there are, among the types of mass organizations not recorded in Zhang's book, 31 in the political category, 11 in the foreign relations category, 10 in the commerce and industry category, 20 in the culture and skills category, three in the young people's category, two in the women's category, and two in the religious category. (Chambers of commerce and education associations are not counted for the time being, since the statistics for chambers of commerce and education associations listed by Wang Di and Sang Bing and quoted above did not specify names or titles. Hence it is not possible to determine whether the two

<sup>12</sup> See Zhang Yufa: *Constitutional Groups toward the End of the Qing Dynasty*, pp. 90–143.

<sup>13</sup> See *Research Materials on China's Modern History of Economics*, vol. 7, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Publishing House, 1987.

<sup>14</sup> See Sang Bing (1995, p. 274).

<sup>15</sup> See Zhu Ying (1991, p. 253).

foregoing categories of mass organizations as seen in Shi Bao were included in those statistics.)

If a few more of the representative newspapers published nationwide are to be chosen for examination, one would certainly find more social groups. However, the information recorded in Shi Bao alone shows that setting up social groups had become all the rage in the last years of the Qing Dynasty. Some of these social groups, such as chambers of commerce, study societies, and so forth, were officially encouraged. Others were not encouraged, but could not very well be prohibited because of the professed preparations for setting up a constitution. In 1908, the Qing court banned the *Zheng wen she* (Political Information Society) in a move to suppress the Parliamentary Petitions Movement sponsored by Liang Qichao, and other social groups now and then encountered similar circumstances. On the whole, however, this did little to check the proliferation of social groups in the last years of the Ming Dynasty. It should be noted that because of explicit government encouragement for the establishment of such organizations as chambers of commerce, study societies, and so forth, poor-quality and spurious groups were bound to crop up in certain localities, for which reason the statistics may be somewhat inflated. And it is also true that many of the social groups were non-permanent institutions that did not last for any length of time. We have examined the social groups in those days to show how public cultural spaces were formed in society; the poor-quality or spurious ones of course did not play any real role therein. Hence we believe that the number of social groups that did have a real effect were fewer than indicated by the statistics.

To understand how the social groups had the effect of promoting social advance and promoting the transformations of ideology and culture, it is necessary to first examine the purposes for which they were formed and the actual matters they engaged in. Regarding social groups in the political category, whether their political attitude tended toward extremism or moderation, their ultimate purpose was to strive to replace the rulers' authoritarian system with some form of modern democracy, or in other words, bring about a constitutional political system – the most crucial link for effecting a transformation in social politics and setting up a modern national state. This was so for the various study groups formed during the 1898 Reform Movement, and even more so for the political groups set up after the New Policies period and especially after the announcement of the intention of establishing constitutional government. Since they had clearly defined this aim, all of their activities were closely focused on this central objective.

In general, the more influential of the political groups ran their own newspapers or periodicals, such as the *Qiang Xue Bao* (Strengthen China Studies Journal), *Shi Wu Bao* (Current Affairs Journal), *Zhi Xin Bao* (New Developments Journal), *Xiang Bao* (Hunan Journal), *Xiang Xue Bao* (Hunan Studies Journal) and so forth of the Reform Movement period. In the period of preparations for a constitution, the Preparatory Constitution Public Society ran the *Journal of the Preparatory Constitution Public Society* (later renamed the *Xian Zhi Ri Bao*, or *Constitutional Records Daily*), the Political Information Society operated the *Zheng Lun* (Political Debates) magazine, the Constitutional Government Public Society operated the

Zhong Guo Xin Bao (China News), the Constitutional Government Research Society operated the Xian Zheng Xin Zhi (Constitutional Government New Annals), and so forth. At times, they also operated various study groups, lecture meetings, newspaper reading rooms, and so forth to extend their publicity work. The contents of such publicity consisted first of all of providing basic knowledge about constitutional government, e.g., about constitutions, the organization of parliaments and governments, people's rights, and so forth. They also vigorously criticized the diverse malpractices of monarchical autocracy. Such publicity played a major role in spreading democratic concepts and calling on the general public to rise up against the system of monarchical autocracy. Proof of this can be seen from the large-scale nationwide parliamentary petitions campaign that took place from 1908 to the first part of 1911. After the Qing court arbitrarily suppressed the petitions campaign, the majority of the forces that had supported peaceful reform switched to sympathizing with and supporting revolution, and finally contributed to the dissolution of the Qing Dynasty's autocratic political system. Publicity played an immense role in this process. As for the actual activities pursued by the political groups that promoted revolution, in addition to the parliamentary petitions campaign mentioned above<sup>16</sup> they also played an important role in promoting local self-government, supporting the establishment of advisory agencies (*zi yi ju*) in various provinces, pushing forward the agencies' activities and so forth. At the time, not a few groups organized local self-government research societies, put out publications, and organized advisory bureau assistance-and-support meetings, proposal support meetings, proposal investigation meetings and so forth, all of which played significant roles in assisting the advisory agencies in their struggles with the local military and civil authorities. These activities in themselves also served as a means for training and assembling forces of democracy, or in other words, as a process of social reform and social transformation. We ought to point out that the social groups and organizations at the end of Qing Dynasty, even if they were groups of the political category, also constituted an important part of the social public cultural space, the reason being that in the great majority of cases their activities consisted of studying, discussing and publicizing new political ideas and social concepts. Support from these groups helped to expand the space for disseminating such ideas and concepts.

Social groups of the diplomatic relations category mostly pinpointed specific incidents that concerned foreign affairs, and were established to put up struggles against incursions, repressions and predatory acts by foreign powers. Some aimed at issues of boundary settlements and demarcations, issues of unequal treaties and issues of economic rights and powers. Others directly targeted specific incidents of foreigners unlawfully bullying, oppressing and killing Chinese. All concerned issues of state sovereignty. Their patriotic actions directly served to inculcate the modern nation-state concept among those who participated in their activities.

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<sup>16</sup>With regard to the Parliamentary Petitions Movement, reference may be made to Geng Yunzhi (1980).

Groups of the culture and skills category served as important mechanisms for the transmission of new knowledge, new concepts and new ethics. Some study groups were of a comprehensive nature and advertised themselves as clearing the way for knowledge, promoting educational affairs and maintaining the public benefit. Others were groups of a relatively professional character, such as medical research and health societies focused on promoting new medical and health knowledge or on promoting health for longevity. There were also mathematics, chemistry and zoology research societies which manifestly devoted themselves to the natural sciences and to popularizing knowledge thereof. Jurisprudence, law-and-government and other such societies obviously researched law and government. Territorial and geographical study societies conducted research in geography. History study groups promoted new studies in history. All of these societies directly disseminated modern scientific knowledge, paid great attention to new academic concepts and to new theories and methods, and played a direct role in promoting the modern transformation of China's culture. Some groups that advertised themselves as encouraging morality were helpful toward cultivating new national ethics and improving the mental qualities of the populace.

It goes without saying that industrial and commercial groups devoted themselves to drawing upon the organizational and administrative knowledge and experience of modern businesses in the West to promote the development of modern business practices in China.

It would, of course, be inappropriate for us to overestimate the social effects of these groups. As we have said earlier, given the specific historical characteristics of Chinese society and its internal and external conflicts, these groups were devoid of any sort of powerful backing, which made it difficult for them to exist for any length of time and curtailed the scope and dynamics of their activities. Their effects were, therefore, of a limited nature. However, their effects should by no means be overlooked or written off. Virtually all of the progressive elements and men and women of high ideals who were active on the stage of modern academics in the late Qing period and Republic of China period (1912–1949) and rose to prominent positions in their vocations received training in social groups of this type. All of the new social factors accumulated in China's society of modern times and the motive forces for modernization in all domains are directly or indirectly linked to the activities of these groups – groups that were dissociated from the inherent autocratic system, that were of a more or less independent and modern nature, and that constituted a sort of new social public domain that differed from the various social organizations of the past.

One last thing that should be pointed out: The organizational forms, organizational principles and mode of operations of these new social groups had an important effect on fostering new social factors. The social groups in the last years of the Qing Dynasty, whatever the category they belonged to, strove to organize and conduct their activities according the spirit and principles of democracy as far as the original intentions and the initial rules and regulations of their organizations were concerned. Some of their work institutions set up boards of directors or councils, and others established various sub-departments, such as

appraisal departments and executive departments. On the whole, they decided matters according to the principle of democratic majority resolutions. However, some of these groups were unable to assemble at regular intervals due to limitations of funds and manpower, and this made it difficult to fully implement their democratic principles. Among the multifarious groups at the close of the Qing Dynasty, the Preparatory Constitutional Government Public Society in Shanghai had, relatively speaking, the best organization, and its activities hewed to democratic principles in a highly normative manner. From December 1906 when the group was established up to the eve of the 1911 Revolution, it was by and large able, by means of division of work, to conduct reelections and deliberations at regular intervals and to implement its decisions. Fairly substantial results were gained by both the publications it ran and the research and lecture institutions it operated. In line with the group's general regulations, it convened meetings of its board of directors in September each year, held regular sessions of its employees in the first and third weeks of each month, collected 24 yuan in yearly dues from its members and, in emergencies when meetings could not be held, decided important matters by means of correspondence voting.<sup>17</sup>

The Preparatory Constitutional Government Public Society's ability to persevere in discussing and implementing its affairs was closely connected to the specific circumstances of its membership. Except for a very few members who were either incumbent officials or of indeterminate profession, more than 50 % of the members of the society were retired bureaucrats and urban and rural gentry, around 25 % came from business circles, and more than 7 % were academics – all of them propertied and educated people with stable social positions. This ensured the stability and permanence of the groups and their ability to operate according to their regulations and plans. This fact also indicates that, for a democratic system to be workable, most of its adherents must be in possession of permanent property and an education. One might well say that the reason for the existence of a substantial number of social groups organized and operating in accordance with the principle of democracy in the last years of the Qing Dynasty was the presence of forces like these that supported democracy. These forces were able to play an exemplary role, helped assemble new forces in society, and laid the social foundation for democratic reforms and for the transformation of society and the social culture.

Today's sociologists strongly emphasize that the way in which social endeavors are managed is a most important manifestation of the "soft power" of culture. This sort of soft power can only be developed and formed by means of social public spaces. The proliferation of social groups in the final years of the Qing Dynasty played a significant role in the nurturing and development of China's modern culture.

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<sup>17</sup> For the General Regulations of this society, see *Membership Candidate Table of the Preparatory Constitutional Government Public Society of the Preparatory Constitutional Government Public Society Journal*. 1909, vol. 2.

### 4.3 The Establishment of a Modern Media System and Other Matters

#### 4.3.1 *The Development of Modern Newspapers and a Modern Publishing Industry and Their Role in Society*

Song Shu (1862–1910) once stated: “These three things – schools, congresses, and newspapers – are the guiding factors that determine whether there will be peace and tranquility in countries throughout the world,”<sup>18</sup> the implication being that use of these guiding factors could restore the kind of governance extant during the ancient Three dynasties period. This assertion was, of course, an exaggeration, but the importance of schools and newspaper offices was not. A modernizing society is in sore need of mutual communication in such aspects as information, knowledge and concepts, for that is the only way to maintain the normal operations of modern modes of production and life. That was the most basic reason for the development of modern newspapers and publications as well as a very natural process in the world’s first modern societies. However, matters differed somewhat in China where the initial emergence of newspapers and periodicals was, in most cases, driven by political motivations such as national salvation and national reinvigoration. After the newspapers and periodicals had emerged, however, they took on more or less the same functions as those in other countries, i.e., communication of information, knowledge, and concepts.

In the initial period, newspapers and periodicals were too few to form any media system on a national scale. However, in the early years of the twentieth century, after the New Government reforms were reinstated, and especially as the two great movements of revolution and constitutional government gradually worked up to a climax, modern newspapers and publications sprang up and proliferated nationwide like bamboo shoots after a spring shower. Calculations based on the table of newspapers and periodicals attached to Fang Hanqi’s (1926–) *Major Events in the Annals of the Press in China* put the number of newspapers and periodicals published in China between the years 1895 and 1911 at about 1,520 varieties. Aside from a few which remained in print for fairly long periods of time, the great majority soon faded away; a few lasted only a month or two. Some magazines turned out only one or two issues while others kept going for a year or two. In our estimation, assuming that the average life of those newspapers to be 1 year, and assuming that each had a distribution of about 1,500 copies (some had maximum distributions of 14,000–15,000 copies; others only a few hundred), the average annual distribution of newspapers and periodicals would have come to about 141,250 copies. And assuming these newspapers and periodicals were passed around and read in reading societies and among friends and each was perused by

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<sup>18</sup> *Collected Works of Song Shu*, vol. 1, p. 137; Zhonghua Book Company, 1993.

five persons on average, their total annual readership would have come to 703,125 persons. This, of course, was an infinitesimal figure as compared to the national population, but in reality the figure certainly rose by leaps and bounds after 1906. Whatever the case, we are unable to produce any reasonably accurate estimates.

When discussing media systems, mention must be made of publishing and printing establishments. All major newspapers and periodicals had their own publishing departments. However, many book publishers and less well-heeled newspapers and periodicals had to rely on special commercial publishing and printing establishments. The publishing and printing business underwent considerable development in the last ten or more years of the Qing dynasty in terms of both quantity and scale. Even more important were the technological advances: Lithographic printing was a considerable advance over wood-block printing, and typographic printing represented a further improvement. Importations of new-type printing presses very much speeded up the printing process, shortened publication cycles, and impelled significant advances in the publishing industry.

The two most influential publishing institutions in the publishing industry in the last years of the Qing Dynasty were the Shangwu (Commercial) Press and the Guangzhi (Kwong Chi) Bookstore.

The Commercial Press was founded in Shanghai in February, 1897. It became a limited-liability company in 1902 and built itself up as a modern publishing enterprise of considerable proportions, with new-type equipment and a modern business management system. One of its main businesses was compiling elementary school textbooks. It turned out three of these, each with an extensive circulation. Its work included the translation and publishing of well-known works from the West, such as those by Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill. It also published Western novels translated by Lin Shu (1852–1924). Another aspect of its work was the compiling and printing of many types of periodicals and magazines, such as the *Dong Fang Za Zhi* (Journal of the East), *Xiu Xiang Xiao Shuo* (Illustrated Novels), *Jiao Yu Za Zhi* (Education Journal), *Xiao Shu Yue Bao* (Novels Monthly), *To Shu Hui Bao* (Book Reports), *Fa Zheng Za Zhi* (Law and Politics Magazine), *Shao Nian Za Zhi* (Children's Magazine), and so forth. It also published some highly popular auxiliary educational reading materials, such as an *English-Chinese Primer* as well as such reference books as dictionaries and lexicons.

The Guangzhi Bookstore was founded in Shanghai in the first lunar month of the year 1902. This bookstore had very close ties to the leaders of the 1989 Constitutional Reform Movement Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao and their associates. The books it published were insightful, of high quality, and therefore highly influential. It translated and published books on socialism, among which the one entitled *Jin Shi She Hui Zhu Yi* (Modern Socialism) by Japanese scholars was one of the most informative and systematic writings on socialism in those days. The translation in this book of the concluding remarks of the Communist Manifesto preceded Song Jiaoren's (1883–1913) translation by 3 years. Like the Commercial Press, this bookstore devoted much of its efforts to translating well-known Western works. It helped advance the constitutional government movement by proactively



providing information on theories regarding law and government. Examples of these were books on constitutional theory, constitutional documentation and the history of constitutional government as well as books on the theory of jurisprudence, on international public law, on major international trends and so forth. A distinguishing feature of this bookstore was the even more numerous and varied works it published on Chinese and international history. It engaged in the publishing and distribution of textbooks for elementary, secondary and teachers' schools. The bookstore also turned out a great many highly popular Chinese and foreign novels. Because of its close ties with Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, it printed a good many of the books written by those two personages.

In addition to these two well-known nongovernmental publishing institutions, Shanghai had at least 14 publishing institutions, including the Wenming, Kaiming, and Youzheng book companies and other less-known publishers. Such cities as Beijing, Guangzhou, Tianjin, Nanjing, Wuchang, Changsha, Chongqing, Chengdu, Jinan, Yangzhou, and Shantou each had one or more publishing houses.

In this period, the Qing Dynasty's central government and local governments also set up a number of agencies with publishing functions. Among these were the Political Official Newspaper Bureau and the Board of Education Book Editing and Translation Bureau at the central level and the Beiyang and Nanyang official newspaper bureaus at local levels. Not a few provinces also established official newspaper bureaus. These agencies for the most part put out publications of an official nature, but because of the need to coordinate the preparations for setting up a constitution, a large part of the publications on constitutional government in effect disseminated new knowledge, new ideology, and new concepts.<sup>19</sup>

Publishing institutions served as production bases for assembling knowledge, thoughts, and concepts and for processing and packaging these as special products acceptable to the general public. They served as public platforms for the dissemination of knowledge, thoughts, and concepts, and as indispensable intermediary links between writers and their readers and among various ideologies and cultures, ancient and modern and Chinese and foreign. They therefore constituted an important link in the mechanisms for the transition to a modern culture.

Distribution channels are, of course, a link not to be overlooked in the modern media system. And so, a system of postal and dispatching agencies as well as bookstores, newspaper reading rooms, and book and newspaper agencies was set up in large and small cities and townships throughout the country. The establishment of such a system was clearly indispensable for the dissemination of new knowledge, thinking, and concepts.

The most prominent function of the modern newspapers and periodicals was their political effect, but here we also need to understand the other social effects they produced by spreading new knowledge, new ideology, and new concepts.

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<sup>19</sup> For more information about the development of China's publishing institutions in this period, see Ye Zaisheng's book *General History of China's Modern Publishing*, chapters 5 and 7; Beijing Huawen Press, 2002.

New knowledge was an important content of the modern newspapers and periodicals. The overwhelming majority of newspapers and periodicals contained special sections for presenting various types of information on the natural sciences. Some of them, such as the Zhejiang Chao, had a science section. In this section, Lu Xun once published an article entitled *Shuo ri* (All about R) in which he related Madame Curie's discovery of the new element radium. Many other newspapers and periodicals had miscellaneous sections dealing with elementary knowledge of the natural sciences, such as the Earth being round, astronomical facts, meteorological phenomena (wind, rain, thunder, and lightning, etc.), geological and geographical information, and so forth. The ancient Chinese had produced numerous inventions in terms of practical technology, but since most of these were created by common craftsmen and "did not appeal to refined tastes," China's literati and officials had deemed the processing and dissemination of such knowledge beneath their dignity. Meanwhile, lacking information about natural phenomena, the general public had contrived superstitious explanations for many natural phenomena and passed these down for thousands of years. By publicizing knowledge about the natural sciences, modern newspapers and periodicals made highly significant contributions to breaking down superstitions and changing people's concepts about nature. In addition, many newspapers and periodicals promptly published information about everyday life matters in other countries, about various new industrial and military inventions, such as new-type torpedo boats, new-type attack submarines and so forth, and about diverse new social phenomena, all of which helped to broaden people's knowledge.

The social sciences were also a focus and important aspect of the knowledge disseminated by newspapers and periodicals. Examples of these were legal knowledge, political knowledge, business knowledge, financial knowledge, and so forth as well as new books on pedagogy and philosophy and introductions to well-known philosophers, educationists, and politicians. After preparations were announced in 1906 for setting up a constitution, explanations about constitutional government, discussions on local self-government, and various reports on social investigations provided the public with a great deal of new knowledge and information. These were of great help for enhancing people's understanding of constitutional government.

Another important content of the newspapers and periodicals had to do with actual affairs in other countries and reports on the overall world situation. The Chinese had always regarded their country as the "land under Heaven," and had known little about, or shown little interest in, matters outside China. And after the Opium Wars and the coming of Westerners to China, most people regarded the latter as mere "barbarians." During the Westernization Movement, a few slightly enlightened officials and gentry began to learn a bit about the world beyond China but knew hardly anything about actualities abroad. By the time of the Reform Movement of 1898, travelogue-type books written by Chinese and directly describing matters in other countries had gradually emerged and translations of books by foreigners multiplied, but timely reports on world events were still few and far between. After the 1898 Reform Movement, exiled Chinese politicians residing in other countries gradually increased and the number of Chinese students studying

abroad rose by leaps and bounds. For the sake of promoting either revolution or reform, they badly needed to draw experience from events abroad, and so the newspapers and periodicals they operated were filled with reports and articles about matters in other countries and the world as a whole. Not a few of the newspapers and periodicals ran special sections on world trends and, at the beginning or end of each year, compiled special editions on major world events, such as “Japanese Events” or “Major European and American Events” (as in the Tianjin Daily News). News and discussions of this sort that concerned the world situation or the contacts between China and other countries had the effect of broadening the perspectives of the Chinese and gradually fostering in them a new “world outlook” in place of their former China-centrist “land-under-Heaven” point of view. Among these, reports on matters of close concern to China were the most numerous and most detailed, as for example reports and commentaries on the Movement for the Reclamation of Benefits and Rights, on the campaigns against US exclusion of Chinese laborers, on the “missionary incidents” in various localities and so forth. Such reports informed the Chinese people about the realities of imperialist incursions in and depredations against China, awakened people’s awareness, and encouraged them to participate in diverse ways in the struggles against imperialism. The patriotic thinking inspired by these actual-event reports was quite different from the simplistic xenophobia of former times and fostered modern nationalist concepts among the Chinese people.

Another major contribution by the newspapers and publications was the induction of a number of important modern classics and ideological doctrines which laid a preliminary foundation for the enlightenment movement. Examples are Rousseau’s *The Social Contract*, Montesquieu’s *The Spirit of Laws*, Spencer’s *Political Philosophy*, and so forth. Many subsequent newspapers and periodicals brought information on the state theories, governmental organizations, and constitutional thinking of Western scholars of politics. Western socialist theory, including the teachings of Karl Marx, was also introduced during this period. The Wan Guo Gong Bao (The Globe Magazine), Qing Yi Bao; Compilation of Foreign Translations, Min Bao; and others carried introductions to socialism and Karl Marx. Some newspapers and periodicals also blended elements of Western thinking and theory into articles acceptable to Chinese readers regarding such modern concepts as civil rights, democracy, new-type states, and new-type citizens. Examples are “On New People” in Xin Min Cong Bao, “On Citizens” in Guo Min Bao, and a great many articles in newspapers and periodicals on the rights and duties of citizens, citizens’ ethics, and other such content. All of these were beneficial for improving the qualities of the Chinese.

By means of the dissemination of new knowledge, new ideology, and new concepts, newspapers and periodicals gradually altered people’s thinking, changed people’s attitudes toward realities – either toward supporting reform or toward rising up in revolution – and prompted people to devise various social bonds on the basis of common understandings. These bonds constituted important elements for social reform, and the gradual accumulation of such elements prepared the conditions necessary for social and cultural transformations.

### 4.3.2 *The Establishment of Other Social Public Culture Facilities*

As far back as during the 1898 Reform Movement, reformists already brought up proposals for running libraries. When Kang Youwei set up the Qiangxue Society, he proposed establishing “large book repositories” and museums.<sup>20</sup> Song Shu, in his *Liu zi ke zhai bei yi* (Humble Opinions from Liuzikezhai), also explicitly stated that “all counties should be instructed to set up one or more small libraries; . . . the capital city and all commercial outlets and well-known cities should set up large repositories, the books in which should be made available for perusal by the citizenry.”<sup>21</sup> The Southern Study Society founded by reformists in Hunan Province also set up a repository with an abundance of books, all of them Chinese and Western works procured for practical purposes. When a college was established in Beijing in 1898, specific orders were given to equip it with a library. And when government ministers dispatched to Europe on investigation missions returned to China in 1906, their memorials to the throne calling for constitutional government contained special proposals for setting up libraries. It is quite evident that all enlightened officials and gentry and progressive intellectuals – from the 1898 Reform Movement up to the time of the renewed proposals for new governance in 1901 and the preparations for a constitution – understood the importance of public libraries. Starting in 1903, libraries were set up one after another, thanks to these vigorous recommendations. According to an investigation conducted by the author of the second volume of the *Transformations in the Social Culture of Modern China*, more than 20 small libraries (then called “book repositories,” “public book bureaus,” and “public book societies”) were set up with nongovernmental funds in various localities from 1898 to 1903. Between 1903 and 1910, 11 nationally known libraries emerged, as Beijing, Guangzhou, and the provinces of Hunan, Zhili, Jilin, Shandong, Shaanxi, Yunnan, Heilongjiang, Henan, and Jiangsu, respectively, built up fairly large libraries of a government-run nature.

There were even larger numbers of book-and-newspaper societies that focused on the reading of newspapers. According to a count made by the above-mentioned author, 45 book-and-newspaper societies were set up between 1905 and 1907 in Beijing alone, and this figure can only be smaller than the actual number. In about the same period, Tianjin had five book-and-newspaper societies and Zhili [province] had ten.<sup>22</sup> These book-and-newspaper societies, book repositories, and libraries were highly valuable as institutions of modern culture, and their social effects are certainly not to be lightly dismissed.

Social public cultural spaces served as breeding grounds for the new culture. They acted as networks for the dissemination of the new culture, as channels for

<sup>20</sup> See *Collected Political Dissertations by Kang Youwei*, vol. 1, p. 174.

<sup>21</sup> See *Collected Works by Song Shu*, vol. 1, p. 147.

<sup>22</sup> See *Record of the Cultural Changes in China's Modern Society*, vol. 2, pp. 400–405.

mutual exchanges among diverse types of culture, and as arenas for mutual competition. In a word, they were a necessary condition for promoting socio-cultural progress and transformation.

Deng Shi (1877–1951), the National Essentialist, once deplored the fact that when scholars and thinkers in the West came up with major new theories, society very often responded and “takes whirlwind action that is capable of swiftly changing people’s minds and habits.” In China, on the other hand, “there are a number of eminent scholars who have conducted profound research and reflections, set up their own schools, and are not lacking in systematic learning, yet when they run classes and give lectures their followers are limited to their disciples and a few close friends. Society as a whole does not respect them, nor do later generations hear any words spoken to commend them. Hence, their schools of thought slowly fade away over distance and time, and even their last words are lost in oblivion. What a pity!”<sup>23</sup> His observations were quite correct. But the reasons he cited were not, since the situation stemmed from the fact that no social public spaces had been formed in Chinese society. In the early years of the Republic, Du Yaquan (1873–1933) voiced a similar lament. He said China was not lacking in outstanding persons, but it had “a vast land mass, poor communications, language barriers, and differing customs and habits, yet has no organizations or newspapers that serve as hubs for exchanging information, promoting friendly relations and transmitting thoughts. Thus there is nothing to assist in the transmission, popularization or replication of any social spirit, and this is the reason for the puerility and unresponsiveness of China’s social mentality.”<sup>24</sup>

It is evident that people felt the need for social public cultural spaces. As Marx said, social needs arise when the conditions for satisfying such needs arise. Modern social public spaces were formed in the last years of the Qing Dynasty because of the emergence and development of new education, the proliferation of social groups, and the establishment of a public media system. These public spaces played an extremely important role in promoting the modern transformation of China’s culture.

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<sup>23</sup> “A Discussion on the Disuse of Chinese Studies,” *Guo Cui Xue Bao* (Journal on the Study of National Essentialism), no. 6 in its third year.

<sup>24</sup> *Selected Works of Du Yaquan*, Huadong Normal University Press, 1993, p. 71.

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# Chapter 5

## Major Trends in Ideological and Cultural Transformation Toward the End of the Qing Dynasty

The traditional politico-cultural system was severely challenged in the final years of the Qing Dynasty. Western ideology and culture was being extensively disseminated via the social public cultural spaces and causing significant changes in people's ideological concepts. The most important of these changes were the gradual shedding of the reverence-for-rulers concept and a fundamental shaking of the exalted status of Confucius and Confucianism. These major changes in ideological concepts spurred the plebification of culture and changes in social customs and mores.

### 5.1 Major Transformations in Thinking and Concepts

#### 5.1.1 *From the “De-Reverencing of the Sons of Heaven” to the Negation of Monarchical Power*

As far back as in the Yin and Zhou dynasties, there were writings that reflected the concept that sovereign power was conferred by the gods and “granted solely” to the Sons of Heaven. In later years, numerous ideologues explained the origins of Sons of Heaven and kings by declaring that in the early days of mankind, people were utterly ignorant and knew not how to pursue the beneficial or eschew the harmful. It was the Supreme Being in Heaven who became their ruler and teacher, who taught the people how to attend to their daily needs and how to pursue the beneficial and eschew the harmful, and brought the people peace and security. The ruler was the emissary of the gods, the great benefactor of all people under Heaven, and had to be shown sincere gratitude and implicit obedience. Qin Shi Huang (First Emperor of Qin) (259–210 BC) elevated the power of the ruler to the acme of reverence, claiming that “all lands in the universe are the Emperor's, and all people are his

subjects.” He combined the concepts of “Supreme Being” and “emperor,” and of “emperors” and “the gods,” and coined the concept of “absolute sovereign power.” Thereafter, the doctrine of reverence for the ruler became solidly entrenched. During the Tang Dynasty, Han Yu (768–824) wrote *Yuan Dao* (The Origins of the Way), further expounding the “reverence for rulers” principle in theoretical terms. He averred that the ruler is the one who issues edicts, his ministers are those who carry out edicts and transmit them to the people, and the people are those who produce the necessities of life, manufacture tools and utensils, and transport goods and wealth in the service of those above. Ministers who failed to carry out edicts or transmit them to the people and people who failed to produce the necessities of life, manufacture tools and utensils, and transport goods and wealth in the service of those above should all be put to death. The ruler was paramount, governed the people on behalf of Heaven, and was absolutely infallible. Hence it was said that “the Heavenly ruler is divinely perspicacious, and his subjects who err deserve to die.” The sanctity of sovereign power became deeply and permanently ensconced in people’s minds. Although a few individuals disapproved of excessive reverence for rulers, their comments were made in private and did little to shake the deep-rooted concept of reverence for the ruler. It was not until the end of the Ming and the beginning of the Qing dynasties that Huang Zongxi (1610–1695), in his book *Yuan Jun* (The Origins of Rulers), for the first time expressed new understandings of the status, duties, and responsibilities of rulers. Although Huang continued to assert that rulers were indispensable, he emphasized that a ruler should, for the sake of all people under Heaven, manage the country, pursue benefits for the people and do away with things harmful to the people. In so doing, “his diligence would have to be a thousand times greater than that of other people under Heaven,” and he would gain the love of the people, who would then “regard him as their father, and equate him with Heaven.” He stated, however, that subsequent rulers had come to regard the country as their private property, “ascribed all benefits under Heaven to themselves and all baneful things to the people.” By ruling the country they could sequester the greatest of benefits. Hence, he said, before establishing their rule they felt no compunctions about poisoning the minds of people in the country and sowing discord among their children for the sake of winning them over. And after acceding to power, they sucked the marrow from the people’s bones and sowed discord among their children to satisfy their own specious pleasures, and people naturally resented such rulers and regarded them as their foes. The critical understanding Huang voiced in *Yuan Jun* with regard to excessive veneration of rulers was of great progressive significance. However, some scholars have overexaggerated his progressiveness and even believe he showed signs of democratic ideology and that his concepts had already entered the domain of modern thinking. This is inappropriate. Huang did not negate monarchical power per se, and even less did he put forward the concept of limiting monarchical power. What he emphasized was that rulers should manage the country for its people and that it was the ruler’s duty to promote things beneficial for the people and do away with things harmful to the people. This sort of thinking did not go beyond the scope of ancient populism. However, he fairly explicitly negated the concept of sovereign power



being conferred by the gods, and denied that a country was the private domain of one household or surname. He believed that a country's people were justified in hating a brutal, autocratic ruler, and that monarchical power was neither boundless nor immutable. The progressive significance of these concepts is not to be denied but should not be overexaggerated.

Only when the Reform Movement of 1898 arose toward the end of the Qing Dynasty did the understanding of the Chinese regarding monarchical power cross the threshold into modern times. In his *Chun qiu dong shi xue* (Dong Zhongshu's Studies of the Spring and Autumn Period), Kang Youwei wrote: "All of the ancients Sages (meant here as "rulers"—the Author) believed they were also one of the people, that they had by chance acceded to the throne, yet wished to relieve the people of their sufferings, and they refrained from serving their own interests. This was subtly stated by Confucius, but later rulers failed to comprehend his allusions, gathered all powers unto themselves, and busied themselves making laws to govern the people. It is here that the divide between public and private interests began."<sup>1</sup> Clearly, Kang Youwei had advanced by one big step over Huang Zongxi: The ruler was "also one of the people." This step was no small matter. It all at once brought the ruler, the Son of Heaven, down to Earth. Kang's disciples went even further. Liang Qichao stated: "Ever since the Three dynasties, sovereign rule has been increasingly exalted and the people's power has progressively declined, and this has been the fundamental reason for China's weakness." He also said the worst offenders in this respect were the emperors Qin Shi Huang, Yuan Taizu, and Ming Taizu. In Liang's view, prior to those three, no great rift existed between ruler and ruled, and the rulers governed the people in the Min Ben manner. [Min Ben—the theory that regarded people as the root or foundation of the nation.] With those three, rulers became autocrats, "all regimes were established for the sake of protecting the monarch and his household and not to protect the people, which went completely against the cardinal principles of Confucius and Mencius!"<sup>2</sup> Mencius believed that "the people are the most important element in a state; the next is the state or the country; the least is the ruler himself." The fact that rulers throughout history sat on high as oppressors of the people clearly ran against the beliefs of Confucius and Mencius, he said. Such autocratic rulers were not only undeserving of respect, they should have been regarded as felons. In his *Hunan shiwu xuetao ke yi pi yu* (Comments on the Teaching Methods at the Hunan Current Affairs School), Liang Qichao put it even more bluntly: "In all of the twenty-four dynasties, not one of them [the rulers] was worthy of serving as a standard-bearer for Confucius. A number of tyrants arose among them. The rest were all traitors to the people." He opined: "All future political reforms should start with the de-reverencing of the Sons of Heaven." The rulers and their ministers, he said, were "all administrators of

<sup>1</sup> "Dong Zhongshu's Study of the Spring and Autumn Annals," vol. 6 (2) *Wang dao* (Kingly Way), *The Complete Works of Kang Youwei*, p. 863; Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> "Postscript to Booklist on Western Learning," *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 1*, p. 128.

the people's affairs, as though one were running a shop in which the ruler is the manager and the ministers are the shop attendants and so on."<sup>3</sup> Liang's meaning was quite clear; the shop's shareholders were the millions of commoners. This already came close to regarding a ruler as a "public servant."

Tan Sitong (1865–1898) saw himself as Kang Youwei's self-appointed disciple. In his book, *Ren xue* (The Doctrine of Benevolence), he proved to be fairly adept at discussing the duties of rulers in terms of scientific principles. He wrote: "When people emerged, there were at first no rulers or ministers; all were people. The people were not capable of governing themselves, nor had they the time to do so. Thus together they elected a ruler, and it was not the ruler choosing the people but instead the people choosing the ruler. Together they elected rulers, and there was no great distance between the rulers and the people, and the rulers did not tread on the people. Together they elected rulers, and because the people were there before the rulers, the rulers were the *mo* (the foliage, the non-essential) and the people were the *ben* (the tree trunk, the essential). Nowhere does the *mo* prevail over the *ben*, so why should the rulers prevail over the people? The people together elect them, and can certainly together unseat them. Rulers administer affairs for the people, and their ministers help with the administration of people's affairs."<sup>4</sup> Although he evinced certain vestiges of ancient populism here, he also displayed clear signs of modern ideological concepts. First, he introduced the concept of elections, of the rulers being rulers only because they were elected by the people; of people being able to choose rulers and not vice versa. Secondly and more importantly, since rulers were elected, electors could recall the elected. Hence rulers had to work diligently for the people if they were to continue enjoying the status of rulers. Such rulers were shorn of their sacred haloes and were no more than public servants who worked for the people. Tan's thinking went higher than that of his contemporaries. Little wonder that Liang Qichao described him as "a shooting star in the domain of ideology."

Subsequent to the 1898 Reform Movement, the 1900 War broke out and Empress Dowager Cixi who held actual power and the Guangxu Emperor who held no power scuttled like stray dogs from Beijing to Xi'an. After concluding the 1901 Treaty—a treaty that betrayed and humiliated the nation, they returned to Beijing. Pressures at home and abroad compelled them to once more bring up the subject of governmental reform. At this time, whether in the eyes of foreigners or the Chinese, the majesty of both the Qing court and of the Empress Dowager and Guangxu had been severely compromised. That was particularly true for the Empress Dowager who had sold out the country to save her own skin and whom the foreign powers had intended to prosecute as an arch-criminal, and whose face was barely saved by getting the common people to pay up several hundred million more taels of silver. One can well imagine how hated she was. Earlier, the reform movement proposed by Liang Qichao had called for de-reverencing the Sons of

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<sup>3</sup> See *Reform Movement of 1898* (II), pp. 549, 548 and 550.

<sup>4</sup> *Ren xue* vol. 1. See the *Complete Works of Tan Sitong*, p. 339. Zhonghua Book Company.

Heaven. But now, whether or not any reforms took place, the rulers were covered with ignominy. The majesty of monarchical power was progressively undermined by the continuing upsurge of revolutionary and reform movements.

In 1901, Qin Lishan (1877–1906), Shen Xiangyun (1888–1913) and other radical and revolutionary young people studying in Japan started up the *Guo Min Bao* (Citizens Newspaper). The title itself was evocative of democratic revolution. In its second issue, the journal published an article entitled “On Citizens,” which said: “We ask, can a country do without a ruler? Our answer is yes. The president of a democratic country is not called a ruler. He comes when summoned, and goes when dismissed, and is in no way a ruler.” A country could be without a ruler but could not be without people. “A country belongs to its people, and all countries in the world belong to the world’s peoples. Since that is the case, it is possible to eliminate tyrants and traitors above and to preclude talk about usurpations and revolts below. When the people of a country govern the country, all affairs are properly governed. When the people of a country exercise the country’s powers, no powers exceed their boundaries. . . . Thus none are more respected and revered and inviolable in a country than its people.”<sup>5</sup> In the view of the writers, rulers had become redundant. Since a country belonged to its people, the people should govern the country’s affairs. It also went without saying that a country’s people should wield the country’s powers, which would do away with many redundancies and superfluities. Asserting that none were to be “more respected and revered and inviolable” than the people was tantamount to wholly negating the position of rulers. In the same year, Liang Qichao published in his *Qing Yi Bao* an article entitled “On the Similarities and Differences between Changes of the Notion of the State.” He cited a passage from *The State* by the German scholar Johann Caspar Bluntschli to illustrate changes in thinking about the state. Liang started by comparing Europe as it had been in the Middle Ages and as it was in modern times, and then compared China’s old thinking with Europe’s new thinking. He wrote that according to China’s old thinking, “the state and the people were both set up by the ruler, for which reason the ruler was regarded as the *zhuti* (mainstay, essential element) of the state.” According to the new thinking in Europe, “the state is set up by the people, rulers are appendages of the state and there is no question that they are set up by the people, for which reason the people are the *zhuti* of the state.”<sup>6</sup> The one believed that the ruler was essential and that both the state and the people were set up by the ruler and were at his beck and call. The other regarded the people as essential to the state and maintained that the ruler was set up by the country’s people and was at the beck and call of the people. The two views were diametrically opposed. In citing Western theory, Liang expressed views that were very close to those of revolutionary young people in those days.

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted from *Selected Discussions from the Ten Years before the 1911 Revolution*, Volume 1 Part 1, p. 72.

<sup>6</sup> See *Collected Works of Yinbingshi*, Collection No. 6, p. 15.

In 1906, an article entitled “The Absurd Thinking behind China’s Reverence for Rulers” signed by a certain Wu Yun was published in the revolutionary journal *Fu Bao*. The author targeted the corrupt and toadying-upon-foreigners Qing government, and pointed out that, blinded by thousands of years of veneration for rulers, “there was only acquiescence when rulers sucked the people’s sweat and blood to swell the private moneybags of their dynasties; there was again acquiescence when they rashly provoked disputes with other nations and then paid millions upon millions in indemnities—all of which were taken from the people—to meet the enemy’s insatiable demands; there was again acquiescence when they hastened to take other people’s lands and proffered them to green-eyed red-beards as a sop to the diplomatic machinations of foreign powers. . .” The author maintained that all of these were due to absurd concepts of veneration for rulers, which benumbed the people and blinded them to imminent disasters. According to the author’s analysis, the Chinese so superstitiously revered their rulers because, (a) “the Sages taught loyalty”; (b) “the rulers make use of the Sages’ teachings” and (c) “officials are chosen through imperial examinations.”<sup>7</sup> These three things generated an absurd reverence-for-rulers thinking so firmly entrenched that people knew only that they had a ruler but not that they had a country, knew only that they should revere their ruler but not that they should love their country. The upshot: people had no inkling that their country was on the brink of destruction. Such was the utter absurdity of “veneration for the ruler!”

Here we should also mention an article entitled “In Rebuttal of Kang Youwei’s Writings on Revolution,” written by Zhang Taiyan (1869–1936) in 1903. Although this article contributed little in terms of ideology or scientific principles, it had a galvanizing effect on the anti-Manchu trend of thought of those times. One passage in it accused the ruling emperor of being a “dim-witted buffoon,” and was one of the grounds for the *Su Journal* case which caused such a sensation in China and abroad. This passage contained no scientific principles worthy of mention, but in China, with its centuries-old tradition of reverencing its rulers, the effects of such a public scolding of the emperor can well be imagined. Other persons had merely demonstrated in terms of scientific principles that rulers were “also one of the people” and that there was nothing to be revered about them. Zhang, however, accused the then emperor of being even less than a commoner, of being an ignorant buffoon who was “unable to tell beans from wheat.” Such an accusation was indubitably conducive to shaking off the ideological bonds of reverence for the rulers.

The publication *Xin Shi Ji* (New Century), run by Wu Zhihui (1865–1953) and others who had split out from *Min Bao*, carried an article in 1907 entitled “Revolution against the Three Cardinal Guides.” It stated that a ruler “is one who uses might to subjugate others,” but in reality “rulers are also men, so why should they arrogate special powers and special benefits to themselves? Some say it is because they are born rulers and Sons of Heaven. This is superstition, and it runs against

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted from *Selected Political Commentaries from the Decade Before to the 1911 Revolution*, vol. 2, Part 1, pp. 543–545.

science.” The writer asserted that “rulers and their ministers all represent a barbarous world, and in the new century all rulers and ministers should be eradicated, leaving only the people and a society in which all men are equal.”<sup>8</sup> This smacked of anarchism. In 1908, the same publication again carried the well-known “four withouts” article entitled “Without Fathers, Without Rulers, and Without Human Laws or Divine Laws.” This article declared: “Entirely irrelevant ‘rulers’ whose accession to power has depended on the use of force will be the first to be deposed.” The author also maintained that this could happen without having to wait for the era of anarchism. Not to mention the fact that there are no rulers in republics, “despite the use of such façade terminology as ‘venerated and inviolable,’ monarchs in the status of representatives of the state and the law have been pulled down in constitutional states, brought within the bounds of constitutions, may be said to exist uniquely by virtue of the ‘law,’ and their original archetypes have in reality already been eradicated.”<sup>9</sup> In 1911, the second issue of *Ke Fu Xue Bao* (*Kefu Academic Journal*) carried an article entitled “On Ethics” which further stated that in the days of primitive man, there was no distinction between rulers and subjects, nor had there been any such distinction in the era of Great Harmony, that “primitive times ended in this fashion, and rulers as a phenomenon have been nothing more than redundancies over thousands of years of history.”<sup>10</sup> Liang Qichao later said that rulers, in countries that genuinely practiced constitutionality, had become “clay puppets.” The two meant the same thing.

In sum, in the 10 or more years since the Reform Movement of 1898 to the outbreak of the 1911 Revolution, thanks to the translation of Western writings, the creation of “schools of new learning,” and the constant increases in the number of people who received the new-type education, plus the extensive dissemination of new knowledge and new thinking and new concepts by newspapers and periodicals, some Chinese, while striving to find new ways out for China’s politics, were so fundamentally shaken in terms of their millennial concept of monarchical sanctity that they even regarded monarchs as redundancies who had to be eliminated. Revolutionaries who wanted to drive out the “northern intruders” and set up a republic naturally demanded expulsion of the Qing emperors. Constitutionalists who wished to implement constitutionalism called for eliminating the supreme powers of monarchs, for retaining the monarchs in name only and not in substance, and for turning them into “clay puppets.” It was clear that the autocratic rulers’ exit from the stage of history had become an irreversible trend.

At the close of the Qing Dynasty, criticism and negation of rulers and emperors was tantamount to criticism and negation of the system of autocracy. (There were already numerous writings with detailed criticisms of autocracy, but these are not discussed here since this book focuses on the process of cultural transformation.) In

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<sup>8</sup> See *Selected Political Commentaries from the Decade Before to the 1911 Revolution*, vol. 2, Part 2, p. 1016.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 204.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 847.

the course of such criticism, however, some members of revolutionary parties regarded the systems of monarchical and imperial rule as almost one and the same as the system of autocracy, and believed that autocracy could be eliminated by doing away with the emperors. (Another minority of revolutionary party members only opposed the Manchu emperors, merely wanted to drive away the latter, and deemed it acceptable if Hans were to act as emperors; these constituted minor exceptions and need not be discussed here.) That belief, of course, was quite one-sided. After experiencing the many years of turmoil subsequent to the 1911 Revolution, percipient persons were finally awakened to the fact that autocracy continued to exist even after the emperors were gone. Of this circumstance, persons in the constitutionalist faction who were versed in Western constitutionalism had a somewhat more comprehensive and profound understanding. They were already able to point out that autocracy existed because of the system, and not because of any person or persons. Emperors or presidents—all were autocrats if their powers were not restricted or subjected to supervision. Restricting the powers of sovereigns or presidents could only be effected by implementing constitutional government. And whether constitutional government could be implemented depended entirely on whether the people of the country were capable of exercising constitutional government, and especially if the core component of the people, or in other words, the so-called zhong deng shehui (middle tier of society), was capable of doing so. Of course, persons who were capable of reaching a clear understanding of this issue were probably a very small minority. Nonetheless, it must also be seen that the criticism and negation of sovereigns and imperial power represented a major change in the ideology and concepts of the Chinese.

### ***5.1.2 The Shaking of the Exalted Position of Confucius and Confucianism***

Confucius was a great thinker and educator in China's history. In pre-Qin times, the Confucian school of thought created by him and his followers was one of the most influential in ancient China. It suffered a severe setback when the Qin Emperor Shi Huang unified the six states, burned books, and buried Confucian scholars alive. By the time of the Han emperor Wu Di, however, Confucianism had been espoused as the orthodox state ideology, all non-Confucian schools of thought were proscribed, and from then on Confucianism found itself in a position of unchallenged veneration. Rulers of all succeeding dynasties heaped superlative honorific titles on Confucius, calling him The Great-Achiever-cum-Most-Sacred-First-Teacher-cum-Monarch-of-Letters. From the central government down to local governments, Confucian temples were constructed in a big way and lavish sacrificial ceremonies were held at which literati prostrated themselves in worship. Rulers used the Confucian teachings as the overriding norm for governing the nation, and literati regarded the Confucian teachings as the foundation of their livelihoods and careers.

After the inception of the imperial examinations system, the Confucian teachings were further elevated to the status of insuperable dogma.

The teachings of Confucius and the Confucians were indeed of indelible value. However, vigorous promotion by the rulers of successive dynasties tied Confucian ideology securely to the rulers' autocratic politics. Still, by the close of the Qing Dynasty, the rulers' autocratic institutions increasingly betrayed flaws that hindered modern social advance, and were in consequence subjected to intense challenges. Under such circumstances, the Confucian teachings closely linked to the regime were also unavoidably and increasingly called in question, and their exalted status was becoming more and more shaky.

The coming of Western missionaries to China continued the dissemination of Western learning in China, and missionaries and Western scholars voiced doubts and criticism regarding the unitary domination by Confucius and the Confucian teachings. Their criticisms of Confucius and the Confucian teachings were of course aimed at getting the Chinese to accept Christianity. Hence such criticism contained much that was one-sided or untrue. For example, saying Confucianism "does not discuss God very explicitly" and "it has people worship Heaven, demons and gods, but leaves them ignorant of the fact that God is the Lord in Heaven and the one and only true God."<sup>11</sup> Many such views were expressed and need not be enumerated here. However, the criticisms also contained much that was quite to the point. For example, they stated that in terms of the three major domains of Heaven and man and material things, Confucianism merely addressed man and overlooked Heaven and material things, and was therefore slanted and closed-minded. The portions of Confucianism that dealt with man also contained much that was faulty. For instance, "the ruler governs the subject" resulted in absolute autocracy; "the father governs the son" led to despotism in the household, and "the husband governs the wife" created inequality between the genders and relegated females to a state of extreme distress. They also averred that the Confucian emphasis on cultivation of the character and self-restraint caused people "to be feeble of heart and lacking in fortitude," and they pointed out that the teachings of Confucianism fettered people's bodies and minds. Hence, they asked: "Are the Confucian teachings not to blame when China is to this day still weak and poor after two thousand or more years of reverence for Confucianism?"<sup>12</sup>

Basically, all of the leading personages of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom movement [Boxer Rebellion] opposed Confucius and his teachings, in part because the Boxers propagated a God-fearing religion modeled upon the West for the sake of rallying and organizing the masses. However, their anti-Confucian thinking had little influence on China's mainstream ideology. Faint stirrings of change had

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Kranze and Shen Shaoping: "Jiu shi jiao cheng quan ru jiao shuo (Christianity and the Fulfillment of Confucianism)" *The Globe*, vol. 96, Jan. 1897; quoted from Yang Daichun (2002, p. 188).

<sup>12</sup> Written by 盖乐惠 and translated by Young John Allen: "On the Relationship between Politics and Religion," *The Globe*, vol. 170, March 1903; quoted from Yang Daichun: *The Globe and Chinese-Western Cultural Exchange in the Late Qing Era*, p. 194.

appeared in the mainstream ideology around the time of the Opium War. Wei Yuan (1794–1857), Yao Ying (1785–1853), and others had begun to pay attention to studies of Lao Zi, in contrast to the consistent exclusion of and hostility toward Lao Zi on the part of mainstream ideologists. Zeng Guofan (1811–1872) also acknowledged Mo Zi's resolve to “undergo great sacrifices in the service of the country” and held him in high esteem. Not a few literati noted that there were aspects of Western learning that agreed with the teachings of the Philosophers [that is, philosophers other than the Confucians], giving rise to the theory that “Western learning has its source in China.” Thus the Philosophers gradually rose in status and already showed a tendency toward attaining parity with the Confucians. Meanwhile, studies on the writings of the Philosophers gained in prominence, with many grand masters of academics throwing all of their energies into textual criticisms and evaluations of the posthumous works of the Philosophers. All such books as *Evaluations of Mo Zi* (*Mo zi jian gu*), *Annotations on Lao Zi* (*Lao zi zhu*), *Collected Annotations on Zhuang Zi* (*Zhuang zi ji jie*), *Collected Annotations on Xun Zi* (*Xun zi ji jie*), *Guan Zi Emendments* (*Guan zi jiao zheng*), and *Collected Annotations on Han Fei Zi* (*Han fei zi ji jie*) came from the hands of such grand masters and became undying masterpieces.<sup>13</sup> The ascendancy of the Philosophers' teachings was in itself a sign that the exalted status of Confucius and Confucianism had begun to unravel.

Kang Youwei's ideas about constitutional monarchy were out of keeping with the Confucian teachings. However, in view of the entrenched and inviolable reverence for Confucianism among China's literati and officialdom, he resorted to the method of “recasting Confucian ideology in the name of Confucius,” as a means of propagating his own views. To recast Confucian ideology, it was necessary to exclude the prevailing Confucian teachings, whereupon Kang wrote a book entitled *Xin xue wei jing kao* (A Study of the False Classics of the New School) which ousted from the ranks of orthodoxy all studies of the Confucian classics starting with those by the Han Dynasty scholar Liu Xin (c. 50 BC–AD 23). Since Kang's intention was to reform the state's fundamental system, he described Confucius as the forefather of political reform and described Confucius' writings as works that “cite the ancients to reform the order of things.” Fearing disbelief, he further claimed that all of the Philosophers in Confucius' time cited the ancients “in order to reform the present.” As a consequence, however, the erstwhile Confucius became no more than one of the ancient Philosophers, all of whom belonged to one or another school of reform. Looking back at this period in history, Kang Youwei's chief disciple, Liang Qichao, stated that Kang Youwei's book *A Study of the False Classics of the New School* “has produced two effects: first, it has fundamentally shaken the basis of Confucian orthodoxy, and secondly, all ancient books will have to be re-examined and re-evaluated. This has swept up a veritable storm in ideological circles.” When discussing the book *Kong zi gai zhi kao* (Confucius as a

<sup>13</sup> Regarding the gradual rise of the teachings of the Philosophers, see Luo Jianqiu's book *Jin dai zhu zi xue yu wen hua si chao* (Modern Studies on the Sages and Cultural Trends); China Social Sciences Publishing House, 1998.



Reformer), Liang also said: “A *Study of the False Classics of the New School* sees most of the classics as spurious works by Liu Xin, but now *Confucius as a Reformer* regards all the classics as Confucian works that carry forward the precepts of the ancients, and the thousands of years of classics are all acknowledged as being sacred and inviolable. This has given rise to fundamental queries and to doubts and criticism among scholars.” He also said: “(Kang) vigorously promotes Confucius, yet also says the founding Confucians and the founding Philosophers shared the same motives, the same objectives and the same means. Hence, he ranks Confucius together with the Philosophers, and the view that ‘adjudges Confucius’ sanctity to be absolute’ has been wholly dismissed; this has led to the conduct of comparative studies.”<sup>14</sup> Liang’s statements were fully justified. No matter how energetically Kang Youwei promoted the Confucian teachings in later times or stood for revering Confucius, his efforts to recast Confucius and Confucianism during the Reform Movement had shaken the exalted position of Confucius and the Confucian teachings. In the year after the 1898 political reform, He Qi (1859–1914) and Hu Liyuan (1874–1916), who resided in Hongkong at the time, published *Quan xue pian shu hou* (Postscript to Exhortation to Learning), criticizing the conservative leanings of Zhang Zhidong. In the section *Zong jing pian bian* (A Discussion on the Ancient Classics) they stated: “Confucians are but one of the Nine Schools of Thought, each of which has aspects in which it excels and its so-called shortcomings. No one school of thought can be used to characterize all schools of thought.” This explicitly negated the exalted position of Confucianism.<sup>15</sup>

After the 1898 Political Reform, Kang Youwei persisted in upholding the imperial system and upholding the Confucian teachings, and he proposed the establishment of a Confucian church (*kong jiao hui*). Although Liang Qichao did not openly advertise a different position or take a clear stand against his mentor, he obviously did not agree with him. In 1902, Liang published an article entitled “Maintaining the Beliefs Does Not Require Veneration of Confucius,” in which he pointed out that no teachings could be artificially maintained, nor was Confucius a propagator of religion. In this article he stressed in particular that promoting and maintaining a Confucian religion would hinder freedom of thought and fetter people’s minds. He wrote: “It is claimed that the Confucian teachings have been practiced more than two thousand years from the Han Dynasty to the present, and that for the sake of consistency, all believed that certain views should be advocated and other views proscribed. In consequence, contentions have arisen over what is orthodox and what is heterodox, and over modern learning and old learning. In textual research, the contentions were over which masters to follow. As regards the Confucian teachings, the contention was over orthodoxy. All believed themselves to be proponents of the Confucian teachings, and they banished everything they

<sup>14</sup> See Liang Qichao: “An Overview of Qing Dynasty Academics,” *Collected Works of Yinbingshi*, Collection No. 34, pp. 56 and 58.

<sup>15</sup> *Xin zheng zhen quan* (True Explanation of the New Policies), p. 362. Liaoning People’s Publishing House, 1994.

believed not to be of those teachings. And so the scope of the Confucian teachings progressively narrowed. Hence, in the course of time Confucius reappeared in the shape of Dong Jiaogong and He Shaogong [during the Western Han Dynasty], and then in the shape of Ma Jichang and Zheng Kangcheng [during the Eastern Han Dynasty], and then in the shape of Han Changli and Ouyang Yongshu [during the Tang Dynasty], and then in the shape of Cheng Yichuan and Zhu Huian [in the Song Dynasty], and then in the shape of Lu Xiangshan and Wang Yangming [during the Ming Dynasty], and then in the shape of Ji Xiaofeng and Ruan Yuntai [during the Qing Dynasty], but all of these latter-day Confucians were so restricted in their ways of thinking that they were incapable of opening up any vistas of their own. They were like a band of monkeys that chance upon a piece of fruit and prance and fight over it; or like a gaggle of old women who find a bit of cash and then squabble over it. They were pathetic indeed! Given the magnitude of the world and the breadth of academic horizons, it should have been quite evident that no one can achieve anything by circumscribing their initiatives and endeavors. Not so! These people put on grand airs, yet stuck to the teachings of one master and, if anything even slightly overstepped the set boundaries they dared not speak of or even think about it. Such was the result of two thousand years of accomplishment by the protectors of the faith.”<sup>16</sup> Where learning, either ancient and modern or Chinese and foreign, was concerned, the writer advocated thinking things out for oneself, judging rights and wrong by oneself, and “accepting what is good and discarding what it not.”<sup>17</sup> Liang’s assertion that “I love Confucius but I love the truth even more”<sup>18</sup> clearly denoted that he no longer revered Confucianism. In his book *Xin min shuo: lun zi you* (New People: On Freedom), he further developed this line of thought and thoroughly rejected and castigated any sort of superstitious faith in Confucius.<sup>19</sup>

Zhang Taiyan (1869–1936), a noted scholar of the same period as Kang Youwei, had in fact already begun to conduct “comparative studies” of Confucius and Confucianism. All of his writings prior to 1900—*Ru Mo* (Confucianism and Mohism), *Ru Dao* (Confucianism and Daoism), *Ru Fa* (Confucianism and the Legalists), *Ru Xia* (Confucianism and the Chivalrous Swordsmen)—contained fair and objective “comparative studies” and were free from any exaltation of Confucius and Confucianism. In 1906, he published an article entitled “A Brief Description of the Theories of Various Philosophers” in the journal *Guo Cui Xue Bao*, in which he placed the various schools—the Daoists, the Mohists, the Yin Yang, the Political Strategists, the Legalists, the Logicians, the Eclectics, the Agriculturists, and the Novelists—side by side with the Confucians, and one by one evaluated their merits and demerits. His judgments regarding the Confucians contained a good many acerbic comments. He stated, for instance: “The Confucians’ malady rests in

<sup>16</sup> *Collected Works of Yinbingshi, Collection No. 9*, p. 55.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>19</sup> *Collected Works of Yinbingshi, Special Collection No. 4*; p. 47 and 48.

their obsession with wealth and rank.” And “The practice and ethics of the Confucian doctrines vary with the times and trends.” “Rulers adapt with great flexibility to the times, hence they have had no need to seek truth in their morals and ideals; they only need to justify their conduct. They practice the morals of Confucianism, for which reason those among them that are hard-working and self-demanding are non-existent, while charlatans and self-seekers abound. . . . They tout the Confucian ideals, hence most of their goals are ambivalent and vaguely articulated.”

For such reasons, “the harm brought by Confucianism is that it blurs and confuses people’s thinking.” After such withering criticism of Confucianism, Zhang stated: “It is true that Confucius had his merits in that he converted mystical sayings to the service of human beings and the learning of astronomers and meteorologists and talented thinkers to the service of ordinary people, and in this aspect he remains unexcelled through the ages.” However, in the subsequent two millennia, the merits of Confucianism “have become things of the past, and all that is left today is a hankering for [personal] advancement.”<sup>20</sup> Liu Shipei (1884–1919), a master of Chinese culture contemporaneous with Zhang Taiyan, besides affirming Confucius’ contributions as a scholar and educationist, was also critical of Confucius and pointed out, for example, that the latter inappropriately revered Heaven’s mandates, attached more importance to scriptures than to realities, discouraged equal discussion, discriminated against persons with different views from his own, and so forth.<sup>21</sup>

The fact that intellectuals such as Zhang Taiyan and Liu Shipei—both recipients of a traditional education—had, under the stimulus of realities and the influence of Western learning, reevaluated the Confucian teachings, demoted Confucius from his exalted position to an equal status with the other Philosophers, and switched from devout belief in his precepts to harsh criticism thereof, was ample evidence of the severe shaking that Confucianism was being subjected to in the last years of the Qing Dynasty.

Deng Shi (1877–1951), chief editor of the *Guo Cui Xue Bao* (*National Essence Studies Journal*), wrote an article entitled “Revival of Ancient Learning” in which he stated: “Since the Han Dynasty, our country has for more than a thousand years revered the Confucian teachings, and no one found anything remarkable in this at first when new races of people with new religions entered this country. Over time, however, as people observed these new religions and how they operated in their countries of origin, they saw that their methods worked, and might even be more effective than the ones practiced in China. And so it dawned on them that there were teachings other than the Confucian, that there were philosophers beyond the writers of the Six Classics, and this toppled their belief in ‘the one exalted teacher’.”<sup>22</sup>

The above examples reflected the change in the understanding of well-known scholars with regard to Confucius and Confucianism—understandings that took the

<sup>20</sup> See *Guo Cui Xue Bao*, second year issue no. 8.

<sup>21</sup> See Liu Shipei: “*Kongzi zhen lun*,” *Guo Cui Xue Bao*, second year issue no 5.

<sup>22</sup> See *Guo Cui Xue Bao*, first year issue no. 9.

latter down from their exalted positions, placed them on the same footing as the other Philosophers, and went from reverencing over to criticizing Confucianism. This change was already quite obvious. The following is an overview of how newspapers and periodicals that represented the general consensus saw this change.

The *Wan Guo Gong Bao* published an article entitled “On the Separation of Politics from Religion” written by Huang Zicai, a Chinese expatriate intellectual in San Francisco. Huang maintained that because the limits of political power were unclear in China, religious freedom existed only at the lower levels of society, whereas there was no freedom of faith to speak of in the upper and middle levels of society because of pressures from the regime. He said “Officials in today’s China, from the time they assume their positions must adhere to the old rules and proceed to a temple to take part in prayer services. Thus every first day of the lunar month they have to observe the old rules and burn joss sticks at a temple. Important civil and military officials who are otherwise occupied and have no time to do so appoint underlings to go in their stead. Failure to do so is regarded as a breach of rules by the government and incurs immediate threats of dismissal from office. Lack of freedom of belief is even worse among scholars. Regulations today for all schools in all provinces prescribe that every school shall set up a memorial tablet before which students must intone meaningless words, and kneel and kowtow in worship. This is euphemistically called reverencing the sacred faith. Students who fail to do so are regarded by their teachers as violating discipline, reproved for disrespecting the Sage, and threatened with expulsion. Burning joss sticks has nothing to do with politics or academics, yet the government devises rules to force people to do such things. Is that not absurd? . . . If religion is not separated from politics, scholars will never obtain freedom of religion. This is the greatest hindrance to China’s advance and a major cause of unrest—unrest caused by the government.”<sup>23</sup> The object of veneration by officials and students, as stated in the article, is of course Confucius. The writer disagreed with the use of official mandates to compel scholars and young people to kowtow to Confucius; he hoped there would be freedom of religious faith, freedom of thought. It is obvious that the writer no longer saw Confucius as a saint.

*Da Lu* (Mainland), a magazine operated by Chinese students in Japan who were influenced by revolutionary factions, carried an article entitled “The Thinking of the Turanid Race and its Differences and Similarities with That of Other Races.” The writer saw the Chinese as representatives of the so-called Turanid race, and regarded the ideology of the Turanid race he discussed as the ideology of the Chinese. Citing criticisms by Western scholars of Confucian ideology and learning, the writer maintained that emperors of past dynasties exalted Confucius simply because his ideology leaned toward conservatism. The writer stated: “Confucius’ teachings consist of the Three Cardinal Guides and the Five Constant Principles, and in this respect they are of unrivalled purity. Yet there was one major drawback. The State combined politics with the clan system and applied paternalism to politics. This became the basis of the Chinese system and the pivot of the Confucian

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<sup>23</sup> See *Wan Guo Gong Bao*, no. 196.

teachings.” The article also stated that Confucius attached the greatest importance to the relationship between fathers and sons and emphasized filial piety as the basis of his teachings. A country was like a household, where the father/ruler commanded obedience from his sons/subjects and where there was no equality and independence to speak of. Such thinking, wherever its influence extended, “has, in the Chinese, the effect of fostering slavishness, hypocrisy and timidity.”<sup>24</sup>

*Tong Zi Shi Jie* (Children’s World), another publication with revolutionary leanings, published an article entitled “Following the Example of the Ancients” which, in terms of general principles, first of all strongly opposed “following the example of the ancients” and displayed influences of evolutionist thinking. It is generally known that Confucius and his disciples throughout the years invariably invoked Yao, Shun, Yu, Shang, Wen, Wu, and Zhou Gong as well as the Three dynasties of remote antiquity. Later Confucians went even further and attributed supernatural qualities to Confucius and his teachings, insisted that people in later times be guided by these teachings in all they did, and not stray from them in the least. The article stated: “Confucius was good for the Zhou Dynasty, but would appear to be quite bad for current times. The term ‘the most exalted’ is merely a title of honor arrogated to him by tyrants and traitors of the people. Why do these tyrannical autocrats revere Confucius? They do so because Confucius made it a point of asking people to be loyal to and obey their rulers—a request most beneficial to the rulers. Hence, these tyrants adored him and demanded that people respect him and call him ‘the most exalted.’ They made the ordinary people afraid of showing him the least disrespect. They made defaming the Sage a crime, so that people dared not say anything against him. As time went by, the people became accustomed to such things. All fell into this trap laid by the tyrants, all saw ‘showing loyalty to the ruler’ as their duty, and regarded ‘following example of the ancients’ as being of the greatest importance.” In sum, all people were turned into slaves of Confucius, slaves of the ancients, and slaves of the rulers.<sup>25</sup> Among the articles that criticized Confucius and Confucianism at that time, this was one of those presented in the most popular style, the most lucid, and the best-expressed.

In terms of scientific principles, the most representative writing, aside from Zhang Taiyan’s “General Description of the Philosophers’ Theories (*Zhu zi xue lue shuo*),” was the article “There Is No Sage (*wu sheng pian*)” carried in the periodical *He Nan*. The article proceeded from the standpoint of absolutely negating Confucius’ status as a sage. It began by stating: “Starting in the Qin and Han, it was claimed in all succeeding dynasties that there existed a weird phenomenon called ‘the Sage.’” People lauded the Sage to the skies, stating that he “encompassed all the virtues” and “encompassed all learning.” Confucius, too, had said of himself “Heaven conferred the virtues on me” and “Heaven did not neglect my writings,” and described himself as “one of the favored sons of Heaven

<sup>24</sup> See Da Lu (Mainland), no. 1.

<sup>25</sup> See *Compilation of Discussions in the First Decade after the 1911 Revolution*, vol. 1, part two, pp. 529 and 532.

who bears a mission from Heaven.” The article continued: “He dazzled and deceived all people, and to all appearances was what is called a ‘true saint.’ Deluded, people vied to become his followers and persuaded others do the same, as this was the best means of acquiring fame and fortune.” And as a result, “baneful waters trickled and then surged like a mighty flood that none could hold back.” It is not surprising that the Japanese scholar Endo Ryukichi asserted: “Confucianism, which originated in China, has indeed become the root of all disasters in China.” The writer of the article then proceeded to criticize the so-called sacred learning. In his opinion there was actually no “learning” to speak of in Confucius’ learning, and it consisted of no more than Confucius installing Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, Wu, and Zhou Gong as models and examples that later generations should emulate but not overstep. The writer also criticized the Confucian Way (*sheng dao*). He noted there had never been any hard and fast definitions for the Confucian teachings, and that they in fact consisted of no more than narrow sectarian sermonizing, designed to reject dissenting views, pander to popular sentiment, and confuse people’s minds. Most notable was the writer’s assertion that “there are those who have not studied Confucianism, but who may yet be sages.” What he meant was that, if those who attain the acme of learning are all to be called sages, then the Daoists had their sages, the Mohists had their sages, Shen and Han were sages of the Legalist School, Yi and Qin were sages of the Han and Zongheng Schools, Du Fu was a sage of poetry, and Xi Zhi was a sage of calligraphy. The reputations they gained were for their learning and were unrelated to their titles. And so, studying Confucianism prevented independent innovation, whereas not adhering to Confucianism enabled and encouraged innovation.

The writer summed up the main points of his article as: (1) Doing away with the demon of autocracy must start with doing away with the Confucian Sages. “There are close connections between monarchs and the Sages. Monarchs must keep the Sages if they are to maintain their rule, and the Sages depend on the monarchs to propagate their teachings. If the roots and tendrils that link rulers and sages are not severed and stamped out, slaves and subjects will continue to serve the rulers’ will and shall never be able evolve and discover their natural talents. Malpractices will never be attributed to the monarchs or the Sages, while the subjects will take the blame, be put to death, and will never be delivered from oppression and persecution!” (2) Seeking independence for human beings must start with doing away with the Sages. The writer stated: “If claims of divine boundaries are not clarified and done away with, if such absurdities are not refuted and people are not awakened from their benightedness, human beings will never be restored to their original state. They will continue to be enslaved either by the rulers or the Sages until such time as disasters cause the nation’s extinction.” (3) Establishing domains for the various schools of learning is of prime importance for the future and must start with doing away with the Sages. The writer stated: “Our country’s wellsprings of learning are not limited to those of Confucius and Mencius. A dispassionate evaluation will show that all are of equal import. If all schools of learning are subjected to a public and fair assessment, there is no reason to claim that the teachings other than those of Confucius and Mencius have nothing to recommend

them. The fact is, Confucius and Confucianism force others to revere them, restrict people's freedoms, and forbid the development of other teachings. And I, in all conscience, could not tolerate the emergence of another Emperor like Han Wudi who established these as the sole object of exaltation."<sup>26</sup> This writer also published an article entitled "A Discussion on Opening Avenues for Learning" (*Kai tong xue shu yi*) in the fifth issue of *He Nan*, in which he once again lashed out at Confucius and Confucianism. He stated that the evils of the Confucian teachings were not limited to those mentioned in the preceding article, and that the following matters should also be given attention: (1) Their promotion of "ruler egoism" (exaltation of rulers who regard the country as their private domain.) (2) Their slavish interpretation of benevolent comportment (benevolent comportment should consist of turning a blind eye to what is right and what is wrong and of slavishly obeying the ruler and his intimates). (3) Presumptuous interpretations of life (expositions of the contradictory and unsound nature of Confucius' and Mencius' explanations of the meaning of life). (4) Pernicious vestiges of superstitions (holding in awe and dread such things as He Tu [dragon-horse depictions], Luo Shu [carapace carvings], Heavenly mandates, saints, eminent personages, and so forth).<sup>27</sup>

An article in *Xin Shi Ji* (New Century) entitled "Soliciting Statements for Eliminating Confucianism (*pai kong zheng yan*)" was apparently all for launching a campaign to castigate Confucianism. It stated that "seeing how the government makes use of Confucianism and how people blindly worship it," there was no denying its religious character. Confucius "has laid the foundations for autocratic governments that have afflicted our compatriots for thousands of years." And, "any intention of bringing happiness to the Chinese must first start with a revolution against Confucius." And how was that revolution to be conducted? "In view of the depths to which people have been poisoned by Confucianism, no cure can be effected other than by radical surgery." The writer of the article called on all upright persons to show concern for the country and, for the sake of eliminating Confucianism, write articles to do away with any exaltation of Confucius and strive for ideological and academic freedom.

The above opinions are among the most incisive and convincing of the criticisms leveled at Confucius and Confucianism in the last years of the Qing Dynasty. They may not have represented the views of the great majority of the intelligentsia in those times, but they can be seen as the most rational of the understandings attained by the "first-awakened" as a result of the stimulus of new thinking and reflections on the harm done by the traditional culture.

<sup>26</sup> See above, vol. 3, pp. 261, 263, 264, 265–266, and 267–268.

<sup>27</sup> See *Compilation of Political Discussions in the First Ten Years after the 1911 Revolution*, vol. 3, pp. 345, 346, 347, and 349.

## 5.2 The Trend Toward a Populist Culture

The culture of remote antiquity was created in common and was shared in common by all people. It was not differentiated as the superior and the inferior or the refined and the vulgar. With the advent of class society, however, people became divided as the superior and the inferior and their culture as the refined and the vulgar. Thereafter, culture split into two levels, one high and one low. The higher level was for the Wise (i.e., the rulers), the lower was for the Benighted (i.e., commoners). In Confucius' words: "It is an unalterable fact that those above are wise and those below are benighted." In modern times, there has been a gradual intermingling of the upper and lower levels of culture, a trend toward populism and secularism. This has taken place in both China and the West.

In China, the trend toward modern populism arose in conjunction with calls for national salvation and building up a strong nation, since China's modernization started at a time of invasions by foreign powers. Initially, only people in the upper levels knew anything about the capabilities and skills of the West, and they entertained thoughts of "learning the foreigners' skills to deal with the foreigners." This, of course, involved only officials, gentry, and literati and had nothing to do with the common people. Later, as this strategy proved ineffective and time and again met with failure, persons with foresight began to realize that the general public had to be awakened and that all people should shoulder responsibilities toward their country if China was to be rendered strong and invincible. This understanding gave rise to a populist ideological tendency. From its very outset, populism arose and advanced together with a consciousness of democracy. Prior to the emergence of any consciousness of democracy, people were merely subjects of the feudal rulers and the ruling dynasty. They could not act either independently or on their own initiative, and were mere appendages of their rulers and the dynastic court. As consciousness of democracy emerged, these former subjects became "people of the nation." The nation pertained to its people, and its people pertained to the nation instead of being the private property of the ruler or of a dynastic household. Thus, the people-of-the-nation [*guomin* in Chinese, which translates into English as "citizens"] concept gradually gained currency. According to a study by Liang Jinghe (1956–), the first person to use the "citizens" concept in China was Kang Youwei, the leader of the 1898 Reform Movement. In a "Memorial Requesting the Running of Schools" submitted to the throne in June or July 1898 (textual research by Huang Zhangjian [1919–2009] regarded this as a spurious memorial fabricated at a later date by Kang Youwei, but there are also scholars who hold to the original version, as is provisionally done in this article), Kang Youwei used the term "citizens [in Chinese, people of the nation]" for the first time. He stated: "The term 'people of the nation' is also recommended in Germany,"<sup>28</sup> and from this it would appear that his use of this term placed more emphasis on "nation," since "nationalism" was quite the vogue in Germany at the time. In

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<sup>28</sup> See Tang Zhijun (1981, pp. 305–306).



October 1899, Liang Qichao published an article entitled “Current Major Trends in Citizens’ Endeavors and China’s Future” in which he, for the first time, produced a fairly clear definition for the term “citizens.” He wrote: “‘Citizens’ is the term for people who together own the nation. A nation is the accumulation of its people’s achievements, and there would be no nation without its people. The people of a nation govern the nation’s affairs, enact its laws, work for its benefit, and defend it when it is imperiled. If these are not achieved, the people will suffer and the nation will fall. Such is the significance of ‘citizens.’”<sup>29</sup> This actually includes the implication of Abraham Lincoln’s statement “of the people, by the people, and for the people”—the implication of a country owned by the people, governed by the people, enjoyed by the people, and defended by the people in times of peril. This was a most complete definition for the term “citizens.” Diverse newspapers and publications which emerged later frequently publicized one or more of these implications. For instance, the *Guo Min Bao* (*Citizens’ Journal*), in an article entitled “On Citizens” stated that “a country pertains to its citizens, to all of those within its domains. In other words, a country pertains to all of its citizens within its domains.” It also stated: “When the citizens of a country govern its affairs, all affairs are properly governed, and when the citizens of a country wield its powers, no powers are abused.”<sup>30</sup> The chief editor of *Zhongguo Baihua Bao* (*China Vernacular Journal*), Lin Xie (1874–1926) (aka Li Baishui, self-styled Propagator of the Vernacular) explained in very simple language: “This country pertains to us—the common people, and all matters in it pertain to us—the common people.” Hence, “since we are the common people, all matters without exception concern every one of us. If a matter is beneficial, it is beneficial to all. If a matter is bad, it is bad for all of us.”<sup>31</sup> The *Zhong Wai Ribao* (Chinese-Foreign Daily) published a dissertation entitled “On the Uses of China’s National Spirit” which stated: “A country is the aggregate of its people. It is strong when its people are strong; it is weak when its people are weak.”<sup>32</sup> This, too, echoed Liang Qichao’s theory.

Since a country pertains to its people, the destiny of that country hinges on its people. Thus, awakening the people and having them assume citizens’ responsibilities became a most important matter. As Liang Qichao declared: “Should there be a new people [citizenry], there will certainly be a new system, a new governance, and a new country.”<sup>33</sup>

Worth noting is the fact that when Li Xie of *Zhongguo Baihua Bao* discussed awakening China’s citizens, he especially emphasized that there was no counting

<sup>29</sup> See *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 4*, p. 56.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted from *Compilation of Political Discussions in the First Decade after the 1911 Revolution*, vol. 1, part one, p. 72. Sanlian Bookstore, 1977.

<sup>31</sup> “The Status of Being an Ordinary Person,” *China Vernacular Journal*, no. 1; quoted from *Compilation of Political Discussions in the First Decade after the 1911 Revolution*, vol. 1, part two, pp. 607 and 608.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted from *Compilation of Political Discussions in the First Decade after the 1911 Revolution*, vol. 1, part two, p. 938.

<sup>33</sup> See *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collected Articles No. 4*, p. 56.

on China's scholars. "All hope rests with those tillers of the land, those craftspeople, those merchants, those soldiers, and those children in their teens—those boys and girls." He also declared "should all of those tillers of the land, craftspeople, merchants, soldiers as well as those children and women understand matters and broaden their knowledge and experience, there will be real hope for China's self-strengthening."<sup>34</sup> The emphasis here was quite evidently on commoners at the lower levels, i.e., populism. This was an improvement over nationalism (*guomin zhuyi*), as it constituted an ideology that focused on the ordinary people in the lower strata. After a period of fermentation, this populist ideology gained prominence in the early years of the twentieth century. It was manifested chiefly as calls for using the vernacular (*bai hua*) for writing articles and delivering lectures so as to arouse and awaken lower-level ordinary people. The earliest of such proposals were made in the late 1880s. In his *Annals of the Japanese Nation: Annals of Literature* written in 1887, Huang Zunxian (1848–1905) noted that China's spoken language and written language were so different that few people understood the written language, and that this was a major defect. He stated: "To enable all peasants, workers, merchants, women and the young to understand and use the written language," a simple method should be sought to unify the spoken and written languages. He himself set an example by penning poetry and articles in a highly colloquial style of writing. Liang Qichao, too, paid attention to this matter when he edited the *Shi Wu Bao* (Everyday Affairs Newspaper). In a scathing discourse on the disparity between the written and spoken languages, he stated: "The ancients merged their written and spoken languages, but today's people disconnect them, and I have time and again dwelt on the disadvantages of doing so. Today's people speak in contemporary language but insist on using ancient language when they write, for which reason reading books is so difficult for women, children, peasants and commoners." He said "it would be best now to use only the colloquial language and write more books for the ordinary folk" so that all ordinary people could read them and know about the country's affairs.<sup>35</sup> Many forward-looking persons at the time shared this view. For instance, Chen Ronggun (1862–1922), in his dissertation "On Popular Language," argued that today's archaic language was the popular language in olden times. No difference was made then between refined and popular language, and that which is seen today as refined language was popular language in olden times and that which was refined in one place was popular in another. "Since no difference was made between the refined and the popular," he said, "I cannot understand why more importance is placed now on the use of the refined than on the popular, and I especially cannot understand why it is obligatory to replace the popular with the refined. . . Today's learning which goes for the ancient popular language and spurns today's popular language is, under the circumstances, quite

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<sup>34</sup> *Foreword for the Publication of the China Vernacular Journal*, cited from *Compilation of Political Discussions in the First Decade after the 1911 Revolution*, vol. 1, part two, pp. 605 and 604.

<sup>35</sup> See *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collected Articles No. 1*, p. 54.

pointless.”<sup>36</sup> Ye Lan (1941-), in his dissertation “Origins of the Enlightenment Journal,” also points to the harm caused by “the disparity between China’s written and spoken languages” and that “using simple and practical methods of writing that are easily learned” to teach children over a period of 2–3 years would produce salutary effects.<sup>37</sup>

In 1898, during the high tide of the Reform Movement, Qiu Tingliang (1857–1943) published a lengthy article entitled “On the Essential Role of the Vernacular in the Reform” in the Wuxi *Vernacular Journal*, in which he fairly comprehensively discussed the importance of popularizing the vernacular. He first of all stated that in a country “where there are many educated people, no learning falls behind, no endeavors stagnate, and no beneficial things fail to flourish. . . . However, where educated people are few, all learning decays, all endeavors decline, and all good things fall into oblivion.” He also stated: “Lettered countries are intelligent countries, unlettered countries are unintelligent countries; lettered people are intelligent people, unlettered people are unintelligent people. The same goes for all countries in the world, all except for China which is a lettered but unintelligent country and which has lettered but unintelligent people. Why is that? Qiu Tingliang says: ‘That is the harm caused by the classical style of writing’.”<sup>38</sup> He then points out that writing is a country’s public voice-recording device, for which reason all writing started out as vernacular. This was manifestly evident in ancient times. Yet “people in later times did not understand this, and have insisted on using and imitating the language of the ancients which does not resemble that of today’s people. And as a result, the written and spoken languages are markedly different. A man’s tongue and his hand might well be from different countries. Such is the predicament caused by the written language over the last two thousand years.” Due to this unnatural use of the language of the ancients, the written language had conversely become a hindrance to the acquisition of knowledge. He asked: “Did the ancients invent the written language to bring convenience to all people or to make things difficult for them? When people seek to learn the written language, do they learn it to have it serve them, or do they learn it to expend all their energies on it, to be forced into its service, and to become its slaves?”<sup>39</sup> His questions were highly pertinent. He also pointed out that there were eight advantages to using the vernacular, the most important of which were ease of learning, convenience for teaching children, and convenience for the indigent. He states in conclusion: “Nothing has been more effective for keeping the people ignorant than the classical language, and nothing is more effective for enlightening the people than the vernacular. If China does not intend to enlighten its people, so be it. But if the intention is to enlighten them by using the classical language, effects contrary to the eight advantages I have

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<sup>36</sup> Quoted from *Materials on the Vernacular Language Movement at the End of the Qing Dynasty*, see *Materials on Contemporary History*, 1963, no. 2; p. 116.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

mentioned earlier will be produced, and great harm will be done to intelligent people in this country. I would conclude by saying one thing: Promotion of the classical language will cripple true learning, whereas use of the vernacular will encourage true learning. If true learning is not encouraged, there will be no intelligent people.”<sup>40</sup>

Due to vigorous promotion by forward-looking people, newspapers in the vernacular gradually went into circulation, and were touted in an article entitled “Newspaper Articles Should Switch Over to Simple Language” by the aforementioned Chen Ronggun. Comparing China with Japan, he said, a great many Japanese read newspapers whereas very few Chinese did so. An important reason was that “most Japanese newspapers use simple language while most Chinese newspapers use the classical language.” He said: “Today’s reform by and large places priority on educating the people, and the best way to do so is by doing away with the classical language. If this is not done, our four hundred and ninety-nine million people will live in a dark world, a benighted land.”<sup>41</sup> Other statements that similarly encouraged newspapers in the vernacular were legion. Due to such vigorous promotion on the part of forward-looking persons, and also due to the objective needs of reformist and revolutionary campaigns, vernacular newspapers developed quite rapidly. By a very rough count, at least 200 vernacular newspapers emerged in the years between the founding of the vernacular newspaper *Wuxi Bao* in 1898 and the Wuchang Uprising (1911).<sup>42</sup> It should be pointed out, however, that the main consideration for encouraging the vernacular was its usefulness for conducting political enlightenment. In other words, reformist and revolutionary activists had to use the vernacular for propagandizing and mobilizing the masses. This was quite unlike the use of vernacular during the New Culture Movement of later times, when the vernacular was requisite for writing poetry and compositions and all literary activities, and when it served as the basis for unifying the national language.

The promotion of the vernacular and the proliferation of vernacular newspapers to a certain extent influenced government officials. Investigations conducted around the time of the Reform Movement revealed sporadic instances of local officials in some areas venturing to put out official notices written in the vernacular. By 1905, many notices in the vernacular were appearing even in such relatively conservative places as Beijing and Tianjin. Newspaper reading societies, too, were thriving in these localities. Statistics show that Beijing had 45 such societies by 1907, and Tianjin had 6 in the years 1905 and 1906.<sup>43</sup> It may be assumed from this that substantial numbers of such newspaper reading societies had been established in urban areas along the southeastern coast and in inland regions with good communications. In these newspaper reading societies, and by reading various vernacular

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>42</sup> See Fang Hanqi ed.: “Index of Newspaper Names” in *Annals of the History of China’s News Media*, pp. 2583–2826.

<sup>43</sup> See Min Jie (1998, p. 458).

newspapers, substantial numbers of lower-level commoners acquired information about major domestic and international affairs and had access to new knowledge and new concepts. This was precisely the objective of the initiators of vernacular newspapers and of populism. Another important manifestation of the rise of populism was the proliferation of oratorical societies.

The rise of oratory was closely tied to the reform movements of contemporary times. During the high tide of the 1898 Reform Movement, the Southern Study Society regularly organized orations, and the Safeguard the Nation Society (Bao Guo Hui) in Beijing attached much importance to oratorical activities and established a set of “Rules and Regulations for Oratory.” This innovative activity was temporarily snuffed out by the 1898 coup d’état but revived in the early twentieth century. Orations were vigorously played up in an article entitled “On Orations” in the *Tianjin Da Gong Bao*, which stated: “Urgent events in the country may seem to be of little urgency and important matters appear to be of little import, and only some forward-looking persons are informed of these circumstances while ordinary people are not. Hence the importance of orations.” It also stated: “Inanimate writing is certainly more cumbersome than live speech as a means of communication when the objective is to unify the spirit and soul of the nation. Henceforth, patriotic personages will have to acquire the skill of speech-making.”<sup>44</sup> At about the same time, the *Hangzhou Bai Hua Bao* (*Hangzhou Vernacular Journal*) also put out many articles that promoted speech-making. For instance, in its first edition of its first year of publication, it carried a report on the Hangzhou Hall of Oratory, stating that oratory was the best way for developing the people’s intelligence. Running schools was also a way for developing the people’s intelligence, it said, but a school could not accommodate many people, and to attend school one had to be able to read, thus people who could not read could not get into schools. Oratorical sessions could accommodate many more people, and people who could not read books or were illiterate could listen to the speeches and understand them. Hence, oratory was extremely effective.<sup>45</sup> The noted woman revolutionary Qiu Jin (1875–1907) once wrote a special paper “On the Advantages of Oratory.” She stated: “Oratory is absolutely necessary for opening up people’s minds and touching their hearts.” Explaining why newspapers were less effective than oratory, she stated: “There are several kinds of people who are able to read newspapers today—people in official circles, merchants, people of leisure and, finally, intellectuals. People in official circles seldom read newspapers and even if they do it is not for the sake of acquiring knowledge. Merchants who read newspapers are only interested in market quotations. People of leisure who read newspapers pay attention only to entertainment information. And among the intellectuals who read newspapers, some favor discussions on new matters while others prefer discussions on bygone subjects. However, people who are illiterate and cannot read newspapers listen to lectures and speeches in order to open up their

<sup>44</sup> See the *Tianjin Da Gong Bao*, November 5, 1902.

<sup>45</sup> See *Tianjin Ta Kung Pao* of November 5, 1902.

minds.” She emphasized that there were many benefits to oratory. One, there were no venue restrictions, and oratorical sessions could be held anywhere. Two, no fees were collected and anyone could listen. Three, everyone could understand. Four, all that oratory required was a ready tongue, and there was no need to involve many people or pay any costs. And five, oratorical sessions provided all sorts of information about important events. Precisely because of these advantages, she said, all the world’s countries attached importance to oratorical sessions, and China should not underestimate their effects.<sup>46</sup>

Thanks to vigorous promotion by forward-looking people and to the objective needs of reformist and revolutionary movements, oratorical activities grew vigorously in all localities. Some places started up oratory meetings, others set up oratorical training classes, and still others built auditoriums for oratorical sessions. In ordinary times, the oratorical societies organized lectures for the improvement of social mores and imparting knowledge. But when major domestic and international incidents broke out, oratorical activities turned forthwith into mass political activities and were especially lively during, for instance, the campaigns for rejecting the unreasonable demands by France (1903) and Russia (1903), the movement against the US exclusions of Chinese laborers (1905), and the various activities for upholding sovereign rights as related to border surveys and demarcations. Distributions of vernacular pamphlets and oratorical activities in the rural areas during the large-scale Parliamentary Petition Campaign, in particular, brought about an unprecedented upsurge in the political culture of populism.<sup>47</sup> The progressive advances of such activities drew increasing numbers of ordinary people into various campaigns and movements, as was only to be expected.

During or even before the vigorous advances of vernacular newspapers and oratorical activities, another group of forward-looking personages, out of similar concerns for lower-strata commoners and a desire to popularize education as quickly as possible, energetically promoted simplified Chinese characters and Pinyin (Chinese phonetic alphabets).

Prior to the rise of the 1899 Reform Movement, some people had already begun to put forward tentative ideas for Pinyin. Influenced by Western culture, they believed that the Western alphabet would greatly facilitate the popularization of education. Moreover, the divide between the Chinese written and spoken languages and the complexity of the characters in Chinese writing made it difficult to popularize education, and so they wished to start by reforming the written language. Song Shu (1862–1910), in his “Humble Opinions from Liuzikezhai (Preliminary draft)” completed in early 1892, put forward a proposal for Qie Yin Zhu Zi [using two Chinese characters to represent the pronunciation of a third character—Trans].

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<sup>46</sup> See Min Jie: *Cultural Changes in Contemporary Chinese Society*, vol. 2, p. 255.

<sup>47</sup> This article was initially printed in the first issue (September 1904) of the magazine *Vernacular* published in Tokyo, and subsequently carried in the first issue (December 1907) of *Shenzhou Nü Bao* (Chinese Women’s Journal). The current version is based on *Collected Writings of Qiu Jin*, pp. 3–4, published in 1960 by the Zhonghua Book Company.

In 1895, Lu Zhuangzhang (1854–1928) published his “Qie Yin New Characters.” In 1896, Shen Xue published his “Sheng Shi Yuan Yin (Vowels for a Prosperous Age).” And in 1897, Wang Bingyao published his “Table of Pinyin Characters.” This period also saw the emergence of Wu Jingheng’s (1865–1953) “Bean Sprouts Alphabet,” Cai Xiyong’s (1850–1896) “Characters for the Rapid Conversion of Speech,” and so forth.<sup>48</sup> These initiatives showed the enthusiasm of forward-looking personages in those times for popularizing education among the lower-strata populace. Two of them, Wang Zhao and Lao Naixuan, made the most outstanding contributions in this respect.

Wang Zhao (1859–1933), a new adherent to the cause, made quite a name for himself during the 1898 Reform Movement. He fled to Japan at the outset of the political coup and slipped back to China in 1900. While hiding out in Tianjin, he completed a plan for his Mandarin Composite Phonetic Alphabet which used 15 *yun mu* (single or compound vowels) and 50 *sheng mu* (initial consonants) to spell out the “Northern parlance” and serve as a tool for popularizing education. Wang Zhao had been very much impressed by the adage that “Prussia’s elementary school teachers defeated France” and by the fact that education in the island nation of Japan was 250 times more prevalent than in China—which was why Japan had been able to defeat its much larger neighbor and also why Wang strenuously sought to spread education. He maintained: “Prosperous and strong governance rests not with a few elitists, but with the many common people who hone their abilities, expand their knowledge and are aware of their responsibilities.”<sup>49</sup> In 1903, Wang Zhao, then a fugitive from law, secretly ran a “school for the Mandarin Composite Phonetic Alphabet.” He reprinted his Mandarin Composite Phonetic Alphabet and reduced the number of *yun mu* to 12. He also set about compiling teaching materials that used this kind of spelling, with remarkable results. Many persons in Beijing, Tianjin, and Zhili followed his example, and the kind of school run by Wang Zhao in Beijing increased to more than 24 in those days.<sup>50</sup> Lao Naixuan (1845–1921) very much admired and supported Wang Zhao’s Mandarin Composite Phonetic Alphabet. He himself was a devotee of the *yin yun* (phonology) system and, with Wang Zhao’s consent and on the basis of the Mandarin Composite Phonetic Alphabet, devised two tables of simplified characters for spelling the Ning (Nanjing) and Wu (Shanghai) dialects, which he called the “Revised and Expanded Table of Simplified Characters for Spelling Speech” and the “Reset Table of Simplified Characters for Spelling Speech.” Having solicited support from Zhou Fu, Governor-General of Jiangxi and Jiangsu, he first set up a school for simplified characters in Jiangning, the provincial capital, and then submitted a memorial to the

<sup>48</sup> See my book *The Movement for a Parliament in the Last Years of the Qing Dynasty*, carried in *Social Sciences of China*, no. 2, 1980; also carried in *Collected Writings by Geng Yunzhi*, pp. 1–34, Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 2005.

<sup>49</sup> See Zhou Min (2003, p. 92).

<sup>50</sup> *Preface to the Mandarin Composite Phonetic Alphabet*, see *Xiao hang wen cun* (Collected Essays of Wang Xiaohang) vol. 1, p. 29, block-printed in the Geng Wu year.

throne on “Using Dialects as Stepping Stones and Learning the Mandarin Speech as the Objective.” This matter produced such an impact that Lao Naixuan was invited to an audience with the Empress Dowager Ci Xi in 1908. As ordered, Lao Naixuan submitted his Table of Simplified Characters, and he wrote in his memorial: “The popularization of education is imperative for China’s salvation. To popularize education, easily understood letters are imperative. And to make letters easily understood, the *pinyin* method is imperative.” In his memorial he also stated: “Over the past few years, Pinyin Mandarin newspaper offices in Beijing have devised a Mandarin alphabet consisting of fifty *mu*, twelve *yun* and four tones, various combinations of which produce more than two thousand different sounds, including those of the Beijing parlance. . . easily read and easily understood.” What he referred to here was actually Wang Zhao’s Mandarin Composite Phonetic Alphabet. He requested that the imperial court, on this basis, “issue by imperial edict a complete and unified national table of characters, use these characters to compile simple teaching textbooks, and decree their issuance throughout the country.” He believed that such popularization, “vigorously undertaken by the state, would eliminate illiteracy nation-wide within a few years. . . All persons would be able to peruse books and read newspapers, all would be informed of the moral principles and the world affairs they should know about, all would be able to write the things they wish to communicate to others, official orders and decrees could be sent down without mishap, and people’s opinions could be sent up without impediment, all in a clear, easily understood and uniform manner throughout the country. With such education and guidance, there is no fear that the people’s morals will be shallow or their intelligence deficient. On these rest the foundations of peace and tranquility and the roots of prosperity and strength.”<sup>51</sup>

Wang Zhao, Lao Naixuan and all other persons who strove to reform the written language in those days took an oversimplified view of matters, but the fact that they directed their attention toward lower-strata commoners reflected the overall cultural tendency toward populism.

### 5.3 Changing Customs and Habits in a Modern Secular Culture

Since forward-looking personages were now directing their attention toward the common people, they were bound to come up against the question of how to rid the latter of a variety of undesirable or even, one might say, abominable customs and habits as they strove to raise the consciousness and qualities of the common people. In other words, they had to fight a bitter fight to change those customs and habits.

Actually, many forward-looking persons had already broached the matter of changing customs and habits during the germinating and early stages of the Reform

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<sup>51</sup> Lao Naixuan’s memorial was carried in Zheng Zhi Guan Bao (Political News), no. 297.



Movement. For example, Chen Qiu (1851–1904), in the “Ten Reforms” section of *Jing shi bo yi* (In-Depth Discussions on the Administration of State Affairs) he wrote in 1892, mentioned that various overelaborate formalities should be discarded, and proposed reforming marriage and funeral ceremonies. In the same year, Song Shu, in his “Humble Opinions from Liuzikezhai,” also put forward proposals with regard to reforms of wedding ceremonies, free choice of marriage partners, and terminating the official honoring of *zhen nü* (virtuous women), *lie nü* (women who die defending their chastity), *jie fu* (widows who do not remarry), and *lie fu* (widows who die rather than remarry). Zheng Guanying (1842–1921), in his *Words of Warning in Times of Prosperity* (published around 1893–1894), proposed doing away with such old customs as processions in honor of local deities, lavish Buddha worship ceremonies and vegetarian feasts for Buddhist monks, and advocated using the money thus saved for performing good deeds beneficial to society, such as supporting poor people and orphans. He also proposed sending Buddhist monks and Daoist priests back to secular life. In 1896, reformist activists began to set up the Chinese people’s own anti-foot-binding societies, and Liang Qichao’s passionate “Preface to the Anti-Foot-Binding Society” moved people all over the country and triggered an anti-foot-binding movement that swept numerous localities in China. In short, an important trait of reformist activists dedicated to national salvation was their strong determination to do away with old customs and habits.

In 1899, Liang Qichao published his book *Zhong guo ji ruo su yuan lun* (Tracing the Sources of China’s Weaknesses), and in a section entitled “Customs and Habits: A Source of Weakness,” he dwelt in particular on the evils of China’s old customs and habits. He stated: “In view of China’s current mental state and customs and habits, even constant purchases of ships and guns, constant construction of railroads, constant opening of mines, and constant staging of Western-style military exercises will produce no greater effect than ‘spreading damask over walls of dirt and carving dragons on decayed wood,’ and would only increase their unsightliness.”<sup>52</sup> This passage contains graphic descriptions of the shortcomings resulting from China’s customs and habits and mentality, as for instance, such unseemly behavior as treating subordinates like slaves and acting slavishly before one’s superiors; ignorance and lack of common sense; selfishness and self-interest; deceit and hypocrisy; cowardice and timidity; indolence and sloth; and so forth.

After a period of fermentation and consensus preparation, calls for changes to customs and habits merged as a trend in the early years of the twentieth century. Severe criticisms were leveled at all sorts of old customs and habits that held back progress, and various plans for reforms were put forward.

The most frequently denounced and the most inhumane of all the old customs and habits was the practice of binding women’s feet. This despicable custom had existed for more than a 1,000 years in China. The Manchus had issued orders banning foot binding before they established political power over the whole of China, and several decrees had subsequently been issued during the Shunzhi and

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<sup>52</sup> See *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collected Articles No. 5*, p. 18.

Kangxi reigns, but these hardly had any effect on the Han ethnic majority. Foot-binding bans implemented within the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom movement, too, had had little or no influence nationwide. It was only in the 1870s and 1880s that the pernicious practice of foot-binding began to be viewed with serious concern by forward-looking people. In a section on *nü jiao* (Women's Education) in *Words of Warning in Times of Prosperity*, Zheng Guanying said of foot binding that "this thing is brutal, cruel, and inhumane," and "throughout the ninety thousand *li* of the world's five continents, it exists only in China."<sup>53</sup> In his "Preface for the Anti-Foot-Binding Society," Liang Qichao wrote: "China's foot-binding is torture comparable to cutting off the feet. . . this cruel and tawdry practice affects all regions, and has exerted a baneful influence for a thousand years," and it "should not to be brought to public attention in neighboring countries since it reflects so poorly on our character. . . It affects half of China's four hundred million people and relegates them to the level of felons."<sup>54</sup> Tan Sitong warned: "If the Chinese still do not wake up to the reasons for their country's decline and lack the courage to quickly do away with the great evil of foot-binding. . . they will see the perishing not only of their country but of their race as well."<sup>55</sup> Kang Youwei, Yan Fu, and Xu Qing all strenuously castigated the harm done to their people, country, and race. Subsequently, denunciations of the vile custom of foot-binding frequently appeared in various newspapers and publications. The *Ningbo Vernacular Journal* carried three consecutive articles written in the form of ballads, sharply denouncing the sufferings caused by foot-binding and calling for a ban on that evil practice.<sup>56</sup> Women's World put out such works as the "Ode to Banning Foot Binding" and "Song to Unbinding the Feet" and pointed out that this "millennial evil practice" was "offensive to Heaven and reason" and intolerable, and that it ought to be forever prohibited.<sup>57</sup> Others, such as *China's New Women* and the *Popular Enlightenment Journal* also published articles denouncing foot binding. The *Jing Ye Xun Bao* (Competitive Business Ten-Day Periodical) published, by installments, lectures by Shi Jimin entitled "Ten Discussions on Unbinding the Feet," in which she described in detail the evils of foot binding, strongly advised against further foot-binding, and asked women with already bound feet to unbind them. The journal's editor wrote that China's three greatest evils were the Eight-part Essay, opium and foot binding, and these should be eliminated if China was to be made strong.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See *Words of Warning in Times of Prosperity*, vol. 3, p. 7, printed by the Shanghai Bookstore in the Bing Shen year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>54</sup> See *Collected Works of Yinbingshi, Collected Articles No. One*, pp. 120–121.

<sup>55</sup> See *Ren Xue*, Section 10, *Complete Collection of Tan Sitong's Works* (revised and enlarged edition) p. 303. Zhonghua Bookstore, 1998.

<sup>56</sup> See *Introduction to Periodicals of the 1911 Revolution Period*, vol. 1, p. 439; People's Publishing House, 1982.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 469–470.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 292–293.

With a view to releasing women from the sufferings of foot binding and stamping out that evil practice, enlightened personages formed groups to promote campaigns against foot binding and for unbinding feet. The first societies against foot binding in contemporary China were set up by foreigners. In 1876, missionaries of the London Missionary Society who were spreading the gospel in Shantou set up an anti-foot-binding society. “(Society members) came together twice a year, and all who did not wish to have their daughters’ feet bound would sign a pledge at the society, affix their name to it, and have relatives make their marks as testimonials. Each party would retain half of the document, and any breaches of agreement would be censured at public meetings.”<sup>59</sup> On April 18, 1897, the Englishwoman Mrs. Archibald Little sponsored the establishment of a “natural feet society” in Shanghai for the purpose of “dissuading foot binding,” and expressed the hope that more and more Chinese would join the society. Chinese members of the society should take the lead in unbinding the feet of women in their families, forever forbid girls in their families from binding their feet, and not permit their sons to marry girls with bound feet. Branch societies were set up in Suzhou, Wuxi, Zhenjiang, and Nanjing to expand their anti-foot-binding campaign.<sup>60</sup> In 1896, the Cantonese personages Lai Bitong and Chen Mo’an started up the Longshan Anti-Foot-Binding Society. Two Sichuanese personages also set up such a society. These were the first two anti-foot-binding societies to be run by Chinese. An introduction to the Guangdong Longshan Anti-Foot-Binding Society, written by Liang Qichao, expanded the society’s influence so that Guangdong’s anti-foot-binding movement became the most active nationwide. Nine such societies existed in Guangdong at the end of 1897. In June 1897, Liang Qichao and others initiated the General Society of Natural Feet situated at the offices of the *Shi Wu Bao*. The Concise Rules and Regulations of the Natural Feet Society, drafted by Liang Qichao, stipulated that no society members were to bind their daughters’ feet and their sons were not to marry girls with bound feet, that members who had daughters with bound feet should unbind their feet if the girls were under 8 years old, or, if the girls were over 8 years old and their feet could not be unbound, their names were to be registered with the society before they could marry into the families of society members. The rules also stipulated that branch societies were to be set up in all provincial capitals, and each prefecture, county, or city could set up small sub-branches if a substantial number of people in those places applied for membership.<sup>61</sup> The *Wan Guo Gong Bao* recorded that “more than three hundred thousand persons” nationwide joined the Natural Feet Society.<sup>62</sup> During the high tide of the Reform Movement, natural feet societies sprang up in Hunan, Guangdong, Hubei, Fujian, and Sichuan provinces. By comparison, northern China lagged behind, and organizations of the Natural Feet Society were to be found only in Tianjin.

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<sup>59</sup> “On Giving Up Foot-binding.” See *Wan Guo Gong Bao*, March 22, 1879.

<sup>60</sup> See Min Jie: *Cultural Changes in Modern Chinese Society*, vol. 2, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> See *The Reform Movement of 1898* (4), pp. 433–434.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted from Liang Jinghe (1998, p. 216).

After the Boxer Rebellion, the Qing Dynasty rulers were compelled to show some remorse over the disastrous events, and once again brought up the subject of reforms, which were referred to as the “New Governance.” An imperial edict advising against foot-binding was issued in the first months of 1902. This edict, it should be said, produced substantial results, firstly, because it was preceded by several years of preparations in terms of public opinion and relevant activities; secondly, because imperial orders still exercised a prompting effect on most officials at all levels; and, thirdly, such edicts allayed misgivings and hesitation on the part of a good many gentry. Thereafter, the anti-foot-binding movement developed quite rapidly, due to official support and the somewhat lessened mental resistance among the general public. Many of the highest local officials displayed considerable activism. By 1904, the governors of 18 of China’s provinces had spoken in favor of discontinuing foot binding; the only ones who had not were the governors of Zhejiang, Fujian, Shaanxi, and Gansu. Governor-general Yuan Shikai of Zhili and Governor-general Cen Chunxuan of Sichuan did exceptionally well. Yuan Shikai personally wrote articles urging people to forgo foot binding, and ordered his children and relatives to refrain from foot binding and to unbind bound feet. Cen Chunxuan sponsored the publication of 50,000 copies of “An Elementary Introduction to the Official Opinion on Anti-Foot-Binding (*Bu chan zu guan hua qian shuo*)” and had these widely distributed. Indeed, the example set by progressive personages requiring natural feet as a condition for concluding marriages dealt a substantial blow to the long-term and almost morbid obsession with bound feet and the discrimination against natural feet in women. In this period, newspapers and publications carried a great number of articles and commentaries on the anti-foot-binding movement. Some even publicized or provided information on methods of unbinding bound feet.<sup>63</sup> As a whole, however, the anti-foot-binding movement was limited in this period to urban areas and localities with fairly good communications, and little change took place in rural areas in the vast hinterland. Thanks to the efforts made by forward-looking persons and to the participation and promotion by enlightened officials and gentry, the anti-foot-binding movement made real progress in the last dozen or so years of the Qing Dynasty and laid the foundation for the eventual extirpation, during the republican era, of a pernicious practice that had harmed China for more than a thousand years.

Another old Chinese practice which urgently needed reforming was the marriage system.

China’s old marriage system was rife with malpractices. The first was early marriage, where “having grandsons at age thirty is regarded by members of the family clan as matter for celebration and by society as a propitious omen.”<sup>64</sup> The custom of marrying early was especially prevalent in remote and border regions and

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<sup>63</sup> See Liang Jinghe: *A Study on the Evolution of Customs and Habits and Culture in Modern China*, pp. 218–220.

<sup>64</sup> “Discussion on Banning Early Marriage,” originally carried in *Xin Min Cong Bao*, no. 23, and included in *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collected Articles No. 7*, p. 109.

poor and backward districts. The marriage system was closely tied to living standards and level of education, but since early marriage was condoned by customs and habits it existed in all localities and in all social strata. The first section in Liang Qichao's work *Xin Min Yi* (Discussions on New People) was "A Discussion on Banning Early Marriages." Liang saw five harms in early marriage: (1) Harm to health. Young boys and girls, who were "physically still immature, intellectually still puerile, and shallow of experience" were likely to become enamored of sensual and carnal desires and injure their health without knowing it. (2) Harm to procreation. Liang stated: "Humans are superior to animals and civilized people are superior to savages, not because of their ability to produce offspring but because of their ability to raise and cultivate their offspring. Such is the essence of procreation." Those who were able to fulfill the duties of procreation "must first of all be of an age suitable for becoming parents; and two, be capable of undertaking the responsibilities of parents." Hence, early marriages could not produce good offspring. Liang Qichao stated with deep feeling: "China's population figure which tops the world, and the Chinese people's strengths which are among the world's weakest, are both the outcome of early marriage." (3) Harm to upbringing. Home education was actually an important phase in national education and the basis of all education. "Children are the most mimetic when in their parents' arms and at their parents' knees." The examples set by parents at such times were of utmost importance for a child's lifelong education and development. "Nine out of ten" parents who married early were unable to give their children a good home education. As such, they harmed their children and also harmed the nation's future populace. (4) Harm to education. A complete contemporary education generally required 15 or 16 years or more. Males and females who married early were just at the age of acquiring an education. Yet these precious years were spent in "pleasure seeking, romantic sentimentality, and fond thoughts of bedchamber intimacies" which sapped their energies and wasted time, inevitably prevented the cultivation of superior attributes, and "bring about a gradual decline in national qualities." (5) Harm to the nation's finances. Immature boys and girls who married and begat children themselves needed to be supported by their parents; their wives and children, too, needed to be supported by their parents, so that the wealth gained by one person was shared among ten or more persons. The inevitable outcome: fewer creators of wealth nationwide than sharers of wealth. The wealth created by a country's people did not suffice to provide a decent living for them and resulted in a poor and weak country. Liang Qichao's discussion was a thorough exposé of the harm caused by early marriages.<sup>65</sup> Articles criticizing early marriage were also carried by many other newspapers and publications, among them the magazine *Awakened Citizens*, the *Magazine of the Society of Female Students in Japan*, the

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 08–112.

journal *China's New Women*, the Competitive Business Ten-Day Periodical, and so forth. Some of them proposed setting 25 as the appropriate age of marriage.<sup>66</sup>

Secondly, the malpractices of the marriage system. Such articles as “On the Malpractices in Marriage Ceremonies” in *Awakened Citizens*, “The Five Major Malpractices of China’s Marriage Customs” in *China’s New Women*, the “Articles on Evil Customs” (three of which were about marriage) in the *Anhui Vernacular Journal*, the article “On Marriage” in the Competitive Business Ten-Day Periodical, and “Issues of Women’s Emancipation” in *Tian Yi Bao* were all quite hard-hitting. They pointed to a number of major malpractices in the old marriage system, to wit: (1) Marriages arranged wholly by parents, and sons and daughters reduced to being passively coerced into such marriages. (2) Matchmakers seeing marriages as a source of profit and resorting to all sorts of “duplicitous words and actions”<sup>67</sup> and cajolery and deception for the sake of obtaining handsome remunerations, even if that meant destroying someone’s lifelong happiness. (3) Men and women unable to meet before marrying, so that mutual attraction and love were entirely out of the question. “Husbands who have no love for their wives visit prostitutes and take concubines, and wives who have no love for their husbands take paramours or elope,”<sup>68</sup> bringing on all sorts of family tragedies. (4) Too much preoccupation with dowries and betrothal ceremonies. The man’s family would nitpick about the woman’s dowry, while the woman’s family fussed over the betrothal settlements offered by the man’s family, all of which in fact led to mercenary marriages. (5) Unnecessary and overelaborate formalities. The entire process, from proposal to engagement and to marriage, was interlarded with a surfeit of formalities, each of which consumed a great deal of time and money and burdened the nation and its people. Hence, many people proposed to simplify marriage ceremonies, and some even took to Western forms of marriage.<sup>69</sup> (6) Superstition. During the discussions on entering into a marriage, the parties consulted birth-date horoscopes, sought fortune-tellers, and conducted divinations before likenesses of gods, convinced that all marriages are preordained by fate. Some newspaper articles also denounced the old marriage system as protecting the male’s rights but completely ignoring those of the female. Men had “seven reasons” for divorcing and sending away a wife, whereas women could not break off a marriage relationship. A wife could not remarry if her husband died, but widowers could take another wife. Some articles also castigated extremely irrational customs, such as taking child brides, concluding

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<sup>66</sup> See Lü Yi: “On Reforming Marriage,” in *Magazine of the Society of Female Students Studying in Japan*, no. 1. Quoted from Liang Jinghe: *A Study on the Evolution of Customs and Habits and Culture in Modern China*, p. 75.

<sup>67</sup> See Chen Wang: “On the Maladies of Marriage Ceremonies,” *Jue Min (Awakened Citizens)*, combined issues no. 1–5.

<sup>68</sup> See Lü Yi: “On Reforming Marriage,” in *Magazine of the Society of Female Students Studying in Japan*, no. 1.

<sup>69</sup> Ref. Min Jie: *Cultural Changes in Modern Chinese Society*, vol. 2, pp. 335–336 and pp. 437–446.

betrotals by “pointing at the belly,” and “girls waiting for (as-yet unborn) husbands.”

As they repudiated the old marriage system, forward-looking personages also proposed ideas for reform. In his “Humble Opinions from Liuzikezhai,” Song Shu posited that biological parents might decide a marriage but that both the intended bride and groom should “personally document their consent,” and “non-biological mothers, or uncles and siblings should be forbidden from arbitrarily fixing marriages.” He also proposed setting rules regarding the “three outs” and “five goes,” which he articulated as follows: “The three outs are: When the wife does not get along with in-laws—out; when she does not get along with her husband—out; and when she does not get along with the children of previous wives or concubines—out. All of these are to be decided by the husband.” And, “The five goes: Three of these shall be the same as the three outs. Of the other two goes, one is when wives and concubines do not get along, and the other is when the wife or concubine wishes to return to her biological parents. These are to be decided by the wife or the concubine.”<sup>70</sup> Hu Shih, in the *Competitive Business Ten-Day Periodical* he sponsored, proposed that, where old-type marriages were concerned, “the method for remedying its malpractices should take into consideration the marriage systems of both China and the West, and will work only if it falls somewhere between the two. First, parents must preside over marriages and, secondly, sons and daughters must have the right to intervene.” He said this way of doing things “is in accordance with the current circumstances of China.”<sup>71</sup> He opposed the old marriage system, and was also against going over immediately to the system of free marriage. His proposition took into consideration both the Chinese and the Western and compromised between the old and the new. In fact, this system is fairly widely practiced in the world today.

Another focus in the criticism of old customs and habits was on superstition. China has never had a unified national religion, and although Confucianism bears some characteristics of religion, it is, in the final analysis, not a religion. Buddhism and Daoism are both religions, but they are excessively secularized and have degenerated into mere superstitions among the general public. All peoples in the world feel some sort of reverence and awe for divinities. Some devout believers regard divinities with a sense of original sin and gratitude, and this may have a cleansing effect on their psyches. In China, however, the great majority of believers in supernatural beings harbor extremely selfish motives. They kowtow to Confucius for official positions, kowtow to Buddha for safety and security, kowtow to Zhao Gong Ming for wealth, and so on. They kowtow to as many deities as they entertain wishes and desires. These wishes and desires are the biggest sources of superstition, and since they find expression in superstition a great deal of capital is invested in efforts to realize them. A staggering amount of money and wealth is devoted to superstitious activities. Moreover, superstitious activities have become the vocation

<sup>70</sup> See *Collected Works of Song Shu*, vol. 1, p. 149, Zhonghua Book Company, 1993.

<sup>71</sup> See Hu Shih: “On Marriage (cont.),” *Competitive Business Periodical*, no. 25.

of a large number of persons. This is clearly not needed in a healthy society. Fighting superstition was a prominent aspect of the trend to change customs and habits in the late years of the Qing Dynasty.

Views and ideas about opposing superstition had been touted [in China] since ancient times. However, it was against the background of contemporary scientific knowledge, ideology, and theory that a fairly systematic and thorough criticism of superstition commenced toward the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of twentieth century. We can see from the statements made by reformist ideologues prior to the Reform Movement how they intended to oppose superstition. Zheng Guanying, for example, strongly objected to the proliferation of elaborate processions for local deities and other wasteful practices. He also recommended sending most of the Buddhist monks and Taoist priests back to secular life. During the high tide of 1898 Reform Movement, Kang Youwei submitted a memorial to the throne in which he requested that “reverence for Confucius be designated as a national religion, that ministries and churches for commemorating Confucius be set up, and that extravagant sacrifices be abolished” (Huang Zhangjian believes this memorial to be spurious as well, but this has yet to be verified) and he criticized popular superstitions. He declared: “The Sage countenanced religions for worshipping the deities.” However, “temples have been built in every village and hamlet, money is spent on expensive ceremonies, incense is offered every day to devils and demons, and absurd sacrifices are made to spirits and ghosts, none of which provides people with any inspiration or any guidance for prevailing customs. These things merely enable witchdoctors and charlatans to spread deception and confusion, and to frighten people with ghosts and demons. They waste money on sacrificial animals and wines, and squander funds on incense and candles. European and American visitors regard this as barbaric. . . Such things are highly disgraceful for our country and of little or no benefit for its people.”<sup>72</sup> Although Kang stated the above from the standpoint of reverencing the Confucian faith, he was nonetheless quite unequivocal and determined in his opposition to superstition. The 1898 Reform Movement was a failure in terms of politics, but its enlightening effects had a far-reaching influence on subsequent historical development. Calls for opposing superstition became ever louder in the early years of the twentieth century.

The well-known newspaper *Da Gong Bao* [Ta Kung Pao] started publication in Tianjin in June 1902. From the very outset this newspaper, which grew increasingly influential, distinguished itself by its opposition to superstition, and its stated purpose was to “open up our people’s minds and change our people’s customs.” In less than half a month after it started publication it had released a series of articles criticizing superstition, as for example “On the Harmfulness of the Absurd Belief in Fengshui,” “Fallacies that Must Not Be Given Credence,” “On the Uselessness of Facial Fortunetelling and the Importance of Learning,” “Reiterating Our Views without

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<sup>72</sup> See *Collected Political Discussions by Kang Youwei. vol. 1*, pp. 279–280, Zhonghua Book Company, 1981.



Hesitation,” “Why the Benightedness of the Chinese,” and so forth. That a newly published newspaper devoted so much space to whipping up public opinion against superstitious beliefs was a clear indication that opposing superstition had become a trend in those days. Other newspapers to varying extents also reflected this trend. Shanghai’s *Competitive Business Ten-Day Periodical*, for instance, put out a total of 41 issues, of which 24 carried articles opposing superstition and promoting science.

A comprehensive survey of the newspaper articles at that time shows that many of them focused on the following matters:

Repudiating the worship of clay and wooden idols. In August 1902, when the imperialist powers gave back to China the rights of governance over Tianjin, the very first thing the local authorities did was to ceremoniously restore to their original temples the images of town gods that had been hidden in outlying suburbs during the war. The *Da Gong Bao* sharply criticized this action.<sup>73</sup> The *Anhui Vernacular Journal* published Chen Duxiu’s “Writings on Evil Customs,” the fourth of which castigated Buddha worship. He pointed out that idols were made by man but that the Buddhist scriptures clearly stated there should be no likenesses made of Buddha, and so it was ridiculous that people should produce likenesses of Buddha and kowtow to them. Other likenesses before which people prostrated themselves were legion and included those of earth gods, town gods, the God of Fire, Mother Guanyin, the Goddess of Fertility, and so forth. Worshiping so many deities, which sometimes required going on pilgrimages, called for considerable outlays of wealth. Monks and Daoist priests grew fat on the tributes given them and, when money abounded, took to smoking opium and whoring. Citing an example, the writer related how in the city of Anqing the town god’s robe was appropriated by the temple caretaker’s son who exchanged it for silver with which to buy opium—and there was nothing the town god could do about it! This proved there were no holy spirits to speak of.<sup>74</sup> The *Competitive Business Ten-Day Periodical* carried an article entitled “On Destroying Idols,” which stated that idols were made of clay and wood, and if there was anything sacred about clay and wooden idols, should not the masons and carpenters who made the idols be even more sacred? The writer asserted there was absolutely nothing holy about idols and splurging good money on burning incense and offering sacrifices to such idols brought no benefits, only harm. For one thing, the practice was a waste of money. For another, its baneful influence affected later generations. Third, it inculcated in people a mentality of dependence, slavishness, and fatalism which posed a great obstacle to progress. Fourth, superstition kept people in a state of benightedness. And fifth, Buddhist monks and Taoist priests made use of superstitions to harm the ordinary people. For such reasons “idols must be destroyed” and “Buddhist monks and Daoist priests must be driven away.”<sup>75</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Ref. Min Jie: *Cultural Changes in Modern Chinese Society*, vol. 2, P. 233.

<sup>74</sup> See *An Hui Su Hua Bao* (*Anhui Vernacular Journal*), no. 7; also see *Selected Writings by Chen Duxiu*, vol. 1, pp. 31–36, Sanlian Bookstore, 1984.

<sup>75</sup> See Tie Er (Hu Shih): “On Dismantling Idols,” *Competitive Business Periodical*, no. 28.

Repudiating superstitious belief in supernatural beings. Superstition in supernatural beings may have been one of the most common superstitions in China, and it was endemic among men, women, the old and the young, among officials and the ordinary people, in all regions of the country, and among scholars, peasants, workers, and merchants alike. Hence, doing away with such superstitions was the most urgent but at the same time the most difficult thing to do. Ever since Fan Zhen of the Northern and Southern dynasties period (420–589) expressed his view about “The Nonexistence of Supernatural Beings (*shen mie lun*),” and even though many other sensible persons after him vigorously castigated beliefs in the supernatural, such superstitions were in universal existence even in Republican times. Hence the praiseworthiness of the efforts made in this regard by forward-looking persons at the end of the Qing Dynasty. In 1903, the publication *Awakened Citizens* vigorously refuted the existence of ghosts and spirits. Its article “On Non-Existent Ghosts and Spirits” argued there was absolutely no way people who die, stop breathing, become cold and stiff, and lose all sensation could have a mystical presence in some nether region, and that any popular references to “ghostly apparitions,” “ghostly voices,” and like were completely unfounded. The writer also explained such phenomena as “ghostly apparitions” and “ghostly voices” based on his own understandings. The *Competitive Business Ten-Day Periodical* carried a series of four articles entitled “Serial Talks on the Non-Existence of Ghosts and Spirits” which cited statements by the ancients to refute superstitions in ghosts and demons. It accused the authors of books *The Gods* (*Feng shen yan yi*) and *Journey to the West* (*Xi you ji*) of exerting a pernicious effect on the common people by playing up accounts of ghosts and demons, and it criticized intellectuals past and present of ignoring the innate laws of things and failing to spread scientific thinking that could have cleared up fears and misapprehensions, with the result that superstitions had run rife. Citing statements by the ancients on the nonexistence of ghosts and spirits and using popular and easily-understood language and examples, the journal demonstrated that no ghosts or spirits existed in the world. The writer related how the deceased were encoffined in Ming-style garments in his hometown in Anhui province but in Manchu-style garments in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, but the ghosts that people in these places saw or heard about were all clad in everyday clothing. This showed that “so-called ghosts do not exist either in Heaven or on Earth.”<sup>76</sup> The writer opined that the most important reason for superstitions in ghosts and spirits was the extreme lack of scientific knowledge—an opinion in which most forward-looking persons concurred.

Repudiating superstitions with regard to natural phenomena. Forward-looking persons used all knowledge at their disposal to explain away fears and superstitions elicited by such phenomena as solar and lunar eclipses, storms, thunder and lightning, and so forth.

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<sup>76</sup> See Shi Zhi: “Collected Comments on the Non-existence of Demons (4)”, *Competitive Business Periodical*, no. 32.

Denouncing certain officials for engaging in superstitious practices. The *Da Gong Bao*, for example, censured Tianjin's local officials for welcoming back the town gods, the provincial governor of Anhui for conferring titles on town gods, the viceroy of Sichuan for conferring official titles on Buddhist monks, and the governor of Guangdong for conferring a secular title on the Dragon Mother. The *Da Gong Bao* stated that these examples set by officials were an important reason for the proliferation of superstitions.<sup>77</sup> An article in the *Dong Fang Za Zhi* (The Eastern Miscellany) put it quite explicitly: "The manifold habits handed down during the thousands of years of autocracy have apparently become indestructible. Our people's customs have also been formed by the handing down of sayings about spirits and deities, and such superstitions have apparently also become indestructible. Autocratic governance has combined with superstitious customs to shape a benumbed and apathetic world."<sup>78</sup>

The articles criticizing superstition, published in the newspapers of those times, were wide-ranging and castigated in particular the vast amounts of manpower, time, and funds wasted on such superstitious activities as religious processions, sacrificial ceremonies, and the dispensation of alms. Some people proposed that money saved from the profligate spending on superstition be used for running educational and charitable causes in society.

Forward-looking personages of course did not neglect the struggle against gambling, armed feuds, opium smoking, and other such highly deleterious customs. These customs were gradually to be rooted out over a very long period of time.

Customs and habits are extremely firm and stable phenomena formed in the history of national cultures. The ancients said "educate and train people so that they form good habits." That means getting people to accept the contents of education and gradually turning these contents into habits, which in turn denote successful education. Implanting a new habit requires a long period of time, which tells us that uprooting a habit inevitably takes a long time as well. While criticizing old customs and habits, some forward-looking persons strove to analyze the reasons for the genesis of customs and habits, and they began to understand, hazily at first, that the fundamental reasons were flaws in the politics, economics and culture of China's society, and that if they were to eradicate old customs and habits they would have to start by fixing up fundamental problems in the politics, economics, education and culture of society.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ref. Min Jie: *Cultural Changes in Modern Chinese Society*, vol. 2, pp. 434–436.

<sup>78</sup> See *Dong Fang Za Zhi* (The Eastern Miscellany), 1st issue of the 2nd year.

<sup>79</sup> Ref. the article "On Ways to Extirpate Superstition, Ghosts and Gods" vol. 2, issue 4 in *Zhong Wai Ri Bao* (Chinese Foreign Daily), *On the Circumstances of Chinese Society and the Main Points for Its Revitalization* (vol. 1, issue 12).

## 5.4 Initial Emergence of Globalization and Individuality

The Western encroachments, the losses of territory and sovereign rights, and the indemnities and humiliations China suffered after the 1840s were ascribed by people in those times to “turns of events unprecedented in thousands of years.” The Chinese drew lessons from these bitter experiences and racked their brains for ways to save the nation. At first they thought that they could quell the barbarians, defend themselves and become strong by learning foreign technology, training armies, building warships and manufacturing arms. But after military defeats, losses of territory and the enormous indemnities exacted as a result of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, they began to realize that “Westernization” and “learning from the foreigners” were of no avail if no changes were first made to the corrupt autocratic system. Thereupon, people went further and demanded political reform, called for doing away with autocracy and practicing constitutional government, or rose in revolution to overthrow the Qing Dynasty and replace the monarchical system with a republican system. In this process, people bit-by-bit increased their understanding of Western techniques, Western politics, and Western customs—in a word, Western culture—through translating Western books, establishing new-type schools and running newspapers and publications, and enthusiasm grew for learning from the West—called “Europeanization” in those days. However, the process was neither simple, nor unidirectional, nor linear. And while studying, referencing, and assimilating cultural nutrients from the West, people constantly recalled or reflected upon China’s intrinsic cultural resources. Patriots who took national salvation as their duty kept a close eye on current national conditions and popular developments in an effort to understand these more thoroughly. And in this process, a new culture slowly emerged.

In the last 10 or more years of the Qing Dynasty, quite a few new cultural phenomena had indeed appeared in Chinese society. Examples were the emergence of the vernacular writing system, novels in the vernacular and translations of Western novels, the introduction of photography, Western films, Western music and the phonograph, the emergence of stage plays, modern sports, and new cultural and entertainment activities such as ballroom dancing and so forth. However, these did not demonstrate any essential evolution toward a modern culture. Individual persons whose basic cultural value concepts were highly conservative did not necessarily reject such things. The Empress Dowager Ci Xi, for example, amused herself with photographic cameras and other such gadgets. And so, what was there that could indicate a change toward a modern culture? Ten or more years ago, during some discussions on the wellsprings of China’s new culture and its tendencies, I made so bold as to posit a theorem that China’s new culture in modern times has developed along two orientations. One is globalization (*shijie hua*), and the other, individuality (*gexing zhuyi*).<sup>80</sup> After more than a decade of reflection, I still believe that theorem to be tenable.

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<sup>80</sup> Geng Yunzhi: “The Wellspring of China’s New Culture and its Trends,” *Historical Research*, no. 2, 1994.

Culture is a product of society; a completely isolated and de-socialized individual is in no position to create any sort of culture. But the specific process of creating culture is inseparable from the individual. Hence, giving play to the creativeness of individuals is an important condition for cultural progress. However, in the early stages of human society most people had to devote all of their energies to fulfilling the minimum material requirements for maintaining life and had little or no time or opportunity to exercise individual creativity. Increases in social productivity could at first free only some persons from the drudgery of merely meeting the needs of survival. In modern times, the rapid advances of science and technology have enabled the great majority of workers to devote leisure time to exercising their creativity. And so, liberating the individuality of all individuals has become a common issue for all nations in the modern era.

Advances in human history have also demonstrated another truth, i.e., mutual exchanges among various regions, ethnic peoples, and countries are important pivots for promoting cultural development. This is only to be expected, since the meeting of different cultures leads to comparison, comparison reveals strengths and weaknesses, and revelations of strengths and weaknesses makes one want to learn from other peoples' strong points to offset one's own weaknesses. Also, competitiveness prompts a mutual desire to innovate. Hence exchanges are an important factor for cultural advance. If the Chinese had little understanding of this matter in the past, today, after more than 20 years of reform and opening up, we should have no more doubts about it.

Globalization and individuality have been two basic tendencies in the modernization of Chinese culture since the end of the Qing Dynasty. Evidence of this is provided by personages who have played a trend-setting role in various periods.

Let us first discuss globalization. China, which had existed in a state of relative insularity during its thousands of years of Grand Unity, was subjected to coercion, compulsion, pillage, and other humiliations when the Western powers all at once swarmed in after China's defeats during the Opium Wars. This badly upset the Chinese and made people reflect and see things in a new light.

In the first 20 years after the Opium Wars, except for the Qing Dynasty ideologue Wei Yuan (1794–1857) and a very few other persons, the Chinese were totally ignorant; they regarded the foreign powers as barbarians and knew nothing either about current affairs or the rest of world. By the 1860s, as a result of contacts with foreigners a number of officials gradually gained some understandings and, inspired by Wei Yuan, Feng Guifen (1809–1874) and others, made some attempts at reforms, which people called *Yangwu* (Westernization). In this process, a few of them slowly developed some idea of globalization. Aside from Guo Songtao and others who travelled to other countries as emissaries, the most representative in this respect was Li Hongzhang. He realized that China, after the Opium Wars, was faced with “a turn of events unprecedented in thousands of years.” Even more remarkable was his understanding that the strength and prosperity of the European countries “stems from constructive relations among these countries. One country has little experience and limited amounts of intelligence, and must assemble the talent and intelligence of all countries and thereby gradually

refine and strengthen itself. Countries and people are the same. For example, a person who seeks learning must travel afield, meet other people, adopt their strong points and shun their weaknesses, whereupon their learning will improve and their knowledge will broaden. The same goes for a country. New methods of research and new ways of manufacturing, which at first are one country's secrets, are fully understood and imitated by other countries in the course of mutual contacts. Such are the benefits of contacts with all other countries."<sup>81</sup> Clearly, this may be seen as an initial understanding of globalization. By the time of the 1898 Reform Movement and the 1911 Revolution, which we are studying here, there were substantial advances in the understanding of globalization among the Chinese.

Kang Youwei, the main leader of the 1898 Reform Movement, gave frequent expression to his globalized awareness in his various memorials to the Guangxu Emperor. Very much like Li Hongzhang, he had seen the benefits of contacts among countries for development and progress. He said: "Why are the Western nations so strong? Existing side by side as they have over a thousand or more years, the slightest weakness would doom a nation to extinction. Hence, efforts were made at all levels to improve themselves, to remain alert at all times, to honor the intelligent and reward the meritorious, to protect the people, and to keep close to those below. . . Hence all information was communicated, all talent was put to good use, and people's mental faculties and discussions were focused on attaining supremacy. When others had good methods and systems, all efforts were made to acquire and supersede these, and when there were external or internal conflicts, all efforts were made to dispel them and keep them under purview. On all matters there was mutual guardedness, at all times there was an awareness of competition, and all methods and systems were kept in a state of high perfection, which enabled nations to hold their own"(Kang Youwei 1898). Here, he emphasized that mutual competition promotes the development of each country. In another memorial, Kang Youwei pointed out: "China has a vast territory extending 80,000 *li*. China is also one of the fifty or more countries in the world. Communications with the rest of the world began at the end of the Ming Dynasty, and shipping and land transport have proliferated since the Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns. These new events in the last hundred years all constitute changes unprecedented in the preceding four thousand years."<sup>82</sup> He requested that the emperor first take this situation into account when considering various matters—that China was no longer a large, unitary and solitary country that could be self-sufficient in all matters, that China existed in the world together other countries and had to consider its relations with other countries at all times and in all matters. Hence, "one should deal with matters under Heaven in connection and in competition with other countries, and not do so in an isolated and

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<sup>81</sup> Li Hongzhang: *Complete Works by Li Wenzhong: Translations, Writings, Letters and Drafts*, vol. 6. P. 13. Commercial Press, photo-offset copy, 1921.

<sup>82</sup> "Fifth Memorial to the Qing Emperor" (January, 1898), *Collected Political Writings of Kang Youwei*, vol. 1, p. 204.

inactive manner.”<sup>83</sup> He also emphasized that one should strive to learn from all advanced things in the Western countries. He said: “Today, all parts of the world are connected, and countries compete with each other. Europe and America are constantly devising new ways of governance, new laws, new learning and new utensils. The Europeans take advantage of their steamboats and railways to link together all lands and bring the world under their rule. Those who use these methods flourish, those who resist are destroyed, while those who adapt to such things are assimilated but are able to preserve themselves.”<sup>84</sup> All of this indicates that Kang Youwei had a sense of globalization, and one may also infer that he already realized that the reform movement he led was an advance in the direction of globalization.

Kang Youwei’s chief disciple, Liang Qichao, gradually supplanted his teacher after 1899 to become the principal spokesman of the Reform Movement. In December 1901, in an article entitled “The 100 Messages of Congratulations in the Qing Yi Bao and a Discussion on the Responsibilities of Newspaper Offices and the Experiences of This Newspaper Office” Liang Qichao stated: “Today’s world has changed. All places are linked by railroads and electric cables. Countries in different continents are like neighbors, and peoples in different countries stand virtually shoulder to shoulder. For this reason, events in one country never fail to affect other countries. And for the same reason, today’s people with lofty ideals should not only regard their country’s affairs as family affairs, but should also regard world affairs as their own country’s affairs.”<sup>85</sup> When discussing the relevance to China of the US–Philippine war and the Anglo-Transvaal war, Liang stated: “A hundred years ago, the revolution in France and America’s independence were epoch-making events in the world, but we Chinese remained in the dark and no one knew how influential these were. Thirty years ago the Prussian-French war and the Russo-Turkish war were extraordinary events in Europe, yet allegedly well-informed people in China merely heard these events mentioned and little else. That was not strange since such things were indeed of very little relevance. . . . Alas, with ships, railways and wire communications, the world is becoming ever smaller, and the threads that knit humanity together are increasingly dense. It does not take a genius to recognize the importance of such events as today’s U.S.-Philippine war and the Anglo-Transvaal war, as compared to the erstwhile battles of the French Revolution, the U.S. war of independence, the Prussian-French war and the Russo-Turkish war. Whereas the relevance to China of those erstwhile events was minimal, today’s events are of great moment to China.”<sup>86</sup> Liang Qichao did not directly discuss the issue of culture here, but he did point out that whether or not the Chinese

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<sup>83</sup> “Fourth Memorial to the Qing Emperor”, *Collected Political Writings of Kang Youwei*, vol. 1, p. 152.

<sup>84</sup> “Introduction to a Study of the Political Reforms of Japan under the Meiji Emperor,” *Collected Political Writings of Kang Youwei*, vol. 1, p. 222.

<sup>85</sup> Originally carried in Qing Yi Bao, vol. 100, cited from *Collected Works of Yinbingshi*, Collection No. 6, p. 57.

<sup>86</sup> “Relevance of the U.S.-Philippines War and Anglo-Transvaal War to China”, *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 11*, p. 1.

cast their eyes toward the rest of the world, and whether or not the world directed its attention toward China, were matters of gravely different significance for China. Either of these circumstances reflected the presence or absence of the consciousness of globalization in the Chinese.

Liang Qichao was undoubtedly a forward-looking person with global consciousness in the late years of the Qing Dynasty. He put great effort into providing a virtually all-round introduction to the various ideologies and theories of the West for the edification of his countrymen. He vigorously promoted the New Citizens theorem and regarded the improvement of his countrymen's attributes as his mission. He threw all his efforts into promoting the constitutional monarchy movement so as to reform China's thousand-year-old monarchical autocratic system. He did all of this to keep China in step with the worldwide tide of advance, to seek survival and strength and prosperity, and to have the Chinese people—like other peoples in the world—enjoy the various blessings of mankind's advances in the new century. When the decadent Qing Dynasty finally collapsed under the dual impact of revolutionary and reformist movements, and soon after the establishment of the Nationalist Republic, Liang Qichao drafted a voluminous manifesto-like dissertation called "Major Guiding Principles for Building up the Nation," the first section of which was entitled "Countries of the World." He stated: "The advances of the present era bring changes every month and every year, and the least inertia or sluggishness dooms one to defeat. Hence, all who love their country strive with the utmost urgency to devise new internal and external strategies and plans. Yet in which way is the world developing today? What is China's position in the world today? And what path should China follow in future in order to prevail over external competitors? These are matters which our people should constantly keep in mind and on which there must be no hesitation or complacency."<sup>87</sup> Indeed, in republican times, China's advance toward globalization became increasingly evident and increasingly rapid.

If the Chinese people's awareness of globalization had begun to germinate during the Yangwu (Westernization) Movement, their modern sense of individuality began to develop at a later date. That is not surprising, since the Chinese had languished too long within the shackles of the system of monarchical autocracy and the patriarchal clan system.

The first person to broach this matter was Yan Fu (1894–1921). In 1895, before the end of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 and when China's defeat was a foregone conclusion, Yan Fu published an article in Tianjin's *Shi Bao* on the differences between the Chinese and Western cultural systems. He pointed out that the most basic difference between East and West was "the difference between freedom and lack of freedom." He further stated: "The term 'freedom' struck fear in all of the ancient Chinese sages and they never made it a subject of their teachings. Westerners, on the other hand, say that Heaven has created men, endowed each with

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<sup>87</sup> The original text is carried in *Yong Yan*, vol. 1 nos. 1, 2, and 4; see *Collected Works of Yinbingshi*, Collection No. 28, p. 40.



weighty responsibilities and given all of them freedom. Thus all people and all countries are given freedom, which is on no account to be infringed upon or violated. . . The closest thing to freedom in China's ethical teachings is *shu* (forbearance, forgiveness, reciprocity) and *jieju* (temperance, rules for the defining of boundaries). One may say there are similarities, but certainly not that these are the same. Why is that? China's *shu* and *jieju* refers uniquely to the way one conducts oneself in relation to others, whereas the Westerners' freedom actually implies *cun wo* (preservation of the self) in all matters."<sup>88</sup> The term "preservation of the self" fairly accurately expresses the true sense of the Western theorem of freedom. It must be explained here that, first of all, individuality and freedom cannot be separated; the two are different aspects of one and the same thing. And secondly, since individuality means "preservation of the self" as regards "the way of conducting oneself in relation to others," the self and the individual must not become ablated and diffused in the course of dealing with people or matters. The next year, Liang Qichao, in an article published in the *Shi Wu Bao*, stated: "It is said in the West that all persons have the right to self-determination. What is self-determination? It means each performing the duties incumbent on him or her, and each obtaining the benefits due to him or her. That is the best explanation."<sup>89</sup> Liang Qichao's understanding of freedom or individuality was still fairly limited at this period in time. By comparison, Tan Sitong (1865–1898) seemed to show a slightly more advanced understanding of individuality and freedom when he discussed in his book *Ren Xue* the Five Cardinal Relations and the "relations between friends" in particular. He wrote: "Of the Five Cardinal Relations, only relations with friends and the sort of friends one chooses are the least disadvantageous and most advantageous in life, cause the least distress, and bring the purest of pleasures. Why is that so? The first reason is 'equality.' The second, 'freedom.' And the third, 'restraint (*jie xuan wei yi*).' To sum up, it means not losing the right of self-determination."<sup>90</sup> It was, in a word, very close to the meaning of what Yan Fu called "preservation of the self." When the ideologists He Qi and Hu Liyuan, who lived in Hongkong at the time, criticized the dissertation *Zheng quan* (The True Meaning of Rights) in Zhang Zhidong's *Exhortation to Study*, they somewhat amplified the meaning of "freedom." They said: "An important principle for governing a country is to first let people know there is the right of self-determination. This is not (only) for the overall purpose of governance, but is a requirement of the natural order of things. Self-determination means that each does things in his own way. This right is a Heaven-given right. Rulers and ministers do not benefit from it, nor do commoners

<sup>88</sup> Yan Fu: *On the Speed of World Change* (Lun shi bian zhi ji), originally carried in the *Tianjin Zhi Bao*, February 4–5, 1895; cited from *Collected Works of Yan Fu*, vol. 1, pp. 2–3; Zhonghua Book Company, 1986.

<sup>89</sup> *On China's Accumulated Weaknesses Resulting from Guarding Against Perfidy and Deception* (Lun zhong guo ji ruo you yu fang bi), cited from *Collected Works of Yinbingshi, Collection No. 1*, p. 99.

<sup>90</sup> See *The Complete Works of Tan Sitong* (revised and enlarged edition), pp. 349–350; Zhonghua Book Company, 1998.

lose from it. The ignorant do not get too little from It, nor do the highly intelligent get too much. If people do not commit evil deeds or break laws, there is no reason to deprive them of this right.”<sup>91</sup>

After the Reform Movement and especially in early part of the twentieth century Liang Qichao became the most important and influential enlightenment thinker. He served successively as chief editor of such newspapers as the *Qing Yi Bao*, *Xin Min Cong Bao*, *Zheng Lun*, and *Guo Feng Bao* and published a large number of articles. Many of these elucidated the concepts of freedom and individuality. We cite a few of them here to illustrate the gradually deepening understanding among the Chinese of freedom and individuality on the one hand and, on the other, to show Liao Qichao’s ideological contributions in this respect.

In June 1901, Liang Qichao published an article entitled “How Ten Moral Qualities Complement Each Other” in *Qing Yi Bao*, and expatiated at length on the freedom theory. He pointed out: “The general rule for freedom is that each person’s freedom is limited by non-violation of other people’s freedom. Rulers observe this limitation, as do their subjects.” Liang’s understanding of the theory of freedom was quite accurate. He also pointed that for a person, freedom is “the life of the spiritual world,” “something I secure for myself and enjoy by myself,” and “not something that others may wrest away.” That was to say, freedom is a sacred and inviolable right, and the defense of this right is an unalterable principle. Liang also said: “A person who does not give any thought to his own interests is bound to relinquish his rights, neglect his responsibilities and ultimately lose his independence.” Worth noting is the fact that here, Liang Qichao reinterprets the “preservation-of-the-self” thinking of Yang Zhu, the pre-Qin ideologue who was rejected and reviled for more than 2000 years. He said: “China’s Yang Zhu based his teachings on ‘serving the self’ and said when no one plucks out a single hair (from his own head) and when no one appropriates benefits from the world, the world is well governed. In the past, I very much doubted in and detested his sayings. After poring over the works of great philosophers of such countries as England and Germany, however, I found that the teachings of not a few of them were identical with those of Yang Zhu in more ways than one, and the perfection of their ideologies is such that they are helpful for bringing prosperity to the people and promoting civilization among the citizenry. Hence, the basis of politics in Western countries is people’s rights, and the consolidation of such rights rests in a country’s people fighting for these rights and not ceding an inch. That means every person refusing to pluck out a hair; it means benefiting the country by benefiting oneself. . . . Hence, one finds today that not only Mo Zi’s teachings can save the China, but that Yang Zhu’s teachings can also save China.” Rulers had never tolerated personal freedom or individuality, and commoners dared not commit the least transgression in this respect. With a heavy heart, Liang Qichao declared: “I do not worry that China might not be an independent country, but I do worry that China has no independent persons. Thus when speaking about independence, I must first speak

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<sup>91</sup> See *True Explanation of the New Reforms*, p. 419; Liaoning People’s Publishing House, 1994.

about independence of the individual.”<sup>92</sup> The awareness of “having to first speak about independence of the individual” was not easily come by.

The most influential instance of Liang Qichao’s enlightened thinking was his *Xin Min Lun* (New Citizens), which was published in installments by the *Xin Min Cong Bao* and totaled a 100,000 words in ten sections. Discussions on freedom and individuality occurred in many of these, but were concentrated mainly in the section “On Freedom.” He maintained that freedom consisted of four aspects: Political freedom, religious freedom, national freedom, and freedom in terms of livelihood. He did not single out the freedoms of thought or speech, since he obviously ascribed these freedoms to political freedom. As for political freedom, Liang Qichao maintained that “the most urgent issues for our country today” were “the issue of participation in governance” and “the issue of setting up a national government.” When studying Liang Qichao’s statements and writings in this period, we felt that Liang Qichao’s emphasis on the issues of establishing national government and democratic governance inevitably detracted somewhat from his highly admirable thinking—as mentioned above—on “having to speak first about independence of the individual.” Liang declared: “The freedom I talk about is freedom of the group, not of the individual.” He also confused freedom with *laissez-faire*, and said “in barbaric times, freedom of the individual prevailed over freedom of the group, whereas in civilized times, freedom of the group takes precedence over freedom of the individual,” and he even went so far as to set freedom of the individual against freedom of the group. Liang and Sun Yat-sen shared the same misconception about freedom. Both sometimes confused freedom with *laissez-faire*, and even maintained that the Chinese already had a good deal of freedom. However, Liang was at the same time a scholar and an ideologue and, in the final analysis, more thorough and rigorous as an ideologue. He pointed out that *laissez-faire* freedom was “barbaric freedom” and not, after all, the kind of freedom recommended in modern times. Hence he corrected himself, saying: “But does that mean the freedom concept is not applicable to the individual? Some say: It is bad! Yet how can one say that? The freedom of the group is the sum total of the freedoms of the individual.” This statement had two implications: When no individual freedom exists, there can be no freedom of the group; when the group is encroached upon and broken up, individual freedom can certainly not be protected. However, Liang then shifted to a different tack, merely mentioned the second implication, and emphasized that the individual should moderate or even curtail his or her own freedom to preserve the freedom of the group. This contradictory phenomenon was not strange, as it was a reflection of that contradiction-racked period. Liang Qichao left us many valuable ideological resources when specifically expounding the significance of freedom. His main focus of attention was on politics when he comprehensively discussed the theory of freedom, but he put ideological freedom in first place when he specifically expounded the significance of freedom. He

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<sup>92</sup> See Qing Yi Bao, vols. 82 and 84. These are quoted from *Collected Works of Yinbingshi, Collection No. 5*, pp. 46, 45, 48, 49 and 44.

emphasized that to be a free person, one should not let oneself be enslaved by the ancients, or by worldly customs, or by circumstances, or by one's passions. The roots of freedom lay in independence of thought, independence of spirit, independence of will, and independence of ability, and the root of all roots lay in independence of thought. Liang said: "I examine all natural phenomena with my own eyes and ears, and I study all matters with my own mind. Hence I stand erect on the summit of high mountains and plumb the depths of deep seas."<sup>93</sup> The freedom of the true man rests in not being concerned by the ancients, not being bound by worldly customs, not falling prey to circumstances, and not abandoning oneself to one's passions.

All of that generation who were influenced by the *Xin Min Shuo* (New Citizens) to a certain degree drew from it some ideological elements of freedom and individuality. Zou Rong (1885–1905), in his *Ge ming jun* (Revolutionary Forces), wrote copiously about "my self-respect," "individual self-governance," "inalienable personal rights, all conferred by Heaven," "life's freedoms and all matters related to benefits pertaining to rights conferred by Heaven," and "inviolable rights, such as speech, thought, and publication."<sup>94</sup> Yang Dusheng (1871–1911), in his journal *Xin Hu Nan* (*The New Hunan*), vigorously promoted the "theorem of individual rights," stating that "individual rights are the rights of freedom given to man by Heaven," and "Heaven-conferred human rights are a generally acknowledged truth and a rightful act of Heaven."<sup>95</sup> Promoting freedom and giving expression to individuality were aspirations shared by all courageous and upright young people in those days.

Mention should be made here of Lu Xun who was studying in Japan at the time. He published in the magazine *He Nan* an article entitled "On Cultural Bias (*wen hua pian zhi lun*)" in which he vigorously publicized individuality. He wrote: "Indeed, if stratagems are to be devised today, one should refer to the past, gauge the future, enrich oneself materially and spiritually, give rein to the individual, and avoid conforming to the herd. When people are imbued with vigor and élan, their country will also thrive." He maintained that countries can be made to flourish only by giving full play to people's initiative. He also stated: "Ever since the great French Revolution, liberty and equality have been placed before all else and have everywhere served as the basis of ordinary education and national education. Protracted exposure to such a culture gradually awakens understanding of human dignity and awareness of the value of individuality. This, plus the discarding of old customs, the repudiation of superstitions, and recognition of the self brings about a radical change and gives the self a dominant role." In the historical development of

<sup>93</sup> See *Xin Min Cong Bao*, no. 7 and 8. These are quoted from *Collected Works of Yinbingshi*, Collection No. 4, pp. 40, 44 and 45, 46 and 48.

<sup>94</sup> See *Selected Political Commentaries from the Decade before the 1911 Revolution*, vol. 1. (2); pp. 667 and 665.

<sup>95</sup> See *Selected Political Commentaries from the Decade before the 1911 Revolution*, vol. 1. (2); pp. 631, 632, and 633.

human civilization, the rise of individuality is an inevitable and irresistible trend. Hence, “respect for individuality is bound to grow and no profound conjectures are needed to recognize its import and consequences.” He goes further to say that if an opposite course is taken and individuality is rejected, “doing so would make all people in the world uniform and eliminate all disparities of status in society. That might be seen as an ideal and laudable state of affairs. Exceptional individuals would be seen as contemptible, and no differentiation would be made between them in the hope that they all die out. That, however, would only result in greater benightedness, and wherever such abuses occurred, intelligent and knowledgeable persons would gradually become ignorant and all affairs would drift into decline.” That is why all countries compete “first of all to foster capable people, because where there are capable people all things get done; and for that to happen it is necessary to respect and propagate the spirit of individuality.”<sup>96</sup> Lu Xun’s arguments were the most avant-garde among the publicly expressed opinions advocating freedom and respect for individuality in those times. Yet in his article he places on a par the egoism of Max Stirner (whom Marx derided as an “egoist”), the volitionism of Arthur Schopenhauer, and the individualism of Henrik Johan Ibsen. This indicates that the concepts of individuality shared by Lu Xun and most other persons in this period were still short of profound or sound understandings.

The positing of “individuality” denoted the discovery of the “person (*ren*)” and the awakening of the “individual.” The ancient Chinese sages had taken much pleasure in discussing “*ren* (humans, people, folk),” but the “*ren*” they discussed was an abstract concept; that is to say, they discussed humans in the general sense and not as persons in the specific, individual or independent sense, nor in the sense of discrete and actual persons with particular thoughts, particular desires, and particular likes and dislikes. In the former case, *ren* referred to human beings in general, to the common herd; in the latter case, *ren* refers to individuals. Liang Shuming (1893–1988) said that the greatest deficiency of ancient Chinese culture is that the “individual” was never discovered. He hit the nail on the head. Toward the end of the Qing Dynasty, forward-looking persons in China began to sense the importance of the individual and individuality, and this presaged the irresistible emergence of the radiant morning sun of modern Chinese culture.

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## Chapter 6

# Political Disarray and Conflicts Between New and Old Ideology in the First Years of the Republic

The establishment of the Republic of China was proclaimed in Nanjing on New Year's Day of 1912, Sun Yat-sen assumed the post of provisional president, a provisional government was set up, relevant laws were drawn up, and in a few months' time old institutions were dismantled and replaced with new ones. The ambience was very much like that of a new nation. However, the Qing Dynasty in Beijing did not step down from the stage of history just yet. The new Revolutionary Government had established control over a few southern provinces, but its armed forces were too few to force their way into the old haven of the Qing Manchus and unify the whole country. Yuan Shikai, who had rapidly built up his strength in the last years of the Qing Dynasty, took advantage of this situation to seize actual power from the Qing government. Peace negotiations then took place between north and south. The two sides bargained repeatedly over the conditions for the Qing emperor's abdication before reaching agreement. On February 12, 1912, the young Qing emperor Pu Yi announced he was ceding the throne. However, to his abdication edict was added the words: "Yuan Shikai is to have full powers to organize a temporary republican government." Yuan Shikai made the most of this proviso and ceremoniously instated himself as the legal successor to state power and the putative ruler of the country. Most intermediate forces in the country at the time wanted unity and peace as soon as possible and pinned their hopes on the relatively powerful Yuan Shikai. Besides, after the 1911 Wuchang Uprising, Sun Yat-sen had more than once expressed willingness to step aside in favor of Yuan Shikai. This formed a consensus that Yuan was the sole person fit to unify and pacify the country. The day after the abdication of the Qing emperor, Sun Yat-sen issued a proclamation of resignation and recommended that Yuan replace him. Sun Yat-sen and other revolutionary party members called on Yuan Shikai to announce his political views, abide by the provisional constitution, uphold the republic, and proceed to Nanjing to take over the presidency. Yuan agreed to all of these requests, but then resorted to a ruse. After stage directing a mutiny in Beijing, he claimed instability in the north and refused to go to Nanjing. On March 10, he was,

in Beijing, sworn in as provisional president of the Republic of China. Thereafter, he used his legal position and his new powers to build up his strength, persecute dissidents, push forward reactionary policies, and institute himself as emperor. What ensued was nationwide political disorder and widespread outbreaks of chaos.

However, the new ideologies, new concepts, and new forces that had gradually emerged and accumulated after the end of the Qing Dynasty were not to be written off, and conflicts between new and old thinking were inevitable. It was precisely amid such conflicts that the new ideologies, new concepts, and new culture step by step developed and laid the groundwork for the approaching New Culture Movement.

## **6.1 Political Disarray in the Early Years of the Nationalist Republic**

As mentioned earlier, the abdication of the Qing emperor took place only after an agreement was reached as a result of repeated negotiations between northern and southern forces. The southern forces composed mainly of revolutionaries were in themselves hardly unified. Not only were they incapable of mounting a northward expedition to overthrow the Qing Dynasty and unify the whole country, but also they lacked even the ability to hold a few southern provinces together. Meanwhile, the northern forces represented by Yuan Shikai did appear to be somewhat stronger than the southern forces—at least to most people among the intermediate social strata in China. However, the Qing government on which Yuan Shikai had placed dependence was losing all credit among the populace. Even though the great majority of people had no true understanding of democracy and republicanism in the period following the Wuchang Uprising, most of them leaned toward the republic because of their disillusionment with the Qing government. Anyone with the least a bit of political insight could see where popular support and sympathies tended, and Yuan Shikai was no exception. In spite of his overweening ambitions, he was aware of his delicate situation, felt uncertain about his ability to defeat the southern forces, and so did not dare do anything that might expose him to universal condemnation. Consequently, the political situation after the Wuchang Uprising was marked by the loss of a national center of gravity. Neither Sun Yat-sen's revolutionaries nor Yuan Shikai's northern forces were capable of exerting control over the entire nation. The absence of a political center of gravity prevented politics from taking a normal course, and the result was a situation of political disarray.

### ***6.1.1 The Stand-off Between North and South***

In the 40-odd-day interval after the forming of the Nanjing Provisional Government and the abdication of the Qing Emperor, two parallel political powers existed in China. The one in the south—the Provisional Government of the Republic of China



in which the revolutionary party played the main role—was a democratic political institution setup by and large according to the Western pattern. Sun Yat-sen led the revolutionaries as well as personages who had been constitutionalists but later joined anti-Qing and republican provisional governments in various provinces in attempts to create a new national entity in line with the spirit of democracy. Some revolutionaries also continued to make preparations for a military expedition to the north. The northern part of China was superficially still ruled by the Qing Dynasty, but in substance all power lay in Yuan Shikai's hands. Meanwhile, the Qing ruling clan was highly alarmed by what would happen to them after the Emperor's abdication. Some of its princes, relatives and favorite courtiers, blind to the inevitable trend of events and hoping to preserve the throne for the Qing dynastic clan, organized a so-called *Zong she dang* (Party of the Ancestral Shrine of the Ruling Household), and engaged in activities aimed at holding on to the throne. Yuan Shikai, on his part, used the southern government to pressure the Qing court on the one hand and, on the other hand, used the Qing court and the foreign diplomatic corps in Beijing to pressure the southern faction in a bid to further his scheme of seizing control over the entire nation. Thus, the political situation in China at the time was one of two governments existing side by side. Neither was strong enough to control the country as a whole or even to ensure command over territories under their jurisdiction. Both had come up against serious financial difficulties and did their best to ingratiate themselves with foreign countries, seeking loans from them by means of promises to acknowledge the special prerogatives and benefits previously acquired by these countries in China and to varying extents using China's sovereign rights as collateral. After the Qing imperial dynasty announced its abdication, there was a superficial tendency toward unification, but in fact what transpired was a far cry from true unification. Foreign aggressors took advantage of China's chaos and disunity to press forward their interests step by step. Japan, Britain, Germany, France, and Russia found excuses to send armies to occupy China's territories or to incite and abet separatist forces bent on undermining unity in China.

After acceding to the position of provisional president, Yuan Shikai schemed incessantly against the southern revolutionaries and democratic forces in an effort to consolidate his rule. He engineered pogroms and assassinations and went to all lengths to persecute, split, and disintegrate his opponents. The Nationalist Party [Kuomintang], the core of which comprised the original revolutionaries and the Tong Meng Hui [Chinese Revolutionary League], was politically quite influential at the time, and therefore figured as Yuan Shikai's main political opponent. Yuan Shikai had members of his faction assassinate Song Jiaoren (1882–1913), an important leader of the Nationalist Party and standard bearer for the forces of democracy. This incident, coupled with the Yuan Shikai government's solicitation of massive foreign loans, triggered the so-called Second Revolution. Although this revolution was soon suppressed, anti-Yuan struggles continued. Meanwhile, carried away by his superficial victories, Yuan exercised coercive means to force China's Parliament to elect him as president of the Republic of China. By then Yuan believed himself to be immune to all opposition and stepped up his measures to

restore the imperial system. He first dissolved the Nationalist Party and the Parliament in order to clear away institutional and legal obstructions and then inserted his cohorts in key positions and set up political institutions under his control. He also conducted publicity campaigns and orchestrated ‘public appeals’ calling on him to mount the throne and so forth. In December 1915, disregarding strong opposition in both China and abroad, he flagrantly proclaimed that the imperial system would be restored in China. This perverse act, as well as arousing strong opposition among the original revolutionaries, also stirred up opposition from former constitutionalists and even among personages who had previously exerted strenuous efforts in support of Yuan. [Yunnan’s military governor] Cai E (1882–1916) was the first to rebel and declare independence, and his calls for national salvation gained widespread response. In the ensuing war of national salvation that lasted more than half a year, Yuan Shikai, besieged on all sides, fell ill and soon died in disrepute and despair. After Yuan Shikai’s death, however, the northern part of China remained under the control of warlords of the Yuan faction. A year later, the loyalist Qing general Yan Xun attempted a restoration of the Qing Dynasty which, however, was defeated in only 12 days. But the confrontation between north and south lasted right up to the Northern Expeditionary War (1926–1928), at which time the Beiyang warlords were utterly routed.

### ***6.1.2 Repeated Internal Upheavals and External Coercion***

Uprisings and mutinies frequently occurred on account of the country’s disunity and political turmoil, its weak and inadequate finances, and its destitute populace and perennially underpaid soldiery. According to incomplete statistics, in the 3 years from 1912 to 1914 alone, 30 mutinies occurred in the 15 provinces and cities of Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shandong, Fengtian, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Jiangsu, Anhui, Jiangxi, Guangdong, Hubei, Shaanxi, Sichuan, and Yunnan. Most of the mutinies were triggered by soldiers not being paid or by factional strife, but a few were also brought on by rank-and-file resentment against higher authorities. Some, of course, were deliberately incited by reactionary ruling cliques. Also, according to incomplete statistics in these 3 years some 20 popular revolts took place in the 15 provinces and cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Hebei, Shandong, Fengtian, Henan, Shaanxi, Jiangsu, Anhui, Zhejiang, Fujian, Hubei, Yunnan, and Xinjiang.<sup>1</sup> The main reasons for these popular revolts were opposition to tax levies, land grabs, oppression by the authorities, and so forth. There were also frequent strikes by merchants, industrial workers, and students.

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<sup>1</sup> The statistics on the mutinies and popular revolts presented here were obtained by searching through vol. 1, 1912–1914, of the *Major Events in the Republic of China* edited by Han Xinfu and Jiang Kefu. This book was published by the Chinese Literature and History Press in 1997.

Simultaneously with the internal uprisings, the imperialist powers stepped up their threats and encroachments against China. Britain, for instance, connived with Tibet's upper-level rulers, fanned demands for independence, and incited unrest among Tibet's soldiers. Unknown to the Chinese government, the British and Tibetans secretly subsumed more than 90,000 km<sup>2</sup> of Chinese territory into India. Britain also brazenly dispatched troops to Tibet and into Lhasa and increased its military presence in the Pianma region to as many as 5,000 or 6,000 men. Again for example, the Russians, in connivance with the Mongolian ruling clique, concluded a so-called Russo-Mongolian agreement which infringed on China's interests. It then openly dispatched troops to Yili and Haerbin, and occupied and annexed a wide swath of Chinese territory at Tannu Unankhai. At about the same time, France sent an army to invade Yunnan and Germany dispatched troops to Qingdao. The greatest threat to China, however, was posed by the Japanese imperialists who pressed forward steadily in this period and increasingly manifested their ambition to take over China. In China's northeastern provinces, it stepped up its "Southern Manchuria" activities and sent troops into Yanji. After the outbreak of the war in Europe, it took advantage of the hostilities there to take over the German invaders' interests in China's Shandong with intent to expand on them. It forced the Chinese government to mark out a so-called Japan-German War Zone, sent troops to land at Longkou and the Laoshan Bay, took over the entire Jinan-Qingdao railway line, and attacked and captured Qingdao. When occupying Pingdu, the Japanese imperialists proclaimed a barbaric set of "Five Rules for Beheadings," one of which stipulated that if any person in a village tried to hinder advances by the Japanese armed forces, everyone in the village would have his or her head hacked off. Such was the extent of their savagery and cruelty! Having secured an advantageous position in Shandong, the Japanese set themselves to scheming a complete takeover of China. In November 1914, the Japanese Diet passed a bill for negotiations with China, which later developed into the notorious Twenty-one Demands. This bill was approved by the Japanese Emperor in early December, and in January the following year was presented to the Chinese government for negotiation. At that time Yuan Shikai was already planning to restore the imperial system. To realize his fond dream of donning the yellow imperial robes, he disregarded the interests of his country and the Chinese nation and, under duress from Japan, acceded to Japan's demands on May 9, 1915.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>The contents of the Twenty-one Demands presented by Japan consisted of five sections, known respectively as groups 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Group 5 contained demands that Japanese advisors be appointed for China's politics, finances and military affairs; that China and Japan jointly administer China's police force and armaments factories; that Japan be given the right to build railways between numerous cities in South China and so forth. Since Japan was fully aware that the other imperialist powers would strenuously object to these contents, it put them forward merely to apply pressure without intending to compel China's acceptance. Officials of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs dropped hints about this to the Japanese personnel in charge of the negotiations. Hence, Yuan Shikai's acceptance of the first four groups of demands was in fact tantamount to acceding to all of Japan's demands.

As mentioned earlier, the disarray in China was due to the absence of a center of political gravity in the country, and the outcome was a perilous situation of repeated internal upheavals and ever increasing threats of external invasion.

### **6.1.3 The “Second Revolution”**

When Sun Yat-sen ceded power to Yuan Shikai, his intention was to force Yuan onto the path of democratic republicanism by having him agree to three conditions (1) Yuan Shikai should take a public oath to uphold republicanism and prevent the imperial system from ever emerging in China again; (2) Yuan Shikai should leave the old imperial court and his bastion of personal power and move to Nanjing to assume the post of provisional president; and (3) a provisional constitution was to be devised which would keep Yuan Shikai within restraints. Needless to say, this was mere wishful thinking on the part of the politically inexperienced revolutionaries. Yuan was quite agreeable to issuing a sheet of paper proclaiming allegiance to a republic, but he balked at coming out of his lair in Beijing. He deftly duped the revolutionaries by ordering his followers to fake a mutiny, which gave him an excuse to stay in Beijing to take the oath as provisional president. As for the provisional constitution, that was, in Yuan Shikai’s view, no more than a sheet of paper: Whether in China or other countries, in ancient or present times, solutions that lacked any backing by actual force could by no means be brought about by means of a paper document.

After becoming provisional president, Yuan Shikai was seemingly quite polite and courteous to the southern revolutionaries. He invited Sun Yat-sen to Beijing for discussions on state matters. Sun asked Huang Xing (1874–1916) to accompany him to Beijing, but Huang declined. So Sun Yat-sen went by himself to Beijing where he had ten or more talks with Yuan Shikai and gained the impression that there was “absolutely no reason for entertaining doubts” about Yuan Shikai’s intentions. He thereupon declared that “the next presidency must of needs be held by Yuan Shikai.” After this decision, Sun devoted himself to the task of building a hundred thousand kilometers of railways in China and took no more interest in other matters.

However, the revolutionaries could not forget that their goal was to set up a democratic republican system. Some, as represented by Song Jiaoren and who had a relatively deep understanding of and firm belief in democracy, were able to maintain a fairly sober view of the situation. They were aware that a democratic system was far from being established and saw that Yuan Shikai, a man nurtured by the old imperial system and invested with substantial military and political powers, frequently resorted to authoritarian behavior. For example, he had forced the Senate to approve his list of Cabinet members by exercising army and police controls and threats, had executed revolutionary fighters without going through legal procedures (the killings of Zhang Zhenwu [1877–1912] and Fang Wei’an), and so forth. Song Jiaoren and others strove to expand and consolidate the revolutionary forces, gain

control of a majority in the Senate, establish a duty-cabinet system in order to limit the powers of the president, and gradually take to the road of democratic government. The politically adroit Yuan Shikai perceived that Song Jiaoren was the most serious menace to his ambitions, and on March 20, 1913 Song was grievously wounded by an assassin at the Shanghai railway station and died in a hospital on March 22. All knew at the time that the perpetrators were Yuan's underlings acting at Yuan's behest. The Jiangsu authorities soon obtained a large amount of evidence which pointed to two of Yuan Shikai's trusted followers as major suspects in the case. They were Zhao Bingjun who served as premier of the parliament and Hong Shuzu as a secretary of the cabinet. But both of them, plus the assassin and other coconspirators, subsequently died under unnatural circumstances. Song Jiaoren's assassination served as a rude awakening for many revolutionaries. Also at this time, Yuan Shikai's government reached an agreement with foreign banks for a large amount of loans which people at the time dubbed the "the mega-loans." The Yuan Shikai government forced the matter through without approval from the Parliament. This incident and the Song Jiaoren case sparked vehement anti-Yuan protests among the revolutionaries. In May 1913, the military governors of Hunan, Jiangxi, Anhui, and Guangdong provinces issued telegrams opposing the government's behavior over the Song assassination and the foreign loans. Public opinion was incensed and anti-Yuan voices rose on all sides. Some with regard to the Song case called for the resignations of Yuan Shikai and Zhao Bingjun; others, with regard to the loans, demanded that Zhao Bingjun and Zhou Xuexi (the then General Director of Finances) be impeached. Written memorials and telegrams came in virtually every day. Countless articles criticizing Yuan and attacking the government appeared in newspapers nationwide. Exasperated and infuriated, Yuan Shikai and his government turned to violence. Newspaper offices were closed, editors killed, influential opponents assassinated, parliamentarians subjected to intense army and police scrutiny, and so on. Yuan went so far as to order the dismissal of Jiangxi Military Governor Li Liejun and Anhui Military Governor Bo Wenwei, both of whom had opposed him. The reactionary and unpopular actions of Yuan Shikai and his government finally aroused the revolutionaries to armed resistance.

On July 12, 1913, Li Liejun rose in rebellion at Hukou and Jiangxi proclaimed independence, triggering the Second Revolution. On July 15, Jiangsu proclaimed independence; on 17th, Anhui proclaimed independence; on 18th, Shanghai proclaimed independence, as did Guangdong on the same day; on 19th, Fujian and Zhejiang's Ningbo proclaimed independence; and on 25th, Hunan proclaimed independence. Yuan Shikai deployed military forces to suppress the Second Revolution on the one hand and, on the other hand, established tighter controls over the north. He took a series of unlawful measures such as arresting members of Parliament, dissolving political parties and provincial assemblies, ordering the Nationalists to expel some of its members, posting rewards for the assassination of anti-Yuan elements, even dispatching secret agents to Hong Kong to assassinate Sun Yat-sen, and took his criminal actions to extremes. The Kuomintang, on the other hand, could not coordinate itself internally and lacked sufficient forces to start with, and most of the country's intermediate social strata disapproved of using military

means against Yuan Shikai. Thus, the Second Revolution collapsed in less than 2 months. Yuan Shikai had gained a superficial victory. However, he had further revealed himself as a despot who rejected republican democracy and sought to restore the imperial throne for himself. China was doomed to greater unrest.

### ***6.1.4 A Parliament in Name Only***

Normally, the parliament of a country that calls itself a democratic republic should give expression to the people's opinions and the will of the nation and enact the country's laws. However, the Parliament of the Chinese Republic merely provided diverse factions with a venue for political bickering. No sooner had the Parliament been set up than it became so mired in political disputes that it could hardly complete its own organizational and regulatory construction. Being itself unsound and riddled with constant factional disputes, it was incapable of exercising the functions of governmental supervision and legislation. The Parliament fully betrayed its weaknesses on the issue of the "mega-loans." It could neither effectively prevent the execution of those patently illegal loan schemes nor could it sanction or punish the relevant perpetrators. The same went for the issue of the "Sino-Russian-Mongolian Treaty." Taking advantage of China's internal chaos and its inability to deal with its external affairs, and going behind the Chinese government's back, Russia and some Mongolian separatists signed a so-called Russo-Mongolian Agreement that violated China's sovereign rights. And when China engaged Russia in negotiations over this matter, the Russians coerced the Yuan Shikai government into signing a so-called Sino-Russo-Mongolian Treaty that in effect recognized the Russo-Mongolian Agreement. This treaty, when deliberated in the General Assembly, was actually approved under heavy pressure from the Yuan Shikai government. It was vetoed by the Senate in which Nationalist members constituted the majority, but soon after that veto, the Senate was forcibly suspended. Using this opportunity, Yuan Shikai, under the guise of "exchanging documents," signed and in effect confirmed the contents of the Sino-Russo-Mongolian Treaty. Meanwhile, when the list of Senate members was ratified and the "Grand President" was elected, Yuan Shikai on both occasions made use of army and police forces and even rallied so-called commoners to besiege the Senate and force it to produce the results he desired.

But even this Senate was regarded by Yuan Shikai as an obstruction that had to be cleared from his path to imperial restoration. Less than a month after he was formally "elected" to the presidency on October 6, 1913, he ordered the Nationalist Party dissolved and revoked its members' qualifications as parliamentarians. Thereafter, the Parliament no longer possessed its legal quorum and existed in name only. Subsequently, on November 12, Yuan again issued an order revoking all Nationalist Party members' qualifications for participation in any provincial parliament. Only an empty shell remained now of the political system that symbolized democracy and republicanism. Two months later, on January 10, 1914, Yuan issued a direct order to dissolve the national Parliament. On February 3, he ordered the cessation of

local self-government and, on February 28, ordered the dissolution of all provincial parliaments. By then, even the empty shell of democracy and republicanism was gone.

### ***6.1.5 The Restoration Farce***

As Yuan Shikai step by step dismantled the various institutions of republicanism and democracy, some remnant elements from the era of sovereign autocracy did their utmost to shape public opinion for restoring the old imperial order. They opposed any reforming of the goals of education—goals that had been determined during the Qing Dynasty and contained such things as loyalty to the ruler and veneration of Confucius; they encouraged veneration of Confucius, studies of the classics, promoted the old morals, and touted the setting up of a Confucian church, of Confucian societies, ancestral shrines, and so forth. A turbid and unsavory ambience of strident calls to “restore the monarchy” and “return to the ancients” pervaded society for a period of time. Then, deeming the moment appropriate, Yuan Shikai on September 25, 1914 issued an order to “memorialize Confucius” and formally restore the previous era’s rites for worshipping Confucius, and on September 28 a grandiose ceremony was held at which sacrifices were made to Confucius. On December 20, Yuan issued an order to restore the previous emperors’ Heaven-worshipping system, and on 23rd Yuan personally took a large group of officials to the Temple of Heaven to conduct rites for worshipping Heaven. All these actions produced the feeling that an imperial restoration was just around the corner.

Yuan Shikai and his henchmen, however, were not the only ones longing for a restoration; but this was also desired by members and hangers-on of the dynastic household who had been shunted aside. Some were members of the imperial household who had taken an active part in the previous preparations for a constitutional monarchy in the hope of achieving political survival and permanently preserving the Qing imperial line. These persons felt highly resentful toward the revolutionary parties and especially toward Yuan Shikai for using the opportunity to seize the Qing Dynasty’s ruling powers. Their representative was Shanqi, former minister of civil affairs. Still others, such as Dolot Shengyun (1858–1931) and the like, had obstinately disapproved of the preparations for constitutionalism, resolutely opposed democratic republicanism, and abhorred Yuan Shikai for stealing power. All of them had been either imperial kin or favorite courtiers and, when the 1911 revolution toppled the Qing Dynasty, had set up a monarchical party and persistently engaged in activities to protect and restore the Qing imperial clan. They even colluded with the Japanese in the staging of armed insurrections. These were the core forces for Qing restoration. And then there were men like Zhang Xun—military men of the deposed dynasty steeped in the old ways of thinking and dedicated to their old masters. There were also old-type literati, men such as Lao Naixuan, Yu Shimei, Liu Tingchen, Shen Zengzhi, and Zheng Xiaoxu who knew

little else than the classics, whose minds were filled with ideas about loyalty to the ruler and the Confucian Way, who detested new institutions, new thinking, and new-type personages, and who retained fond memories of bygone dynasties and rulers. Faithful as they were to the old morality and fairly consistent in their ideology, these persons neither served in the new government, nor were they attracted to Yuan Shikai. Hence, despite the futility of their ideas about restoring imperial rule, they were able to maintain independence of personality. Persons of this type were unable to band together, but they were at one in their hopes of supporting the deposed last emperor, Puyi, and returning him to the throne. In July 1914, Liu Tingchen (1867–1932), in a letter of resignation written when he refused to accept the post of advisor to the Protocol Office of the Government Affairs Department, demanded that Yuan Shikai “return supreme power to the Qing Court.” Lao Naixuan (1843–1921) combined, printed and distributed three of his articles “A Correct Understanding of Republicanism,” “More on the Correct Understanding of Republicanism” and “A Fair Evaluation of Sovereign Democracy,” and asked Xu Shichang (1855–1939) and others to transmit these articles to Yuan Shikai, also with a request that Yuan “return supreme power” to Puyi when the latter attained maturity. The restoration ambience had been devised by Yuan Shikai and others for their own purposes but was now being made use of by persons who hoped to restore the Qing court, and that was not something Yuan could tolerate. Thus in November, when Xia Shoukang (1871–1923), the then administrator of Gansu Province, sent up a report requesting that “fallacies about restoration be banned,” Yuan used the opportunity to order investigations and had his military henchmen summon and arrest Song Yuren (1857–1931), an assistant at the National Historical Library, for his utterances about restoration as a warning to others. The Ministry of Justice and other departments also followed suit and notified civil and military authorities in all provinces to take concerted action, report all utterances and actions related to restoration, and punish the perpetrators by law. The Qing restoration elements, who had little power or courage to start with, were quickly quashed.

After suppressing the Qing Dynasty restoration elements, Yuan Shikai began to stage his own restoration act.

Yuan Shikai had long cherished the ambition of setting himself up as emperor. Back in the final years of the Qing Dynasty when Yuan had begun to gain power and position, some persons had perceived his ambition, but they did not widely comment on the matter, so that few others were aware of it. After the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, Yuan had constantly maneuvered among the various political groupings. He utilized the Qing dynastic household and foreigners to put pressure on the southern revolutionaries and utilized the southerners to pressure the Qing household in his quest for opportunities to seize power. His ambitions became more obvious in this period. After he had suppressed the Second Revolution and gradually dismantled the democratic republican system and its laws and related institutions, his desire to set himself up as emperor became abundantly clear. By the year 1915, his subordinates were making dispositions according to his intentions, which were becoming evident even to outsiders. Yet Yuan Shikai still put up a



pretense of adhering to republicanism. In August, his plot finally came out into the open. His constitutional advisor, the American Frank Johnson Goodnow, published a paper entitled “On Republicanism and Monarchism,” in which he stated that “it is of course not susceptible of doubt that a monarchy is better suited than a republic to China.” Subsequently, the Chou An Hui (Peace Planning Council) organized at the instigation of Yang Du (1875–1931) put on its appearance. Besides Yang Du, its members included Yan Fu (1854–1921), the former general supervisor of colleges and universities in Beijing who was one of the first to bring studies of the Western classics into China and publicly acknowledged as a great scholar well-versed in the learning of both Chinese and Western cultures; and Liu Shiwei (1884–1919), who was consummately learned in Chinese classical studies, had achieved fame toward the end of the Qing Dynasty, and who had once joined the Revolutionary Party. Another three personages—Sun Yujun, Li Xiehe, and Hu Ying—had once been core members of the Revolutionary Party but joined Yuan Shikai’s camp after the Second Revolution. All six of these supporters of Yuan Shikai’s restoration of the imperial system<sup>3</sup> were representative and influential to varying degrees. The surfacing of the Chou An Hui and its manifesto was an important signal, and it put all supporters of democracy on the alert. They came out with proclamations and statements against Yuan Shikai’s efforts to resurrect the imperial system. The most influential of these statements was Liang Qichao’s “*Yi zai suo wei guo ti wen ti zhe*” (Strange! The So-called Issue of National Polity!). It was couched in language less intense than the proclamations issued by some other revolutionaries, but its argumentation was the most penetrating and incisive. Liang pointed out: “If the body politic is constitutional, it makes no difference whether the system of government is monarchical or republican. If the body politic is not constitutional, it makes a difference whether the system of government is monarchical or republican”.<sup>4</sup> He maintained that “claims that the system of government can be radically changed along with changes in the state system are either prevarications spread by would-be tyrants or the impractical opinions of pedants”.<sup>5</sup> However, Yuan Shikai and his henchmen were irrevocably committed to their odious scheme and pursued it at all costs, regardless of public opinion or future prospects. Rallying all possible forces, they conducted widespread activities, fabricated “popular consensus” in support of Yuan Shikai’s imperial ambitions in the name of various localities, departments, professions, and social organizations and concocted a great many telegrams appealing to Yuan to mount the throne. They also intensified preparations for “elections” and held so-called meetings of “citizens’ representatives” to make “collective decisions” on the state system. These so-called citizens’ representatives were all appointed by Yuan’s henchmen, and the outcome of their so-called collective decisions was a 100 % endorsement for restoring the imperial system

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<sup>3</sup> A considerable amount of data shows that Yan Fu was manipulated by Yang Du and that he personally did not make any individual statements to play up Yuan Shikai.

<sup>4</sup> See *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 33*, p. 88.

<sup>5</sup> See *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 33*, p. 90.

and a 100 % endorsement of Yuan Shikai's becoming emperor. After a brief show of modest declination and after instructing his henchmen to relieve him of his pledge to uphold the republic, Yuan grandly accepted the expressions of "support," ordered preparations for an enthronement ceremony, and announced that the next year (1916) would be the "first year of the Hongxian reign."

The unpopularity of the restoration was obvious to all clear-minded persons. Liang Qichao and Cai E forthwith engineered the Yunnan Uprising and launched the War to Protect the Nation, to which many provinces rose up in response. Meanwhile, Sun Yat-sen and his revolutionaries launched numerous anti-Yuan campaigns in various localities. Revolts also took place within the Yuan camp amid widespread calls denouncing Yuan Shikai. Increasingly isolated and ferociously assailed from all sides, Yuan Shikai finally fell ill and gave up the ghost in ignominy.

However, not all dregs of the restoration were expurgated, and a short-lived restoration farce was staged by loyalist general Zhang Xun who attempted to reinstate the Qing Imperial rule. This restoration lasted only 12 days.

The two restorations showed that the new republic lacked the necessary foundations for its existence. The restorations' swift demises also proved that the imperial system was highly unpopular, and if autocracy were to be exercised it would have to come under a new guise.

## 6.2 The Conflict Between Old and New Ideology

Due to the disordered state of politics in the early years of the Republic, chaos reigned in China's ideological circles. Pessimistic about the state of politics and society and unable to see any way out for the country, people sank into extreme confusion and perplexity. In an article entitled "Recent Pessimism in Society," one man stated: "The outcome of a nation's fall is manifested as foreign invasions, but the reason for a nation's fall rests in domestic governance. . . . Looking back at China's domestic governance, criticism of constitutionalism has tended toward extremes and has allowed no room for discussion. The nation is roiled by heavy taxation on people's wealth and the quashing of dissenters, and people hope in vain for the peace that prevailed prior to the reforms. Every day one sees grand ceremonies and merry-making and promotions to higher rank and office, all of which present a false picture of peace and prosperity. Yet, anyone with the least bit of intelligence quails before the ubiquity of calamities and the absence of any hope for domestic governance. The destiny of the nation is tied to the political situation, and politics is linked to society. If by chance society preserved some of the spirit of building up a nation, this country could still hope that its demise is not yet too close. But if one examines this country's society as a whole, not only is it lacking in the vigorous ambience that imbues the world's big powers; but also no sign whatsoever remains of the previous spirit of braving frosts and hacking through brambles that permeated the country when it was first set up. All one sees is the increasing

depravity of people's hearts and an increasing disregard for morals. The wisdom and strength needed for human existence are also irreversibly withering away" (Wei Yi 1915). This was probably one of the more pessimistic pronouncements in those days. However, even relatively optimistic and forward-looking people clearly saw the chaotic circumstances and were beside themselves with anger and grief.

Liang Qichao, for instance, regarded himself as a highly optimistic person but could not refrain from penning his "Words from a Wounded Heart," the preface of which contained this passage: "I dare not hide anything from my readers. I am a very sensitive person. Ever since I reached the age of understanding I have been beset with anxieties. In the last year or two I have felt so much more distress and inexpressible anger I am no longer able control myself. Alone with my ruminations I am unable to write down my feelings. During my encounters with friends we merely sigh and stare at each other. Ah! Who would have thought that this country, on which the life of its people depends, has declined to such a state that it can no longer be saved. It is as though a parent has become gravely ill and after all remedies and medicines have been tried, his or her condition only gets worse, at which point it is evident that death is approaching, that the flickering lantern is dimming and it is time to prepare for the worst. How can one endure such pain? I am fully aware than pessimistic utterances are of no help for improving governance, and I try to conjure up brave words of hope which may slightly revive the people's flagging spirits. Yet I myself am so oppressed and crushed by what is happening around me I can hardly stand on my feet. Alas! What can I say other than words from a wounded heart?"<sup>6</sup> Bitter words indeed from an ideologue and politician who fought tirelessly for reform! Even Chen Duxiu, a man of unparalleled revolutionary spirit, came up with some pessimistic statements at this time. In his "Letter to a Reporter of Jia Yin (The Tiger)" he stated: "Ever since the Senate has been disbanded all governance has collapsed, the country is filled with those who have lost their means of living, and all sorts of punishments and heavy taxes once again burden the peasants and merchants. Except for officials, military men, brigands and police agents, all live in trepidation and fear for their means of survival. This applies to all people and not only revolutionaries".<sup>7</sup> Huang Yuanyong (1884–1915), a well-known journalist in the early years of the Republic, wrote numerous articles on his observations of the then political situation and society. Because the nation had lost its center of political gravity, he declared, "the country has in fact lost its mainstay, and the loss of this mainstay has left the people as a whole with nothing they can rely on. Subject to their needs and opportunities, all rush hither and thither and slave away under the dominance of certain forces with no regard for any standards of right and wrong, as I have said earlier. And for that reason people submit to power, lose all sense of honor and decency, give rein to their basest instincts and may very well go to any lengths. Where politics are concerned, there is no more center of power and a complete absence of law. Where society is

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<sup>6</sup> See *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 33*, pp. 54–55.

<sup>7</sup> See *Selections from the Writings of Chen Duxiu*, vol. 1, p. 66; Sanlian Bookstore, 1984.

concerned, morality has lost its authority and the four social bonds [of propriety, righteousness, honesty and sense of shame] have been abandoned. And so, virtuous and intelligent people become apathetic and distance themselves from society while pessimists and armchair philosophers and intemperate self-seekers proliferate. During the heyday of Rome, the entire country indulged itself in luxury, debauchery, sophistry and idle chatter, all of which helped to bring down the nation. Today, the newly set up National Republic displays none of the vigor of a new nation but presents the sad spectacle of Rome in its decline. There are no morals standards above and no laws below, and all conceivable acts of lawlessness, dishonesty and extravagance are committed”.<sup>8</sup> To all appearances the country would soon collapse.

We quote these fairly representative personages to help us understand the chaotic situation in Chinese society in the early years of the republic and the distress evinced by personages anxious about the fate of their country. Knowledge of this background will be helpful for further analyses of the ideological confusion in those years.

### ***6.2.1 The Controversy Over the Republican and Imperial Systems***

The most surprising as well as the most intriguing development in the first years of the republic was the controversy over what was called the “state system,” or in other words, over the republican system and the monarchical system. This was surprising because the issue arose when the monarchical system had only just been overthrown and the republic had just been set up. And surprising in terms of the law, because under that republican system some people went so far as to announce that the republican system was not suited to China and that the monarchical system should be restored. In previous times, any attempt to overthrow the Qing Dynasty and set up a republic had constituted treason against the Qing government; and now, attempts to overthrow the republic and restore the monarchical system also constituted treason against the republic and ought not to have been condoned by the authorities. However, as well as directing perfunctory reprimands at agitations for restoring the Qing imperial family and symbolically subjecting the agitator Song Yuren to a vague and incomprehensible punishment,<sup>9</sup> special leniency was also shown toward other proposals and actions and in particular toward proposals and

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<sup>8</sup> “The Truth about the Political Situation of This Last Year,” see *A Posthumous Collection of Huang Yuansheng’s Works*, vol. 1, p. 87.

<sup>9</sup> Under pressure from public opinion and fearful that his overall dispositions might be compromised, Yuan Shikai selected for punishment Song Yuren, an assistant at the National Historical Library and agitator for “restoring political power to the Qing imperial household,” ostensibly for his “spreading absurd comments and being mentally disturbed, necessitating his return to the custody of officials in his native town for surveillance.” Song himself, however, was “advised to return to his ancestral home for rest and recuperation” and given 3,000 yuan for the

actions aimed at creating consensus for Yuan Shikai's restoration of his own imperial regime. The dispute over the monarchical and republican systems, provoked by the supporters of restoration, was primarily a political issue, but it involved people's understanding of China's actual conditions and a number of problems in Chinese ideological concepts. Hence, this dispute had a major bearing on the subsequent rise of the New Culture Movement and needs to be discussed here.

Since this discussion is focused mainly on the ideological and cultural aspects of the dispute, no distinction will be made of whether the Restorationists stood for restoring the Qing Dynasty or for making Yuan Shikai emperor. And since the controversy gave rise to no scientific or academic achievements to speak of, we will not subject it to any deep-going theoretical exploration. Attention will be paid only to matters that reflect the parties' understanding of China's actual conditions and their ideological and cultural concepts as manifested by their political leanings.

The main issues involved in this controversy are as follows:

Were the political chaos and corrupt social mores in the early years of the republic caused by the republican system?

Both parties to the controversy were exasperated by the political chaos at the time but held entirely different views about what had created such chaos. All Restorationists, without exception, maintained it was brought about by the overthrow of the imperial system and the institution of a republican system. Kang Youwei's comments were most representative. He said: "In China, almost a year later, the whole country has gone berserk, rapacious, delirious. All governance, cultivation and mores in China have been indiscriminately scrapped." "With equality the vogue, subordinates spurn their superiors and soldiers disobey their officers. With freedom the vogue, sons make their own decisions, and wives lightly seek divorce." "Four hundred million people weep and groan amid their great sufferings and tribulations. Peasants, merchants, workers and traders lose their means of livelihoods and schools fall into desuetude as bands of brigands roam the countryside and violent mobs run amuck, feeding on the flesh and blood of the populace".<sup>10</sup> Kang Youwei maintained that the dismal circumstances he described were caused by practicing the republican system. He said: "All people are called upon to comply with the republican system, since the Republic of China is governed by means of a provisional constitution. . . Although the provisional constitution was decided by representatives of the seventeen provincial military governors, it was not formed according to the wishes of the four hundred million people. After the Senate was established, factions among the populace have used the provisional constitution to contend with the government and trouble-makers once again dominate the land. Thus it is in this republic that trouble-makers and military generals

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journey, and the local officials were ordered to grant him 300 yuan per month for recuperation expenses.

<sup>10</sup>"On the Contention that the Tumult in China is Due to the Mistake of Imitating Europe and America in All Matters and Abandoning the Quintessence of Chinese Culture," see *Kang Youwei's Political Essays*, vol. 2, pp. 890–891; Zhonghua Book Company, 1981.

elect representatives to contend for power. At the lower levels, trouble-makers contend with trouble-makers; at the higher levels, generals contend with generals, and internally, the president contends with the prime minister. The people suffer, and the country no longer resembles a country".<sup>11</sup> Others, such as Yuan Shikai's political adviser the American Frank Johnson Goodnow and Yang Du who initiated the Chou An Hui, both maintained that the fundamental reason for the turbulence was the implementation of the republican system. Yang Du stated: "Henceforth, if no consideration is given to making radical changes, there can be no hope of the country becoming strong or prosperous or a constitutional nation, and the country will ultimately perish! . . .Such is the harm brought by the republican system. The Chinese people, wont to pursue the superficial rather than the practical, insisted on forming a republic during the 1911 war, but since then China has had no way left for attaining its salvation!"<sup>12</sup>

Persons who opposed any restoration maintained that the depraved state of China's political life was not due to implementing the democratic system, but precisely because the democratic system had not been truly implemented and the old forces were constantly and everywhere fomenting trouble. Liang Qichao stated: "The putrid state of China's mores in recent years may be due, in no more than two or three parts out of ten, to the shallowness and immaturity of the New Learning scholars, but in reality is, in seven or eight parts out of ten, due to the diehard attitude of proponents of the old order. These proponents of the old order at every turn claim that the fallacies of freedom and equality have penetrated people's minds and turned all people into animals. They again and again reiterate such allegations in official proclamations and bring forth such accusations during both formal discussions and casual conversations. However, the true reason for the depraved atmosphere is that persons in important positions have over the last 20 or so years frequently made use of human weaknesses and have exercised their power, wealth and prestige in ways that destroy all sense of honor and shame and compel others to submit to their wills. There was already little integrity in society to start with, and it is now falling ever further under the influence of such enticements and coercion. There are, in addition, those rationalizations for corruption and fraud which administrators regard as articles of faith and which scoundrels use to advance themselves. Their self-indulgent and hedonistic comportment to a great degree excites envy in society and is imitated by newcomers on the scene, which only fuels the spreading of such behavior. Such is the reason for the grave deterioration of social customs. . . . Those who have been demoralized by freedom and equality are no more than a few immature youngsters whose influence is insufficient to affect society. It is instead those high-placed officials and literati who constantly prate about Confucius and codes of ethics who in truth have become the source of the depraved customs

<sup>11</sup> "Correspondence with Xu Shichang," see same as above, p. 992.

<sup>12</sup> "A Constitutional Monarchy Will Save the Nation," vol. 1. See *Unofficial Stories of Modern History*, 3rd edition, p. 131. Sichuan People's Publishing House, 1985.

and habits”.<sup>13</sup> Liang Qichao’s commentary was quite objective and fair. Zhang Shizhao (1881–1973), too, argued at the time that the chaotic political situation and poor social atmosphere in the early years of the republic were not caused by the republican system. He maintained that the republican system had not had the opportunity to be tested in practice. He said: “The strongest accusation against republicanism is that it has already been tested and has proven to be unsuitable for us. It should be asked, when was it tested? Before the Gui Chou [1913] revolutions? In that case, the political strife was fanned and aggravated by those who opposed republicanism, and not because republicanism was put to any test. After the Gui Chou revolutions? The political scene at that time did not bear traces of republicanism sufficient to mislead even a young child, and there was even less reason to regard the events as a test of republicanism”.<sup>14</sup> In sum, those who opposed any restoration of the imperial system were clearly aware that blaming the republican system for all the chaos and confusion attendant on the first years of the Republic was patently unjust.

The second controversy was on whether the republican system suited China’s conditions.

All Restorationists insisted that republicanism was basically unsuited to China’s conditions. They believed that the Chinese people were insufficiently mature and politically inept. Goodnow stated: [Translated from the Chinese; the original English versions were not found. The same applies to subsequent quotations from Goodnow—Tr.] “Because of China’s rigid adherence to the politics of monarchic despotism for thousands of years and the deficiency of its schools, the great majority of its people are not well educated. And with absolutely no participation in the government’s actions, they are not able to learn anything about politics. The changeover from autocracy to republicanism four years ago was all too sudden, and can hardly be expected to bring any good results”.<sup>15</sup> He said: “There is almost no doubt that it would be better for China to practice the monarchical system rather than the republican system”.<sup>16</sup> Yang Du was of the same opinion. He said: “Republican politics require that the majority of the people share a common level of intellectual development. . . Can this be said of the standards in China? Most of the people do not know what a republic is, nor do they know what is meant by ‘law’ or by freedom and equality. They think their abrupt parting from despotic rulers and their advent into republicanism means that no one can control them anymore and they can do as they please. . . Hence, China cannot expect a single day of peace”.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> “A Fair Appraisal of the Back-to-the-Ancients Trend of Thought.” See *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 33*, pp. 70–71.

<sup>14</sup> *Gong he ping yi* (Proposals for the Republic), see *A Complete Collection of Zhang Shizhao’s Works*, vol. 3, p. 471, Wenhui Press, 2000.

<sup>15</sup> “On Republicanism and Monarchism,” quoted from *Unofficial Stories of Modern History*, vol. 3, p. 127, Sichuan People’s Publishing House, 1985.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>17</sup> “A Constitutional Monarchy Will Save the Nation”, vol. 1. See *Unofficial Stories of Modern History*, 3rd edition, p. 133.

They saw the inadequacy of the people as a hindrance to republicanism and a source of chaos in the country. Refuting this theory about the people's inadequacy, Zhang Shizhao (1881–1973) posited a highly significant point of view. He stated: "It is my humble opinion that, ideally, constitutional government would not be based initially on the intelligence of the ordinary people but on a number of elitist elements who would create the requisite organizations and have these organizations oversee, study, substantiate and regulate one another".<sup>18</sup> Many countries in the world that adopted the method of restricted elections when they first practice constitutional government have based their actions on this theory. It is evident that the so-called inadequacy of the people does not justify refusal to take to the road of constitutional government.

Those who stood for restoring the monarchical system also insisted that practicing the democratic system and conducting regular presidential elections was bound to give rise to chaos every time elections were held. Goodnow said that if the republican system were implemented, "it would be impossible to properly resolve the issue of presidential succession since the head of state would not be hereditary and the inevitable outcome would be arbitrary actions by military governments. Although there might be times of peace and calm when using this system, periods of chaos would inevitably intersperse the periods of peace. Unscrupulous elements would fight one another for control over the handles of government and irreparable chaos would ensue".<sup>19</sup> Yang Du, with reference to political realities in China, even claimed that the nation's safety was tied to the person of Yuan Shikai; that none after him would be able to compare with him and, when that time came, turmoil would inevitably ensue as struggles occurred over control of government. Yang also stated: "There would be contention over the title of grand president, but none over the title of monarch. Contending for the title of president would not be a crime, but contending for the title of monarch would be high treason, so who would dare do so? That would be the outcome of the fixed succession system. When reelections take place in a republic, all would contend for the presidency, which is why everything would be thrown into disarray. But when a monarch succeeds to the throne, no such bizarre event as a widespread contention over the throne would occur, and for that reason there would be no widespread disarray".<sup>20</sup> Those who stood for restoring the monarchical system laid great store by this argument. They maintained that the system would preclude major disorders since the rulers' titles and successions were predetermined, whereas presidents were not predetermined under the republican system and chaos would certainly ensue when successions took place.

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<sup>18</sup> "Proposals for the Republic", see *A Complete Collection of Zhang Shizhao's Works*, vol. 3, p. 460.

<sup>19</sup> "On Republicanism and Monarchism," quoted from *Unofficial Stories of Modern History*, vol. 3, p. 126.

<sup>20</sup> "A Constitutional Monarchy Will Save the Nation", quoted from *Unofficial Stories of Modern History*, 3rd edition, p. 143.



Liang Qichao rebutted the arguments by Goodnow and Yang Du, pointing out that the basic conditions for determining whether or not presidential elections would bring about disarray were, first, “one should see whether the merits and prestige” of an incumbent president could be “passed on to his successor,” and second, “whether ambitious and domineering persons are around at that time, how many of them are around, and whether their claims suffice to sustain dissent.” These conditions would be similarly effective in determining whether disarray occurred during the successions of monarchs under the monarchical system. Liang stated: “A review of past history will reveal innumerable stories about emperors and kings that tell of ruthless struggles over the succession—struggles beginning even before the bodies of the deceased emperors or kings were entombed. This shows that there are underlying reasons for a country’s peace or turmoil other than the constitutional forms of republics or monarchies”.<sup>21</sup> Zhang Shizhao saw Goodnow’s claim that the determination of successions constitutes the greatest advantage of the monarchical system as compared to the republican as “sheer nonsense”.<sup>22</sup> The practice of the monarchical and republican systems both hinged on existing circumstances and realities, not on theories or ideals. Neither system was absolutely good or absolutely bad. It was as Liang Qichao stated: “Either of the state systems is capable of creating order or disarray. The major reason for disarray is, in nine cases out of ten, related to the circumstances of governance, and not to the state system”.<sup>23</sup> And the machinations of those who would restore the monarchical system during a republican system were the real source of disarray under the republican system.

Yang Du also came up with a bizarre theory alleging that setting up a constitution under the republican system was not possible, and that the imperial system would have to be restored if one wanted to set up a constitution. He claimed: “China’s republic cannot be governed other than by an autocracy. In other words, China’s republic cannot be governed by setting up a constitution. Since a constitution is incapable of governing a republic, the republic cannot be a constitutional one”.<sup>24</sup> There was no logic to this theory. Liang Qichao argued it was quite incomprehensible why establishing a constitution could not be done under the republican state system “but should take a detour via a monarchy.” He stated: “I believe there are many reasons for China’s being unable to set up a constitution at present. It stems either from the circumstances in the localities, or from the mentality of local authorities, or from the customs and capabilities of the people. However, these various reasons are not caused by the implementation of republicanism, nor will they vanish because republicanism is rejected.” Hence, whether or

<sup>21</sup> “Strange! The So-called Issue of National Polity,” see *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Special Collection No. 33*, pp. 91–92.

<sup>22</sup> *Di zheng bo yi* (A Refutation of Imperial Governance), see *A Complete Collection of Zhang Zhizhao’s Works*, vol. 3, p. 565.

<sup>23</sup> “Strange! The So-called Issue of National Polity,” see *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Special Collection No. 33*, p. 93.

<sup>24</sup> “A Constitutional Monarchy Will Save the Nation,” vol. 1, quoted from *Unofficial Stories of Modern History*, vol. 3, p. 133.

not a constitution could be set up had nothing to do with changes or otherwise in the state system. He also said that if China wished to set up a constitution, it should respect the then Provisional Constitution; China should “practice every word in it” and at the same time “endeavor to give the people more opportunities to get close to politics instead of obstructing their channels of knowledge, smothering their abilities and ruining their moral rectitude, and after a few years of doing so the effects will be immediately apparent.” And, “Not doing so and laying all blame on the current political system would be no different from Zhu Zi’s claiming that ‘the boat is not navigable because the riverbed is crooked’”.<sup>25</sup> Zhang Shizhao queried: If constitutional government “is indeed feasible, why not implement it in democratic times instead of waiting for a monarch to be enthroned?”<sup>26</sup>

The fact that the controversy over the republican and monarchical systems took place only 4 years after the republic had replaced the monarchist system showed that China was still far from attaining a political situation that would enable it to engage in reforms and construction. Laying a foundation and opening a path for bringing about such a situation would be a big problem over which the Chinese would be pondering long and hard for many years to come. One choice that forward-looking people would soon be making—in a bid to lay a foundation for reforming and building up China—was to start by reforming China’s ideology and culture.

### 6.2.2 *The Debate Over a Confucian Religion*

Pessimism and disenchantment increased as politics failed to move onto a right track and chaos ran rife. Some people believed that political corruption stemmed from depraved morals, and that depraved morals stemmed from lack of religious beliefs; hence, a matter of top priority was to establish a religion. As Lan Gongwu (1887–1957) wrote in an article: “If one hopes to put today’s China in order, one must first put today’s society in order; and if one hopes to put today’s society in order, there is no way other than by promoting religion. When religion is promoted, the Chinese people will be pure in their thinking and steadfast in their convictions, and when their thinking is pure and their convictions steadfast, there need be no need to fear that bad habits will not be eradicated, or that mores will not be honest, that legality will not hold sway, that politics will not be well-intentioned, that culture will not be progressive, and that the country will not be strong”.<sup>27</sup> Lan maintained that only Confucianism, or in other words, the Confucian religion, was suitable for being

<sup>25</sup> “Strange! The So-called Issue of National Polity,” see *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Special Collection No. 33*, pp. 90–91.

<sup>26</sup> “Proposals for the Republic”, see *A Complete Collection of Zhang Shizhao’s Works*, vol. 3, p. 476.

<sup>27</sup> “On Building up a Religion,” *Yong yan (Justice)*, vol. 1, 1st issue; published on Feb. 16, 1913.

turned into China's state religion. No other religions—Christianity, Buddhism, Daoism, or Islamism—were suitable for universal application in China. Lan, a prominent reformist, was not an ordinary conservative. It is, moreover, inappropriate to make oversimplified distinctions of ideologues as being progressives and conservatives or revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries in the early years of the Nationalist Republic, when the ideological domain was in such turmoil. Better is it to conduct more specific analyses.

Lan Gongwu's arguments unexpectedly coincided with those of Kang Youwei and Chen Huanzhang (1880–1933). During the Reform Movement in the last years of the Qing Dynasty, Kang Youwei had proposed making Confucianism the state religion. Doing so at that time was of course aimed at drawing the Chinese people together spiritually and driving forward the Reform Movement for the sake of saving and strengthening China. But the 1911 dynastic change prevented the realization of Kang's plan for constitutional government, and in the early years of the republic chaos reigned in politics, the people lost confidence and intellectual circles were overwhelmed with pessimism. Kang loudly proclaimed that the situation was entirely the result of people not listening to him,<sup>28</sup> and that finding a way out of the quandary should start with the establishment of Confucianism as the state religion, as he proposed doing.

Reverence for Confucius did indeed go back to ancient times and could claim a long history. That was common knowledge. But establishing Confucianism as the state religion was a recent proposition. It was a proposition rooted in orthodox thinking and at the same time intended to ward off the influences of Western thinking. Confucian doctrine consisted in the main of two things: one was the governance principle of “*de jun xing dao*” (fostering a virtuous monarch and implementing his policies), and the other was the ethical principle of cultivating a high-minded personality. The two were closely linked. After the Nationalist Republic was set up and emperors were gone, no one except for a tiny minority who yearned for the restoration of the imperial system made any more mention of the first aspect of the Confucian teachings. But Confucius' teachings on ethics still commanded a broad market. Whereas toward the end of the Qing Dynasty proponents of Confucianism clung to the objectives of constitutional monarchy, in the early years of the republic most proponents of Confucianism hewed to a desire to save the nation through morality and religion. When they could find no other solutions, they invariably ascribed the political chaos and social degeneracy to human hearts not being what they used to be and to deteriorating morals. Hence, they believed they should start by redeeming people's morals. It was a proven fact that religions had played an important role on uplifting morals in past history and at home and abroad. And so the theory of saving the nation through religions and a Confucian religion in particular gained much currency in those years.

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<sup>28</sup> Kang Youwei once wrote an article entitled “*Bu xing er yan zhong, bu ting ze wang guo* (Words Spoken in Times of Misfortune: If Not Listened To the Country Will Fall),” see *Collected Writings of Kang Nanhai*.

Starting in 1912, the doctrines of “reverence for Confucius” and promoting a Confucian religion gradually took hold. Societies such as the Kong Dao Society in Shandong, the Zong Sheng Society in Shanxi, the Kong Society in Beijing, the Zun Kong Wen Society in Qingdao, the Zun Kong Sheng Dao Society in Yangzhou, the Zun Kong Society in Zhenjiang, and the Kong Sheng Society in Guangdong and others sprang up virtually all over the country. The most influential of these was the Kong Jiao Hui (or, Confucian Society) set up in Shanghai on October 7. Special note should be taken of the principal founders of this society:

Shen Cengzhi (1850–1922), native of Jiaying in Zhejiang Province, *jinshi* of the Geng Chen year (1880) during the Guangxu reign, held the positions of Chief Administrator of the Ministry of Punishments, Education Commissioner of Anhui Province and Provincial Governor of Anhui. Highly erudite, he served as presidents of two well-known academies. Claiming to be an adherent of the Qing Dynasty after the establishment of the Nationalist Republic, he at one time participated in Zhang Xun’s restoration bid.

Liang Dingfen (1895–1919), native of Panyu, Guangdong Province, *jinshi* of the Gengchen year during the Guangxu reign, held the positions of Regional Surveillance Commissioner and Provincial Administration Commissioner of Hubei Province. Highly erudite, he served as president or dean of numerous academies. Also claiming to be an adherent of the Qing Dynasty after the establishment of the Nationalist Republic, he served as mentor to Puyi (the last Qing emperor) and participated in Zhang Xun’s restoration attempt.

Chen Huanzhang (1811–1933), a native of Gaoyao in Guangdong Province, was among the last batch of Qing Dynasty *jinshi*. He went to study in the USA in 1907 and returned after receiving a PhD with his thesis “The Economic Principles of Confucius.” While in the USA, he promoted the setting up of a religious society and recommended Confucian studies and, after coming back to China, put even greater efforts into “reverencing Confucius” and creating a church. After the Confucian Church was set up, he started up the Kong Jiao Hui Za Zhi (*Confucian Church Magazine*) and acted as its chief editor. This magazine and Kang Youwei’s *Bu Ren* (No Tolerance) were the most influential promoters of the Confucian religion. Chen Huanzhang, who had been educated under Kang Youwei’s tutelage, nominated his teacher Kang Youwei as chairman of the National Congress of Confucian Churches when that congress was held in Qufu in September 1913. He also sponsored a joint petition to the House of Representatives, requesting that Confucianism be designated as the state religion. In 1917, he took over the presidency of the Confucian Society. The allure of this organization, which consisted of orthodox conservative forces, was considerably enhanced by the inclusion of “new” personages who returned from studies abroad and had been exposed to a Westernized education.

There were, at that time, a great many people who supported and advocated a Confucian religion. Conversely, not a few persons and views were against setting up a Confucian religion. Briefly summarized, the main points of the latter were as follows:

### 6.2.2.1 On the Question of Establishing a National Religion and Adopting Confucianism as the National Religion

Kang Youwei stated: “A country needs a major religion to serve as a pillar for its establishment, existence and dependence, one that blends in with popular customs, penetrates people’s minds, orders people’s behavior and regulates life and death. With this pillar, the people can be governed, which is not something that politics can do”.<sup>29</sup> He believed that politics can only control people’s physical bodies whereas a religion starts by controlling people’s minds. Hence, when religions thrive, a country prospers, but when religions decline, the country follows suit. For this reason Kang Youwei stood for establishing a state religion. He said: “If one examines the constitutions of all other countries, one sees that besides prescribing freedom of religion they make it a special point of stipulating the establishment of a state religion to promote respect and veneration”.<sup>30</sup> Kang Youwei’s allegation that all countries, besides prescribing freedom of religion, made it a special point of stipulating the establishment of a state religion was a willful fabrication on his part. But it shows the urgency of his desire to set up a state religion. He stressed that “setting up a state religion is imperative if the people’s minds are to be redeemed and customs and habits ameliorated”.<sup>31</sup> Lan Gongwu’s article, cited earlier, contained the statement that “the basis of establishing a country is religion,” which came close to advocating a state religion. Chen Huanzhang believed that China had already established Confucianism as a state religion thousands of years ago, but it had become necessary to redesignate Confucianism as such during the Nationalist Republic because Confucianism had been hastily discarded before new moral strengths could be established and old failings eliminated, and the upshot was political disarray and administrative corruption. And so it was imperative to restore Confucianism’s authority as the state religion if the political disarray and administrative corruption were to be remedied. In the “Petition of the Confucian Society” on which Chen Huanzhang was the first signatory, it was stated: “Morals are the basis on which countries are founded, and the standards for morals are defined by religions.” It was also stated that China had had a state religion ever since the Three dynasties period, that Confucius “had inherited the principles of conduct of Yao and Shun and the institutions of [Emperors] Wen Di and Wu Di,” and that Confucianism had held sway over the China after the Han Emperor Wu Di proscribed all non-Confucian schools of thought. Hence, “our country has since ancient times observed Confucianism as the state religion.” It also said: “The spirit of a republic rests in its morals, and China’s morals are rooted in Confucianism. . . Hence, China should regard Confucianism as its state religion.” The Petition

<sup>29</sup> “Introduction to the Confucian Church (1)”, see *Collected Essays on Politics by Kang Youwei*, vol. 2, p. 733, Zhonghua Book Company, 1981.

<sup>30</sup> “Letter to Members of Parliament,” see above, p. 960.

<sup>31</sup> “Instating Confucianism as the State Religion Harmonizes with Heaven’s Will,” see above, p. 846.

declared in conclusion: “Today when China has just changed its state system, popular opinion is confused and disorderly, and freedom of religion is virtually misconstrued as freedom to tear down religion. Pernicious elements run amok, conservative persons are shocked and terrified, and the foundations of the country are shaken. Thus when devising a new constitution, it is appropriate that a provision should be written in it which defines Confucianism as the state religion. This will provide the means for maintaining public ethics and popular morals and for implementing governance and law”.<sup>32</sup> Worth noting is that Ariaga Nagao, a Japanese who had served as political advisor to Yuan Shikai, wrote an article entitled “The Main Reason Why the Constitution Should Explicitly Provide that Confucianism Be Made the National Religion,” which he asked Chen Huangzhang to publish in the *Confucian Church Magazine*, and in which he placed special emphasis on the absolute necessity of stipulating Confucianism as the state religion in the new constitution.

Doing so involved two major issues: first, that there must be a state religion and second, that Confucianism must be established as the state religion. There were many arguments regarding the latter issue. Kang Youwei, for example, said “China’s entire civilization is linked to and dependent on Confucianism,”<sup>33</sup> “the basis of thousands of years public morality and customs. . . is to be found in Confucianism”.<sup>34</sup> No other religion could compare with it. He also stated: “What is it that the Chinese wish to revere and obey? Buddhist teachings are abstruse and permeated with other-worldly theorems; their definitions of sins and blessings may convince Mongolians and Tibetans but are inadequate when applied to the Chinese. Christianity reveres Heaven and loves humanity, cultivates the soul and shrives sins, and may be practiced in Europe and America, yet it reveres Heaven without mentioning reverence for one’s ancestors. Could China practice Christianity while giving up the sacrificial rites conducted before ancestral tombs? That is impossible. We have our own religious founder—a religious founder whose origins are known to all and whose effects are all-pervading, and this religious founder is Confucius. He is most devoutly revered by our four hundred million people who respect and believe in him, submit to his teachings, behave according to his precepts, and understand his subtleties. People depend on his teachings physically and mentally and find in them the national spirit, so that they are not subjugated by perverse ideas. With his teachings, people behave properly, morals are maintained, the national spirit survives and the appearance of the nation is retained. One may then adopt European and American material goods and select European and American ways of governance without imperiling ourselves, and thereby strengthen

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<sup>32</sup> See *Collected Writings on Statecraft from the Republican Period*, vol. 39; *Religions*, pp. 48, 49, 51.

<sup>33</sup> “Introduction to the Confucian Church,” (1) see *Collected Essays on Politics by Kang Youwei*, vol. 2, p. 738.

<sup>34</sup> “Letter of Reply to the Ministry of Education”; same as above, p. 864.

ourselves”.<sup>35</sup> In Kang Youwei’s view, Confucianism was best suited to China, and by using it as China’s state religion China could be saved and made strong. Chen Huanzhang, on his part, maintained that China’s situation at that time was one of “rumor-mongering, mutual vilification, internecine fighting, fraud, bribery, violence, assassinations and schisms.” The reason for such a situation was the loss of morality. Hence, if this situation was to be remedied, morality should first be redeemed. He said, “China’s morality originated with Confucius who was the founder of China’s morality. . . In the absence of Confucianism there can be no mention of so-called morality; only of quarrelling over rights and interests. Yet there are no so-called rights and interests; there are only whoring, gambling, feasting, carousing and inimitable consumption. Such is the reason for the degeneration of today’s political situation.” In his opinion, “once the Confucian religion thrives, all that gives rise to such situations as rumor-mongering, mutual vilification, fighting one another, fraud, bribery, violence, assassinations and schisms will be eliminated”.<sup>36</sup> Hence, Confucianism should be established as the state religion as soon as possible.

To put it briefly, supporters of a state religion held that, in view of the political chaos, moral degeneration, social crises, and imminent collapse of the nation, any effort to rescue the foundering public morality, restore inherent morals, and bring hope to governance could succeed only if a state religion were established. And only Confucianism was qualified for serving as the state religion.

However, the proposals by Kang Youwei, Chen Huanzhang, etc. met with strong opposition.

Although the arguments for establishing Confucianism as the state religion became quite strident at the time and would seem to figure as the dominant consensus, opinions to the contrary were stronger and more rational. To counter the Petition of the Confucian Society, Xu Shiyong (1873–1964) submitted his own petition against establishing a state religion. He declared: “Respecting the Dao and the teachings of Confucius is admissible, but making the Dao and the teachings of Confucius a state religion is not.” Xu maintained that establishing a state religion was likely to be the cause of disputes in foreign relations. That was a lesson to be learned from the many religious wars that had broken out in medieval Europe. Moreover, domestically speaking, establishing a state religion violated the spirit of republicanism. “Our country’s republican system comprises five major ethnic groups. In terms of religion, the Mongols believe in Lamaism, the Huis believe in the Arab religion, the Red and Yellow sects adhere to the Tibetan religion, and most Hans and Manchus believe in Buddhism although they have not designated any gods of their own, and all live together in peace. Despite some small controversies between the Confucians and the Buddhists and conversions on both sides, there

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<sup>35</sup> “Foreword to the China Xue Hui Bao,” same as above, p. 800.

<sup>36</sup> “On the Relationship between Discarding Confucianism and the Political Situation,” see *Compilation of Writings on Government Administration during the Nationalist Republic*, vol. 39; *Religions*, pp. 39, 40 and 42.

have been no calamities of a religious provenance. This is one of China's major characteristics and a source of worldwide admiration and envy. Today, the bane of superstition is receding with advances in science, and the limits of religious authority shrink as freedoms expand. If a state religion is resurrected, gates and walls will be erected," and he feared that the establishment of a state religion would "estrangle people's hearts" and even "tear the land apart." If Xu's concerns about the outbreak of religious wars with other countries might have been overblown, the likelihood of interethnic disputes within China was quite real. Another objection raised by Xu about establishing Confucianism as a state religion was that, once a state religion came into being, "there would have to be religious rules, churches, and eventually religious potentates." And, "Many people would be converted into believers, the church's powers would inevitably grow to such an extent as to disrupt peace and interfere with governance, and troubles would arise in society and spread throughout the country. Lessons are to be found in history. Are we to follow the disastrous road of Rome?"<sup>37</sup> This reminder was quite pertinent.

Other persons, too, submitted petitions to both the Senate and the House of Representatives regarding the "Petition of the Confucian Society," and took a strong stand for religious freedom and against a state religion. Their arguments were similar to those of the afore-mentioned Xu Shiying. They also stated: "In countries where there are diverse religions, all persons have the right to make their own [religious] decisions, and people in all households have the right to follow or not follow family rules [on religion.] Fathers may not impose their wills on sons, nor may older siblings impose their wills on younger siblings. And although the religions of diverse households may differ, no disputes on religious matters exist between them. Harmony reigns if there is no state religion, whereas the establishment of a state religion will cause cracks and rifts." China "is a country with numerous and heterogeneous religions which would be most difficult to unify under a single religious system. Gratuitous attempts to instate a non-religion as a state religion among a number of coexisting religions" would only invite trouble. He pointed out that the forcible institution of state religion would cause serious harm in four respects (1) it would incite religious disputes; (2) it would disrupt the harmony between the five ethnic groups; (3) it would violate the republic's provisional constitution (Note: The Temporary Constitution of the Republic of China and the Provisional Constitution of the Republic of China revised under Yuan Shikai both clearly specified that "no differences of race, class or religion are made among the people of the Republic of China and all are equal"); and (4) it would impede political unification.<sup>38</sup> It was quite evident that these serious threats made the establishment of a state religion inappropriate. Notably, a foreigner by the

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<sup>37</sup> See *Compilation of Writings on Government Administration during the Nationalist Republic*, vol. 39; *Religions*, pp. 58, 59.

<sup>38</sup> Ai Zhiming: "Petition to the State Council and the Senate and House of Representatives on Religious Freedom and Not Establishing a State Religion," see *Compilation of Writings on Government Administration during the Nationalist Republic*, vol. 39; *Religions*, pp. 59–60.



name of Edward Waite Thwing (1864–1943) also wrote a paper opposing the establishment of Confucianism as a state religion. His main objection was that doing so would give rise to religious calamities. He stated that of all countries China had the greatest freedom of religion and had never experienced religious calamities and was therefore very much envied in other countries. But now, for no good reason religious troubles would be provoked where no such troubles existed. “I don’t know whether to cry or laugh,” said Thwing.<sup>39</sup>

The above quotations were made from the perspective of political and social considerations. More noteworthy were criticisms against the trend toward establishing Confucianism as a state religion voiced from the perspective of mental enlightenment by persons who stood ideologically at the forefront of the times.

Chen Duxiu published numerous profound and hard-hitting writings against setting Confucianism up as state religion. First and foremost, he pointed out that the chaotic political scene was “a temporary phenomenon of the transitional period brought on by the aftermath of autocracy, and by no means an evil of true republicanism.” And, “republicanism in word but autocracy in thought—those are the things that have led to the unrest on the political scene”.<sup>40</sup> In ascribing the chaos on the political scene to the pernicious vestiges of autocracy, he indeed grasped the essence of the matter. In this regard, Liang Qichao also presented very specific arguments, some of which we have quoted earlier. He maintained that the corruption of social morality and mores were, in seven or eight cases out of ten, “due to old and ingrained practices.” He also maintained that those high-placed literati and officials who “prate about Confucius and the feudal code of ethics whenever they open their mouths” were the “direct source of the corrupt mood of society.” He also pointed out that republican governance was, admittedly, unable to satisfy all hopes. Yet, the fault did not lie in the system itself but in the fact that it was “exercised in the wrong way by the wrong people.” Hence, efforts should be directed toward making improvements to the new system rather than abandoning it.<sup>41</sup>

These comments by Chen Duxiu and Liang Qichao indicated that the premise of the notion about using religion and Confucianism to redeem the manners and morals of the times was fundamentally erroneous.

Chen Duxiu rebutted the establishment of Confucianism as the state religion mainly from the perspective of the basic spirit of democracy and republicanism. He pointed out that the basic spirit of a republican state consisted of freedom and equality. “By scorning other religions and worshiping only Confucius, would one not be infringing on the freedom of religious faith?” He noted in particular: “Freedom of religious faith means that people may believe in and choose any

<sup>39</sup> Edward Waite Thwing: “Will Religious Calamities Spread to China?” See same as above, pp. 61–63.

<sup>40</sup> “In Reply to Chang Naide’s ‘Ancient Writings and the Confucian Religion,’” *New Youth*, vol. 2 no. 6.

<sup>41</sup> “A Fair Appraisal of the Back-to-the-Ancients Trend of Thinking,” see *Collected Works of Yingbingshi: Collection No. 33*, pp. 70–73.

religion, that all should enjoy the same treatment from the state and not be discriminated against.” Establishing Confucianism as the state religion would inevitably result in discrimination against other religions and would moreover result in factual inequality in terms of politics. The reason: “If Confucianism is established as the state religion, stipulations would certainly be added to the laws on presidential elections and official appointments that believers in other religions may not be elected. Should they be elected, believers in other religions who serve as presidents or officials would break the law if they did not worship Confucius, and betray their own religion if they did. Nothing [they did] would be right.”

Chen Duxiu also pointed out that the Dao of Confucianism was founded on the feudal code of ethics, which in turn was founded on the Three Cardinal Guides. These Guides consisted of loyalty, filial piety, and obedience, or in other words, the subject should be loyal to the ruler, the son should be filial to the father, and the wife should obey the husband. Were not “these one-sided duties, these unequal morals, and this system of class differentiation” precisely a departure from the spirit of freedom and equality of a republic?<sup>42</sup> Chen Duxiu also pointed out that modern society lays emphasis on the autonomy of the individual, on the independence of the personality and on the independence of personal finances, whereas the Confucian Way insisted on class differentiations and emphasized one-sided obligations. Hence, the Confucian Way was not suited to modern life and any mandatory establishment of Confucianism as the state religion would be unacceptable in modern times.<sup>43</sup>

The calls for adopting Confucianism as the state religion appeared on the surface to carry a great deal of momentum, but they represented only a very small minority in society as a whole. The demands of this minority for explicit provisions in the constitution were not accepted. Although words to the effect that “Confucianism shall be used as the basis for cultivating the moral character” were added to the “Temple of Heaven Draft Constitution” [produced on October 31, 1913 by the Beiyang government] upon the insistence of some persons, it was also clearly stipulated that citizens of the Nationalist Republic were not differentiated by race, class, or religion, that all were equal, and that citizens of the republic enjoyed the freedom of religion.

#### **6.2.2.2 On the Question of Whether the Confucian Teachings Constituted a Religion**

There had always been controversy over the question of whether Confucius’ teachings constituted a religion, and this question could not be avoided when it was proposed that Confucianism be made a state religion. Generally speaking, all religions have two clear characteristics. First, they envisage a world extrinsic to the

<sup>42</sup> “The Constitution and the Confucian Religion,” see *New Youth*, vol. 2, no. 3.

<sup>43</sup> “The Dao of Confucius and Modern Life,” *New Youth*, vol. 4, no. 4.

world of human beings and second, they all have an organizational system, clear boundaries between believers and nonbelievers, and certain affiliations (*xi shu guanxi*) between believers and clergy within the religion. None of these characteristics applied to Confucius and his teachings. Hence despite the profound and far-reaching influence of the Confucian teachings and the Confucian Way in China, most people had never regarded Confucianism as a religion.

Those who stood for establishing Confucianism as a religion devoted a great deal of thought and effort to this matter, but never turned up any satisfactory arguments.

In this matter, Kang Youwei can best show the awkward predicament of the proponents of a Confucian religion.

Prior to the Republic of China, Kang put great effort into proving that Confucius had acknowledged the presence of another world. For instance, when explaining the sentence “*chao wen dao xi si ke ye*” (having obtained the truth in the morning, it matters not if one dies in the evening) in his *Annotations to the Analects*, Kang Youwei even stated: “There are the truths of Heaven and the truths of man, and the Book of Changes tells us that by studying the beginnings and ends of all matters we will know all there is to know about life and death and about the spirits and the gods.” He further stated: “Death and life are like day and night. We suffer and struggle at night until the sky brightens, and then there are no more days and nights, because people can cultivate their spirits to a state of perfection, of permanent awakening and clarity. And so, one learns the truths in the morning and has no fear of dying in the evening. That is the meaning of Confucius’ words about gods and spirits and life and death, summed up most profoundly and lucidly in a single sentence. Regrettably, later scholars did not pass this on, and few persons knew of this postulation, or they believed it to pertain to Buddhism and said that Confucius did not believe in souls and spirits. Worse yet, later scholars simply excluded this (from the Confucian teachings).”<sup>44</sup> He went so far as to interpret words by Confucius about his insatiable search for knowledge as proof that the soul runs through both life and death, an interpretation that was as farfetched as it was absurd. When interpreting the sentences “how can one deal with spirits when one is incapable of dealing with humans” and “how can one know death when one does not know life,” Kang’s theories were even more bizarre. He stated: “It is said in the Book of Changes that when one knows the beginnings and ends of all things, one knows about life and death. The body is composed of the spirit and the *qi*, and when the spirit is released, a transformation occurs and one knows about the circumstances of the gods and spirits. It is also said that, when one is versed in truths about day and night, one knows the beginnings and ends of all things. And then *samsara* takes place, which means that those who die in one place are resurrected elsewhere, and those who die and become spirits are then resurrected as humans, all of which is the doing of *samsara* . . . Confucius’ truths about *samsara* and transformations are

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<sup>44</sup> Wanmucaotang edition of *Annotations to the Analects*, vol. 4, p. 4.

most profound and his statements are most subtle and original. Those who say that Confucius did not talk about life after death are most ignorant”.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, Kang Youwei adamantly alleged that Confucius was a believer in ghosts and spirits, *samsara*, and another world. He moreover described Confucius as being almost like a god or supernatural being. He stated: “As Confucius roamed through the Heavens (the universe), his soul was all-knowing and his spirit was omnipresent. When he occasionally assumed human form, he stayed on as such and resigned himself to this state of existence”.<sup>46</sup>

Kang Youwei’s theories were patently unconvincing, so he posited another formulation and placed more emphasis on the differences of Confucius’ teachings with other teachings or religions. He stressed that Confucius did not teach about the ways of gods and spirits but about the ways of man. He stated: “There are many different Ways to be taught. Some teachings are about the Ways of the gods, others are about the Ways of man, and still others are about men and gods combined”.<sup>47</sup> “As far as Confucius’ teachings are concerned, these are based on Heavenly mandates and superficially concern ghosts and spirits, but actually are about the Ways of man”.<sup>48</sup> He also said: “Confucius concerned himself especially about human morals and rejected all the polytheist religions of antiquity. . . . Unlike in India, China does not constantly serve gods and ghosts but deals with the ways of man, which is very much to Confucius’ credit”.<sup>49</sup> These statements are diametrically opposed to the ones quoted earlier.

Kang Youwei did not deny that Confucianism lacked an organizational system and expressed much regret over this matter. He said: “All religions possess a body of religious believers, religious attendants and religious propagators who adhere to their own sect and toil day in and day out to carry it forward. Yet the Confucian religion. . . conversely has no body of religious believers, religious attendants or religious propagators”.<sup>50</sup> Hence in his “Memorial Requesting Agreement on a Law for Missionary Cases, on Defining the Contents and Methods of Civil Examinations and Allowing the Establishment of Confucian Temples in Rural and Urban Areas Nationwide” he submitted in the Wu Xu year (1898), and in his *Zhong hua jiu guo lun* (On the Salvation of China) written in the early years of the republic, he designed two “*jiao jie zhi*” (religious structures), respectively for the Confucian religion. The first one foresaw the appointment of a descendant of Confucius as a general administrator, public elections of persons with high scholarly attainments,

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Wanmucaotang edition of *Annotations to the Analects*, vol. 9, p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> “Notes on Travels in Italy,” *Notes on Travels in Eleven Countries in Europe: Vol. 1*, p. 71; Hunan People’s Publishing House, 1980.

<sup>48</sup> *Introduction to the Confucian Church (1)*, see *Collected Essays on Politics by Kang Youwei*, vol. 2, p. 732.

<sup>49</sup> Wanmucaotang edition of *Annotations to the Analects*, vol. 6, p. 10.

<sup>50</sup> *Introduction to the Confucian Church (1)*, see *Collected Essays on Politics by Kang Youwei*, vol. 2, p. 733.

and moral conduct as directors of offices (churches) and societies, and the setting up of offices (churches) and societies in each province, *fu*, and county. The second structure foresaw the appointment of preachers in townships, religious instructors in counties, religious masters in *fu*, grand religious masters in provinces, and a general administrator of religious affairs for the country as a whole. However, since Kang Youwei's dream of a state religion failed to materialize, these two structural systems of course got no further than the paper on which they were written.

As to whether the Confucian Dao was a religion, the highly erudite Zhang Dongsun (1886–1973) wrote a lengthy paper on his opinions. He pointed out that on the issue of whether Confucianism constituted a religion, “the difficult thing to explain is not the Confucian religion but the definition of religion per se”.<sup>51</sup> He quoted diverse formulations by nine scholars, ranging from Immanuel Kant to William James, and then declared there was no unanimous conclusion, but that one could find some common features requisite for a religion (1) a deity or deities; (2) a faith; (3) morals and customs; and (4) a culture. If one used these to judge Confucianism, “Regarding the first feature about a ‘deity’ or ‘deities,’ it [Confucianism] had what Confucius called Heaven as well as the Heavenly Ways that go with it. . . . As regards the second one called ‘faith,’ although this was not as pronounced as in other religions, Mencius and later sages all strove to exclude ‘heterodoxies’ . . . which goes to show that Confucianism might well be regarded as being a faith. As regards to the third one called ‘morals,’ Confucius devoted his entire life to teaching morality, and his utterances have been the main source of the national morals inculcated in China over thousands of years. . . . As regards the fourth feature called ‘culture,’ even less needs to be said. What is China’s millennial culture if not the culture of Confucianism? This are the most discernible features. Seen from these features, Confucianism is not only a religion, but as a religion it is of the utmost import to China”.<sup>52</sup> Worth noting is the fact that although Zhang identified Confucianism as a religion and believed that Confucianism had the effect of redeeming people’s minds, he did not approve of mandatorily defining Confucianism as the national religion. He said: “Lately, some persons have discussed presenting a bill to the Parliament for the sake of defining Confucianism as a state religion and instituting religious rites to commemorate Confucius. This will not add luster to Confucius, and would be as superfluous as painting feet onto the picture of a serpent”.<sup>53</sup>

Since Zhang did not approve of mandatorily instituting Confucianism as a religion, his arguments about the Dao of Confucius being a religion were of no help to Kang Youwei.

Those who were against a Confucian religion unanimously rejected the qualifications of Confucianism as a religion. Xu Shiyong, for example, stated: “The

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<sup>51</sup> “My Views on Confucianism,” *Compilation of Writings on Government Administration during the Nationalist Republic*, vol. 39; *Religions*, p. 6.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Confucian Dao does not conform to the principles of a religion. It is popularly referred to as ‘Kong jiao,’ and the explanation of the ideogram ‘jiao’ should be ‘teachings’ rather than ‘religion’.<sup>54</sup> Ai Zhiming wrote: “Confucius was an educationist and politician, not a religionist,” and those who requested that Confucianism be turned into the state religion “are not only confused about the overall situation today and unaware of why Confucius was Confucius, but are also unaware of what makes a religion a religion.” “Religions always talk of retribution for sins, but Confucius . . . never cautioned people about retribution for sins. Religions like to talk of life after death, but Confucius, when answering queries from his disciples, said he did not know what happened after death. Religions have a fondness for prayer, but Confucius never prayed when he was in distress. Religions do not deal with politics and official affairs, but five out of ten of Confucius’ utterances were about governance and serving the monarch. This tells us that Confucius was not setting up any religion and he was not a religionist”.<sup>55</sup> Chen Duxiu, of course, even more adamantly refused to recognize Confucianism as a religion. He stated: “The ideograms ‘Kong’ [Confucius] and ‘jiao’ [religion] cannot be put together to form a single term. . . Scholars have used the Dao to address the people and gain popular recognition and the Six Classical Arts as their teachings. Confucius was a scholar. During and after the time of Confucius, scholars patterned their activities after Confucius. They acted as teachers and their writings and actions were about loyalty and integrity. They did not discuss life and death or say anything about ghosts and spirits. They talked about serving the monarch of Lu, and all concerned themselves with cultivating moral qualities in everyday matters. Nothing they said in any way resembled what is now called ‘religion.’ The term ‘Confucian religion’ originated during the controversies among the three religions in the Northern and Southern dynasties period. Actually, neither Lao Zi of Daoism nor Confucius of Confucianism was the founder of a religion. The substance of their theories was in no way religious”.<sup>56</sup> The well-known educationist Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940) explicitly stated that Confucius was not a religionist, and Confucianism was not a religion. He said: “Confucius’ teachings were only about education, politics and morality. The reason why he did not negate the ancient rituals which came close to being a religion was that they conformed to popular customs, but that was not his original intent. When Ji Lu asked him about ghosts and spirits, he replied ‘how can one deal with spirits when one is incapable of dealing with humans?’ And when asked about death, he said ‘how can one know about death when one does not know life?’ These are the limits that Confucius himself drew with regard to religion. There is also the matter of the creation of religions which requires that their founders claim to be emissaries from Heaven, devise rituals, and regard the castigation of heresies as a

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<sup>54</sup> “Petition Against Making Confucianism the State Religion,” *Compilation of Writings on Government Administration during the Nationalist Republic*, vol. 39; *Religions*, p. 59.

<sup>55</sup> “Petition to the State Council and the Senate and House of Representatives on Religious Freedom and Not Establishing a State Religion,” same as above, p. 60.

<sup>56</sup> “Once More on the Issue of a Confucian Religion,” *New Youth*, vol. 1, no. 5.

most important duty. Did Confucius do any of these things? Confucianism is Confucianism and religions are religions, and the two are unrelated. So how can one combine the ideograms ‘Confucius’ and ‘religion’ in a single term?” Hence, the conclusion he drew was that “religion is religion, Confucius is Confucius, and the state is the state; all have their own domains and cannot be mentioned in one breath”.<sup>57</sup>

It was the common view of the great majority that the Confucian Dao and Confucian teachings were not a religion. That was one of the main reasons why proposals to make Confucianism the state religion failed to win support or gain any results.

### 6.2.3 *The Controversy About New and Old Morals*

Social morality deteriorated during the early years of the Nationalist Republic because the old ruling order had been torn down and the new ruling order could not be set up and, in the ensuing state of political disarray, most of the moral standards and norms that could have constrained people’s behavior lost their effectiveness. Most people did not dispute this conclusion. The controversy lay in how to explain the reasons for it and how to find a solution.

Kang Youwei once wrote a paper entitled “Mistakes That Have Brought China to the Verge of Collapse: All-Round Imitation of Europe and America and Complete Abandonment of China’s National Quintessence.” In that article he ascribed all undesirable social phenomena to theories about equality and freedom and made a great many inflated and inaccurate statements. In a paper entitled “On China’s Salvation,” he lashed out with the assertion that ever since republican times, “old customs and habits nationwide, whether good or bad, have been thrown out and few are left. The people have nothing to look up to, education has nothing to rely upon, people on top do not stand in awe of the gods in Heaven, those in the middle do not revere the founders of religions, those below do not respect the authorities, rules of conduct are thoroughly discredited, and codes of ethics are trampled underfoot. At the top there are no controlling principles, and below there are no laws to be observed. All that remains are some rules of etiquette and customs. There is nothing today with which to educate the people. All one sees is ruthlessness, complete lack of scruples, utter shamelessness, brutality and ferocity, and willingness to seize by force, kill and commit fraud and mayhem in the furtherance of one’s desires”.<sup>58</sup> In Kang Youwei’s view, the only way to restore the controlling principles, the laws, the rules of conduct and the morals was by establishing Confucianism as the state religion. Another person who enthusiastically stood for establishing Confucianism

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<sup>57</sup> “Speech at a Meeting on Freedom of Religion”, *Complete Works of Cai Yuanpei*, vol. 2, pp. 494 and 493; Zhejiang Education Press, 1997.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 713.

as the state religion was Zhang Ertian (1874–1945). He, too, was highly disaffected by the state of social morals after the founding of the Republic of China, and wrote: “I have only to open the daily papers to see numerous articles which suffice to bring tears to my eyes. There are stories about fathers reduced to equal status with sons, about friendships based on the bartering of benefits, about husbands betrayed and wives abandoned, about illicit sexual relationships, about maidens and young swains constantly hatching plots and schemes instead of talking of love, about the bullying of orphans and widows, about refusal to take care of the old and infirm. Even worse, all think they can rule themselves and need not choose heads of state, all maintain they can be teachers and need not appoint school principals, and all see themselves as officials and pay no heed to rank and authority. Judicial cases are won through bribery, bailiffs are suborned by promises of gain, cliques are formed to pursue selfish interests, and specious statements are made to curry public favor”.<sup>59</sup> In a word, everything was a shambles, and the only remedy was to venerate Confucianism. He maintained that countries were founded on their laws and their morality, and matters which laws were unable to govern could be governed by morality. Thus, the bounds of morality were wider than those of laws. [Zhang maintained.] There were two things that kept people within the bounds of morality. One of these was their beliefs, and the other was what they held in awe and veneration. All the things that people in China had for thousands of years believed in and held in awe and veneration were to be found in the Dao of Confucius. Hence, his conclusion: “Today, when one talks about morality and wishes to strengthen and consolidate one’s beliefs, there is indeed nothing more pertinent than our Confucian religion”.<sup>60</sup>

Clearly, believers in Confucianism ascribed the corrupted customs and habits and the moral depravity after the establishment of the Nationalist Republic to the abolishing of the rites for commemorating Confucius and the promotion of freedom and equality under the republican and democratic systems. Their solution was to establish Confucianism as the state religion so that all people might believe in it.

There were also some moderate conservatives who respected the Dao of Confucius and placed importance on traditional morality, but who took a slightly more objective view of the state of morality in the early years of the republic. For example, Lan Gongwu (1887–1957) maintained that the deterioration of contemporary morality was due to the deterioration of the innate authority of morality. However, there were multiple reasons for the deterioration of that innate authority, such as incursions by external forces, the frequent changes of circumstances within China, the proliferation of a material civilization, the difficulties of life in society and so forth. Yet, the plan he produced for rebuilding moral authority consisted in

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<sup>59</sup> “Letter to Explain How Kong Jiao Can Strengthen Morality,” see *Compilation of Writings on Government Administration during the Nationalist Republic*, vol. 39; *Religions*, p. 58.

<sup>60</sup> “Letter to Explain How Kong Jiao May Strengthen Morality,” see *Compilation of Writings on Government Administration during the Nationalist Republic*, vol. 39; *Religions*, p. 57.



restoring faith in the Heavenly Way and the Confucian Way.<sup>61</sup> Zhang Dongsun, on the other hand, explained the degeneration of morality from the perspective of laws. He maintained that most of the laws fashioned after the end of the Qing Dynasty were patterned on Roman laws or even directly copied from Japanese laws, for which reason many were ineffective because they did not conform to China's circumstances. Meanwhile, many that were consistent with China's circumstances and should have been included in China's judicial system were never included. In terms of law enforcement, due to diverse reasons and circumstances many laws were unenforceable, or could not be effectively enforced, or little effort was put into enforcing them, or gave rise to pernicious aftereffects after being enforced. In short, laws were defective, inconsistent with China's circumstances and poorly enforced, and therefore did not have the effect of maintaining order and strengthening morality.<sup>62</sup> His theorem was not without reason, but it failed to furnish a clear answer to the question of whether morality would improve once laws were perfected, or of how to improve laws and make them effective in practice.

There were others who maintained that because of the changes in current trends, some of the earlier rules of morality were, in terms of their form, unsuited to the times and consequently contributed to the decline in morality. This theorem was quite plausible. However, adherents to it posited that the problem could be solved only if "persons like Jesus, Confucius, Mohammed and Sakyamuni" were to come forth and create new rules of morality.<sup>63</sup> There was also a newspaper named *Min De Bao* (Popular Morals Newspaper) which, in its foreword, disapproved of both the old schools' proposals to reinstate the old morals and the new schools' touting of new Western-type morality, and stood for vigorously promoting universal fraternity, equality and freedom, maintaining that these constituted the basis of humanitarianism.<sup>64</sup>

Standing in sharp opposition to Kang Youwei et al. were Chen Duxiu and other advocates of reform.

There have never been differences—whether in ancient or modern times or in China or other lands—in the fundamental spirit of morality; the differences lie in the specific particulars of morality. Most who have taken part in discussions are in agreement on this matter. Thus, even between Chen Duxiu and conservatives like Kang Youwei, the controversy was focused mainly on the specific particulars of morality. Kang Youwei et al. detested equality and liberty, whereas Chen Duxiu most vigorously promoted equality and liberty. Of the six guiding principles Chen Duxiu posited in an article entitled "*Jing gao qing nian*" (Warning the Youth), the very first principle was contingent upon equality and liberty. He placed emphasis on

<sup>61</sup> "The Authority of Chinese Morality," *Yong yan* (Justice), vol. 1, nos. 3 and 5.

<sup>62</sup> "The Reasons for the Decline in Morality," see above; vol. 1, no. 12.

<sup>63</sup> Fang Nangang: "My Strategy for Saving Our National Morality," see *Compilation of Writings on Government Administration during the Nationalist Republic*, vol. 40; *Religions*, p. 20.

<sup>64</sup> Que Ming: "Foreword on the Issuance of the *Min De Bao*," see *Compilation of Writings on Government Administration during the Nationalist Republic*, vol. 40; *Religions*, pp. 34–36.

“perfecting one’s independent and free personality,” and “all behavior, all rights and all beliefs must obey the dictates of each person’s intrinsic intellect, and must on no account blindly follow or be subservient to others”.<sup>65</sup> The other five principles did not, strictly speaking, specifically appertain to morality, but were indispensable conditions for the implementation of the new morality of equality and liberty. In an article “Our People’s Final Awakening,” in which Chen Duxiu discussed awakening in terms of codes of ethics, he asserted that under the republican constitutional system, “the principles of independence, equality and liberty are absolutely inimical to the class system as defined by the Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues”.<sup>66</sup> In an article published in *New Youth*, Chen Duxiu once more summed up his idea as follows, i.e., the core of the new morality was “to strive internally for developing the personality and, externally, for making contributions to the populace”.<sup>67</sup> Clearly, Chen Duxiu’s goal was to get rid of the old morality with the high-versus-low class system at its core and to establish a new morality of equality and liberty with personal independence and freedoms at its core.

There were many others at the time who advocated the new morality, or who somewhat understood or were enthused by the new morality. One of these, for example, was Cai Yuanpei (1868–1949), who had joined the revolution early on, studied many years in Europe, and became the first Minister of Education of the republic. When he set up the Association for Reforming Society in the early years of the republic, he stated: “Emphasis on public morality, respect for human rights, equality for people of high or low social status instead of arrogance and servility, freedom of will instead of dependence on circumstances beyond one’s control, no indulging oneself in matters that go beyond the law and no unbridled behavior on matters that fall within one’s powers—such are the elements which make up republican thinking and with thinking and with which all people should admonish themselves”.<sup>68</sup> This also exactly described the new morality which placed equality and liberty at its core. Gao Yihan (1885–1968) published a paper entitled “The Republican State and the Self-Awakening of Young People” in which he compared the new and old moralities. He wrote: “A comparison of today’s morality with that of ancient times shows that the old morality emphasized conservatism while today’s morality values enterprise; the old morality was limited to social traditions while today’s morality proceeds from the conscience of the individual; the old morality took as its criteria whether behavior violated customs and habits and whether it was good or evil while today’s morality takes as its criteria whether behavior violates natural instincts and whether it is right or wrong; the old morality lay in respecting and admiring bygone monarchs and imitating the past while today’s morality lies in

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<sup>65</sup> See *Youth Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 1.

<sup>66</sup> See *Youth Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 6.

<sup>67</sup> See *Youth Magazine*, vol. 2, no. 1.

<sup>68</sup> “Proclamation of the Association for Reforming Society,” see *Collected Works of Cai Yuanpei*, vol. 2, p. 20; Zhejiang Education Press, 1997.

bringing out the truth and setting good examples for the future; and people used to suppress their natural inclinations until there was nothing left to suppress and regarded that as the best tempering while today's people promote their natural inclinations to the ultimate and see that as good cultivation. Such are the radical differences between the old and new moralities".<sup>69</sup> Gao's assertions meant basically the same thing as Chen Duxiu's Six Guiding Principles. The renowned journalist Huang Yuanyong gave a good description of the basic difference between the old and new moralities. He said: "The new one dares to criticize and examine the morals, habits and social system that have been sacred and inviolable for thousands of years and thereby affirms that all human beings have liberty of will, whereas the old one does not acknowledge that human beings have such liberty".<sup>70</sup> Huang, too, singled out liberty of personal will as the most important core content of the new morality.

It is evident from the above that the controversy between the old and new views on morality focused on the identification of human values. This was closely tied to the attitude taken toward the republican democratic system. To advocate new morality was to safeguard and consolidate the republican democratic system; to advocate the old morality was, intentionally or otherwise, conducive to restoring the erstwhile system of autocracy or to reducing the republican democratic system to something bearing the name only. People who advocated the new morality were well aware of the serious crisis facing the republican democratic system and tried to find ways out of the crisis, but were unable as yet to clearly discern the way ahead.

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<sup>69</sup> *Youth Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 1.

<sup>70</sup> "The Conflict between New and Old Thinking," see *Posthumous Writings of Yuan Sheng*, vol. 1, pp. 159–160; Commercial Press, photo-offset edition.

## Chapter 7

# Rise of the New Culture Movement

Successive years of turmoil and the chaos in intellectual circles after the founding of the National Republic made forward-looking persons start to rethink things more profoundly. Countless deaths and untold bloodshed at the end of the Qing Dynasty had prompted a change in the designation of the state power but failed to bring about a new social order, and the nation's internal and external troubles kept multiplying. In the spring of 1915, the Japanese imperialists who had consistently cherished designs of invading China raised their iniquitous Twenty-One Demands. The news infuriated the nation and accelerated the awakening of China's forward-looking persons. They realized that no reliance could be placed either on the government or the governance of the times, and one had to turn to the people if China's independence were to be safeguarded and the country were to be made strong and prosperous. Meanwhile, the constitutional and revolutionary movements toward the end of the Qing Dynasty had aimed at setting up a democratic system, but since the people had not awakened and no foundation for a democratic system had been laid in Chinese society, the reality of a democratic system remained as remote as ever even though the designation of the state's regime had changed. As Chen Duxiu put it, "we have suffered even more grievously from autocracy under the republican state system".<sup>1</sup> Hence, forward-looking persons gradually came to a common understanding: They should strive to change people's ideological concepts, so that every person might understand his or her responsibilities and rights as an individual and a citizen; so that every person might be emancipated from the existing bonds of autocracy, patriarchy and the family clan, and so that every person should fulfill his or her duties and rights in the awareness of being his or her own master. Only thus would it be possible to lay the foundations for a new society and a

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<sup>1</sup> "Our People's Final Awakening," see *Qingnian Zazhi* (Youth Magazine), vol. 1, no. 6.

new system. Based on this understanding, some forward-looking persons resolved to start by bringing changes to the ideological culture and by initiating a grand project whereby “the first-awakened arouse the later-awakened.” A certain basis for this new ideological and cultural enlightenment had already been prepared in the final years of the Qing Dynasty through the efforts of progressive personages to introduce new thinking and culture from the West and to criticize some of China’s old traditions. To these were now added the participation of growing numbers of intellectual elites who had systematically obtained a new education in and outside China. And thus arose the most ebullient, longest-lasting, broadest, and most influential cultural movement in China’s history, one that served as a major pivot in modern China’s cultural transformation—the New Culture Movement.

## 7.1 The Reflections of Forward-Looking Persons

While Yuan Shikai’s restoration farce was still in process, the well-known journalist Huang Yuanyong (1885–1915) incisively pointed out that ever since the importation of Western culture, the conflict between new and old thinking had reached an unprecedented pass. “Whereas in former days conflicts took place only in the manufacturing and politico-legal sectors, today they have developed into an ideological contest that is very much like the offensives and counter-offensives launched by two opposing armies and that is gradually pressing closer to the main stronghold. Final victory or defeat will soon be proclaimed.” He believed the basis of all issues was ideology, and only when one started by resolving ideological issues could one seek to gradually resolve other issues. He trenchantly defined the fundamental focus of conflict between the new and old ideologies in China in those times: “What I refer to as the points of conflict between the new and old ideologies are the following: First, people with the old ideology stick to one belief and confine themselves to old customs, whereas people with the new ideology are bound to call things in question and investigate. Secondly, people with the new ideology dare to criticize and investigate morals, habits and social conventions regarded as sacred and inviolable over thousands of years, because they affirm that all human beings have their freedom of thought, and they refuse to conform to things they cannot accept even at the risk of violating universal taboos. Thirdly, people with the new ideology affirm that human beings have this freedom because they possess individual awareness and strive for individual emancipation, because all human beings have their individual personalities. Personality means understanding oneself, or in other words, understanding that human beings possess definite values as well as independent goals. People are not inanimate objects which are there to serve other human beings, nor are they slaves or servants who labor for others and who have no values or goals of their own. People with the old ideology, however, regard all human beings as mechanical contrivances for rendering services and labor. They even regard themselves as providers of labor for others. Hence they are bound to be slaves and do not know distress even if their country is

vanquished. Fourthly. People with the new ideology are bound to regard human beings as individuals who seek freedom, and they inevitably seek liberty for their country and people because they cannot be detached from love of their society or love of their country. People with the old ideology, on the other hand, are fettered to the old customs and conventions and do not know what love means”.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, Huang had already recognized that the core of the new ideology consisted of placing importance on the person and on the value of the person, and he therefore emphasized the person’s individuality and the person’s freedom of will. Emphasizing the person’s individuality and freedom of will inevitably entailed full recognition of the value of the individual. Liang Qichao had personally experienced the political reforms and revolutions in the final years of the Qing Dynasty, and in early 1915, when Yuan Shikai’s restoration farce had not yet become fully public, he declared he would no longer discuss matters of politics but instead turn his attention to issues of the people and society. He had realized that “politics always have their basis in society,” and society’s issues essentially were people’s issues. Hence, he stated: “Having considered and reconsidered the matter, I realized I have a bounden duty. As a person, I shall strive to understand why human beings are human beings, and shall share my understandings with others. And since I am a citizen of China, I shall strive to understand why citizens are citizens and shall share my understandings with others”.<sup>3</sup> Liang intended to throw his energies into the work of enlightenment, of transforming people’s thinking and raising the quality of citizens. Chen Duxiu too had experienced the reforms and revolutions toward the end of the Qing Dynasty and, precisely because he realized that such reforms and revolutions had achieved little of consequence, he decided to turn his efforts toward transforming people’s thinking and culture, which is why he set up the publication *New Youth*. After the fiasco of Yuan Shikai’s monarchical gambit, many people grew optimistic and, as Chen Duxiu found, all believed the monarchical system would not come back and the republican system could finally achieve some stability. He strongly disagree, and noted that the minds of the great majority of citizens “are cluttered with old thinking from monarchical times and contain not even a shadow of the civilized social and state systems of Europe and America, and whenever they open their lips or stretch out their hands, they inadvertently release the foul odor of monarchical autocracy”.<sup>4</sup> Hence, he believed that “in order to consolidate the republic, it is absolutely necessary to cleanse our citizens’ minds of all the old anti-republican thinking”.<sup>5</sup> This cleansing job would require a great deal of ideological enlightenment.

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<sup>2</sup> “The Conflict between New and Old Thinking,” see *Posthumous Works of Yuan Sheng*, vol. 1, pp. 145–155 and 159–160; Commercial Press lithographic copy, 1984.

<sup>3</sup> “What I Will Do to Serve the Country in the Future,” *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 33*, pp. 53 and 54.

<sup>4</sup> “Old Thinking and the State System,” see *New Youth*, vol. 3, no. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

Hu Shih, a leading figure who achieved renown equal to that of Chen Duxiu during the New Culture Movement, heard about the lamentable political chaos and the monarchical restoration while he was still studying in the USA. But, unlike others who zealously held denunciation meetings or proclaimed they would return to China to protest, he determined that, as a scholar, he should fulfill a greater mission. In a letter to a friend he wrote: "I have recently advised people neither to trouble themselves about the monarchical system nor to worry about the external dangers that threaten our country's existence. If the motherland itself has the means to stand strong, it will certainly not perish. If it has no such means, we cannot prevent it from perishing no matter how hard we exert ourselves. Hence, we should best make up our minds to start with fundamentals and create the means that will keep the motherland from perishing." And, "The first and foremost way to create these means is by nurturing people of substance, and nurturing people of substance depends on education. And so, my sole ambition today is to go back to the motherland and, by dint of my words and my writings, engage in social education for the sake of nurturing people of substance for China's future. Nothing more".<sup>6</sup> In the summer of 1917, when Hu Shih had completed his studies and was returning to China, the Zhang Xun restoration farce took place. This reinforced his belief that efforts to save the nation should start with education, ideology, and culture. He thereupon vowed "to keep away from politics for twenty years and to be devoted only to educational intellectual, and cultural activities, to build a political foundation by way of non-political factors".<sup>7</sup>

Li Dazhao, too, participated in the reform and revolutionary movements in the last years of the Qing Dynasty. And after going through the political turmoil in the first few years of the Nationalist Republic, he too lost interest in taking a direct part in political activities but instead placed his hopes in changing people's ideological concepts and mental outlook, in particular among China's young people. He said, "It is true that China today is approaching a dead end. However, hope still remains, and I cannot allow myself to succumb to despair. There have been changes in the people's spirits of late, and their staunch determination suffices to bolster up my will. They say one is controlled by one's circumstances and cannot fight them. But that does not mean one cannot do anything to shape those circumstances. Hence we should not reduce ourselves to a state of passive fatalism or *determinus*, which only inhibits the initiative of the spirit. One should make efforts in accordance with the theory of free will, strive to rise to higher levels and change one's circumstances so that these conform to our intentions".<sup>8</sup> He wanted people to transform their mental outlook, encouraged them to press forward, to change undesirable social circumstances and create new social circumstances. In another article, he stated

<sup>6</sup> See *Hu Shih's Diary While Studying in the U.S.A.*, vol 3, pp. 832–833; Commercial Press, 1947.

<sup>7</sup> "My Crossroads," see *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, collection 2, vol. 3, p. 96; Yadong Library, 1925, 2nd ed.

<sup>8</sup> "Pessimism and Self-Awareness," *Collected Works of Li Dazhao*, vol. 1, p. 140; People's Publishing House, 1999.

encouragingly: “We should be aware that the world is beginning to change, and that China is beginning to change. We would do well to understand the Confucians’ teachings about daily renewal, practice the Buddhists’ penitence for past errors, and abide by the Christians’ principle of resurrection so as to change our physiognomy, cleanse our minds and first recreate ourselves. For we must repudiate our iniquitous selves and advance toward righteousness; repudiate our old and decayed selves and advance toward vitality; repudiate our grey-haired selves and advance toward youthfulness; and repudiate our autocratic selves and advance toward constitutionality, so that our transformed selves will be equal to the task of constructing new institutions for China, and so that the transformed China will be equal to the task of shaping new trends in the world”.<sup>9</sup> He reposed his hopes for replacing the old with the new on China’s younger generation. In an article entitled “The Mission of Morning Bell” he said: “China itself has no so-called destiny; its destiny lies in the destiny of its young people. Morning Bell itself has no so-called mission of its own, its mission is the mission of the young. China will not perish as long as the young do not perish. Morning Bell is the voicepiece of the young. The nation cannot go a single day without the young, and the young cannot go a single day without awakening. Whether a young China can be created or not will depend on the awakening of its young people, and whether the young people will awaken or not will depend on the vigor and alacrity of Morning Bell”.<sup>10</sup> Like Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao believed that the young people should first be awakened if the Chinese people were to be awakened; and that the young people’s ideological concepts had to be changed if the Chinese people’s ideological concepts were to be changed.

Lu Xun is known to all as a seasoned warrior of the New Culture Movement which he joined with the same ideological motives as the persons mentioned above. In his preface to his first collection of writings, he describes how he was stimulated by a movie he saw while studying in Japan and felt that “all intellectually weak citizens, no matter how physically healthy and sturdy, merely serve as utterly insignificant subjects or as spectators at public punishments, and no matter how many sicken or die is of little consequence. Hence, a matter of first importance for us is to change their mental state.”<sup>11</sup> That statement “a matter of first importance is to change their mental state” coincided with the intent of other forward-looking persons.

Gao Yihan (1884–1968), who coedited the *New Youth* with Chen Duxiu and like Chen was a native of Anhui, had studied law and politics in Japan and was a highly accomplished scholar. He wrote a large number of articles of no small import in the early period of *New Youth*. On the opening issue of *New Youth* (called *Youth Magazine* at that time, and renamed *New Youth* with its second issue), Chen Duxiu published an article entitled “Notice to Young People,” which was actually a foreword to the renamed magazine and which directly addressed young people.

<sup>9</sup> “The Popular Will and Politics,” same book as above, p. 165.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>11</sup> See *The Complete Works of Lu Xun*, vol. 1, p. 417, People’s Literature Publishing House, 1981.



Gao Yihan published an article “The Republican State and the Awakening of Young People,” which also directly addressed young people. This article began by clearly stating that the foundations of republican states were built on popular consensus. Thus, for people born in a republican era, “their first bounden duty is to create, on the basis of free will, a universal national consensus which serves as an advance guard for guiding state governance.” For the people to be able to create public opinion, a true spirit of republicanism had to be awakened in them. However, since the Chinese people were too deeply tainted by autocracy, he placed his hopes in young people. He stated: “To change the morals and mentality of our country’s people, so that they may be thoroughly remolded and purged of the poisons that infected them during the period of autocracy, I place my hopes solely on young people who have been less contaminated and who may yet awaken. That is why I specially address this sincere advice to our exuberant and lusty young people”.<sup>12</sup> Gao wrote three installments of this article. The third installment happened to come out when Yuan Shikai’s monarchical restoration was just about to become public knowledge. Gao, still in Japan at the time, was outraged. He wrote: “What year is this? That such a perversion should take place at this time makes one’s flesh creep. Looking back at our motherland, one sees all manner of potential strife, violent changes and explosive provocations within its walls. . . All of those walking corpses over there are hardly to blame. The only ones to blame are the young people who regard themselves as masters of the country. It makes one despair to see how they refuse to fulfill their duties as such. They should know that these are not times in which one can simply let oneself slide. Today’s changes do not concern merely the quality of the state system, they are indeed crucial to the nation’s very survival. At other times one might behave like an onlooker, but today one cannot look on with folded arms. Others might sidestep their responsibilities, but we cannot permit the slightest shirking of this important responsibility. That is why I exhort you over and over again, and admonish you so earnestly.”<sup>13</sup> Such were his impassioned expectations for the awakening of China’s young people! He later took his explanations a step deeper in an article entitled “A Negation of Monarchism.” He wrote: “China’s revolution (i.e. the 1911 Revolution) was effectuated on the basis of racial thinking, not on the basis of republican thinking. Hence, although the emperor abdicated his throne, the emperor in everyone’s minds has not yet abdicated. Hence, ever since entering the Nationalist era, virtually all of the actions of its presidents imitate those of the emperors. The emperors offered sacrifices to heaven, and the presidents also offer sacrifices to heaven. The emperors venerated Confucius, and the presidents also venerate Confucius. When the emperors issued forth the ground was strewn with yellow soil, and when the presidents come out the earth is also strewn with yellow soil. The emperors ‘rectified their minds (*zheng xin*),’ and the presidents must also ‘rectify their minds.’ The emperors shouldered all responsibilities pertaining to ‘heaven, earth, ruler, parents and teachers,’ and the presidents also

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<sup>12</sup> See *Young People’s Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 1.

<sup>13</sup> See *Young People’s Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 3.

shoulder all responsibilities pertaining to ‘heaven, earth, ruler, parents and teachers.’ These are incontrovertible evidence that a revolution has occurred in the system but not in people’s thinking.” This touched on the core of the matter. The 1911 Revolution had merely brought a signboard of republicanism while people continued to hew to the thinking of the monarchical era. That is why years of political chaos ensued, and why restoration farces recurred time and again. A profound ideological revolution was imperative in order to bring about genuine republicanism.

One might say that conducting an ideological revolution had by then already become a basic common understanding among the great majority of forward-looking persons or among people capable taking a fairly sober view of current affairs at that time. Even professional revolutionaries like Sun Yat-sen held similar views. Sun once said: “Of the four hundred million citizens of China, one cannot say that many are able as yet to clearly understand the significance of republicanism. Those who do not understand and possess no such thinking oppose republicanism. However, their opposition is manifested in their minds and not necessarily in their actions. To put republican thinking in their minds and ensure that they do not oppose it, one must influence them and co-opt them by mental means.”<sup>14</sup> It is clear that he deemed it necessary to conduct ideological enlightenment among the country’s citizens. Even personages who did not strongly support the New Culture Movement were to a certain extent aware of an objective need to do some ideological renovation. One example was Hu Jinjie (1870–1934), an educator in the Huizhou Region who at one time took measures to suppress students and resisted the New Culture Movement in schools under his control when that movement was just starting up. In a letter to Chen Duxiu, editor of *New Youth*, he wrote: “All endeavors are likely to fail, and an important reason is that the thinking behind them has not been renovated”.<sup>15</sup>

The materials quoted above are ample evidence that all forward-looking elements in China were aware that having a republic in name only was of no use. If China was to be extricated from its state of autocracy, backwardness, and corruption and put on the path of democracy, prosperity, and strength, it was essential to rid the minds of the great majority of Chinese people of the pernicious vestiges of absolutism, establish the thinking of democracy and republicanism, and thereby lay a solid foundation for a democratic republican system.<sup>16</sup>

One also sees from the materials quoted above that the direction in which these foresightful persons were thinking was quite identical, and that all stood for

<sup>14</sup> “Speech at the Shanghai Welcoming Convention for Overseas Chinese Troops,” see *The Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen*, vol. 3, p. 374, Zhonghua Bookstore, 1984.

<sup>15</sup> See *New Youth*, vol. 3, no. 3 “Correspondence.”

<sup>16</sup> About the common understandings of forward-looking persons of those times on contemporary topics and historical missions, the reader may refer to the author’s article “A Renewed Understanding of the May Fourth New Culture Movement,” carried in *Chinese Social Sciences*, 1989 issue no. 3, and included in *The Collected Writings of Geng Yunzhi*, pp. 163–190; Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 2005.

channeling efforts toward the general public and especially toward young people. The majority of them also clearly regarded arousing the individual's free will as the focus of transforming people's thinking.

The goal had been defined and the path was clearly understood. It was only logical that the New Culture Movement with ideological enlightenment as its theme should now be moved onto the agenda.

## 7.2 Rise of the New Culture Movement

For a long time, many people were wont to date the start of the New Culture Movement as 1915, the year in which *New Youth* started publication. This was inappropriate. When *Young People's Magazine* first appeared, Yuan Shi-kai's restoration had yet to be staged and the reactionary upsurge had yet to reach a climax. Moreover, the statements carried in the magazine in its early days did not, in general, go beyond reflections of progressive personages on earlier events, nor did those statements concern subjects of sufficient moment to grasp the attention of the majority of people or form common understandings among them. Hence the magazine's impact on society was limited. Chen Duxiu, in the "correspondence" column of *New Youth*, vol. 2, no. 2, wrote in reply to a reader: "I, a person of little competence, have been writing for this magazine for only a year, which is not long enough to have had the least effect on the views and perceptions of young people." This would indicate that no political movement in any form or sense was even remotely taking shape at that time, and that was indeed the case. The New Culture Movement was initiated by a literary revolution. In a letter to Zhang Shizhao (1881–1973), editor of the magazine *Jia Yin* (The Tiger), the well-known journalist Huang Yuanyong we mentioned earlier wrote: "If I were to discuss politics today, I in truth would not know where to begin. . . . As far as fundamental solutions are concerned, one should endeavor in the long term to promote a new literature. To put it briefly, one should find ways of bringing our trends of thinking in consonance with modern trends of thought and promote a rapid awakening. Most importantly, we must connect with the lives of the ordinary people and find ways of propagating easy-to-understand literature and art".<sup>17</sup> Lu Xun, when explaining why he had abandoned medicine and engaged in literature for the sake of awakening the Chinese people, also said "I, at the time, of course made art and literature my first choice" as the best way for changing people's mentality, and "this made me think of recommending a literature and art movement".<sup>18</sup>

Just when Huang Yuanyong prophetically pointed out that one should "start by promoting a new literature," and "find ways of propagating an easy-to-understand

<sup>17</sup> See *Posthumous Works of Yuansheng*, vol 4, p. 189.

<sup>18</sup> "Preface to Call to Arms," see *Complete Works of Lu Xun*, vol. 1, p. 417. See *Hu Shih's Diary While Studying in the U.S.A.*, vol. 3, pp. 759–760, Commercial Press, 1947.

literature,” Hu Shih, who later became a “vanguard standard-bearer” of the literary revolution and one of the principal leaders of the entire New Culture Movement, had already begun to explore issues of literary revolution while he was studying in the USA. Hu Shih had gradually arrived at a conscious awareness of the need for a literary revolution through his own literary practice. He had already acquired fluency in writing articles in the vernacular language (*baihua wen*) when he had served as editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Jing Ye Xun Bao* (Competitive Business Ten-Day Periodical) in the last years of the Qing Dynasty. Influenced by English literature during his studies in the USA, he became increasingly conscious of the inconvenience and irrationality of the sharp divide between the Chinese written and spoken languages. In the summer of 1915, he stated for the first time his view that Chinese prose in the classical style “is a half-dead language” whereas vernacular Chinese, as an everyday-use language, was a living language.<sup>19</sup> He saw that most articles written in that “half-dead” classical Chinese were empty and devoid of content since they were divorced from the realities of society and people’s lives. In them—as he put it—“verbiage takes precedence over substance”,<sup>20</sup> and the pretentiously ornate terminology and vacuous writings had virtually nothing to do with the broad masses. Hu Shih also observed that, although some persons had advocated the vernacular language since the last years of the Qing Dynasty, they did so merely for the political expedient of mobilizing the masses and for writing propaganda tracts directed at the general public. Literature, and in particular prose, poetry, songs, and so forth, remained the exclusive domain of China’s literati and bore no relation to the populace in general. In direct opposition to this state of affairs, Hu Shih stated: “I believe that literature today ought not to be the private property of a few, and that one of its major qualities ought to be an ability to reach out to the maximum number of Chinese”.<sup>21</sup> In order to eliminate literature’s drawback of “verbiage taking precedence over substance” and enable it to reach the broad masses, Hu Shih proposed using literature written in the vernacular to replace literature written in classical Chinese, and that the vernacular should serve as the tool for all forms of literature. In a poem he penned and presented to [the scholar] Mei Guangdi (1890–1945), he explicitly put forward the slogan “literary revolution.” He wrote: “Mei, Mei, do not despise yourself; it is true that China’s literature has long since withered and moldered; that for a hundred years no healthy leaders have emerged from it; yet the new trend is approaching and it is irresistible. The time has come for a literary revolution; we cannot just sit by and watch. We must call up a number of capable people; who could serve as precursors and vanguards of the revolutionary army; who could lash and drive away the demons

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<sup>19</sup> *Hu Shih’s Diary While Studying in the U.S.A.*, vol. 3, pp. 759–760; Commercial Printing House, 1947.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 844.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 956.

that impede its advance; and would welcome in the new era. This would be a worthy service to the nation; and do much to change heaven and earth.”<sup>22</sup> We see from these lines that Hu Shih was by this time showing substantial awareness about the necessity of a literary revolution. This poem was written September 1915, and by February and March of 1916 Hu had concluded from his perusals of Chinese literary history that the evolution of that history “is a history of the supersession of old literary forms (tools) by the new, a history of ‘new literature’ arising as the occasion demands to replace ‘dead literature.’ The life of literature depends entirely on the use of the live tools of a specific era to express the sentiments and thoughts of that era. When the tools become ossified, they must be replaced by new and live ones. That is literary revolution.”<sup>23</sup> We know that Hu Shih’s concepts regarding the literary revolution were gradually formed in the course of constant discussions with his fellow students and colleagues.<sup>24</sup> Three of these concepts were the most basic: one of them had to do with the malady of “verbiage taking precedence over substance,” and stood for realism. Another concerned popularizing literature among the maximum number of Chinese, and stood for populism. And the third concerned historically evolved literary concepts put forward on the basis of investigations into the history of Chinese literature. These constituted the most basic theoretical foundation of the literary revolution he posited. In August of that year, in a letter to Zhu Jingnong (1887–1951), a good friend of his, Hu Shih initially summed up eight guidelines which he took as his points of departure for the literary revolution. He subsequently rewrote these eight guidelines in a letter to Chen Duxiu, editor-in-chief of *New Youth*.<sup>25</sup> Highly intrigued, Chen Duxiu wrote a

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 784–785, 844.

<sup>23</sup> *Bi shang liang shan* (Driven to Revolt). First published in *Eastern Magazine*, vol. 31, no. 1 (Jan. 1, 1934); later included in *New Literature in China Series: Founding Theories*. Quoted from *The Personal Reminiscences of Hu Shih*, p. 111, Huangshan Press, 1986.

<sup>24</sup> Regarding Hu Shih’s discussions with his schoolfellows and friends on issues of the literary revolution during his studies abroad, reference may be made to my article “Hu Shih and Mei Guangdi—The significance of the Literary Revolution as Seen from their Debates,” carried in the collection of articles commemorating the Zhonghua Book Company’s 80th Anniversary, entitled *The Past, Present and Future of China’s Culture*, published by the Zhonghua Book Company in 1992. Also included in *The Collected Writings of Geng Yunzhi*, see pp. 414–443 of that book; Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 2005.

<sup>25</sup> These eight guidelines were (1) do not use allusions; (2) avoid old clichés; (3) do not use antitheses (parallels in prose and the *lü* form in poetry should be eliminated); (4) do not avoid popular words and expressions (do not shun poetry and couplets written in the vernacular); (5) respect grammar and grammatical forms; (6) do not indulge in melancholic themes without cause; (7) use your own language instead of imitating the ancients; and (8) write with substance. These eight ideas underwent some slight changes in terms of sequence and formulation in his article “A Discussion on the Improvement of Literature.” Some persons have, in recent years, expressed the view that Hu Shih’s guidelines were derived from the six guidelines of an American impressionist poet. That is pure speculation. Even though it cannot be denied that Hu Shih had been influenced by English and American literature, there are no grounds for claiming that Hu Shih’s eight guidelines were lifted from that impressionist poet. In other words, whether or not Hu Shih had ever come across the impressionist poet’s propositions, his own literary practice and his

reply asking him to develop these guidelines into a thesis. The outcome was *Wen xue gai liang chu yi* (Tentative Suggestions for Reforming Chinese Literature)—a major study which became the clarion call for the literary revolution, and which was published in volume 2, no. 5 (January 1917) of *New Youth*. Chen Duxiu was so impressed that he published his epoch-making paper “On the Literary Revolution” on the very next issue of *New Youth*, i.e., volume 2, no. 6. If Hu Shih’s study on the reasons and methods for the literary revolution resembled a teacher’s vivid classroom lecture, Chen Duxiu’s article was more like an official call to arms issued by a frontline command headquarters. Indeed, the literary revolution which began as conversations and discussions among a very few soon morphed into a movement that attracted the attention and the multifaceted participation of a great many.

The publication of Hu Shih’s and Chen Duxiu’s papers very soon elicited attention among other scholars. The first to respond was Qian Xuantong (1887–1939). In a letter in the correspondence section of vol. 2, no. 6 of *New Youth*, he enthusiastically praised Hu Shih’s study, and in this same letter for the first time raised the banner calling for “punitive action” against “utterly absurd and misleading contentions.” Subsequently, Liu Bannong (1891–1934) and other professors successively joined the discussions on literary revolution. Other readers also wrote letters to *New Youth* stating their opinions. Scholars, teachers, students (including those studying abroad), social celebrities, and even some political activists (as for example Yi Zongkui [1874–1925]) expressed great concern. One writer who used the name Zeng Yi wrote a lengthy missive stating that Chen Duxiu and Hu Shih’s advocacies on literary revolution “bring me great joy.” He said: “China’s literature has been misused and stereotyped for a long time. Now that we have your magnificent dissertations, we may thoroughly cleanse literature of its uniform and hackneyed conventions and thereby completely renovate our intellectual world.” He also said that the China of that time was “unsuited for survival in today’s world” in terms of its politics, laws and institutions, academics, and literature. Even if reforms were to be conducted and new methods initiated, they would have hardly any effect on governance because “the prevalence of power and interests and the hindrances posed by various stagnant traditions” would offer no hope for change. However, literature, “if supported by renowned scholars at home and abroad, would in no more than a decade be able to sweep away all obstacles and help evolve a new type of politics.” As Han Yu (768–824) said, “its accomplishments would be no less than those of the legendary Yu”.<sup>26</sup> Li Liantang (1896–?), in a letter to Hu Shih, said: “If China is to attain prosperity and strength, it must promote science and popularize education, and one can only start to promote science and popularize education by reforming literature.” Hence, “reforming literature is indeed of great importance for administering the state, and it is an enduring cause”.<sup>27</sup> The observations of these

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discussions and exchanges of ideas with his friends fully sufficed for him to work out his own guidelines.

<sup>26</sup> See *New Youth*, vol. 3, no. 2, “Correspondence.”

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

two men corroborated the decision of forward-looking persons to usher in the New Culture Movement by means of a literary revolution.

Those who participated in the literary revolution debate aired their views and probed ever more deeply into a host of issues, ranging from whether classicism should be thoroughly abolished to ways of achieving realism in writing, from the basic conditions and requirements of vernacular language to the writing of vernacular poetry, from phonetic alphabet to punctuation, from Chinese grammar to horizontally aligned Chinese writing, from assessments of vernacular novels in past history to the promotion of new vernacular novels, from the reform of old operas to the translation and writing of new plays, from the retention or abolishing of the Han characters to the feasibility of adopting a Chinese phonetic alphabet, and so on and so forth. In this period, however, people who mentally rejected the literary revolution rarely come out with their opinions, and those who enthusiastically advocated and promoted the revolution could not help but feel somewhat cold-shouldered. After Hu Shih published his "Opinions on the Improvement of Literature" in vol. 2, no. 5 of *New Youth* in January 1917, the only piece of writing that opposed the literary revolution was an article written by an expert on ancient writing Lin Shu (1852–1924) and entitled "Why Classical Writing Ought Not to Be Abolished" and published in February 8, 1917 issue of the *Min Guo Ri Bao*. However, the article consisted of only 500-some characters, and the writer declared that classical writing "ought not to be abolished and I know the reasons, but am unable to say why that is so." He merely lamented that "the nation has not yet perished but its written language is already perishing." That voice of opposition was, if anything, much too feeble.

In the March 1918 issue of the *New Youth* (vol. 4, no. 3), Qian Xuanton (1887–1939), known as one of the most radical activists during the literary revolution, wrote a letter under the assumed name "Wang Jingxuan" to the editor of *New Youth* and, taking a resolute stand against the literary revolution, viciously attacked all proposals for such a revolution. At the same time, Liu Bannong (1891–1934), another activist, wrote a long letter fiercely rebutting Qian. Outsiders were at first unaware of this byplay. Within the *New Youth* circle itself, Hu Shih took exception to this development. He believed discussion should be tolerated, and he invited opponents to publish their opinions; that would enable the debate to gradually deepen and would propel the theory and practice of the literary revolution toward greater maturity. Later, during discussions on the reform of traditional opera, he invited Zhang Houzai of the opposing faction to write an article for *New Youth*, which had Qian Xuanton vociferously threaten to break off relations with him. This, of course, did not happen. Despite the differences within *New Youth* over this matter, it had to be acknowledged that the publication of the articles by Wang Jingxuan and Liu Bannong had indeed served to widen the issue's social impact. In less than a year's time, both supporters and opponents of the literary revolution had successively set up publications to express their own opinions. The *Xin Chao* (*New Tide*) magazine set up mainly by students of Peking University in January 1919 turned out to be one of the strongest of the new supporters of the literary revolution.

Among its architects, Fu Sinian (1896–1950), Luo Jialun (1897–1969), and Yu Pingbo (1900–1990) made major contributions to the founding of the new literature.<sup>28</sup> Their criticisms of the school of classical literature were often more forceful and incisive than those voiced by their teachers, and they proved to be quite gifted in terms of creating a new kind of literature.

Two months after the founding of *New Tide*, opponents of the literary revolution, mainly conservative teachers at Peking University, founded a publication which they named *Guo Gu* (National Heritage), the principal figures in which were Liu Shipai (1884–1919), Huang Kan (1886–1935), and Lin Sun (1890–1940). Their publication folded up after putting out only four editions, as their thinking and their articles proved to be no match for those generated by the new literature camp. For one thing, they had had very little or no training in thinking and logic, and their reasoning was either muddled or too shallow. They were like Lin Shu who had said: “I know the reasons but am unable to say why it is so.” Second, their penmanship and language were excessively archaic and hackneyed, filled with clichés and allusions, too tiring and demanding on the reader, and difficult to comprehend. Third, though young, most of them smacked of musty and antiquated decay and were incapable of turning out anything inspirational. On the other hand, virtually all adherents to the new literary school brimmed with vitality and confidence and their writings radiated charisma. Having undergone considerable ideological training, they were clear-headed, nimble of mind, and good analysts. And all were excellent writers. Chen Duxiu, Hu Shih, and Lu Xun had, in the last years of the Qing Dynasty, already published numerous inspiring and stirring articles in newspapers and magazines rooting for reform or revolution, and the younger adherents of *New Tide* had grown up reading their articles and essays. The younger ones were in no way inferior to their teachers in terms of either intellect, ideology, or writing ability. Hence, victory and defeat at Peking University, which constituted the main battlefield in the conflict between the new and old literatures, was a foregone conclusion.

Another point of entry for the New Culture Movement was the morals revolution.

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<sup>28</sup> Fu Sinian’s main articles on the literary revolution include: “Various Aspects of the Theatrical Reform” and “More on the Theatrical Reform,” (*New Youth*, vol. 5, no. 4); “How To Write in the Vernacular,” “The Different Periods in China’s Literary and Arts History: A Study,” and “Roots of the Problems in China’s Literature and Arts,” (*New Tide*, vol. 1, no. 2); “Initial Discussion on the Chinese Language Switching Over to an Alphabetical Writing,” (*New Tide*, vol. 1, no. 3); and “Vernacular Literature and Changes in Mentality,” (*New Tide*, vol. 1, no. 5.) Luo Jialun’s main articles on the literary revolution include: “The Novels Sector in Today’s China,” (*New Tide*, vol. 1, no. 1); “What is Literature?” (*New Tide*, vol. 1, no. 2); “Refuting Master Hu Xiansu’s ‘Theorem on Improving Chinese Literature’,” (*New Tide*, vol. 1 no. 5); and “Changes in the Thinking of China’s Modern Literature” (*New Tide*, vol. 2, no. 5). Yu Pingbo’s main articles on the literary revolution include: “The Three Main Conditions for Vernacular Poetry,” (*New Youth*, vol. 5, no. 3, “Correspondence”); “The Various Mental Perspectives in Society on the New Poetry,” (*New Tide*, vol. 2, no. 1); and “The Freedom and Universality of Poetry,” (*New Tide*, vol. 3, no. 1). The three of them also published a good many vernacular poems in *New Youth* and *New Tide*.



Earlier we mentioned the controversy over new and old morals. Morals, as entities, are the rules that standardize people's minds and behavior and therefore permeate all aspects of human social life. In the process of social change, changes are also bound to occur in morals. Since morals permeate all aspects of social life, the discarding of old morals and the establishment of new morals are extremely lengthy and complicated processes. In the early years of the Nationalist republic politics fell into disorder, and so did morals. However, old morals continued to exert a powerful influence since they were deeply embedded in people minds and all aspects of social life. A letter published in *New Youth* vol. 1, no. 3 signed by a certain "Huaishan recluse" described the various instances of decadence among young people the writer had met. He stated: "Since this is the case among young people, the inference is that the same must go for people in all other circles." He continued: "If one seeks the reasons for the decadence manifested in society, one will see that it is rooted in the inertia of each individual." And what gave rise to such inertia? He believed that aside from reasons of a physical or intellectual nature, one important reason lay in the shackles of old morality. He stated that all persons, "because of being situated in a society entirely besieged by old morals and ethics, may be accused by people around them of violating the teachings of Confucius despite having done nothing of the sort. After being repeatedly harassed in this manner, even persons with lofty ideals are likely to fail in their endeavors and, as time goes by, become as lifeless as withered trees. Such is the reason for their inertia." Hence, his conviction that if one wishes to see persons "become useful for society, one had best get rid of the obstructions posed by the old morals and ethics".<sup>29</sup> However, he was of the opinion that "morality was a term used in barbarous and semi-civilized times" and morals were no longer needed after entering the era of rule of law. This was clearly wrong, and Chen Duxiu, in his letter of reply, made no bones about it. He emphasized: "Morals are mankind's highest spiritual manifestation as well as its most effective instruments for upholding the public benefit. It is permissible to discard old morals and replace them with new ones in compliance with the tides of evolution, but completely abolishing them is not permissible." He also stated: "Morals, as entities, should change along with society and the times, and should evolve and not remain immutable. That is why ancient morals do not suit today's world".<sup>30</sup> In an article entitled "Our People's Final Awakening," Chen Duxiu had already pointed out: "Moral principles and ethics are influenced by politics. This is so in all countries, and especially so in China. The Confucians' teachings on the Three Cardinal Guides are the major provenance of our ethics and politics. . . The fundamental purpose of the Three Cardinal Guides is to maintain a class system, and the so-called wise doctrines and ethical teachings are all designed to uphold the institutions of rank and status." These were entirely at variance with the spirit of liberty, equality and fraternity pursued by the republican system. Hence, if the republican democratic system were

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<sup>29</sup> See *New Youth*, vol 3, no. 1, "Correspondence."

<sup>30</sup> Same as above.

to be adopted and consolidated, it was absolutely necessary to do away with the old ethics and morals which had dominated the Chinese people's minds for centuries and at the core of which lay the Confucians' Three Cardinal Principles. Chen Duxiu called such an understanding "the most final awakening of our people's final awakening".<sup>31</sup> His statements indicated that new morals suited to the democratic republican system should be based mainly on liberty, equality, and fraternity. And if one were to cultivate the spirit of liberty, equality, and fraternity in people, one must first of all rid them of the morals that fettered them and that were based on those Confucian cardinal principles. Some people claimed that the Confucian dictum "let the ruler be a ruler, the ministers be ministers, the father a father and the son a son" had originally been bidirectional in intent. In other words, the ruler should fulfill his duties and the ministers should fulfill their duties, and "the ruler should treat the ministers with courtesy and the ministers should serve the ruler with loyalty." Similarly, the father should be loving and his sons should be filial. The original intent had been neither to invest one party with all rights and no duties nor to charge the other party with nothing but duties and no rights.<sup>32</sup> This theorem would seem to be reasonable if seen from Confucius' dictum alone. But in terms of social actualities, all powers and rights were in the hands of the ruler and the father, and the inevitable reality was that the ministers were dominated by the ruler and the sons by the father. That had given rise to such realities and conventions as "the minister has to die if the ruler demands that he die," and that "children may be in the wrong but never the parents." The same went for relations between husband and wife. The husband could divorce his wife on the strength of any of the "seven outs" [the seven reasons for which a husband could divorce his wife; see Chap. 5], but the wife had absolutely no right to seek a separation. This, too, was a result of all powers and rights being in the hands of the husband.

I have mentioned in Chap. 5 that some forward-looking persons toward the end of the Qing Dynasty had already begun to criticize the old morals built up around the Three Cardinal Principles. In Chap. 6, when discussing the conflicts between new and old thinking, I again touched on the castigation of old morals by forward-looking persons. However, the criticism of old morals and promotion of new morals were decidedly more extensive and deep-going when they became focal topics during the New Culture Movement. By then the emphasis of the criticism of old morals lay on exposing their close and intrinsic connections with autocratic politics, and the emphasis of promoting new morals was directed toward the emancipation of the individual, or in other words, emancipation of the individuality.

Wu Yu (1874–1939), extolled by Hu Shih as "the old hero in Sichuan who single-handedly took on the 'Confucian Establishment'," pointed out in an article that according to the Confucians the core of the old morality was filial piety. Wu said, "a closer examination of Confucius' sayings shows that Confucius regarded filiality as the basis of all behavior, which is why filiality served as the starting point

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<sup>31</sup> See *Selected Papers by Chen Duxiu*, vol. 1, pp. 108–109; Sanlian Bookstore, 1984.

<sup>32</sup> See Chang Naide: "My Views on Confucianism," *New Youth*, vol. 3, no. 1, "Readers' Forum."

of all of his teachings. . . For persons who did not rise to officialdom and remained at home, filial piety meant serving their parents. For those who became officials at the imperial court, filial piety meant serving the ruler. . . All who served their rulers and superiors in the same way as they served their parents were also loyal and obedient subjects.” And, “in its extent, filiality became all-inclusive, since the clan system and the autocratic governance system gradually melded and became inseparable.” Hence, his conclusion was that the Confucian terms “filiality” and “obedience” had become “unshakeable as the fundamental mainstays of the clan system and the autocratic governance system for over two thousand years”.<sup>33</sup> Wu quite clearly exposed the close intrinsic connection between the old morals and the rulers’ autocracy as advocated by Confucianists, promoted by sovereigns, implemented by heads of households and practiced more than two thousand years. Wu’s article had a considerable effect on young people of that generation, since the latter suffered most from the old morals. Young men and women in particular keenly sensed the misery inflicted on them by that class system. In a letter of reply to a certain Fu Guixin, Chen Duxiu scathingly noted that the old morality was the morality of slaves. “Its fault,” he said, “lies in its dividing people as the high-born and the lowly and in its imposing one-sided duties on the lowly. And in consequence the ruler abuses the minister, the father abuses the son, the mother-in-law abuses the daughter-in-law, the master abuses the servant, and the older one abuses the younger one. Those who perpetrate various immoralities and iniquities in society regard doing so as their natural right, while all of the victims must submit to the slave morality and may not disobey. Most of the weaker ones die nursing a bitter sense of wrong, whereas the powerful are encouraged to further acts of perversion”.<sup>34</sup> This was clearly the morality of that part of the population which oppressed other part. Thanks to this sort of morality, countless young people “are stifled by the authority of their parents and live out their lives within the walls of their homes benumbed with fear.” And “countless young people, unreconciled to mediocrity, strive to accomplish something worthwhile, only to be crushed by the clan system”.<sup>35</sup> Fu Sinian wrote an article entitled “The Source of All Evils” castigating the old family system. He believed the greatest ill of that family system was that it suppressed people’s personalities and prevented people from developing according to their own personality.<sup>36</sup> *New Youth* published a great many articles and letters criticizing the old family system, such as Sun Mingqi’s “Improving the Family Is Closely Related to the Nation” in vol. 3, no. 4; Zhang Yaoxiang’s “On the Arbitrariness of Parents in Our Country” in vol. 5, no. 6; Xia Daozhang’s “A Discussion on Reforming China’s Family System” in vol. 6, no 4, and so forth. The plight of women under the old family system was even more tragic. Ever since

<sup>33</sup> “The Old Family and Clan System Is the Basis of Despotism,” *Wu Yu Anthology*, pp. 62–63, Sichuan People’s Publishing House, 1985.

<sup>34</sup> See *New Youth*, vol. 3, no. 1, “Correspondence.”

<sup>35</sup> See Geng Yunzhi (2000, p. 62).

<sup>36</sup> See *New Tide*, vol. 1, no. 1.

the Song Dynasty's Li Xue philosophers concocted their absurd dictum that "starving to death is of lesser gravity than losing one's chastity," all imperial courts and all hack literati did their utmost to promote rigorous chastity among women, advised widows to commit suicide after the death of their husband or even their fiancée, and regarded a widow's remarriage as a "loss of virtue." These dictums were tantamount to death sentences. It is impossible to estimate how many innocent women were done to death, smothered and shackled as they were by the concepts of so-called chastity and virtue. Due also to the extreme discrimination against women, girls were not regarded as familial offspring and females had no rights of inheritance or succession. There was also the unconscionable practice of families adopting male children to serve as heirs when they only had girls in the family, and the despicable custom of taking concubines. Such practices frequently gave rise to such degenerate and abominable situations within families as the ubiquitous antagonisms between mothers-in-laws and daughters-in-law, frequent fall outs among sisters-in-law, and feuding between wives and concubines. In such family environments, so-called morality existed in name only. Hence, discussions on women's issues aroused widespread concern in society. Articles touching on women's issues were published in the very first issue of *New Youth*, and letters from women pouring out their grievances began to appear in volume 2, no. 5.<sup>37</sup> Thereafter, such articles gradually became more numerous. Volume 2, no. 6 carried two articles by women on women's issues; volume 3, nos. 1, 3, 5, and 6 featured articles on issues of women and marriage; and volumes 4, 5, and 6 gave deeper attention to issues of women's chastity. These articles and discussions from various angles castigated the decadent and egregious old marriage system and pointed out that chastity was a unilateral and unreasonable "moral" dictate forced upon women. These articles triggered louder calls in society for women's emancipation and criticisms against the old concepts of marriage and chastity.

Besides exposing the one-sidedness of the old morals, proponents of new culture focused on criticizing the hypocrisy and inhumanity of those old morals. Lu Xun, for example, pointed out that morals should by nature be universal, feasible, and useful. However, the old morals, such as "filiality" and "chastity," were not values that everyone could, needed to or was willing to observe, he said. And their performance not only entailed senseless sacrifices by the performer but also brought no benefit to others or to society. Hence observing such values constituted "promoting hypocritical morality and showing contempt for human feelings".<sup>38</sup>

The greatest bane of the old morality was that it fettered people's minds and disregarded their personality, and thereby encouraged conservatism and smothered any drive or ambition. Chen Duxiu stated that old morality had to be assiduously criticized and repudiated because it constituted "a major drag on civilized

<sup>37</sup> See *New Youth*, vol. 2, no. 5; letter signed "bai + hua" (a devised character).

<sup>38</sup> "What Is Required to Be a Father Today," see *Complete Works of Lu Xun*, vol. 1, p. 138; People's Literature Publishing House. 1981.

advance”.<sup>39</sup> It was only natural that criticisms of the old morals should bring up the issue of emancipating the personality, or in other words, the issue of promoting individuality.

Basically speaking, the “individuality” issue falls in the domain of “freedom.” One might say it is the most profound and most nuclear issue in the “freedom” domain. Promoting individuality means advocating that the person be freed from all externally imposed bonds. It means fully respecting the free will of the individual and respecting the individual’s independence and initiative. Chen Duxiu said: “The behavior, rights and beliefs of all who consider themselves to have an independent and autonomous individuality should be subject only to their intrinsic intellect, and there is absolutely no reason why they should be subordinated to other people”.<sup>40</sup> Li Dazhao maintained that China’s ancient traditions “do not respect the authority and power of the personality” and “regard individuals only as incomplete parts of a larger entity, the existential value of which parts is entirely engulfed by that entity”.<sup>41</sup> As Hu Shih pointed out: “There is no greater crime in society than the destruction of an individual’s personality and preventing it from developing freely”.<sup>42</sup> Truly independent individuals are generated only when the personality is enabled to develop freely. Only when a society has a great many independent individuals of this sort can it be a good and honest (*liang shan*) society, because “good and honest societies can certainly not be made up of men and women like today’s who are beholden to others and incapable of ‘standing up on their own’”.<sup>43</sup> Fu Sinian asserted: “Goodness proceeds from the personality. If the personality is given no opportunity to develop, ‘goodness’ becomes ossified and unfeeling. What is ossified and unfeeling can never be ‘good.’ Hence destroying the personality is tantamount to completely repudiating that quality known as ‘goodness’”.<sup>44</sup> Gao Yihan put it even more specifically when he said: “Our country’s civilization has stagnated for thousands of years principally because the personality of the individual had failed to develop.” If society and the nation were to advance, “nothing is of greater efficacy than respecting the value of the individual”.<sup>45</sup>

The enthusiastic eulogies of individuality voiced by the initiators of the New Culture Movement galvanized and inspired tens of thousands of young men and women. They gradually awakened, grew less, and less tolerant of the shackles of the old traditions and morals and struck out on their own to seek educations or find vocations to their liking. There were those who left home to protest against arranged

<sup>39</sup> “Reply to Yu Songhua,” *New Youth*, vol. 3, no. 6, “Correspondence.”

<sup>40</sup> “A Warning to Young People,” *Young People’s Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 1.

<sup>41</sup> “The Fundamental Difference between Eastern and Western Civilizations,” See *Collected Works of Li Dazhao*, vol. 2, p. 205; People’s Publishing House, 1999.

<sup>42</sup> “Ibsenism,” *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 4, p. 34, Oriental Book Company, 8th edition, 1925.

<sup>43</sup> “American Women,” *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 4, p. 61.

<sup>44</sup> “The Source of All Evils,” see *New Tide*, vol. 1, no. 1.

<sup>45</sup> “The Final Destination of Life Is Not the State,” *Young People’s Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 4.

marriages, or who committed suicide because of unwillingness to submit to family or parental dictates or to forced marriages, or who departed far from their native places to avoid such arranged marriages, or who severed all contacts with their parents and families since they could no longer endure the old family restrictions. Countless young people shook off the bonds of old families, family clans, and religious forces and morphed into new social factors. They either congregated in schools or various types of social public institutions or organized their own collectives, such as part-time work and part-time study groups and mutual aid groups. They became the most vibrant force in society because they were directly nurtured by the new cultural ideology and followed their own inclinations, because they had the fewest inhibitions and proved to be the least conservative and the most active and go-getting. Due to their inexperience and lack of sophistication, negative practices also emerged among them, furnishing the old forces with excuses or pretexts to assail them.

Bear in mind that the old family system constituted the fundamental basis of the old society as well as the foundation on which the old ethics and morals had been erected. The criticisms of the old family system and of the old ethics and morals which upheld the old family system shook the very foundations of the old society and inevitably gave rise to grave misgivings among the conservative forces in society.

### 7.3 Sharp Conflicts Between the New and Old Cultures

In a joint letter of reply to Yi Zongkui (1875–1925), Chen Duxiu and Hu Shih clearly pointed out that the old literature, old politics, and old ethics were essentially “next-of-kin” from one single household,<sup>46</sup> and the leaders and combatants of the New Culture Movement were in effect fighting an all-fronts offensive. Meanwhile, as the triumphant advances of the literary revolution, coupled with the revolution in morality, drew untold thousands of young men and women into struggles to shake off the bonds of old morals and ethics, and as their exertions rattled the order of the old-type family and the old society, apologists of the old culture sensed that the foundations of their very existence were being shaken. This inevitably led to head-on conflicts between the new and old cultures.

The old forces had long been irked by the New Culture Movement. However, the voices raised against the New Culture Movement were at first scattered and relatively faint. Starting in 1919, however, the activities of the old forces against the New Culture Movement intensified and their voices became more strident. The old forces were moreover emboldened by repeated injunctions to “ban radical doctrines” issued at this time at the behest of the warlords’ Beiyang government.

An entry in the *Diary of Qian Xuantong* on January 7, 1919 goes like this: “Regarding the so-called ‘reorganization of the liberal arts,’ Master Cai (i.e., Cai

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<sup>46</sup> See *New Youth*, vol. 5, no 4.

Yuanpei—the Author) believes this matter can be negotiated since they have phrased the motion fairly reasonably, and it may be possible to implement the university's reform plan drawn up in winter last year under which the departmental heads would be annulled and [Chen] Duxiu engaged as a professor. If, however, they proceed unreasonably, we should wait for them to issue orders from above regarding removals from office. When that happens, the university's circumstances over the last two years and the reasons for the removals from office could be written out in English, French and German for the information of all civilized countries in the world. I believe this is a good way to handle the matter".<sup>47</sup> This diary entry shows that the government's educational authorities indeed disapproved of the upsurge of new culture at Peking University and intended to suppress it. Their main targets were people like Chen Duxiu. The scheme devised by the authorities was never actually implemented, but the enormous pressures that ultimately forced Chen Duxiu to leave Peking University clearly had to do with it.<sup>48</sup>

As stated earlier, the article entitled "Why Classical Writing Ought Not to Be Abolished" by Lin Shu in 1917 had still been a very faint voice. But by this time Lin published two stories in which he obliquely but viciously attacked the New Culture Movement and its leaders. The story, "Born of Brambles," was about three youngsters (allusions to Chen Duxiu, Hu Shih, and Qian Xuan) grandiloquently discussing the literary revolution and such topics as negating Confucius and the old morals. Just as they were working themselves into a lather, a "great hero" (an allusion to Beiyang warlord Xu Shuzheng) who had been listening to them with disgust walked over and gave them a sound hiding, whereupon the three turned tail and ran. The other story, "Demon's Dream," was about a school that taught in the vernacular.<sup>49</sup> Its principal Yuan Xugong, dean of studies Tian Heng, and deputy dean of studies Qin Ershi were allusions to Cai Yuanpei, Chen Duxiu, and Hu Shih, respectively. Day in and day out, the story ran, the two deans of studies touted the vernacular language and denigrated the feudal morals and ethics while the principal merely nodded in acquiescence. One day, an ogre suddenly showed up and without further ado devoured all three of them, and left in their place a pile of stinking feces. These two stories took abuse of the New Culture Movement and its leaders to the acme of spitefulness, and left no question in the reader's mind as to what or who was being targeted. People already recognized that the allusions and attacks by Lin Shu were not meant merely to provide temporary gratification, but that they embodied specific intentions and expectations. In an article "The Pitched Battle between New and Old Trends of Thought," Li Dazhao commented that "those outdated people" were incapable of "resisting the new by taking an open and forthright stand on reason," so they "attempt to influence forces beyond and outside those of reason to uproot this newly germinating phenomenon." And they hoped to

<sup>47</sup> *Diary of Qian Xuantong* (lithographic copy), vol. 4, pp. 1716–1717, Fujian Education Publishing House, 2002.

<sup>48</sup> Published in the February 17, 1919 edition of the Shanghai *Xin Shen Bao*.

<sup>49</sup> Published in the March 19–23, 1919 editions of the Shanghai *Xin Shen Bao*.

overwhelm their adversaries by “invoking that ‘great hero’ and resorting to ferocious force”.<sup>50</sup> Lin Shu also wrote a letter to Peking University Principal Cai Yuanpei in an attempt to apply pressure on that eminent person and suppress the New Culture Movement and its leaders. In his letter, he wrote that some professors of the new school vigorously touted “unfilial and unethical views,” “subvert Confucius and Mencius and undermine the important ethics in human relationships,” “reject all of the ancient classics,” and “use street slang as their written language,” and went so far as to vilify the professors as “having human heads but speaking the language of animals.” He maintained that the university authorities should interdict such behavior, otherwise “they will be using their status and influence to lead education onto path of the eccentric and bizarre.” He advised Cai to “pay attention, and adhere to the conventional,” and “straighten out the trend for the nation’s sake”.<sup>51</sup> This letter drew strong responses after it appeared in the papers. Lin’s sniping was accompanied by open challenges that obviously had to be taken quite seriously. To wit, “newspapers have carried a request by Parliamentary Zhang Yuanqi, who paid a visit to Fu Zengxiang to request intervention in the new-trend movement at Peking University. If this is not done, the Senate will initiate a motion for impeachment. . .”.<sup>52</sup> There were also rumors spread by the conservatives to harm Cai Yuanpei. Various signs indicated that these rumors were not entirely unfounded. It was widely reported that the authorities intended to remove Cai Yuanpei from his post as president of Peking University and expel Chen Duxiu, Hu Shih, Qian Xuantong, Liu Bannong, and other principal leaders of the New Cultural Movement. A great many tabloids and pamphlets attacked Peking University as well as Hu Shih, etc. Some even fabricated extremely venomous stories that personally assailed Chen Duxiu and his colleagues. It was alleged, for example, that Chen Duxiu and some students at Peking University had visited the same prostitute and that Chen, in a fit of pique, had injured the prostitute’s private parts. Such rumors would normally have been laughed off by the discerning, but under those extreme circumstances there were people who gave the rumors credence. Moreover, someone even penned an anonymous letter threatening Chen Duxiu and Hu Shih. “This letter,” he wrote, “is for the information of Baldy Chen, Hu the Trouble-maker, and others in your pack of rogues. Your evil-doing is worse than that done by the Yellow Turbans and the White Lotus Society. You betray and denigrate your own people, you use foreigners’ flatulence to defame the Sage, you show no respect for anything sacred, you commit all manner of evil, mounting brazen attacks and parading your powers. You have incurred the ire of men and the gods and will not be countenanced by Heaven or Earth. The lives of curs like you

<sup>50</sup> See Mei Zhou Ping Lun (Weekly Critic), no. 12.

<sup>51</sup> This letter was originally carried in the March 18, 1919 issue of the journal Gong Yan Bao (Public Voice) and cited in New Tide, vol. 1, no. 4.

<sup>52</sup> This piece of news was carried in the April 1, 1919 issue of Shen Bao. The present quotation is from the article “A Warning to the Conservatives” in Chen Bao (Morning Paper) and cited in Mei Zhou Ping Lun, no. 17.



are not worth the price of even a small bomb, yet there are those who would be willing to go to that wasteful expense for the sake of eliminating you and throwing you to the jackals and dogs. In my view, you are trouble makers who deliberately court condemnation, but you do so out of ignorance, and killing you would be a pity. However, the matter is not in my hands and you should take precautions. Go meet the King of Hell and get a good scolding!”<sup>53</sup> At first sight, this letter would seem to be the work of some hooligan, but upon closer examination of its contents one may conclude it was written by a fairly erudite person who evinced concern for current events. It reflected the hatred nursed by the authorities and people in the conservative camp against the New Culture Movement and its leaders, hatred so deep that only wiping them out could provide any satisfaction. It also shows the extent of the pressures exerted by the Peking authorities and conservative forces on Peking University, its president, and its progressive professors.

Cai Yuanpei published his letter of reply to Lin Shu in the March 18 issue of *Gong Yan Bao* (Public Voice Journal). Although the reply was moderately toned, Cai made it quite clear that he supported the new Cultural Movement. He first rebutted as unfounded slander all such allegations that teachers “subvert Confucius and Mencius and undermine the important ethics in human relationships,” “reject all of the ancient classics, and use street slang as the written language.” He then frankly and forthrightly announced his guiding principles for running the university. He pointed out first, that “with regard to scholastics, the university holds to the principles of freedom of thought and all-inclusiveness, as is the general practice in all universities world-wide. . . All schools of thought, though they may be mutually conflicting, are allowed to develop freely as long as their statements make sense and their views are well-founded and not yet foredoomed to natural elimination.” Second, the university “judges its teachers mainly by their scholarly attainments, and the only limits placed on their teaching activities at the university are that they do not transgress the limits of the foregoing propositions. Their words and actions outside the university are their own business, and this university neither concerns itself about nor takes any responsibility for these.” Such being the principle, there were indeed teachers at Peking University who stood for an imperial restoration, and teachers whose private conduct was less than discreet. But they were countenanced, so long as they were expert in some special field, conscientiously addressed their teaching responsibilities, and “did not lure students into degeneracy together with themselves”.<sup>54</sup> Cai Yuanpei’s two principles were clearly conducive

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<sup>53</sup> See Geng Yunzhi: “Cai Yuanpei and Hu Shih,” thesis at the International Academic Seminar in 1988 to commemorate the 120th Birthday of Cai Yuanpei, and carried in *On Cai Yuanpei* published by the Tourism Press in 1989. Later incorporated in *The Collected Writings of Geng Yunzhi*; see p. 394 of this book, published by the Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 2005.

<sup>54</sup> “Letter to Gong Yan Bao and in Reply to Lin Qinnan,” quoted here from *Collected Writings on the May Fourth Movement*, p. 224; Sanlian Bookstore, 1959. *The Complete Works of Cai Yuanpei*, published in 1997 by the Zhejiang Education Publishing House, changed the title of this article to “Reply to the Censuring by Lin Qinnan,” which I consider to be inappropriate.

to the spreading of the new culture. His second principle, which drew a line between the university teachers' words and actions and the university itself, also implied protections for the university.

On April 31, Beijing University ordered a student named Zhang Houzai to quit school. Zhang had helped Lin Shu publish in the *Xin Shen Bao* a series of stories that viciously attacked the New Culture Movement and its leaders and repeatedly published in many other newspapers groundless articles defaming Peking University teachers. The university's decision could be regarded as a mild punishment for inappropriate actions against participants in the New Culture Movement. Around this time, articles criticizing and condemning Lin Shu and others were published in a dozen or more newspapers, including *Chen Bao*, *Guo Min Gong Bao*, *Bei Jing Xin Bao*, *Shun Tian Shi Bao*, *Min Zhi Ri Bao*, *Min Fu Bao*, *Bei Jing Yi Shi Bao*, *Shi Shi Xin Bao*, *Shen Zhou Ri Bao*, *Wei Yi Ri Bao* (Beijing), *Zhong Hua Xin Bao* (Shanghai), *Xin Min Bao* (Beijing), *Chuan Bao* (Chengdu), and *Zhe Jiang Jiao Yu Zhou Bao*, etc. The *Mei Zhou Ping Lun* (Weekly Critic), set up by Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, also put out two special issues dedicated to publishing these newspapers' commentaries on the conflict between old and new cultures.<sup>55</sup> The consensus in these articles focused on promoting the concepts of academic independence and freedom of thought and opposed suppression of the new ideology, new culture, and new education by autocratic and other improper means. These articles were at the same time counterattacks against the conservative camp and expressions of support for the New Culture Movement.

In spite of such expressions of support from public opinion, Cai Yuanpei and Peking University as well as the leaders of the New Culture Movement were nonetheless exposed to considerable pressure. The fiercest attacks were directed at Chen Duxiu, first, because he was publicly acknowledged to be the main leader of the New Culture Movement and, second, because of indiscretions in his personal conduct, which were seen as vulnerabilities by the conservatives. Within Peking University itself, Chen was also regarded as being overly radical in certain respects. Moreover, vestiges of localism existed among the faculty at Peking University. Teachers hailing from Jiangsu and Zhejiang, and Zhejiang in particular, had formed cliques of their own. A central figure among them was Tang Erhe (1878–1940), the then president of the Peking Medical School. Tang was an extremely shrewd man and highly skilled at power politics, and Cai Yuanpei et al were very much prone to listening to his opinions. On March 1, 1919, an appraisal meeting at Peking University passed the decision to set up a joint teaching affairs office for both the liberal arts and the sciences, to be implemented after the summer vacations in the same year. This involved annulling the positions of the head of liberal arts and head of sciences respectively. It is not known whether this decision was meant at the time to target Chen Duxiu. But a decision a short time later to expedite its implementation was clearly directed at Chen. Records show that at an informal meeting convened by Chen Duxiu, Tang Erhe took the lead in sharply criticizing Chen

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<sup>55</sup> See the May 13, 1919 no. 17 and the April 27, no. 19 issues of *Weekly Critic*.

Duxiu. According to Tang's own account, he had "come out against a certain gentleman [Chen Duxiu—the Author] because the latter and some Peking University students had frequented the same prostitute, and in an fit of jealousy, that gentleman had gouged and injured the prostitute's private parts. The news has spread like wildfire, and such conduct can in no way serve as a teacher's example for his students".<sup>56</sup> Tang strongly stood for making Chen Duxiu leave Peking University. This was further evidence that some people hoped to mitigate the pressures on Peking University by firing Chen Duxiu. At the urgings of Tang Erhe and others, Cai Yuanpei, who was founder and chairperson of an "Advanced Morality Society" at Peking University, had no choice but to rule that Chen Duxiu should leave the university. Apparently the only dissenter to this ruling was Hu Shih, who many years later still voiced exasperation when he came across references to the matter in Tang Erhe's diaries.<sup>57</sup>

Chen Duxiu's departure from Peking University temporarily and to a certain extent attenuated the conservatives' attacks against the New Culture Movement at Peking University but did not allay their hatred for the movement and its leaders. The outbreak of the May Fourth Movement gave them an opportunity to implement reprisals of even greater vindictiveness. The May Fourth Movement was a patriotic student movement, and the young people's ardor for democracy, freedom and equality, fostered over the years by the new culture, erupted over the corrupt Beiyang Government's humiliating appeasement of foreign powers. When the news broke that China had been shorn of some of its sovereign territory in Shandong Province by the Paris Peace Conference, thousands of students in the capital city staged a spontaneous demonstration, beat up Zhang Zongxiang who bore responsibility for China's loss of sovereignty in Shandong, and set fire to the residence of Cao Rulin, another culpable official. The Beijing authorities' suppression of the students stoked greater fury among students and sympathy from all patriotic personages. Students boycotted classes, delivered street-corner speeches, distributed fliers, and sent liaison teams all over the country, sweeping up a huge patriotic protest movement nationwide. Die-hard elements in the government and conservative forces in society all held the leaders of the New Culture Movement at Peking University directly responsible for this situation.

On the same night that the May Fourth Movement began, Qian Nengshun (1869–1924), prime minister of the Beijing government, called a meeting at his private residence for emergency consultations on ways of dealing with the student movement. Some persons at the meeting proposed that Peking University be dissolved. Fu Zengxiang (1872–1950), the minister of education, opposed this proposal and threatened to leave his position in protest. Soon afterward, Fu was indeed forced to step down. By then, Cai Yuanpei had already resigned from Beijing University's presidency and left the city. Meanwhile student protests and

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<sup>56</sup> See "Tang Erhe's Letter of Reply to Hu Shih" in Geng Yunzhi ed.: *Hu Shih's Posthumous Writings and Confidential Correspondence*, vol. 36, p. 509; Huangshan Book Press, 1994.

<sup>57</sup> See the three letters from Hu Shih to Tang Erhe; same book as above, vol. 20, pp. 104–116.

expressions of support from various regions grew more intense by the day. Students arrested on May 4 had already been released, but because the authorities had rejected the students' demands that Cao Rulin, Zhang Zongxiang, and Lu Zongyu be cashiered and tried to justify and whitewash their treasonous crimes, students from more than twenty colleges and universities took part in class boycotts and demonstrations on June 3, and the authorities went so far as to arrest close to a thousand of them. The direct causes for these developments were political, but the entire situation was an inevitable reflection of the exacerbated conflict between the old and new cultures and a continuation of the vengeful actions by the conservatives and the reactionary government against the New Culture Movement. The conservative forces were still intent on disbanding Peking University. Government authorities had made no sincere effort to persuade Cai Yuanpei to stay on when he resigned and left the city. By contrast, China's President Xu Shichang (1855–1939) time and again attempted to retain Cao Rulin, Zhang Zongxiang, and Lu Zongyu—the three culprits in the selling out of China's national sovereignty—when the latter were forced by public opinion to hand in their resignations. Before long, the government announced that Hu Renyuan would assume the presidency of Peking University, but it was a foregone conclusion that Hu would be spurned by Peking University's teachers and students.

Although temporary administrators took charge at Peking University after Cai Yuanpei's departure and Hu Renyuan's rejection, there was little the university could accomplish in those turbulent circumstances. All who felt concern for the New Culture Movement and Peking University were worried. In a letter written on May 7 to Hu Shih (who was in Shanghai at the time), Chen Duxiu briefly reported the situation on May 4 and then stated: "No facts indicate as yet that the university will be dissolved, but some wealthy individuals indeed sense there are discontented persons in society who often try to make things difficult for them, and that words are gradually being superseded by actions. In the interests of self-preservation, they are likely to devise corresponding countermeasures." He continued: "It is to be expected that the more than thirty arrested students (twenty-two from the university, including Jiang Shaoyuan) will be chastised, that the university will be overhauled, and that two daily papers and one weekly will be dealt with".<sup>58</sup> A letter written to Hu Shih by Huang Yanpei (1878–1965) and Jiang Menglin (1886–1964) on May 22 also touched on the university's destiny. Hu Shih was then one of those taking part in administering the university's affairs. Huang and Jiang mentioned in their letter that Cai Yuanpei had agreed to resume the presidency on condition that no students were punished, and that the university might well revert to its original state if nothing untoward occurred. However they also prepared for other eventualities. Their first plan: "Our colleagues' greatest hope is that the university will not be disbanded and that Cai Yuanpei resumes his position. [Yet]

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<sup>58</sup> Hu Shih was in Shanghai at end April to welcome John Dewey who came to deliver lectures in China, and had not yet returned to Beijing on May 7. For the quotation here, see *Hu Shih's Posthumous Writings and Confidential Correspondence*, vol. 35, pp. 567–568.

we should make all efforts to set up a university in Nanjing. . . . When this has been done, the new faction in Beijing should be gradually shifted southward and Peking University could be ceded to the old faction. . . . Comparisons may be conducted after twenty or thirty years to see which is the better.” The second plan: “If, unfortunately, Beijing University is disbanded, our colleagues will organize an institution in Nanjing, set up a translating and editing agency, and run first- and second-year university courses in readiness for a comeback.” And finally: “In any case, a university must be set up in the south to serve as a future base camp, since we all know there will eventually be more unrest in Beijing”.<sup>59</sup> Two days later, Jiang Menglin wrote another letter to Hu Shih in which he came straight to the point: “Do you think the university can be kept intact? In my view, it would be best to retain it even if doing so means making some concessions in the overall interest. . . . If, in your view, it looks as though the university cannot be retained, write to me soon so that we can make early preparations for receiving you and your colleagues in Shanghai”.<sup>60</sup> Zhang Dongsun (1886–1973), then chief editor of *Shi Shi Xin Bao*, also wrote to Hu Shih, saying that he too had taken part in consultations on dealing with mishaps that might happen to Peking University and the New Culture Movement. He asked Hu Shih for a detailed account of the Beijing side’s plans for the movement, and about their intentions with regard to education and the Peking University problem.<sup>61</sup> It was obvious from this information that Beijing University and the New Culture Movement faced a very grim situation.<sup>62</sup>

As we all know, Beijing University survived. Jiang Menglin proceeded first to Beijing to take charge of university affairs for a period of time, after which Cai Yuanpei returned to his university presidency in September 1919. Peking University remained as the center of the New Culture Movement. Moreover, the New Culture Movement actually benefitted from the momentum of the political campaigns during those turbulent times to spread rapidly to all areas in the country. The conflict between the new and old cultures was acutely manifested in many provinces nationwide. Let us take Zhejiang and Hunan provinces to illustrate this point.

Zhejiang had emerged as a thriving cultural center during the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279), and literary skills in particular had flourished there in the later years of the Qing Dynasty. A substantial number of professors most active during the New Culture Movement at Peking University hailed from Zhejiang, and included—in addition to President Cai Yuanpei—such notables as Cheng Hanzhang, Cheng Daqi, Ma Shulun, Zhu Xizu, Qian Xuanton, Zhou Zuoren, Ma Yucao, Shen Jianshi, and Ma Yinchu. And of course a no small number of

<sup>59</sup> See *Hu Shih's Posthumous Writings and Confidential Correspondence*, vol. 37, pp. 29–33.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 39, pp. 417–419.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 34, pp. 218–219.

<sup>62</sup> Subsequently, during the large-scale campaign to criticize Hu Shih, some persons groundlessly accused him of scheming to move Beijing University to the south with the intent of sabotaging both the New Culture Movement and Peking University. I have written a special paper to clarify this matter. See “The So-called Issue of Moving Peking University to the South after May 4” carried in the January 5, 1988 issue of *Tuan Jie Bao*.

Zhejiangnese students pursued scholastics at Peking University. The abundance of influential Zhejiangnese at the center of the New Cultural Movement had a major impact on Zhejiang itself, and it was not surprising that sharp conflicts between the old and new cultures evolved in that locality.

According to the reminiscences of participants in the New Culture Movement in the Zhejiang locality, Peking University students went to Hangzhou in Zhejiang after the outbreak of the May 4 Movement, and as a result youthful responders to the new culture came in direct contact there with core elements of the New Culture Movement. Meanwhile, the Zhejiang No. 1 Normal School in Hangzhou, led by the progressive personage Jing Hengyi (1877–1938, courtesy name Ziyuan), recruited a number of teachers with new thinking. These included Chen Wangdao, Xia Gaizun, Liu Dabai, and Li Cijiu who became known as the school principal's "four guardian warriors." With a principal and teachers who supported the new culture, it was only natural that the students should follow suit. Some students at the school set up a kiosk that sold new books and newspapers and distributed such publications as *New Youth*, *Weekly Critic* and *New Tide*. Two other local institutions there that matched the No. 1 Teacher's School in status were the Zhejiang No. 1 Middle School and the Zhejiang Category A Technical College. In October 1919, 1919, students at these two institutions—Zha Mengji (1902–1966) and Ruan Yicheng (1904–1988) of the No. 1 Middle School and Shen Naixi (1900–1995) (aka Shen Duanxian or Xia Yan) and Ni Weixiong of the Technical College—started up a magazine called *Shuang Shi* (Double Tenth) which, in its "declaration" stated that it would "on the one hand exert all efforts to disseminate the new trend of thought and, on the other, furnish sincere counselling to those in leading positions within the conservative camp so that they may bit by bit substitute outdated (thinking) with the new".<sup>63</sup> After two issues had been published, students Shi Cuntong (1898–1970) and Fu Binran (1899–1978) of the Normal School together with 3 persons from the Zongwen Middle School joined the magazine, which by then counted 28 members. As their numbers grew, all agreed to reorganize *Double Tenth* and rename it *Zhejiang New Tide*. The extent to which these young people were influenced by new trends of thought is quite obvious from the four "purports" they announced in this new publication. The first of these purports was to "strive for happiness and progress in mankind's existence"; the second, "reform society"; the third, "promote awareness and alliance among the working people"; and the fourth, "conduct investigations, criticism and guidance among today's students and workers".<sup>64</sup> An article entitled "A Negation of Filial Piety," written by Shi Cuntong (1898–1970) and printed in the second issue of the publication, created a tremendous uproar. Unfortunately, the original text of the article can no longer be found. But recollections

<sup>63</sup> "The Cultural Movement in Zhejiang," originally carried in the October 27, 1919 issue of *Shi Shi Xin Bao*, quoted from *Mass Organizations of the May 4th Period*, vol. 3, p. 128; Sanlian Bookstore, 1979.

<sup>64</sup> "Foreword," *Zhejiang New Tide*, 1st issue, quoted from *Mass Organizations of the May 4th Period*, vol. 3, pp. 124–126.

written by Shi 10 years later provide a glimpse of the gist of “A Negation of Filial Piety.” In his recollections, Shi said he learned in October 1919 that his mother was gravely indisposed, and he hurried home to see her. He found his mother in a pitiful state, with no one to tend to her daily needs and no doctor engaged to provide her with medical treatment. He begged his father to get a doctor, but his father declared the money had to be saved for her ceremonies and funeral arrangements. Shi knew the code of filiality forbade any disobedience of his father’s wishes, yet filiality certainly did not countenance leaving one’s sick mother without medical treatment or personal care. He was helplessly caught between these precepts. Shi eventually tore himself away and went back to school, but he was devastated by this incident. The acute conflict and anguish he had endured gave rise in him to the following realizations: “First, private property is the source of all evil. If these were times of communized property and public hospitals, my mother could have gone to a hospital for treatment when she fell ill. She would not have died without even knowing what illness affected her! There would have been no danger of a minor ailment turning into major affliction! She would not have had to suffer from lack of anyone to take care of her! Two, there is no telling how much evil the family system has caused on account of the ‘status’ doctrine! Had the status relationship not existed between me and my father, I would have had full freedom to attend to my mother’s situation; but my father used the status relationship to raise obstructions that kept my hands tied! Three, ‘filiality’ is a slavish morality that undermines human nature. Were it not for the shackles of such morality, I could certainly have strenuously opposed improper behavior like that displayed by my father, and harmony and happiness would certainly prevail at all times between parents and children. Four, were it not for the parent/progeny relationship, all people could share the same closeness and affection, there would everywhere be people to take care of the living, dying, sick and afflicted, and there would be no need for those long distances away to return for that purpose”.<sup>65</sup> There is reason to believe that these realizations were expressed in the article “A Negation of Filial Piety.” Shi also stated in his recollections that “A Negation of Filial Piety” contained a basic concept, i.e., “that people should be free, equal and fraternal, and should help one another, and that the morality of ‘filiality’ does not conform to these requirements and for this reason should be opposed”.<sup>66</sup> We have pointed out more than once that “filiality” constituted the core of the old traditional morality. Shi Cuntong was the first person in Zhejiang to assail that core of the old morality. The publication of “A Negation of Filial Piety” triggered violent reactions from the conservative camp.

The atmosphere in Zhejiang’s educational and cultural circles had previously been fairly low-key and subdued. After the May Fourth Movement, Jing Hengyi (1877–1938), who was then chairman of the Zhejiang Education Society and

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<sup>65</sup> “Looking Back at Myself Over the Last Twenty-Two Years,” originally carried in the September 23, 1920 issue of *Min Guo Ri Bao*: Awakening; quoted from *Mass Organizations of the May 4th Period*, vol. 3, p. 135.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

principal of the No. 1 Normal School, took the lead in instituting reforms at the school—reforms that allowed students to read new books and newspapers, promoted vernacular teaching materials, permitted student self-government, and so forth. These measures had already aroused dissatisfaction and animosity among conservative elements in the provincial government and parliament and among people in charge at other schools, and they saw the publishing of “A Negation of Filial Piety” as an opportunity to retaliate. First of all, the Provincial Police Department banned the Zhejiang New Tide and prohibited the publication, distribution, and postal delivery of the journal. Next, the province’s military governor Lu Yongxiang and the provincial governor Qi Yueshan immediately ordered the provincial department of education to investigate the No. 1 Normal School, and at the same time submitted a report to the national president in Beijing, the state council and the ministries of internal affairs and education. The charge they leveled was: “Advocating social reform and household revolution, sanctifying labor, and defaming loyalty and filiality.” Worth noting is that they took the opportunity to raise the following accusation: “It has been found that the spreading of these fallacies did not start in Zhejiang Province. Beijing University has been propagating them nationwide, and the magazine New Tide has in particular wantonly touted these fallacies. In addition, such books as *The New Society*, *Liberation and Reform*, and *Youthful China* and the Shanghai newspaper Shi Shi Xin Bao have all flaunted the banners of remoulding the old society and overthrowing the old morality”.<sup>67</sup> The state council expressly sent out coded telegrams requesting that all provinces pay close attention to such circumstances, and that any like circumstances be at once proscribed when spotted. The Zhejiang education authorities applied pressure on Jing Hengyi, demanding that he resign of his own accord, but Jing refused to knuckle under. The authorities then transferred him away from the No. 1 Normal School, after which Shi Cuntong and several other student leaders were compelled to leave Hangzhou. Shi Cuntong later went to Japan with the assistance of Dai Jitao (1891–1949).<sup>68</sup> The furore triggered by “A Negation of Filial Piety” was quite typical of the acute conflicts between the new and old cultures as well as between the new and old ideologies and moralities.

In Hunan province, ever since the rise of the Zeng Guofan faction and the area’s baptism by the Reform Movement of 1898 and the 1911 Revolution, intellectuals in that province and especially the younger ones often stood at the forefront of social trends. Groups of young people had become active even before the May Fourth Movement. When Yang Changji (1871–1920), originally a teacher at the No. 1 Normal Institute, went to teach at Peking University, he landed right in the middle of the new culture, and the more intellectually active among his former student-followers very soon came in contact with New Youth and other

<sup>67</sup> See “Secret Telegram from Lu Yongxiang to the President and Others,” quoted from *Mass Organizations of the May 4th Period*, vol. 3, p. 142.

<sup>68</sup> See written by Ishikawa Yoshihiro, translated by Yuan Guangquan: *History of the Founding of The Chinese Communist Party*, p. 286; Chinese Social Sciences Press, 2006.



publications. Changes quickly took place in their thinking. In April 1918, they organized and set up the Xinmin (New Citizen) Society, the soul of which was Mao Zedong. The original goal set by the society was to “reform academics, temper conduct, and improve people’s minds and customs”.<sup>69</sup> According to Mao Zedong’s “Xinmin Society Conference Report” No. 1., Mao and other persons apparently put forward ideas that were more radical but not written in because the majority of the participants did not approve of them. The activities of the Xinmin Society had a considerable impact in Hunan. First of all, its call to organize young people for part-work and part-study programs in France was highly successful. Not a few famous revolutionaries subsequently emerged from among these students. Second, members of the society took an active part in promoting and leading the patriotic anti-Japan and anti-warlord mass movements in Hunan after the May Fourth Movement. And thirdly, they ran newspapers and publications and organized cultural reading societies. According to New Youth reports, a great many new publications sprang up in Changsha after the May Fourth Movement, such as Xiang Jiang Ping Lun (Xiangjiang Review), Xin Hu Nan (New Hunan), Nü Jie Zhong (Women’s Bell), Yue Lu Zhou Kan (Yuelu Weekly), Ming De Zhou Kan (Mingde Weekly), Ti Yu Zhou Kan (Sports Weekly), and so forth.<sup>70</sup> The most influential of these was Xiangjiang Review edited personally by Mao Zedong. Hu Shih, who at the time edited the Weekly Critic, described Xiangjiang Review in the following terms: “The forte of the Xiangjiang Review lies in its commentaries. That major piece of writing ‘The Great Union of the Popular Masses’ in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th issues of Xiangjiang Review is far-seeing and forthrightly presented, and is indeed an important piece of writing in these times. Also, the column ‘Commentaries on Major Xiangjiang Events’ casts the new movement in Hunan in a light that infuses us with limitless optimism. The fact that such a fine brother has emerged under today’s militarist dominance is truly an unexpected joy for us”.<sup>71</sup> In his “The Grand Union of the Popular Masses,” Mao Zedong posited that “the fundamental method” for the reformation of a society “is a grand union of the masses.” He also perceived that “all movements in history, irrespective of their nature, start out as alliances of the people, and larger movements call for larger alliances”.<sup>72</sup> He called on peasants, on students and teachers, on women, on people in all walks of life to form alliances and ultimately form a grand nationwide alliance. This piece of writing clearly showed that Mao Zedong had by this time been influenced by the [Russian] October Revolution. Alerted and alarmed by the comments in Xiangjiang Review, the ruling authorities banned the publication after just five issues. The Cultural Reading Society organized by the Xinmin Study Society began in the summer of

<sup>69</sup> See “Xinmin Society Conference Report” No. 1., quoted from *Mass Organizations of the May 4th Period*, vol. 1, p. 575.

<sup>70</sup> See *New Youth*, vol. 7, no. 1, “Social Survey: An Overall View of Changsha Society.”

<sup>71</sup> Hu Shih: “An Introduction to the New Publications *Construction*, *Xiangtan Review* and *Sunday*”, see *Weekly Critic* no. 36 (August 24, 1919).

<sup>72</sup> See “‘The Grand Union of the Popular Masses’ (1), *Xiangtan Review*, no. 2.

1920 when the organizers had already acquired greater understanding of the October Revolution. In a report entitled “The Start-up of the Cultural Reading Society” they voiced their belief that the flowers of a truly new culture had just blossomed forth in Russia. Regarding the origins of the Cultural Reading Society, they stated: “We have determined that the lack of new culture is due to the lack of new ideology, that the lack of new ideology is due to the lack of studies, and that the lack of studies is due to the lack of study materials. Today, the minds of Hunan’s people are indeed more famished than their bellies. Young people, in particular, are crying out for sustenance. The Cultural Reading Society is ready to introduce various sorts of the newest Chinese and foreign books, newspapers and magazines in the quickest and most convenient manner to furnish young people and all Hunanese people with new study materials. It is indeed our earnest prayer and greatest hope that doing so may give rise to new ideology and a new culture”.<sup>73</sup> The activities of the Cultural Reading Society produced substantial results and effects. The “First Business Report of the Cultural Reading Society” tells us that in the 42 days from the society’s business start-up on September 9 up to October 20, the society sold 164 kinds of books, 45 kinds of magazines, and three kinds of newspapers, including 165 copies of *New Youth* vol. 8 no. 1, 130 copies of Lao Dong Jie (Labor World) nos. 1–9, and relatively fewer—65 copies—of the daily paper Shi Shi Xin Bao. Of books, it sold 30 copies of *Rousseau’s Political Ideals* and 40 copies of Hu Shih’s *A Volume of Experiments*. In its second report, it claimed to have sold 2,000 copies of *New Youth* and as many as 5,000 copies of Labor World. Among sales of daily newspapers, the largest number was again of the Shi Shi Xin Bao, or 75 copies per day. It also sold 200 copies of *An Introduction to Marx’s Das Capital*, 220 copies of *Dewey’s Five Major Speeches*, 80 copies of *An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*, 140 copies of *A Volume of Experiments*, and 180 copies of *Letter Writing in the Vernacular*.<sup>74</sup> These figures give us an approximate idea of the intellectual inclinations of the reading public. Fourth, it launched and promoted a successful campaign to drive away Zhang Jingyao (1881–1933). Zhang Jingyao was one of the persons who controlled the warlords of the Anhui faction in the Beijing Government. His flagrant misdeeds after he took up a leading position in the Hunan government in March 1918 earned him the hatred of the general public. In August, 1919 Zhang Jingyao ordered the closing down of the Xiangjiang Review and the dissolution of the Hunan Provincial Student Alliance. Mao Zedong began then to consider the matter of driving out Zhang. In December that year, when the newly restored provincial student alliance mobilized all citizens for a second demonstration meeting at which Japanese goods were torched, Zhang Jingyao went so far as to order suppression by armed force, triggering fury throughout Hunan. Mao Zedong and some members of the Xinmin Study Society took an active part in organizing and leading a campaign to expel

<sup>73</sup> “The Start-up of the Cultural Reading Society,” originally carried in the July 31, 1920 issue of Da Gong Bao; quoted from *Mass Organizations of the May 4th Period*, vol. 1, pp. 44–45.

<sup>74</sup> See *Mass Organizations of the May 4th Period*, vol. 1, pp. 53–54, pp. 62–64.

Zhang. A large-scale student strike was held, after which representatives were chosen and dispatched to Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shanghai to drum up support in all quarters. By June 1920, amid universal denunciation as well as pressure exerted by both the Zhili faction warlords and the Hunan military authorities, Zhang Jingyao was finally driven out of Hunan.

By and large, one of Hunan's characteristics was that the acute conflict between the old and the new during the New Culture Movement very soon focused on political matters. Another characteristic was that the conflict found expression in the women's emancipation issue.

In November 1919, Zhao Wuzhen, a young woman in Changsha, killed herself in protest against her parentally arranged marriage as she was being carried to the groom's home in a sedan chair. This incident triggered a huge repercussion in society. Changsha Da Gong Bao, Women's Bell and other newspapers published numerous articles fiercely criticizing the old marriage system, the old morality, and the old society as a whole. Mao Zedong wrote nine articles on the incident. Greatly distressed, he stated: "What lies behind this incident is the corruptness of the marriage system, the evils of the old society, the lack of independent will, and the lack of free choice of marriage partners." The evil institutions that had taken the life of Zhao Wuzhen could similarly take the life of countless other women and even men. Hence, he ascribed that tragedy to the "myriad iniquities of society".<sup>75</sup> An article in Women's Bell lauded Zhao Wuzhen for her praiseworthy spirit of "preferring death to lack freedom." In the spring of 1920, another Changsha girl named Li Xinshu courageously left home in protest against a family that tried to force her into a marriage. A young man to whom she had been betrothed had died of some illness, and her family had at first intended to keep her with them as an "unmarried widow." But they later felt it would be financially more beneficial for them to marry her off to a wealthy man. Furious, Li refused and fled alone to Beijing. Her action was highly acclaimed by public opinion which asserted: "Ms. Zhao Wuzhen's death last year was of negative significance since it merely jolted some old fogeys out of their fond illusions but failed to set an example for our young people. . . . By leaving home, Ms. Li Xinshu has displayed an indomitable spirit of fighting for her existence, and she has broken through the barriers of family custom and the Confucian code. She thoroughly understands the new thinking, her outlook on life is one of loving and striving for the world, she has positive methods, and she has the courage to implement them. The impact she has produced. . . as regards young people, is a tremendous lesson for us. Compared to Ms. Zhao's impact, hers is more important, more far-reaching, and more realistic".<sup>76</sup> Indeed, although Zhao Wuzhen's death was a protest and had a shock effect, it did not give

<sup>75</sup> Mao Zedong: "Society's Iniquities and Ms. Zhao," originally carried by the November 21, 1919 issue of Da Gong Bao; quoted here from *The History of China's Women's Movement*, p. 104, compiled by the China Women's Federation and published by the Chunqiu Press in 1989.

<sup>76</sup> "The Impact Produced by Ms. Li Xinshu Leaving Home," carried by the February 28, 1920 issue of Changsha Da Gong Bao; quoted here from *The History of China's Women's Movement*, p. 105.

people any indication of a way out. Li Xinshu's action was also a protest, but it showed people a way to fight for freedom. Hence her example was more important. The first to help her after she arrived in Beijing was Li Jinhui (1891–1967), a fellow Hunanese. Li Jinhui specially approached Hu Shih for assistance since Li Xinshu desired to continue her studies. And when Hu Shih agreed to help her, Li Xinshu wrote to him, saying: "I left home for two reasons. First, my parents wanted to force me into a marriage. Secondly, I became dissatisfied with my environment after reading five issues of *New Youth*." She also said she was temporarily unable to attend school because of an affliction to her eyes, and she had been deeply moved when Li Jinhui brought some money so she could get treatment. She wrote: "This chance acquaintance is treating me as a parent would treat me. Things like this have never been done under the old morality. Even if someone had wanted to, he wouldn't have dared. This is the spirit of mutual assistance brought by the new trend of thought, and I am lucky enough to benefit from it".<sup>77</sup>

Another example needs to be mentioned here. Yi Zongkui (1874–1925), a well-known political activist from Hunan who lived in Beijing because he was a member of Parliament, had a very young daughter called Yi Qunxian. Influenced by new trends of thought, the girl felt that living at home did not give her enough freedom. Yet, she had no deep understanding of the new trends of thought and left home, only to drift here and there in state of indecision and angst. At first she took part in the life of a part-work and part-study mutual assistance group, but matters did not turn out very well, and it was inevitable that this as-yet mentally unformed girl should feel even more disoriented. Her relations with her family became badly strained, and living as she did on her own led to a rash of inane rumors which for a time severely stressed the young girl's mental state. Both Li Jinhui and Hu Shih did much to help resolve the girl's problems.<sup>78</sup> Yi Qunxian's example was different from Zhao Wuzhen's or Li Xin Shu's. Zhao Wuzhen protested against the old culture and old morality by taking her own life. Li Xinshu protested against the old culture and morality by leaving home and seeking freedom. Yi Qunxian was neither prepared to die as a sort of negative protest amid the conflicts between the new and old cultures and cultures and moralities nor did she find a positive and practicable new course in life. Her mental disorientation was both a reflection of, and the price paid for, such conflicts.

<sup>77</sup> See *Hu Shih's Posthumous Writings and Confidential Correspondence*, vol 28, pp. 214–215.

<sup>78</sup> See *Hu Shih's Posthumous Writings and Confidential Correspondence*, vol. 29, pp. 390–392 "Letters from Yi Zongkui to Hu Shih"; pp. 393–400 "Letters from Yi Qunxian to Hu Shih"; pp. 462–472 "Letters from Zhao Shiyuan to Hu Shih"; pp. 546–553 "Letters from Li Jinhui to Hu Shih"; and pp. 556–559 "Letters from Lu Dingheng to Hu Shih."

## 7.4 The Social Foundations of the New Culture Movement

In a speech on “The Significance of the New Culture Movement” delivered at Wuchang University in 1925, Hu Shih said: “This new literary movement was neither proposed by any single person, nor was it broached in the last eight years. This new literary movement pertains to history. The few of us here today have merely acknowledged this trend, assisted it, and made it known to the general public. . . . The new literary movement has certainly not been concocted out of thin air, nor was it created by a few individuals”.<sup>79</sup> He was talking about the literary revolution, but the same thing applies to the entire New Culture Movement. This movement had a historical background, and it had social foundations.

We have already presented relevant discussions regarding the historical origins of the New Culture Movement and no more details are needed here. We will focus here on discussing its social foundations.

Any discussion on social foundations must involve the then state of economic development, since that constitutes the basis of all social activities.

Most of today’s economists and historians are fairly unanimous on the view that China’s economy, and especially its industrial economy, registered fairly rapid advances in decade or so after the founding of the Nationalist Republic. Some call those years a “golden era.” Statistics show that by June 1921, 794 modern enterprises with a total capital of 321,820,000 yuan were registered with the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce—a two- and three-fold increase respectively as compared to prerepublican times.<sup>80</sup> Also, according to studies by today’s scholars, the capital on reserve at Chinese national-capital industrial and communications enterprises was 287,410,000 yuan in 1913 but 579,770,000 yuan in 1920, doubling in 7 years.<sup>81</sup> A direct outcome of the growth of modern industries and enterprises was of course the development of cities and towns and the flow of rural populations to urban areas. Some people migrated to the cities to do business, others to work in factories or engage in other social endeavors. As regards the workers, some estimates put the number of China’s industrial workers in 1913 at between 500,000 to 600,000.<sup>82</sup> Another estimate puts them at more than 1,170,000.<sup>83</sup> The latter estimate is probably too high. In 1919 or thereabouts, the number of industrial workers rose rapidly. There have been different estimates about this increase: Liu

<sup>79</sup> See *Complete Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 12, pp. 83–4.

<sup>80</sup> See *Archival Materials of the May 4th Patriotic Movement*, pp. 2–11, Chinese Social Sciences Press, 1980.

<sup>81</sup> See Xu Dixin and Wu Chengming (1999, pp. 1046–1047).

<sup>82</sup> See Wang Jingyu: *Materials on the History of Modern Industry in China*, 2nd ed. “Preface”, pp. 38–39.

<sup>83</sup> Labor Movement History Research Office of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions ed. : “Preliminary Estimate of Developments and Changes in the Number of China’s Industrial Workers Before the Liberation” (not published), quoted from Liu Mingkui ed.: *Historical Circumstances of the History of China’s Working Class*, book 1, vol. 1 p. 89, CPC Party School Press, 1985.

Likai (1916–1991) and Wang Zhen (1905–1989) estimated there were about 2,600,000 industrial workers in China in 1919; Zhang Zongren put the number at about 1,900,000, and the Frenchman Jean Chesneaux (1922–2007) put it at close to 1,490,000.<sup>84</sup> These estimates only concern increases in the number of urban industrial workers; we have found no statistics regarding business people or other persons looking for employment in the cities. It may be assumed, however, that their numbers increased considerably. The soaring increases in urban populations were bound to promote the development of various services and of cultural and educational undertakings. Moreover, the substantially different lifestyles of urban and rural populations gave rise to various new requirements in both their material and cultural lives. People living in the cities, especially in cities along the coast, major rivers, and important communication lines, had closer links to the outside and were more likely to come in contact with new matters, new thinking, and new concepts. The cities also had more carriers and transmission channels to meet their new requirements.

Education underwent substantial development in the decade or so after the founding of the republic. Statistics indicate that the number of students in schools of various levels nationwide had surpassed 5,180,000 around the year 1920, as compared to about 2,930,000 in the first year of the republic.<sup>85</sup> Elementary education which got more attention at the time grew most rapidly. The number of elementary schools, of which there were only some 86,300 in 1912, reached 129,000 in 1915. And the schools' students who numbered about 2,790,000 in 1913 exceeded 4,480,000 by 1919.<sup>86</sup> According to statistics compiled by Yuan Xitao (1866–1930), students in elementary schools numbered some 4,110,000 in 1915–1916 but rose to more than 5,720,000 in 1919–1920.<sup>87</sup> During the New Culture Movement, basically all persons who were exposed to new trends of thought and who participated in that movement in various ways had received secondary or higher levels of education. Let us now take a look at the state of development of institutions of secondary and higher education. Some statistics show that there were only 69,770 students (948 of them girls) in secondary schools nationwide in 1915.<sup>88</sup> Other statistics show that the number of secondary school students had reached 132,432 by 1918–1920,<sup>89</sup> almost doubling. By comparison,

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<sup>84</sup> See Liu Mingkui ed.: *Historical Circumstances of the History of China's Working Class*, book 1, vol. 1, pp. 89–112.

<sup>85</sup> See Shu Xincheng (1961, pp. 367, 377).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 368 and p. 383.

<sup>87</sup> Yuan Xitao: "Elementary Education in China in the Last Fifty Years," see Shen Bao Office (1987a, lithographic copy).

<sup>88</sup> Liao Shicheng: "Secondary School Education in China in the last Fifty Years," see same book as above.

<sup>89</sup> See Shu Xincheng: *Materials on the History of Modern Education in China*, vol. 1, p. 377.

higher education in China lagged far behind, as students in institutions above the junior college level nationwide totaled no more 25,948.<sup>90</sup>

All of the above figures concern the number of students actually in school. If account is to be taken of all students who had received an education above the secondary level since the end of the Qing Dynasty, the total number of persons nationwide who had educations at and above the secondary level in the New Culture Movement period would exceed several hundred thousand. One may safely assume that the majority of these were receptive to the influence of new ideology and sympathetic to and supportive of the New Culture Movement. A few hundred thousand persons was indeed a miniscule figure compare to the then four hundred million population of China. However, if one considers that the great majority of these few hundred thousand were concentrated in cities along the coast, major rivers, and important communication lines—cities which took the lead in forming social trends, the impact they could exert was not negligible.

Among these several hundred thousand persons who might be called intellectuals, some of the elites had returned to China after studying abroad, or had at some time or other traveled abroad on inspections or for pleasure. They served in such sectors as education, news and publication, finance, business, or other social endeavors. No few of them played leading roles in various fields of the new culture.

The rapid advances which the New Culture Movement succeeded in achieving within a short time were closely connected with the revolutionary and reform movements in the final years of the Qing Dynasty. The advances were attributable not only to the universal social ground-laying and extensive cultural accumulations conducted by the revolutionary and reform movements for the growth of the new culture—as for example the introductions to new thinking and new doctrines, the criticisms of absolutism and old traditions, the “revolutions” in the fields of historiography, novels, and poetry, the initial promotions of the vernacular, and so forth—but also concerned the leaders big and small in the revolutionary and reform movements, virtually all of whom became active sympathizers and supporters of the New Culture Movement.

First, about the reformers.

We have previously noted that after the collapse of the 1898 Reform, Liang Qichao became the most important representative of the subsequent reform movements. Everyone knows the tremendous role he played in the ideological enlightenment movement in the last years of the Qing Dynasty. All leaders of the New Culture Movement were in one way or another influenced by him, and for that reason acknowledged him as a precursor of the new culture. One might well say the rise of the new culture was directly related to Liang Qichao. Liang actively supported the new culture. He enthusiastically welcomed prose and poetry written in the vernacular. After having read Hu Shih's *A Volume of Experiments*, he

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<sup>90</sup> Guo Bingwen: “Higher Education in China in the Last Fifty Years,” see Shen Bao Office (1987b, lithographic copy). The figures here were obtained by adding up the numbers of students in all institutions at and above the junior college level, as provided by Guo.

declared, “I have never felt such elation and admiration!”<sup>91</sup> Although he had some slight reservations about promoting the new ideology and morality, he on the whole sympathized with and supported these initiatives. The publication *Liberation and Reform* he and his friends ran was regarded as an important institution of the new culture, and many young people saw it as being on a par with *New Youth* and other publications in such respects as promoting new culture, new ideology, and new morals and providing nourishment for the mind. The aims he defined for *Liberation and Reform* laid much stress on “informing readers about various trends in world thought,” and he opposed unification of thought.<sup>92</sup> This was consistent with the positions of leaders of the New Culture Movement.<sup>93</sup> His emphasis, in those times, on individuality and on combining Chinese and Western culture to devise a new Chinese culture<sup>94</sup> was also consistent with, or came close to, the views of leaders of the New Culture Movement.

Zhang Dongsun, a long-time follower of Liang Qichao’s in various reform movements, was chief editor of *Liberation and Reform* and *Shi Shi Xin Bao*. Both the magazine and the newspaper were important consensus institutions during the New Culture Movement. Zhang himself was quite sympathetic to and supportive of the New Culture Movement led by Hu Shih and Chen Duxiu. As I have mentioned earlier, he wrote letters to Hu Shih expressing deep solicitude after the May Fourth Movement broke out and during Peking University’s precarious circumstances. And he, together with Jiang Menglin and Huang Yanpei, took part in devising schemes to assist professors of the new faction at Peking University.

Another follower of Liang Qichao’s during various reform campaigns was Lan Gongwu (1887–1957), chief editor of *Guo Min Gong Bao*, one of the very first publications to support the New Culture Movement. Lan himself actively participated in diverse discussions touched off by *New Youth*, and although his views sometimes differed from those of the main contributors to *New Youth* he quite clearly welcomed the new culture.

The Beijing *Chen Bao* was a newspaper started up by reformist personages who arose during the constitutionalist movement in the last years of the Qing Dynasty, and it played a highly active role in the New Culture Movement. This, to a certain extent, had to do with Li Dazhao’s participation.<sup>95</sup> In February 1919, the newspaper made some important revisions to its supplement, and the revised *Chen Bao Supplement* became a new star of the New Culture Movement.

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<sup>91</sup> See letters from Liang Qichao to Hu Shih, in *Hu Shih’s Posthumous Writings and Confidential Correspondence*, vol. 33, p. 15.

<sup>92</sup> “Introduction to *Liberation and Reform*,” see *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 35*, p. 19 and 21.

<sup>93</sup> See Geng Yunzhi (2005, p. 15).

<sup>94</sup> See Geng Yunzhi (2004, 1st issue).

<sup>95</sup> Note: Li Dazhao had, in the last years of the Qing Dynasty, taken an active part in the parliamentary petition campaigns launched by the constitutionalists, and therefore had deep-going connections with them over the years.



Some of the people who became active during the 1898 Reform period, such as Zhang Yuanji (1867–1959), Gao Mengdan (1870–1936), and Wang Mengzou (1878–1953), still remained as staunch reformists in this period. The Commercial Press run by Zhang and Gao and the Yadong Library operated by Wang were the two most important publishing institutions that supported the New Culture Movement. The great majority of the writings by Hu Shih and Chen Duxiu were printed by these two establishments.

Now, about revolutionary parties. Revolutionaries of the Tong Meng Hui headed by Sun Yat-sen were reorganized as the Kuomintang after the founding of the Nationalist Republic, again reorganized as the China Revolutionary Party (*Zhonghua geming dang*) after the Second Revolution, and ultimately reorganized as the China Kuomintang (*Zhongguo guomin dang*) in 1919. However, for convenience's sake, Kuomintang will be used as the general designation.

Sun Yat-sen reflected deeply on his revolutionary activities after the failure of his first campaign to uphold the constitution in 1917. Influenced by the nascent New Culture Movement and the success of Russia's October Revolution, he began to attach considerable importance to the effects of ideological renovation. He applied himself to writing his *Sun wen xue shuo* (Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Doctrine), in which he dwelt on efforts to change people's thinking by means of "mental construction." Sun took this subject so seriously he specially asked Hu Shih to comment on and recommend the book. Subsequently, in issue no. 31 of *Weekly Critic*, Hu Shih published an article entitled "The Content of *Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Doctrine* and a Commentary," fully approving of the book and pointing out that Sun's aim in writing it was to bring practitioners' plans and ideals to fruition by breaking down people's mental hindrances. Sun Yat-sen showed much concern for the New Culture Movement. He once asked Liao Zhongkai to tell Hu Shih he hoped Hu would start compiling a book on the grammar of the Chinese language as soon as possible to help promote the vernacular Chinese language. He also had members of his political party start up two magazines—the *Xing Qi Ping Lun* (Sunday Commentary) and *Jian She* (Construction), both known as highly distinctive publications during the New Culture Movement. Other than these magazines, starting in June 1919 Sun set up a supplement entitled *Jue Wu* (Awakening) for the *Min Guo Ri Bao* sponsored by members of his Revolutionary Party. This, together with the *Chen Bao* supplement and the *Shi Shi Xin Bao's Xue Deng* (Lamp of Learning) supplement, gained renown as one of the "three major supplements" during the New Culture Movement. *Awakening* was the longest-lasting of the three. As well as articles contributed by members of the China Revolutionary Party, the two magazines and the *Awakening* supplement published a good many articles by leaders and luminaries of the New Culture Movement.

On January 29, 1920, in a "Letter to Kuomintang Comrades in Other Countries," Sun Yat-sen said: "Ever since Peking University students have launched the May Fourth Movement, all patriotic young people see the renovation of their thinking as a means for preparing themselves for innovative endeavors in the days to come. And so there has been an exuberant airing of opinions which has been unanimously encouraged by public opinion nationwide. There has, in response, been a

proliferation of diverse types of publications run by zealous young people who have generated an array of marvelous works that show willingness to go to all lengths and have had a tremendous influence on society. The puppet government, despite its die-hard depravity, has not dared to challenge their onslaughts. This New Culture Movement indeed represents an unprecedented change in China's ideological domain. . . . If it continues to grow, there is no doubt it will yield great and long-lasting effects. If our party is to gain success in the revolution, it must depend on changes in ideology—on 'attacking the mind' as advocated in military strategy or on 'revolutionizing people's minds' in today's parlance. For this reason, the New Culture Movement is truly a matter of the greatest worth".<sup>96</sup> These words reflected the understanding of the New Culture Movement by Sun Yat-sen and some Revolutionary [Kuomintang] Party members. This understanding was why they supported the movement.

It is quite clear that the broad masses of young people who were receiving or had received an education, the new intellectuals serving in the fields of education, journalism, and publishing, and other sectors of the social culture, and forward-looking persons who had taken part in revolution and reform since the last years of the Qing Dynasty were the most important foundation and pillars of the New Culture Movement.

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<sup>96</sup> See *The Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen*, vol. 5, pp. 209–210; Zhonghua Bookstore, 1985.

## Chapter 8

# The Social Foundations of the New Culture Movement

The New Culture Movement succeeded in surmounting obstacles and developing swiftly because there was an objective social need for that movement and because it found wide support in society. Furthermore, the outbreak of the May Fourth Patriotic Movement lent tremendous momentum to the New Culture Movement and enabled it to achieve remarkable results in all domains. Based on the cultural evolutions and accumulations since the last years of the Qing Dynasty, the New Culture Movement gestated and developed some important modern concepts. These new concepts merged with the concrete results of the New Culture Movement to open up new paths and lay the foundation for building up a new culture in today's China. Ninety years later, as we look back at and sum up this period in history, we are deeply cognizant that the New Culture Movement played a truly pivotal role in the Chinese nation's progression from a relatively closed medievalism toward open-door modernization.

### 8.1 The Immense Impetus Given by the May Fourth Movement to the New Culture Movement

The May Fourth Patriotic Movement broke out just as the New Culture Movement was gradually advancing in depth and breadth and as the conflict between the new and old cultures was becoming increasingly acute. Since we all know the reasons for and the specific circumstances of the May Fourth Movement, these need not be rehashed here. What we shall describe here is the close correlation between this movement and the New Culture Movement.

When news of China's diplomatic defeats at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference trickled back to China at the end of April and the beginning of May, the nongovernmental National Council on Foreign Relations held a meeting in the afternoon of May 3rd and decided to hold a grand citizens' meeting at Beijing's

Central Park on May 7 “National Humiliation Day” to discuss ways of dealing with the crisis. Meanwhile, students at Peking University—the center of the New Culture Movement—sprang into action as soon as they learned of the diplomatic crisis. On May 2, some students decided at a meeting of the *Guo Min Za Zhi* (Citizens Magazine) to have Peking University students contact 13 educational institutions at and above the secondary school level in Beijing and hold a rally of student representatives the next evening. That rally on the evening of May 3 turned into a mass mobilization meeting heavily charged with mortification and fury. The meeting participants decided to hold a demonstration in the afternoon of May 4 and to hand letters of protest to foreign embassies, spelling out the standpoint of the Chinese people. What happened on May 4 is common knowledge and needs no further recounting. However, one would ask why Peking University students started up their demonstrations on May 4 when the National Council on Foreign Relations had already decided to hold a grand citizens’ meeting on May 7? Clearly, young students who had been put on their mettle by the New Culture Movement displayed more historical initiative than any other social stratum.

Let us take a look at some of the personalities related to the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement.

The first person to transmit, via nongovernmental channels, the news about China diplomatic debacle at the Paris Peace Conference was Liang Qichao, the universally acknowledged new culture forerunner who sympathized with and supported the New Culture Movement; the first person to disseminate the news by means of the Beijing media was Lin Changmin (1876–1925), a follower of Liang Qichao; and the first to directly inform Peking University students about the news was Peking University’s Principal Cai Yuanpei, that “patron saint” of the New Culture Movement. And those who took a direct part in planning and directing the May 4 demonstration activities were the Peking University students who had been personally exposed to the teachings by leaders of the New Culture Movement, the better-known among them being Fu Sinian, Luo Jialun, Duan Xipeng, Huang Rikui, Xu Deheng, Li Huang, Meng Shouchun, Zhang Guotao, etc. Fu, Luo, and Duan were all backbone members of the New Wave Society; Huang, Xu and Li were activists in the early days of the Young China Association, and Meng and Zhang were both among the first staff members of *Citizens Magazine*. All of them were Peking University students. The Beijing Higher Normal School also had a number of students who became important participants and activists in the movement, and it also gave rise to and developed student groups during the New Culture Movement, among them the Tongyan Association (Equal Speech Association), later renamed the Gongxue (Work Study) Society. It is clear that the nuclear and backbone forces of the May Fourth Patriotic Student Movement consisted of young students who had had the most exposure to the new culture, of a youth elite that had arisen at the center of the New Culture Movement.

After the May Fourth Movement broke out, it was mainly these young student-activists newly emerged during the New Culture Movement who pushed the movement nationwide and stirred up students, businessmen, urban residents, industrial workers, and even peasants in all localities.

One might well say that the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement was due to fermentation by the New Culture Movement. Without the New Culture Movement there would have been no May Fourth Students' Patriotic Movement.

However, once the May Fourth Movement had erupted, it in turn gave a powerful impulse to the New Cultural Movement. To explain this powerful impulse, we must first describe the scale and nature of the May Fourth Movement.

The May Fourth Movement was a great patriotic movement, the central slogan and objective of which was "combat foreign powers externally, purge national traitors internally." Externally, it opposed imperialism and upheld national sovereignty; internally, it opposed the Beiyang warlord government and gave voice to the people's democratic will. Meanwhile, the original intent of the New Culture Movement was to wake up China's people and then lay a foundation for democratic government and a strong and prosperous state. It was in fact closely connected to, and entirely consistent with, the May Fourth Movement.

Patriotism had been the fundamental driving force of all progressive movements in the history of modern China. It was inevitable that more and more people should join in these movements as historic activities took on greater depth and the masses' awareness rose to higher levels. In terms of scale and scope, the May Fourth Patriotic Movement far surpassed any other patriotic movement of a mass nature in China's history. All previous mass patriotic movements after the last years of the Qing Dynasty—as for instance the campaign against Western churches and the movement to recover economic rights—were launched by the public in a given region or of a given stratum for some specific purpose, and even if these campaigns took place by and large at the same point in time, they proceeded independently and each went its own way. The May Fourth Movement was different. This movement took place nationwide and was conducted in concert and with the same objectives by people from virtually every stratum. It was unparalleled in magnitude, in the unanimity of its objectives, and in the concerted nature of its actions. And precisely for these reasons it was more powerful than any previous movement. So powerful, in fact, that the Beiyang warlord government was ultimately unable to cope with it, did not dare sign the Paris Peace Treaty (Treaty of Versailles), and was forced to dismiss from office the treasonous officials Cao Rulin, Zhang Zongxiang, and Lu Zongyu.

As may well be imagined, this movement, with its vast scale and strength and the successes it achieved in terms of its specific objectives, was a tremendous stimulus and inspiration for the general public.

The enthusiasm of Peking University's students located at the center of New Culture Movement soared to unprecedented heights after the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement. The students set up a large number of mass organizations and engaged in all sorts of activities. In addition to conducting anti-imperialist and anti-warlord publicity and organizational work, they vigorously pushed forward the New Culture Movement, started up education for the masses, ran night schools for the general public, set up new newspapers and magazines, and even went to factories to do similar work among industrial workers. The Beijing Students Alliance also sent numerous representatives to various localities to establish

contacts and launch anti-imperialist and anti-warlord political struggles in these localities and further advance the New Culture Movement.

Prior to May 4, the New Culture Movement, as a movement, had been limited in terms of the regions and strata it involved. Regionally, it was limited mainly to such large cities as Beijing and Shanghai; stratum-wise, it operated in the main among young students and some teachers in educational circles, intellectuals in some newspapers and the press, plus a number of men and women of high ideals in the political domain. After May 4, the New Culture Movement spread rapidly to large- and medium-sized cities all over the country and even many townships. Among those it influenced to varying degrees were young men and women and other adults in various trades and professions who had had some education and were able to read books and newspapers. It was as though a huge rock had been dropped in a body of water, driving up waves and ripples that spread swiftly in every direction.

In the previous chapter, we talked about the acute struggles in various localities between the new and old cultures. The great majority of these took place after May 4. This fact alone testifies to the enormous impetus given to the New Culture Movement by the May Fourth Movement. We can illustrate this point by means of the advances in the New Culture Movement after May 4.

Soon after May 4, Yun Daiying (1895–1931) who set up the *Xin sheng* (New Voice) and *Hu zhu* (Mutual Assistance) societies in Wuchang, wrote in a letter to Hu Shih that “there are today many more students than before who are capable of ‘renewing themselves’ and ‘moving forward’”.<sup>1</sup> By “renewing themselves,” he meant that their thinking had changed, that they had acquired new ideology and new concepts; and by “moving forward,” he meant they were taking action and accomplishing such things such as organizing and participating in groups and teams, taking independent action, jointly setting up newspapers and magazines, and so forth. Zheng Chaolin (1901–1998) recalled that he was just 19 years old in the year the May Fourth Movement took place, and Zhangping County where he lived was quite backward. Yet in 2 months after the May Fourth Movement, striking changes took place among the young students there. Zheng said: “There have been marked changes in the general mood here in these last 2 months. For instance, usually inactive students have become active, normally taciturn students are discoursing volubly and eloquently, newspaper reading rooms are crowded, information about current affairs has become more widespread, and most importantly, there is one student who has sponsored a student association entirely on his own”.<sup>2</sup> In October or thereabouts in the same year as the May Fourth Movement, Hu Shih went to the Tangshan Special Industrial School at the invitation of Wu Zhihui (1865–1953) to visit the institute and deliver a speech.<sup>3</sup> One can well imagine the

<sup>1</sup> See Geng Yunzhi (1994, p. 525).

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs of the Chinese Revolutionary Zheng Chaolin*, (Part 1), p. 161. Dongfang Press, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Hu Shih’s going to Tangshan to deliver a speech was mentioned 34 years later in an article he wrote entitled “In Memory of Wu Zhihui.” See *Zi You Zhong Guo* (Free China), vol. 1, issue no. 1.

effects of a personal visit to Tangshan by Hu Shih, a leader of the New Culture Movement. Students of the Tangshan Special Industrial School subsequently wrote a long letter to Hu Shih on what was happening in and outside their school. They wrote that some 20 phonetic alphabet schools had been set up there as well as a society for the dissemination of the phonetic alphabet. They had also started up newspaper called “National Salvation” especially for the general public and it was being circulated in other localities as well. A “federation of various circles” they sponsored was taking in industrial workers and a number of gentry, and their purpose in running it was not only to deal with immediate affairs but to turn it into a “local organ of self-government.” They were also preparing to operate a publishing bureau, which would serve as a center for the new culture. They expressed great interest in developing activities in the industrial domain and the rural areas. The core organization on which they relied at their school was called Ren She (People’s Society) which had its own publication, *Xin Bao Weekly*. From their accounts, one sees that students who had awakened during the New Culture Movement due to the influence of the May Fourth Movement were highly aware of the need to reform society and showed great enthusiasm for doing so. The response in all other quarters was also quite positive. The students also mentioned in their letter that they had a sort of “*gong dang* (work party)” in their locality. *Gong dang* was quite probably not the name of any social group or society but a general designation for some sort of workers’ organization. The students said that as a result of their activities “we feel we are not weak in terms of either creativity or fighting strength”.<sup>4</sup> The circumstances of the students at the Tangshan Special Industrial School may be regarded as typical of the basic situation in schools at and above the secondary level in various localities after May 4.

Advances of the New Culture Movement in all localities after May 4 depended mainly on groups and organizations set up by awakened young people. These groups and organizations could well be said to have proliferated like “bamboo shoots after a spring shower.” We shall describe the specifics of this circumstance in the next section. Here, we quote a passage from Jiang Menglin (1886–1964) to describe the advances and developments of the post-May 4th New Culture Movement in various localities. Jiang personally witnessed those events, which lends authority to his words. In his book *Xi Chao (Tides from the West)*, he wrote: “The influence exerted by Peking University was most deep-going and far-reaching. Every rock and pebble of knowledge cast into the tranquil waters of the ancient capital Beijing stirred up reverberations that reached every corner of the country. Even secondary schools in all localities emulated the organizational institutions at Peking University, advocated freedom of thought, and began to take in female

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<sup>4</sup> See “Letter to Hu Shih from Li Zhongxiang and Xu Wenxi,” *Hu Shih’s Posthumous Writings and Confidential Correspondence*, vol. 28, pp. 131–147.

students. Every movement or campaign initiated at Peking University elicited profuse response from progressive newspapers, magazines and political parties”.<sup>5</sup>

## 8.2 The Concrete Results of the New Culture Movement

Given enormous impetus by the May Fourth Movement, the New Culture Movement swiftly spread throughout China and soon obtained concrete results.

### 8.2.1 Concrete Results of the Literary Revolution

The Literary Revolution is often referred to as the Movement for Vernacularization. That is because for a considerable period of time, discussions indeed revolved around the issue of classical and vernacular Chinese after the start of the movement, and the substitution of the vernacular for the classical language was an extremely important matter in China’s cultural history. Hence, referring to the Literary Revolution as a vernacular movement cannot be regarded as wrong. However doing so is, after all, incomplete and less than accurate. From the time it started up, the Literary Revolution comprised two aspects. The first was to replace the classical language with the vernacular and create a unified vernacular national language, and the other was to repudiate the old and decadent classical literature and build up a new and realistic vernacular literature. Hu Shih’s proposals in his study “Tentative Suggestions for Reforming Chinese Literature” that one should “write with substance,” “not imitate the ancients,” “not indulge in melancholic themes without cause,” and “avoid old clichés” all had to do with his advocacy about building up a new and realistic vernacular literature. A year or so later, he published his “Discussion on the Improvement of Literature,” which presented his views on devising a new and realistic vernacular literature in a more comprehensive manner. And 8 months later, Zhou Zuoren (1885–1967) published his dissertation *Ren de wen xue* (Literature of Humanity) in which he further emphasized the spirit of literary realism. Hence, the literary revolution movement ought not to be one-sidedly simplified as a movement for vernacularization. Still, one cannot deny that the greatest achievement of the Literary Revolution movement was, in the final analysis, the all-round and complete founding of a vernacular *guoyu* (national language).

We pointed out earlier that, back in the last years of the Qing Dynasty, people had already begun to look for ways of making literacy and book-reading easier for the general public. Some had tried to devise phonetic alphabets, others had started by simplifying the Han characters, and still others had directly advocated writing in

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<sup>5</sup> See *Xi chao* (Western Tide), p. 130; Taipei Ta Ful Bookstore, 1993.



the vernacular. By the time of the Nationalist Republic, a number of official, semiofficial, and nongovernmental organizations had gone into action, such as the Society for Unifying Pronunciation, the Preparatory Committee for Unifying *Guoyu*, and the *Guoyu* Research Society. The *guoyu* they referred to consisted in the main of the universally acknowledged so-called official or Mandarin language based on the vernacular of the Beijing region. However, this *guoyu* movement made little headway after the initial hullabaloo, primarily because its promoters labored under an erroneous premise and erroneous mentality, i.e., that the thing they promoted was merely for the use of uneducated lower-class people; they themselves and others like them who pertained to the upper classes would not stoop to using it. In other words, they never thought of using the *guoyu* they were promoting as a replacement for the old classical language or the antiquated Han characters. This dual-standard mentality and practice was doomed to failure. The rising New Culture Movement had made it abundantly clear that the classical language was a dead language, that only the vernacular was a living language, that only a living language could be conveniently used by live people, and that only a living language could produce a live literature. Hence, the vernacular had to be used as a replacement for the classical language; as an efficient tool for creating all forms of literature. In his “Discussion on the Improvement of Literature,” which was extolled as “the most splendid proclamation of the literary revolution,” Hu Shih explicitly underscored the ten Chinese characters “*guo yu de wen xue, wen xue de guo yu* (a *guoyu* literature and a literary *guoyu*).” He explained: “The literary revolution we advocate is solely for the purpose of creating a *guoyu* literature for China. Only when there is a *guoyu* literature can we have a literary *guoyu*, and only when there is a literary *guoyu* can our *guoyu* be regarded a true national language. A national language devoid of literature has no life in it, possesses no value, is not viable, and cannot thrive” (Hu Shih 1925a, p. 74). This piece of writing had a tremendous influence. Thereafter, the Literary Revolution movement and *guoyu* movement would be closely linked—a development which in Hu Shih’s words “brought to life the *guoyu* movement that was half-dead at the time” (Hu Shih 1935, p. 24). As Li Jinxi (1890–1978) put it, it was “the joining of two tides”,<sup>6</sup> and the result was a considerably accelerated advance of the vernacular *guoyu*. The outbreak of the May Fourth Movement and the need of young student multitudes to express their thoughts and carry out publicity among the masses gave rise to a nationwide proliferation of orations, handbills, periodicals, and pamphlets—all in the vernacular. Hu Shih, Luo Jialun, and Li Jinxi estimated that more than 400 new kinds of vernacular newspapers appeared in 1919 alone.<sup>7</sup> The Kongde School in

<sup>6</sup> See Li Jinxi: “Outline History of the Guoyu Movement,” *Collected Writings of the Nationalist Era* lithographic copy, p. 71.

<sup>7</sup> In his book *History of the May Fourth Movement*, Zhou Cezong cited Jiang Menglin’s estimate that 350 weekly papers were started up in the current year, Dewey said there were 300, and others estimated there were 650. Zhou himself estimated that between 1917 and 1921, more than a thousand newspapers were started up nationwide (see *History of the May Fourth Movement*, p. 261; Qiulu Bookstore, 1999). However, he did not specify these as vernacular newspapers. In

Beijing began to compile its own *guoyu* teaching materials in the vernacular. Jiangsu Province, too, began to write vernacular teaching materials. In January 1920, the Ministry of Education issued a general order to national schools in all localities to start by converting first- and second-grade language classes to the vernacular. And then it issued a supplementary order that all teaching materials at state schools should be converted to the vernacular after 1922. One might well say the Literary Revolution was hugely successful in terms of replacing the classical language with the vernacular and bringing about a nationally unified vernacular *guoyu*.

The rift between the classical and vernacular languages over several thousand years in China had seriously hindered any development or ample exercise of the function of literary innovation. Written and spoken languages serve people as tools when they think, talk, write articles and books; as tools for all of mankind's mental labors. Unwieldy tools are bound to affect the processes of mental productivity. Conversely, improved tools certainly promote the progress and development of mental productivity. With the popularization of vernacular *guoyu*, young people who had received a modicum of education were able to read books and newspapers, speak out, and write letters and articles—matters of paramount importance for emancipating their spirits and increasing their creativity. And inestimable benefits were brought to the entire nation's revitalization by having these students help ordinary workers and peasants become literate and read books and newspapers, and thereby awaken and activate vast numbers of people who had been almost completely cut off from education and culture. Hence, as I said more than 20 years ago, there is no overestimating the significance of a completely viable vernacular *guoyu* for our country and nation!

The Literary Revolution movement also made considerable advances in terms of a new vernacular literature.

Hu Shih, the first to advocate the literary revolution, himself admitted that he had the will to advocate but lacked the ability to create. In his "Preliminary Discussion on Literary Reform," he put forward a good many important ideas on creating a new literature as regards both theory and methods. However, where creativity was concerned, he actually turned out no more than a small amount of new poetry, one or two short stories and a one-act play. The first to produce real results in the creation of a new literature was Lu Xun. Hu Shih asserted that in terms of creating a new literature, "the biggest achievements have been made by a person who goes by the name Lu Xun. His short stories, from *Diary of a Madman* 4 years ago to the recent *Story of Ah Q*, are not many, but virtually none of them are wanting".<sup>8</sup> In his "Introduction to *The Corpus of the Modern Literature of China: Second Collection of Fiction*," Lu Xun stated: "The appearance, starting in May 1918, of *Diary of a Madman*, *Kong Yiji* and *Medicine* may be counted as signs of the concrete results of

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my opinion, where specified vernacular newspapers are concerned, the estimates of Hu Shih and others who were eyewitnesses to that period in history should hew closer to actualities.

<sup>8</sup>"Chinese Literature of the Last Fifty Years," *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, 2nd collection, vol. 2, p. 169.

the Literary Revolution”.<sup>9</sup> However, both Hu Shih and Lu Xun showed caution with regard to the achievements of literary creation at that time. Hu Shih believed that the creation of new poetry “can be seen as being on the road to success”; “short stories, too, are gradually becoming viable”; “vernacular prose is quite advanced”; but “drama and full-length novels are the least successful”.<sup>10</sup> Commenting on the excitement triggered by the first few novels he had published, Lu Xun said this was due to lack of exposure to foreign novels. What he meant was the things that excited so much enthusiasm had long existed in many works by writers abroad.<sup>11</sup> Discussing the writing of novels in the early days of the Literary Revolution, Mao Dun (1896–1981) said that in the first year of that revolution, “no creative novels pertaining to the ‘new literature’ have yet emerged.” In the second year, “no other author has yet drawn the same sort of attention” as Lu Xun and his *Diary of a Madman*. In the third year, after *New Tide* started publication, “those who have ‘had a go’ at writing novels are gradually increasing but still number only three or so, including Wang Jingxi.” By the fourth year, “submissions of creative novels received every month by *New Tide*. . . have numbered no more than a dozen or so, and most of them are so juvenile as to preclude publication.” According to Mao Dun, starting in the fifth year, or 1922, the fifth year, or 1922, the next 4 years through 1925 might be characterized as “a period of the exuberant proliferation of young people’s literary groups and small literary and art periodicals.” In this period “there were no less than a hundred literary groups and publications”.<sup>12</sup> Hence, Mao Dun maintained that the first 5 years after the beginning of the Literary Revolution were “very quiet” as regards the creative sector, whereas in the next 5 years “an universal and nationwide literary activity emerged”.<sup>13</sup> Zheng Boqi (1895–1979), who compiled the *The Corpus of the Modern Literature of China: Third Collection of Fiction*, concurred with this conclusion.<sup>14</sup> However, where novels were concerned, short ones still predominated, and a small number of medium- and full-length novels gradually appeared only by the year 1925. Nonetheless, the new novels were all capable of reflecting the actual lives of ordinary people and therefore qualified as “people’s literature.” And as far as artistic methodology was concerned, they were much more advanced than the earlier so-called condemnatory novels (*qian ze xiao shuo*), not to mention the “shady-inside-story novels (*hei mu xiao shuo*).”

<sup>9</sup> See *The Corpus of the Modern Literature of China: Second Collection of Fiction*, “Preamble,” p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> “Chinese Literature of the Last Fifty Years,” *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, collection 2, vol. 2, pp. 169–170.

<sup>11</sup> See *The Corpus of the Modern Literature of China: Second Collection of Fiction*, “Preamble,” pp. 1–2.

<sup>12</sup> *The Corpus of the Modern Literature of China: First Collection of Fiction*, “Preamble,” pp. 1 and 5.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>14</sup> See *The Corpus of the Modern Literature of China: Third Collection of Fiction*, “Preamble,” pp. 2–3.

The success gained by new vernacular poetry deserves special mention. In earlier years when Hu Shih was preparing to launch the Literary Revolution, the strongest resistance he met was in the domain of poetry. Many who opposed the Literary Revolution conceded that using the vernacular was permissible for novels and various forms of practical writing (such as official documents, notices, and so forth), but insisted it was an absolute no—for poetry. And for that reason, Hu Shih devoted much of his energy to experimenting with the new vernacular poetry. *New Youth*, too, took the lead in vigorously promoting vernacular poetry as a way of creating a new literature. It began printing new poetry in the journal's vol. 2, no. 6, and continued to do so in nearly all subsequent issues, whereas its publication of novels began only in vol. 4, no. 5 with Lu Xun's *Diary of a Madman*. Individual collections of the new poetry existed already in 1920, but collections of novels came out only in 1923. The new poetry was successful first of all because it debunked the preconception that vernacular did not belong in poetry and, secondly, because it broke away from the old-style poetry's strict limitations with regard to tonal patterns and rhyming and created a free-style type of vernacular poetry. This new poetry was much more convenient than the old poetry for describing real-life scenes and subjects and for expressing real feelings and sentiments. Those were the fundamental reasons for its ability to replace the old poetry in the domain of poems and songs and become the mainstream in poetic creation.

Prose developed somewhat later. As Zhou Zuoren noted: "Achieving success in the domain of new literature was fairly easy for vernacular prose, yet it did so at a later date".<sup>15</sup> He maintained that writings akin to prose had been fairly well-developed among ancient China's literati and scholars, and the "flavor and charm" of prose been around for a long time. Hence, he also said: "Modern prose in the new literature was the least influenced by other countries, and one might say it was a product of a literary renaissance rather than the literary revolution".<sup>16</sup> A great many collections of vernacular prose were published after May 4 because of the urgent need to popularize vernacular writing and because they were very much in demand. As Hu Shih remarked, the success of vernacular prose served to "thoroughly dispel the blind belief that 'beautiful writing cannot be done in the vernacular'".<sup>17</sup>

As mentioned above, Hu Shih stated in a 1922 article that drama and full-length novels were the least successful, and that was a fact. A few full-length novels and drama productions gradually emerged only after the mid-1920s. Proof of this can be found in *Historical Documents of Chinese New Literature: An Index*, compiled by Ah Ying (1900–1977).

By the mid-1920s, a considerable number of writers and poets had emerged in the arena of China's new literature. And by the 1930s, some were already publicly

<sup>15</sup> *The Corpus of the Modern Literature of China: First Collection of Fiction*, "Preamble," p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Hu Shih: "Chinese Literature of the Last Fifty Years," *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, collection no. 2, vol. 2, p. 170.

recognized as being highly accomplished. That of course was one of the fruits of the Literary Revolution.

### ***8.2.2 Initial Successes of the Educational Reform and Increasing Maturity of the New Education***

New thinking on education surged into China amid the great tide of the New Culture Movement. New types of education had been tried out for several decades during and after the last years of the Qing Dynasty, but only the outer forms of Japanese and Western education were brought in, such as their school systems (divided into three stages—elementary, secondary, and tertiary), their curricula, and so forth. Very little was understood about the thinking and spirit of the new education, and even less were these assimilated or implemented. It was only under the impulsion of the New Culture Movement that new ways of educational thinking in other countries were fairly conscientiously introduced, studied, and absorbed. The most influential among these were the experimentalist and liberalist ways of educational thinking. The experimentalist (or pragmatist) educational thinking as represented by John Dewey in particular exerted the deepest influence. That only to be expected. For one thing, the experimentalist educational thinking embodied the liberalist spirit. Second, the experimentalist educational thinking laid great emphasis on breaking down the boundaries between education and society, and between students and society. Simply stated, education should blend in with life. Also, experimentalist educational thinking put much stress on encouraging students' initiative and on developing students' individuality. These ideas on education were most likely to harmonize with the spirit of the New Culture Movement and be embraced by young boys and girls with a vitalized sense of individuality. Third, at the height of the New Culture Movement, the grand master of experimentalism John Dewey came in person to give lectures in China. He stayed here for 2 years, visited 11 provinces, and delivered more than a hundred lectures, transcripts of which were widely distributed and became hugely influential. And fourth, Dewey's three most outstanding disciples—Hu Shih, Jiang Menglin, and Tao Ruxing—were all serving in educational quarters at this time and enjoyed considerable social prestige. Under such conditions, it is not at all surprising that that the experimentalist educational thinking should have gained such a big following.

The introduction of the new education first of all impacted what had always been regarded in older times as the so-called aims of education. Those aims in the last years of the Qing Dynasty included such things as loyalty to the ruler and veneration for Confucius and were of course abolished when the Nationalist Republic was set up. In the early years of the republic, long-winded discussions took place to determine the aims of education, but those eventually promulgated by the ministry

of education<sup>18</sup> were given little if any importance in the practice of education. In any case, a directive entitled the “Objectives of Education” was no more than a piece of pompous and impractical officialese, which was ultimately annulled by the National Education Federation in October, 1919. Thereafter, what in fact remained effective in educational practice was teaching for transmitting knowledge and fostering personality, as implemented by educators and teachers in accordance with their own understandings and specific social environments. The officialese Objectives of Education basically played no role at all.

The popularization of new educational thinking prompted reforms in education methods. Previously, the basic method of education had consisted of teachers delivering lectures and students listening, and of students memorizing what their teachers taught them in order to cope with exams. Education ended with the passing of exams. The new education method emphasized stimulation of student initiative; hence, heuristic teaching methods were used, such as conducting classroom discussions, and so on. These were highly conducive toward developing students’ intellect. When expounding the experimentalist (pragmatist) method of teaching, Hu Shih emphasized that the recipients of education should cultivate “individuality of intellect,” by which he meant “the capability of independent thinking, independent observation, and independent judgment”.<sup>19</sup> Clearly the new educational thinking and the new education methods played a major role in bringing up a new generation of young people.

The new education attached importance to equality of the sexes in education and did its utmost to promote education for girls. Modern Chinese education had its origins in the last years of the Qing Dynasty and developed somewhat after the Nationalist Republic came into being. However, it was still limited to elementary and secondary education; few girls went to school, and boys and girls could not enter the same schools, or if they did, could not sit in the same classrooms. The New Culture Movement vigorously touted women’s emancipation, promoted equality between the sexes, and gave energetic impetus to the development and advance of education for girls. In 1918, The ministry of education issued a “Request for the Popularization of Girls Education” passed by the National Education Federation. In 1922, the ministry of education released some education statistics, one of which featured “Province-by-Province Tables of Counties Nationwide Which Lack Public or Private Elementary Education for Girls.” These investigative statistics were clearly intended to promote education for girls.<sup>20</sup>

As regards the implementation of the new educational thinking, Peking University played a leading and exemplary role as regards reforming educational institutions, educational administration, and educational methods. This was only to be

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<sup>18</sup> These objectives were articulated as: “Attach importance to moral education, complement this with utilitarian education and national military education, and perfect their morality with education in aesthetics.” Quoted from Yu Shusheng (2000, p. 36).

<sup>19</sup> See Hu Shih (1925c, p. 144).

<sup>20</sup> See Shu Xincheng (1962, p. 382).

expected, since Peking University was the birthplace of the New Culture Movement. After Cai Yuanpei assumed the post of president, the university recruited a large number of persons with new thinking and with real ability and learning to serve as professors. This was most important for carrying out its principles of “all-inclusiveness (*jianrong bingbao*)” and “freedom of thought.” These principles served to realize its objective of rooting out the old Peking University’s decadent ambience as a “stepping-stone to officialdom and wealth” and turning it into an institution for research and advanced learning.

Cai Yuanpei was abundantly imbued with the spirit of democracy. During the reforms at Peking University, he did his best to replace the bureaucratic style of administration with a democratically inspired administration. He set up a Council of Appraisal which served as the university’s highest institution of power and legislation. The members of this council were mutually elected by the university’s professors, with one elected from about every five professors and the university principal acting as the *ex officio* chairman. When the council voted on proposals and motions, the chairman generally abstained from voting and decisions were passed by simple majorities. Only when the balloting turned up an equal number of ayes and nays did the chairman cast the decisive vote. An administrative council was set up as the university’s administrative organ. Its membership consisted of the heads of various committees at the university plus the dean of studies and chief of general affairs, with the principal acting as the *ex officio* chairman. Among the various committees were the organizational committee, the budgets committee, the audits committee, the appointments committee, the entrance examinations committee, the library committee, the business affairs committee, the instruments committee, the publications committee, the student self-government committee, the new students’ guidance committee, and various temporarily set up special committees. In 1919, the system of deans for the humanities and sciences departments respectively was discontinued, the boundaries were removed, and “departments (*men*)” replaced by “faculties (*xi*),” of which a total of 30 were set up. Teachers’ meetings, set up in each faculty, elected the faculty chiefs.<sup>21</sup>

Another important reform was to replace the grade or class system with an elective-courses system. In essence, this elective-courses system prescribed that students were free to choose courses that interested them outside and beyond their required courses. Both the required and elective courses were assigned a given number of study hours and a given number of points or credits. A student could graduate when he or she had acquired the requisite number of credits. This was enormously beneficial for giving rein to the students’ initiative for learning. Simultaneously with this reform, Peking University also began to set up research institutes. This changed the university from a simple educational institution into a research-type seat of higher learning and enabled it to integrate with advanced university education worldwide. Both of the above reforms were proposed by Hu Shih, and Cai Yuanpei firmly agreed to carry them out. Already in December 1917,

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<sup>21</sup> Ref. *Peking University: Historical Materials*, first part of vol. 2 on the university’s organization.

Peking University was the first to set up a philosophy research center, the directorship of which was assumed by Hu Shih.

Amid Peking University's exuberant atmosphere of democracy and spirit of promoting research, its students developed the first and most ample instances of student self-government. Their student associations and organizations played immense roles in the May Fourth Movement. Other student groups emerged in large numbers and engaged in a wide variety of activities. The students' spirit of initiative was also manifested in academic activities. Starting in the latter part of 1917, Peking University saw the rise of various kinds of study societies, research societies and book-reading societies, in the activities of which teachers and students from senior classes generally participated together. Among the more active and influential of these groups were the Philosophy Research Society, the Journalism Research Society, the Graphic Arts Techniques Research Society and, a bit later, the highly influential Marxist Theory Research Society. There were also a Sports Society and a Morals Improvement Society. Other initiatives included a student's savings bank and a consumers' commune, both of which were organized uniquely by the students themselves. As for the New Tide Society, the Citizens' Magazine Society as well as work-study mutual assistance groups, civilian education lecture groups, and so on and so forth, their social effects are common knowledge.

Women's emancipation was one of the important contents of the New Culture Movement. Among all the reforms at Peking University, one of them produced effects that cannot be overlooked, i.e., it set the example of recruiting female students and thereby gave rise to completely new mores and conventions. In 1919, Deng Chunlan, a girl in Xunhua, Gansu Province who was drawn to the new trends of thought, wrote a letter to Peking University President Cai Yuanpei, asking to be admitted to Peking University. The next year, Wang Lan, a girl in Jiangsu sent a request to Tao Menghe, Peking University's dean of studies, asking to sit in at the university's philosophy classes. An animated discussion ensued in the press as to whether girls should be admitted to colleges and universities. Cai Yuanpei publicly stated: "The regulations set by the ministry of education do not stipulate that college students must be males. . . . When Peking University recruits new students next year, all girls with commensurate levels of education may apply for the entrance examinations. Those who qualify will be enrolled".<sup>22</sup> Hu Shih also wrote an article approving of colleges and universities recruiting girl students. He, moreover, proposed steps and methods for implementing college enrolments of girls. Step one: Colleges and universities should engage female teachers. Step two: Girls with given levels of education should be admitted to colleges as sit-in students. Step three: Practically and effectively reform current education for girls so as to make girls' secondary-school education dovetail with college and univer-

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted from Xu Yanzhi: "Notes on Boys and Girls Studying Together at Peking University," in *Shao Nian Zhong Guo* (Journal of the Young China Association), vol 1, issue no. 7.



sity education.<sup>23</sup> With the above positions stated by Cai, Hu, and other related personages, and with support from public opinion, Peking University in 1920 enrolled nine girls including Deng Chunlan and Wang Lan, and admitted them as sit-in (auditing) students at Peking University's faculties of philosophy, Chinese language, and English language, respectively, thus breaking open the path of higher education for Chinese women.

A prominent feature in the development and reform of secondary education was the special attention paid to vocational education and girls' education. Among the important motions made at a national meeting of secondary school principals held in October 1918, three had to do with girls' education. In 1919, the ministry of education issued a general order allowing all provinces and districts to consider increasing or decreasing study courses in light of local circumstances.<sup>24</sup> These measures had a positive effect of the development of education.

The universal promotion of *guoyu* education mentioned earlier was the most epoch-making change to modern ordinary education in China, as it gave immense momentum to the universalization of education and to the improvement and development of mass education. Secondary education derived the most benefit.

The biggest effect produced by the New Culture Movement on the development of education was probably the establishment of the new school system in 1922. Ever since the setting up of new-type schools toward the end of the Qing Dynasty, China's school education had been largely patterned on the Japanese model. This model had had many undesirable effects, first because its substance had not been well understood and, second, it was poorly adapted to China's circumstances. An example is the school system set up in the early years of the Nationalist Republic. Back in 1915, the education council of Hunan Province, which was at the forefront of the modernization trend, raised criticisms about the ills of the old school system, and requested the formulation of a new school system that would be better suited to China's situation and more rational. They pointed out the main shortcomings of the existing school system: Secondary and elementary schools were too stereotyped to suit the needs of society and the populace; the educational thinking was wrong in that it saw elementary schooling as a preparation for secondary schooling and secondary schooling as a preparation for college education, and wrote off the independent status of secondary and elementary schools; school education gave insufficient attention to fostering real-life capabilities in students; the various phases of education were not dove-tailed; the number of years assigned to each phase of education was irrational, some being too many and others too few, and so forth. The opinions of Hunan Province's education council drew widespread attention, and the education authorities decided that education councils in all provinces and regions should conduct detailed discussions and put forward suggestions for

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<sup>23</sup> See Hu Shih: "On the Lifting of Bans on Girls in Colleges and Universities," in *The Journal of the Young China Association*, vol. 1, issue no. 4.

<sup>24</sup> See Liao Shicheng: "Secondary School Education in China over the Last Fifty Years," Shen Bao: *The Last Fifty Years*; Shanghai Bookstore, lithographic copy, 1987.

improvement. At the meeting of the National Education Federation in 1921, representatives from all provinces and regions reformulated a “draft for the new school system” based on the Guangdong Province Education Council’s reform proposal. Everyone found the draft to be fairly satisfactory and it was sent to education circles nationwide for further debate in preparation for final discussions and decision at the next meeting of the National Education Federation.

In September 1922, the ministry of education convened a special meeting in Peking to discuss the school system. It was attended by education council representatives from all provinces, education department representatives, principals of institutions at and above the junior college level and specially invited experts. Further revisions were made to the previous year’s “draft for the new school system.” In October the same year, the Eighth National Education Federation held a conference in Jinan, Shandong expressly to complete the formulation of the school system. As entrusted by conference participants, Hu Shih drew up a draft for the school system indicating seven principles (1) adapt to the needs of social evolution; (2) give play to the spirit of mass education; (3) strive for development of the personality; (4) pay attention to the nation’s economic capability; (5) pay attention to real-life education; (6) make education easy to popularize; and (7) give broad latitude to localities. The school system stipulated that children under 6 years of age would receive kindergarten education, and at six they would start to undergo elementary education in two stages—4 years of lower elementary and 2 years of higher elementary education. Secondary education was also to proceed in two stages—3 years of junior middle school and 3 years of senior middle school education. Secondary education was to consist of vocational education and normal education. Vocational education was to include junior vocational (equivalent to junior middle school) education and senior vocational (equivalent to senior middle school) education. Higher education was to include college or university education (4–6 years) and vocational college education (2–3 years).

After being approved by the conference, this school system draft was made public and implemented by means of a presidential decree on November 1 the same year. Since this school system was finally formulated, announced and implemented in 1922, or the Ren Wu year by the old calendar, it is also known in history as the Ren Wu School System.

The seven guiding principles and the other contents of the new school system all bore clear marks of the profound influence of experimentalist (pragmatist) education. Items 1, 2, 3, and 5 of the seven principles very clearly manifested the spirit of experimentalist education. Meanwhile, the “6:3:3” system of its ordinary school system (i.e., elementary and secondary education) was very similar to the school system in most US states where experimentalism is prevalent. However, there is certainly no reason to conclude that this school system was a copy of the US model. First, this school system was formed on the basis of summing up the development and experiences of new education since the last years of the Qing Dynasty, it took final shape only after it had incorporated the opinions of all related personages and education experts, and it underwent much discussion and repeated revisions. Second, it is true that Hu Shih and other scholars who returned to China after studies in

the USA played an important role in formulating this school system, but all had spent years engaged in actual education work and closely integrated the theories they had learned with their educational practice. Hence, the Ren Wu School System was the result of amply assimilating advanced foreign educational thought and experience and closely integrating these with China's circumstances and the decades of practice in new education since the last years of the Qing Dynasty. After being promulgated, it was implemented right up to the early 1950s. This proves that it conformed with the actualities of education in China and was a fairly good school system.

The formulation and implementation of the Ren Wu School System denoted the gradual maturation of China's new education.

### ***8.2.3 The Awakening of a Generation of Young People and Their "Integration into Society"***

I stated earlier that the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement was the result of fermentation during the New Culture Movement and also of the awakening of a group of young students. Meanwhile, the May Fourth Movement in turn greatly pushed forward the New Culture Movement and further awakened the broad masses of young students nationwide. The young people's awakening was manifested mainly in two aspects: one, their awakening to the "individual," in other words, their pursuit of an independent personality and of freedom of the individuality. And two, a consciousness of the mission of society, the state and the nation. One may say that the latter aspect found full manifestation during the May Fourth Movement, whereas the former can be clearly seen in the publications run by young people, the articles they published, and their letters and correspondence.

Fu Sinian (Fu SSu-nien) (1896–1950) was typical of the many new young people who came to the fore during the New Culture Movement. He suggested in his "Letter on the Purport of Publishing the New Tide" that young people had responsibilities in four respects: one, "to guide China which has existed as a solitary and unchanging entity into joining the flow of world culture." Two, to reform society. Three, carry on research in scholastics to improve public morality. And four, "leave behind the inherited thinking on science and go into the scientific thinking of today's world; do away with subjective, arbitrary thinking and go into objective, skeptical thinking; become people of the future society and not people of today's society; and develop personalities that prevail over society and not personalities that society prevails over".<sup>25</sup> These four points amply reflect the two aspects I pointed out earlier.

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<sup>25</sup> See *The Complete Writings of Fu Sinian*, vol. 1, pp. 80–81. Hunan Educational Publishing House, 2003.

Another highly representative young person was Luo Jialun (1897–1969). In his article “The Successes and Failures of Our Student Movement in the Past Year and the Guiding Principles We Should Adopt in the Future,” he said that after undergoing the stimulus of the May Fourth Movement, “everyone feels that the old methods used in the past were impractical, that we must break fresh ground and look for new methods. This trend of thought pervades the entire world of young people.” Young students, he said, “are trying our utmost to manifest our individuality”.<sup>26</sup> He very clearly expressed the second aspect of young people’s awakening I talked about.

We can find a great deal of information about young people’s awakening in the letters written by those who were active at the time. For instance, a youth called Ding Jihua wrote a letter to Hu Shih, saying: “Situated as I am at the cusp of the surging new tide, I am compelled to look for another ‘path to real freedom and happiness’”. He urgently sought advice on many questions in this respect. The three main questions were: One, which books and which newspapers provided the best reading, and what foreign languages should he learn? Two, what conditions should he prepare if he hoped to continue advancing and developing? And, three, since he wished to run a work-study school, which textbooks would be the most suitable?<sup>27</sup> This letter reflected young people’s thirst for new knowledge, their urgent desire for progress, and their intense yearning to do something for society. A youngster in faraway Guiyang by the name of Ling Ti’an wrote to Hu Shih saying he was “a young person in Guiyang who very much values his own personality, a person who knows no limits, wishes to do everything within his powers and advances with his eyes upon the banner you have raised, in order to overcome the many iniquities of this society.” In his letter, he wrote that a number of teachers and students of the Dade Primary School where he was located had organized a “educational endeavors visiting team” and travelled to Beijing where they had met Dewey and Hu Shih. Ling himself, being indisposed, had not gone along but had been greatly stimulated by eyewitness reports from the team after it returned. Since then, the team members had together overcome various obstacles and set up a secondary-school department.<sup>28</sup>

As pointed out earlier, awakened young people pursued a new life, valued their own personalities, and fought for their own futures and the fulfillment of their values as human beings on the one hand and, on the other, strove to acquire skills for reforming society and hoped to create a new society. In his first letter to Hu Shih written sometime in May 1919, a Hubei youth named Hun Daiying had said: “There are today many more students than before who are capable of ‘renewing themselves’ and ‘moving forward’, and we are always hoping that there will be still

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<sup>26</sup> See *New Tide*, vol. 2, issue no. 2.

<sup>27</sup> See Geng Yunzhi ed.: *Hu Shih’s Posthumous Writings and Confidential Correspondence*, vol. 23, pp. 304–305.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 31, pp. 456–463.

more”.<sup>29</sup> These increasing numbers of awakened youth were eager to try their hand at various things and do something to reform society. In another letter, Hun Daiying said he knew these students were still lacking in abilities, and they realized this was their “fundamental shortcoming.” “However, they constantly urge one another to keep on doing things, since that is the way to learn how to do things. . . I believe that well-meaning persons should do things, as that is the only way to save our country and save the world.” He believed that, only by doing things could one increase one’s capabilities and foster strengths.<sup>30</sup> Hence, these students ran mutual aid societies and operated a publication called *Xin Sheng* (New Voices). He sent a copy of *Xin Sheng* to *New Youth* together with a letter in which he stated: “We had existed in a state of simple-minded ignorance, but after reading *New Youth* we were gradually awakened to realities, as though seeing the light of dawn through the darkness. . . We were awakened, but we saw many of our friends still existing in a lightless and lifeless hell and greatly pitied them. And so, in despite of our inexperience we resolved to engage in the cause of ‘waking ourselves and waking up others,’ and we set up *Xin Sheng*. At first we deemed ourselves unworthy of the task of ‘waking up others,’ yet we could not help feeling this to be a matter of fulfilling a responsibility. Since *New Youth* had given us our awakening, how could we be so selfish as to not pass this awakening on to others? There was also the consideration that, although we had been shown the correct road, we had not yet taken to that road. We set up *Xin Sheng* to seek others’ guidance in walking down this road and in the hope that everyone else would join us on this road. That was our intention in setting up *Xin Sheng*”.<sup>31</sup>

Cai Hesen (1895–1931), Mao Zedong’s most important comrade-in-arms in the early years, wrote a letter to Mao Zedong, saying: “Our ultimate goal is to burst out of the world’s many trammels and create free personalities, free venues and free work endeavors, and then only will we be able to say that development is consistent with capability”.<sup>32</sup> This, too, expresses both aspects of the awakening of young people we have discussed earlier.

Many reports in newspapers and publications in those days factually reflected the rapid awakening of young people in various localities nationwide. Take, for example, the report “Social Survey: An Overall View of Changsha” carried in *New Youth*. The third part of this report described the circumstances of the New Culture Movement in Changsha city, and the author wrote: “Ever since Changsha was inspired by the May Fourth Movement, a great many ordinary people have turned toward the ‘new tide.’ Because of persecution after persecution by the warlord faction in recent years, the charming city of Changsha has been virtually bereft of vitality. Hence, all ordinary people with even a modicum of education—teachers, staff and students in schools—are bitterly resentful and feel that such issues as

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 36, p. 525.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 531–532.

<sup>31</sup> See *New Youth*, vol. 6, no. 3, “Correspondence.”

<sup>32</sup> See *Mass Organizations of the May Fourth Period*, vol. 1, p. 17.

social reform, ideological renovation, women's emancipation and national self-determination brook of absolutely no delay." The author then described the social organizations that had emerged in Changsha and the dozen or so newspapers and publication they operated. To a certain extent, the situation in Changsha mirrored that in most places nationwide.<sup>33</sup>

A very outstanding matter in the young generation's awakening during the New Culture Movement was the awakening of young women. Girl students and young women going out into society and enthusiastically taking part in various activities had become quite a common phenomenon, especially after the May Fourth Movement. The Awakening Society in Tianjin could best represent this trend. Of the 21 members of this society, 11—or more than 50 %—were females,<sup>34</sup> and several of the latter were highly active.

Where the self-emancipation of young females was concerned, the three foremost issues were marriage, education, and economics. These issues were the foci of basically all discussions about women's emancipation published in newspapers in those days. Hu Shih, Lu Xun, Li Dazhao, and Tao Menghe all published articles related to women's emancipation. The issues of marriage and education were the most pressing in those days. Previously, when discussing the acute struggles between the new and old cultures, we mentioned some examples of women's emancipation. Here, we shall give a few more examples to illustrate the awakening of women.

The Tianjin Awakening Society had a member whose name was Zhang Sijing. All members of the Awakening Society were assigned a number, and as Zhang Sijing's was 37, she was also known as "Shan Qi" [which is phonetically close to "37" in Mandarin Chinese—Trans.]. When Shan Qi died as a consequence of marital problems, the society issued a declaration as follows: "Marriage is a matter which many young men and women earnestly hope can be satisfactorily resolved. Since most young men and women are under the oppression of headstrong parents, have no opportunity to fight back, and even submit to parents making decisions on their behalf, malignant outcomes are frequent and everywhere to be seen. . . Shan Qi's history may be regarded as a very good example. We should take full cognizance of this lesson and see it as a warning for many young women." It continued: "Oh, loveable and vivacious young women! Do not be afraid of offending your parents, do not be afraid of offending your parents-in-law, and do not be afraid of offending your husband or other kinfolk. If you feel the environment is unfit for your existence you should courageously break away from it. Society is replete with persons who sympathize with you and who are ready to assist you. Hurry up and join hands with them!"<sup>35</sup> This declaration showed that already awakened young men and women were prepared to carry out social

<sup>33</sup> See *New Youth*, vol. 6, no. 3.

<sup>34</sup> See *Mass Organizations of the Period of May 4th*, vol. 2, p. 305.

<sup>35</sup> See *Mass Organizations of the Period of May 4th*, vol. 2, p. 322.

interventions and sanctions against social phenomena that stifled women's free rights.

Another example is the fairly well-known case of the death of Li Chao. To obtain the right to an education, Li Chao had managed to enter the Beijing Normal Women's College after surmounting all sorts of obstacles and undergoing much suffering. But being in poor health and unable to endure long-term mental depression and pain, she eventually fell ill and died. After her death, several warm-hearted persons from her hometown in Guangxi were deeply moved by her deeds. They published these deeds and the news of her untimely death in the newspapers *Guo Min Gong Bao* and *Min Zhi Ri Bao*, arousing a tremendous amount of sympathy in society. Her fellow townsman, Su Jiarong (1895–1946), stepped forward to sponsor all obsequies. First of all, reports were placed in newspapers that a memorial meeting would be held. Then Hu Shih was asked to write her biography, which was to be widely distributed. Hu Shih was also asked to negotiate women's college principal Mao Yanwen's attendance as chairman of the memorial meeting; Cai Yuanpei and Hu Shih were both invited to attend and deliver speeches. Su Jiarong's arrangements all went as planned. In a letter to Hu Shih, he wrote: "Our intention in holding this memorial is not only to laud one individual (i.e. Li Chao—the Author), but to use this event as a demonstration and campaign for women's emancipation".<sup>36</sup> Both of these objectives were basically realized.

How did some of the girls in the wave of women's emancipation swept up by the New Culture Movement understand the kind of new women they themselves should become? A girl who signed her name as "Miss N.U. Mao" wrote to Hu Shih, saying that in her understanding the new women "must fit in with the new trends of the twentieth century, rid themselves of their 4,000-year-old reputation of being 'play-things,' stop being lifelong slave-girls to men, and enjoy the happiness of national equality." She also enumerated some of the "important qualities" for new women: "First, we must learn the Western women's high aspirations and interests and their ample scholarly attainments that enable them to be independent (for me, independence does not necessarily mean celibacy; it means being effective in and for society by virtue of commensurate abilities—*Original note*). Two, we must be clear about the world's general trend of events. Three, know what sort of responsibilities we bear toward our own country".<sup>37</sup> It was evident that the awakening of young women was also manifested in two aspects—awareness of self, and awareness of society, the nation, and even the world.

In sum, all young people who had awakened as a result of the New Culture Movement were imbued with awareness of self-emancipation and consciousness of the new personality. At the same time, all were eager to make a difference, to reform society. As their numbers increased, their activities became ever more extensive. Forming groups and conducting group activities were an indispensable way of "waking ourselves and waking up others."

<sup>36</sup> See *Hu Shih's Posthumous Writings and Confidential Correspondence*, vol. 41, p. 511.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 24, pp. 648–649.

When the Xinmin (New Citizen) Society recounted its organizational process in its “Society Affairs Report No. 1,” it announced that after 2 or 3 years of discussions they had ultimately come to the conclusion that they should “bring the comrades together and create a new environment for shared activities”; that they had “all at once realized the undesirability of a static and solitary existence and turned instead to pursuing an action-filled and collective existence.” That was precisely “one of the reasons this society has been launched”.<sup>38</sup> Awakened young people wanted both to substantiate and improve themselves and engage in endeavors for reforming society. Solitary individuals could not do that and had to form collectives “for common activities.”

Mass organizations were not formed uniquely during the New Culture Movement; they had already begun to emerge toward the end of the Qing Dynasty. However, a cursory examination shows clear differences between the mass organizations of the New Culture Movement period and those in the last years of the Qing Dynasty. First of all, mass organizations in the last years of the Qing Dynasty generally put forward very specific goals. For example, the aim of those formed during the movement to recover economic rights was to retrieve a given economic right; the aim of those formed during the constitutional movement was to promote constitutionalism and so forth. The mass organizations formed during the New Culture Movement were different in that most of them put forward relatively long-range and ambitious objectives, such as changing people’s minds, reforming society, reforming the world, etc. Here are a few examples:

The New Citizen Society stated: “The objectives of this society are to reform academics, temper people’s conduct, and improve people’s minds and customs”.<sup>39</sup> At a meeting to discuss the society’s common objectives, Mao Zedong said “this should be ‘to reform China and the world’”.<sup>40</sup>

The Shuguang (Dawn) Society, a Beijing students’ mass organization, stated in its manifesto: “We are not content with today’s life and wish to create a new life; we are dissatisfied with today’s society and wish to create a new society. . . . Hence we hope to bring about a thorough awakening among the people of our country and inspire a movement for reformation by our country’s people based on studies of science and on positions dictated by conscience”.<sup>41</sup>

The Jue (Awareness) Society, also a students’ mass organization in Beijing, proclaimed: “The objective set by our society is ‘in the spirit of mutual assistance, conduct research in academics and launch a movement to realize a society of truth’”.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> “Xinmin Society Conference Report” (No 1.), see *Mass Organizations of the Period of May 4th*, vol. 1, p. 575.

<sup>39</sup> See “New Citizen Study Society Routine Affairs Report,” (No 1.) see *Mass Organizations of the Period of May 4th*, vol. 1, p. 575.

<sup>40</sup> “New Citizen Study Society Routine Affairs Report,” (No 2.) see same as above, p. 590.

<sup>41</sup> See *Mass Organizations of the Period of May 4th*, vol. 3, p. 50.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.



The Gai Zao (Reform) Society, a mass organization of young people in Nanchang, Jiangxi, simply proclaimed “our objective is to reform society”.<sup>43</sup>

The Gong Jin (Advance in Common) Society, a mass organization of Shaanxi students located in Beijing, stated their objective was to “promote culture and improve society”.<sup>44</sup>

Even the Work-Study Mutual Assistance Group stated that the motive for its organization was to “open up a way of survival for impecunious students” and at the same time “build a foundation for a new society”.<sup>45</sup>

“Improve society” and “reform society,” when articulated as objectives would seem to be excessively sweeping and vague. One should however consider that the great majority of forward-looking persons who had reflected on the political reforms and the results of the revolution at the end of Qing Dynasty realized that no objectives could be attained by directly seeking changes of the political system without carrying out social reform. Liang Qichao had pointed out that changes in the state system and its institutions had been pursued for two full decades, but the only outcome after the inception of the Nationalist Republic was year after year of chaos and disorder. He said: “My experiences in twenty or so years have profoundly convinced me that the basis of governance is always to be found in society.”<sup>46</sup> He also stated: “We should know that the society in which we live and are bred abounds with innumerable important causes and innumerable great hopes. . . And for as long as China has not perished, it offers us limitless room for maneuver. As long as we do not laze, do not weary, do not lose patience and do not overreach, we can everywhere bring about secure lives and endeavors, which is what the nation’s own interests depend upon”.<sup>47</sup> Fu Sinian, a representative of the young people who came to the fore during the New Culture Movement, had some very profound insights with regard to the issue of reforming society. Fu maintained that for some 2,000 years China had been stuck in a patriarchal society, and the fact was that “there were masses of people, but no society.” Since the autocratic system “had sapped away almost all sense of responsibility on the part of the populace,” the people had no sense of the public weal and no training in the public life of mass organizations. Thus, there were no organizations in society and therefore no activist capabilities. A society like that possessed no vitality or energy and was incapable of advancing. If such a rigid and lifeless society were to be reformed and enabled to form organizations and conduct activities—to become what Fu called an “organic-entity society”—one had to start by “bonding society together,” or in other words,

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 321.

<sup>45</sup> See Wang Guangqi: “New Life in the Cities,” *Mass Organizations of the Period of May 4th*, vol. 2, p. 370.

<sup>46</sup> “How I Shall Serve My Country in the Future,” *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 33*, p. 53.

<sup>47</sup> “Introducing the Dazhonghua,” see same as above, p. 90.

by organizing groups capable of conducting activities.<sup>48</sup> Forward-looking persons thereupon shifted their attention from changing the political system to reforming society. That was an important mechanism [activated by] the New Culture Movement. Views, of course, differ today as to some of the details, but it is certain that all recognize the essence of the matter. Only then can one understand why all sorts of mass organizations and societies emerged like bamboos after a spring shower during the New Culture Movement, and why the great majority of them specified “social reform” as an objective. And one will also understand that the social groups brought forth by the New Culture Movement had advanced a step further than those of the last years of the Qing Dynasty in terms of their ideological and social significance.

Another difference between the social groups of this period and those of the last years of the Qing Dynasty was that they paid much attention to “awakening the individual.” There were two aspects to what was called the “awakening of the individual.” One was that the organizing of these groups was based on the awakening of individuals and not merely on hasty mergers for extrinsic purposes and to deal with external stimuli. Numerous mass organizations were formed after a year of more of discussions and deliberations, as with the New Citizen Society, Young China, and other societies. Second, all individuals who joined the mass organizations attached ample importance to the independent individuality of each person and did not make curtailing the personality a condition for group activities. When the New Citizen Society dwelt on its organizational deliberations in its first report on society affairs, it stated that a matter of special concern was “how to elevate the existence of individuals and mankind as a whole” and that “perceived in particular was the issue of ‘elevating one’s own existence’”.<sup>49</sup> The Shao Nian (Youngsters’) Study Society, a student mass organization in Beijing, described its objective as “to develop individuality and the intelligence, research true academics, and cultivate and perfect children in the spirit of enterprise”.<sup>50</sup> Quite clear and prominent was the fact that their efforts would be focused on developing intelligence and individuality. The Qing Nian (Young People’s) Study Society, a student organization in Henan, proclaimed its objective as “to develop the innate abilities of the personality, research real academics, and cultivate the true spirit of young people”.<sup>51</sup> Although other study societies and mass organizations did not highlight developing the individuality quite so distinctly in their objectives, the importance they placed on individuality was nonetheless manifested in written correspondences among their members and their actual activities. Most of them regularly conducted full and free discussions on matters of concern to them, during which all aired their personal opinions. This tendency to stress individuality and freedom of thought was a most

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<sup>48</sup> See Geng Yunzhi (2004).

<sup>49</sup> See “Xinmin Study Society Routine Affairs Report” (No 1.), see *Mass Organizations of the Period of May 4th*, vol. 1, p. 575.

<sup>50</sup> See *Mass Organizations of the Period of May 4th*, vol. 3, p. 71.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

outstanding characteristic of the New Culture Movement. The guiding role in this trend was exercised by *New Youth* and *New Tide* which took the lead in the movement. However, one should also see that young people who had just shaken off the bonds of the autocratic system's old morality had yet to develop a sound understanding of freedom and individuality and often tended to go to extremes and indulge in irrational speech and behavior. For example, some young people impetuously announced they were severing relations with their family, or disavowed their father, or repudiated their family name, or opposed any form of organization or discipline, or demanded the abrogation of marriage or family relations, or announced they did not want any government or state, or even abjured all politics, and so forth. Such circumstances explain the prevalence of a wave of anarchist thinking during and after the cultural movement. The generation of young people aroused by the New Culture Movement was for some time more or less affected by that wave of anarchist thinking. This was a reaction to the more than two millennia of accumulated authoritarianism.

There are, to this day, no statistics of any reliability on how many mass organizations sprang up during the New Culture Movement. However, two things are certain: first, they were vastly more numerous than those at the end of the Qing Dynasty and in the first years of the Nationalist Republic; and second, the great majority consisted of young people's mass organizations. When discussing the mass organizations at the end of the Qing Dynasty we pointed out that most could not survive for long under the conditions of China's society. The chief reason was that the great majority of their members had no stable social status and lacked steady or sufficient sources of income. There was no fundamental change in this circumstance at the time of the New Culture Movement. Hence, the great majority of social mass organizations of that period were very short lived as well. Most mass organizations of young students, in particular, broke up when the students graduated or when they left China to study abroad. Others had to discontinue their activities for lack of funds. Some also fell apart because of differences of opinion and sharpening conflicts within the mass organizations.

However, the two main characteristics as analyzed earlier of the mass organizations in this period, i.e., their objective of reforming society and their emphasis on developing the individuality, sufficed for them to transcend the mass organizations of the last years of the Qing Dynasty and to produce definite effects on society, as for example, promoting the development of education for the ordinary people, bringing about the social mobilization of sections of the worker and peasant masses, changing people's concepts and social customs to a certain extent, and so forth. The activities of these mass organizations also honed and tempered a batch of leaders who became key leadership elements in various subsequent political (and revolutionary) campaigns and social movements in China. It might well be said that the New Cultural Movement, including the May Fourth Movement, directly sowed the seeds of a range of developments in twentieth century China.

### 8.3 The Main Concepts of the New Culture

Practically, all previous works that have researched the New Culture Movement have, without exception, declared that the main concepts of the New Culture Movement were science and democracy, or in the words of Chen Duxiu, “Messrs. Democracy and Science.” This formulation is of course not wrong. However, if one goes over the literature dating back to the New Culture Movement fairly carefully and deeply, we will find that this formulation is somewhat too general. The fact is that democracy, either as a concept or as a slogan, did not arrive or gain currency in China in the years of the New Culture Movement. This concept, or slogan, was already quite fashionable toward the end of the Qing Dynasty. But in those days, people understood democracy mainly at the level of state systems and institutions. Members of revolutionary parties first of all demanded that the imperial system be eliminated; constitutionalists first of all insisted on setting up a parliament and practicing a responsible cabinet system and thereby transferring the emperor’s powers into the hands of representatives elected by the people. But when the Nationalist Republic had been set up after the 1911 Revolution, people found that the emperors’ powers had not passed into the people’s hands even though the emperors were no more. The powers of the former emperors were being fought over by warlords and politicians, and were like the balls of colored silk that daughters of aristocrat households had sometimes flung out among suitors to decide whom they would marry. Forward-looking persons realized that the populace had not yet awakened, and that democracy had become an empty slogan temporarily touted by warlords and politicians to further their own interests as they scrambled for power. The populace would have to be aroused if democracy was to be realized in Chinese society. Some intellectual leaders who had a deeper understanding of democracy and freedom pointed out that, in addition to arousing the populace, great efforts should be made to promote individuality. They maintained that democracy was impracticable unless people were thoroughly rid of their slavish mentality so that they could consciously assume the status of masters of the country. Hence, democracy, as one of the main concepts of the New Culture Movement, was no longer sweepingly advocated as such, but underwent a deeper and more detailed differentiation as two separate concepts—populism and individuality.

The chief concepts we will make a special effort to discuss here are those of populism, individuality, the scientific attitude, and the concept of an open culture.

#### 8.3.1 *Populism*

Populism (*ping min zhu yi*), as a political concept, had already been put forward toward the end of the Qing Dynasty, as when the publications Jiang Su and He Nan put out by Chinese students in Japan at the time printed articles publicizing populist

governance.<sup>52</sup> However, it was during the New Culture Movement that populism became a universal trend of thinking. We have mentioned more than once that the New Culture Movement arose when people awakened to the fact that all previous revolutions and reforms had failed because the populace had not awakened, had not been aroused. The great majority of the populace had to be energized if China's problems were to be resolved. As Huang Yuanyong, the prophet or pioneer of the New Culture Movement, wrote in his renowned letter to the editor of *Jia Yin*: "In sum, one must bring the thinking of our generation into contact with modern trends of thought and prompt a sudden awakening. The important thing is to bring these [trends of thought] in contact with the ordinary people, and the way to do so is by universalizing easy-to-understand literature and art".<sup>53</sup> Here, the term "ordinary people" referred to the populace (*ping min*). What he clearly meant was that future movements would be effective only if efforts were devoted to arousing the populace. When laying the groundwork for the Literary Revolution, Hu Shih astutely pointed out: "I maintain that literature in these times should not remain as the private property of few literati, but that one should be particularly good at popularizing it among the great majority of our countrymen".<sup>54</sup> What he referred to as "the great majority of our countrymen" was also the populace.

The meaning of "populace" should not be too complicated. I believe it may be understood at three levels (1) as opposed to the aristocracy; (2) as opposed to the upper stratum of society; and (3) as opposed to government officialdom. In most situations during the New Culture Movement, people used the term "populace" in the first two senses. Hence, after the rise of the New Culture Movement and amid widespread calls for populist governance, what people sought and expected was the awakening and rise of people at the lower levels and their participation in the country's political governance. In this, they were to a large extent influenced by Russia's October Revolution. Discussions that touched on the October Revolution at the time all focused on the difference between this revolution and all previous revolutions, i.e., that it was truly a revolution of the masses of ordinary people. Li Dazhao's "Victory of the Multitudes" and Luo Jialun's (1897–1969) "The New Wave in Today's World" both laid special stress on the October Revolution being a true revolution of the masses of ordinary people and that all future revolutions

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<sup>52</sup> An article in issue no. 5 of the journal *Jiang Su* entitled "Construction of the New Government" explains "populist governance" as a state of affairs in which "the country's sovereign rights are in the hands of the populace, all government affairs are determined by the opinion of the populace, the masters of governance are the country's populace, the aim of governance is the happiness of the great majority of the populace, and the strategies of governance are derived from the public will of the populace." (See *Selections from Public Opinion in the Ten Years Prior to the 1911 Revolution*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 584.) Issue no. 4 of *He Nan* carried an article "To Those Who Wish to Set Up a Parliament: Our Impressions," which explicitly stood for "a country of the populace," focused on the relationship of the state with the populace, and emphasized that the two depended upon and safeguarded one another. (See *Selections from Public Opinion in the Ten Years Prior to the 1911 Revolution*, vol. 3, p. 277.)

<sup>53</sup> See *Jia Yin*, vol. 1, no. 10.

<sup>54</sup> *Hu Shih's Diary While Studying in the U.S.A.*, p. 956; Commercial Press, 1947.

should be popular revolutions of the Russian type. Chen Duxiu also laid emphasis on carrying out “mass movements” and on the “belief that truly democratic governance will certainly distribute political power to the people as a whole”.<sup>55</sup>

When the Civilian Education Lecture Group [set up by progressive students in March, 1999] announced the reason for its being set up, it declared: “School education is devoted uniquely to the edification of the scions of the wealthy and does not extend to the children of the lowly and humble, or to those who are forced by poverty to drop out of school, and for that reason does not deserve being called education for the populace. . . . If there are no means for remedying this situation, huge disparities will emerge in people’s knowledge, inequalities will abound in society, and the republican state system will inevitably be shaken to its roots. . . . Since there are few among China’s populace who are literate, and the ability to peruse printed publications is limited to a small number of people, any expectation regarding the popularization and equality of education can succeed only by giving talks and lectures on such subjects”.<sup>56</sup> Hence, it explicitly defined its objective as “increasing the knowledge of the populace and arousing popular consciousness”.<sup>57</sup> The publication *Education for the Populace* put out by the Society of Education for the Populace wrote in its Foreword that “the objective of populist governance is to seek happiness for everyone, and the objective of populist education is to have everyone know what true happiness is and at the same time understand the ways of achieving happiness”.<sup>58</sup> The office of the Ping Min Weekly wrote in the Foreword to its publication that reforming society “is best done by inculcating large amounts of knowledge in the minds of ordinary people so that everyone knows the concepts of life and the principle of mutual assistance. When that happens, that iniquitous society will naturally break down and rational organizations will emerge as the circumstances require”.<sup>59</sup> It was stated in “The Responsibilities of Fudan Ping Min Weekly” that the editors “have undertaken an immense responsibility, which is to inculcate populist knowledge into the minds of ordinary citizens so that they are apprised of such concepts as world trends, a country’s ideology, and freedom and equality; so that they understand that they too are one of their country’s people; so that they have close connections with their country, bear substantial responsibility for their country’s affairs and do not keep on slumbering in a dream world; and so that they develop the determination to be self-aware and possess the spirit of struggle”.<sup>60</sup> All of this clearly shows that a great many persons were focusing their attention on the ordinary people. Even those who did not adopt populist titles

<sup>55</sup> “Proclamation of *New Youth*,” *New Youth*, vol. 7, no. 1.

<sup>56</sup> “Notice of Recruitment by the Peking University Popular Education Lecture Group,” *Mass Organizations of the Period of May 4th*, vol. 2, p. 135.

<sup>57</sup> “General Rules of the Peking University Popular Education Lecture Group,” see same as above, p. 136.

<sup>58</sup> See *Mass Organizations of the Period of May 4th*, vol. 3, p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> See *Mass Organizations of the Period of May 4th*, vol. 4, p. 14.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

or labels for their mass organizations also approved of populist propositions. For example, the *Guo Min* magazine in its Organizational Program laid emphasis on “instilling citizens with information” and “instilling citizens with new knowledge” as its goals.<sup>61</sup> The noted reporter and journalist Shao Piaoping (1886–1926) wrote a letter to *Guo Min* stating: “I have always declared in the public opinion circuit that the basis for China’s salvation lies in its citizenry’s self-awareness”.<sup>62</sup> The “citizens” that concerned Shao and his associates was of course the ordinary people amid the citizenry. For that reason, readers demanded that they “use the most easy-to-understand language” so that “all ordinary citizens will be able understand what is being said”.<sup>63</sup>

Earlier, we mentioned the Tangshan Special Industrial School. Students there ran a publication called *Jiu Guo* (National Salvation) after May 4, and explicitly stated that it was for the perusal of “the local populace in Tangshan”.<sup>64</sup> Notably, some persons were at the time already showing concern for the livelihood of the populace. It was evident that the populace had to be provided first with the conditions for survival if they were to be aroused and awakened and instilled with knowledge. Hence, the livelihood of the populace, or the ordinary people, was the first and foremost issue to be resolved. In 1918, a *Ping Min Sheng Ji* (Livelihood of the Populace) Society was set up in Nanjing and announced its General Rules: “We are initiating this society for the sake of studying the diverse difficulties in the livelihood of the ordinary people with the intention of rescuing them.” The objectives of their efforts were to (1) Energize various industries and businesses; (2) improve the life of the populace; and (3) promote social education.<sup>65</sup> We do not know precisely what this society did and whether they achieved any concrete results. However, we do get some insight from the above about the concern shown for issues of the common people during the New Culture Movement and the extent of the populist trend of thought. It was as some persons said at the time: “Everywhere, people’s eyes are on the ‘life of the populace’”.<sup>66</sup>

The surge of the populist trend of thought had a major bearing on China’s political developments after the May Fourth Movement. Influenced by that trend of thought, a great many intellectuals and young people gradually took to forming contacts with the masses of workers and peasants and even bonding with them. One reason for this was the direction indicated by the populist trend of thought, and another was that young people had witnessed the strength of the worker and peasant masses during the May Fourth Movement and subsequent patriotic movements.

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<sup>61</sup> See *Mass Organizations of the Period of May 4th*, vol. 2, pp. 17 and 19.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>64</sup> “Letter to Hu Shih from Li Zhongxiang and Xu Wenxi,” see *Hu Shih’s Posthumous Writings and Confidential Correspondence*, vol. 8, p. 134.

<sup>65</sup> See *New Youth*, vol. 5, no. 5.

<sup>66</sup> See “Letter to Hu Shih from Hao Yuhan,” see *Hu Shih’s Posthumous Writings and Confidential Correspondence*, vol. 31, p. 341.

Still another reason was the inspiration provided by the Russian October Revolution. Subsequent to the May Fourth Movement, when discoursing on the Shandong issue and the awakening of the citizenry, Chen Duxiu stated: “The only way to fundamental salvation is to have ‘the populace gain mastery over government’”.<sup>67</sup> The populace he referred to included academic circles, commercial associations, peasant groups and labor groups. A most important event after the May Fourth Movement was the worker and peasant masses’ abrupt emergence on the national stage and the close attention paid to them by forward-looking persons. In the Introductory Announcement of the Xiang Jiang Review, Mao Zedong wrote: “In a word, all reforms consist in ‘obtaining freedom from the powers-that-be,’ and the most fundamental of the various ‘-isms’ in the fight against the powers-that-be is populism.” And all powers-that-be “shall be toppled by relying on resounding populist outcries”.<sup>68</sup> The increasing importance paid to, and deeper comprehension of, populism brought a large number of intellectuals to the understanding that the way out for China’s revolution should be sought by going among the worker and peasant masses. In an article published in March 1921, Li Dazhao indicated he had realized that in order to reform China’s politics and society, reliance had to be placed on the strengths of the populace; and to fully exercise the strengths of the populace, reliance had to be placed on training by mass organizations. Movements by the populace and training by mass organizations “work in tandem and advance together,” he said. “Hence, we must with great urgency set up a mass organization. This organization is not to be a political party set up by politicians, nor a democratic party of the middle bourgeoisie. It is to be a political party of the laboring people among the populace, or in other words, a socialist mass organization”.<sup>69</sup> Li Dazhao’s words presaged the birth of the Chinese Communist Party as well as the nature of the Chinese Communist Party. It is clear that the populist trend of thought touched off by the New Culture Movement had an important ideological guiding effect on the birth of the Communist Party of China.<sup>70</sup>

### 8.3.2 *Individuality*

Individuality (*ge xing zhu yi*) and individualism (*ge ren zhu yi*) are essentially one and the same thing. The “individualism” formulation is more prevalent among Western ideologues. But in China, the term “individualism” is open to opprobrium, for which reason most forerunners and leaders of the New Culture Movement used the formulation “individuality.” Hu Shih said there are two kinds of individualism:

<sup>67</sup> “The Shandong Issue and Citizens Awakening,” *Weekly Review*, no. 23.

<sup>68</sup> *Mao Zedong’s Early Manuscripts*, Hunan Publishing House, 1990.

<sup>69</sup> “The Training in Cooperation and the Business of Reform,” *Selected Works of Li Ta-chao*, vol. 4, pp. 78–79.

<sup>70</sup> Reference may be made to Zhu Zhimin (1996).



One is “false individualism,” which is “egoism.” The other is “true individualism,” which is “individuality”.<sup>71</sup> Hu Shih made this differentiation so as to draw a fine line between individuality and the opprobrious type of individualism. The individuality we discuss here as one of the concepts of the New Culture Movement is the true individualism, i.e., individuality, which differs entirely from selfish egoism.

The personality issue was initially brought up in the last years of the Qing Dynasty (see Chap. 5 in this book). However, the subject of promoting the personality and personal freedom was barely broached at the time owing to the specific environments in China and abroad and the subjective limitations of ideologues in those days, and the concept of “individuality” had yet to be put forward. Explanations of the significance of personality and personal freedom lacked clarity at least in three respects (1) definitions of the essential meanings of personality and personal freedom were insufficiently satisfactory or clear. Yan Fu had explained personal freedom as *cun wo* (preservation of the self) and *jie ju* (temperance and restraint); Liang Qichao and Tan Sitong on the other hand explained it as “independence” and “self-determination,” neither of which explanations could be considered comprehensive or lucid. (2) The relationship between personal freedom and freedom of the state and the nation were not clearly elucidated. Due to the grave threats of external aggression facing the country and the sense of imminent national subjugation, the struggle for national independence, or in other words the struggle for the freedom of the state, was seen as the most pressing task. However, if people continued to be bound by the old cardinal guides and Confucian ethics and knew only the morality of slaves, the entire nation would have no strength. Hence, it was imperative to promote personal freedom and to liberate the strengths of the individual. What, in the final analyses, was to be the relationship between two? No one could provide a clear explanation. At the time, even Liang Qichao, universally acknowledged as the most influential of the enlightened thinkers, was constantly conflicted and vexed by this question. (3) The relationship between personal freedom and individuality on the one hand and democratic government on the other was not explained with any clarity. This was closely linked to item two above. And if even Liang Qichao was constantly conflicted and vexed by this question, little needs to be said about his contemporaries.

The largest of the new forces that expanded rapidly during the New Culture Movement consisted of students, and the chief ideological motivation that stimulated and spurred the students was individuality. In China, the most immediate and formidable constraints on the personality were exercised by the system of family and clan ethics. Hence, criticism of the old ethics and morals and repudiation of the bonds of family and clan ethics were in those days the most fundamental and direct manifestations of the emancipation of the personality.

In those days promoting individuality involved two aspects: one involved education and enlightenment, and the other had to do with the relationship of the

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<sup>71</sup> “A New Life of Non-Individualism,” *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 4, p. 174.

individual with the state, society, and the nation. The latter aspect directly concerned the implementation of democratic government.

Let us first discuss the first aspect.

As a leading figure in the educational domain, Cai Yuanpei said when discussing the basic differences between the old and new educations: “Those who know anything about education should give rein to nature instead of sticking to hidebound rules, and develop personal characteristics instead of seeking uniformity”.<sup>72</sup> He stood for eliminating the [social] class system in education so that “the individual will be freed from bonds and be enabled to develop in complete freedom”.<sup>73</sup> One of the principal leaders of the New Culture Movement Chen Duxiu said about the fundamental difference between Eastern and Western cultures: “The Western nations have always been thoroughly individualistic nations. . . . Take, for instance, their ethics, morals, politics and laws, the yearnings of their societies, and the aspirations of their states—all do no more than uphold the free rights and well-being of the individual.” “The Eastern nations. . . [are] patriarchal clan-based societies in which the individual has no rights and all people in a household take orders from the head of the household. . . . The state is organized precisely like a clan.” “The malpractices of the patriarchal system are four: First, it harms the independence and self-esteem of the individual’s personality; two, it stifles and obstructs the freedom of personal expression; three, it deprives the individual of equal rights before the law (such as favoring elders over the young and meting different punishments for the same crime); and four, it fosters dependence and destroys the constructive ability of the individual.” To do away with these four malpractices, Chen maintained, one should “replace the central status of the clan with the central status of the individual”.<sup>74</sup> When discussing the differences between Eastern and Western cultures, Li Dazhao said: “Easterners regard sacrificing themselves as their basic mission in life whereas Westerners see fulfilling themselves as their basic mission in life. Thus Eastern morality rests in maintaining the absence of personality whereas Western morality rests in striving for the emancipation of the personality.” Hence, Easterners “do not respect the authority and strengths of the personality. . . . and regard individuals merely as incomplete parts of a larger entity—an entity which completely engulfs the value of existence of the parts”.<sup>75</sup> The well-known educationist Jiang Menglin said that education’s central issue rested in “increasing the value of mankind.” “Any discussion of the value of mankind should start with the value of the individual. Those who know not the value of the individual know not the value of mankind.” He also said: “The

<sup>72</sup> “Where the New and Old Educations Diverge,” *The Complete Works of Cai Yuanpei*, vol. 3, p. 338; Zhejiang Education Press, 1997.

<sup>73</sup> “The Question of Education after the European War,” see same book as above, pp. 689–690.

<sup>74</sup> “The Fundamental Differences in the Thinking of Eastern and Western Nations,” *Youth*, vol. 1, no. 4.

<sup>75</sup> “The Fundamental Difference between Eastern and Western Civilizations,” see *Selected Works of Li Ta-chao*, vol. 2, pp. 204 and 205.

societies of today's countries with advanced civilizations consist of combinations of individuals. . . The basis of societies which are combinations of individuals consists of strong and doughty individuals." Hence, "the effectiveness of the new education rests in respecting the value of the individual." "The more developed the natural qualities of the individual, the greater is the value of the individual. The greater the value of individuals in a society, the more rapidly does the society's civilization advance. If we regard education as a way of advancing civilization, we should commence by respecting the individual".<sup>76</sup> In another article, Jiang wrote: "Cultural education is about individuality. Culture is able to make advances where the personality is developed and special talent is fostered." He emphasized: "The culture of our country pales in comparison with those of the advanced nations. If we aspire to catch up with them, we must cultivate appropriate special talent. And if we aspire to cultivate appropriate special talent, we can only succeed by developing the personality".<sup>77</sup> In a word, modern civilized societies must be built on the basis of fully respecting and fully developing the personality.

Hu Shih, as one of the principal leaders of the New Culture Movement, published an essay entitled "Ibsenism" in *New Youth* in May 1918. This document was most representative of those promoting individuality and has been called the "proclamation of the emancipation of the personality." In it, Hu Shih delivered an extremely clear and comprehensive exposition of individuality. He pointed out: "There is no greater crime in society than the destruction of an individual's personality and not letting it develop independently".<sup>78</sup> That was because, "when all individuality is destroyed and all desire for freedom and independence is gone, then society as such will have lost its vitality and cannot develop".<sup>79</sup> "A society or a country without free and independent individuals is like alcohol without yeast, bread without leavening or a human body without a brain. A society or country such as that has no hope of improvement or progress".<sup>80</sup> Hence, if one wanted a country to constantly advance, one had to protect the individual's personality, allow it to develop freely and foster free and independent personalities. Only people with such personalities dared to speak frankly, dared to criticize society, dared to fight the evil and foul phenomena in society and thereby promote social advance. In Hu Shih's view, individuality was a necessary condition for a modern society or country to maintain healthy development. In this essay, Hu Shih gave a clear and complete definition for individuality. He pointed out that two conditions are necessary for developing a person's individuality: "First, the individual must have his own free will and, secondly, the Individual must be responsible for his own actions".<sup>81</sup> These

<sup>76</sup> "The Relationship between the Value of the Individual and Education," *Random Notes on Academics and Culture by Jiang Menglin*, pp. 5, 6 and 7; China Youth Publishing House, 2001.

<sup>77</sup> "Individuality and Individualism," see same book as above, p. 45.

<sup>78</sup> "Ibsenism," *Collected Works by Hu Shih*, vol. 4, p. 34.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

two things were closely connected. An individual who has no free will is like a slave. Similarly, a person who has a free will and does what he pleases but does not accept responsibility for his actions is also more or less like a slave, since a slave does not have an independent personality and therefore does not need to take responsibility for his own actions. Hu Shih's definition of individuality pointed to the absolute necessity of free will for the individual, and also pointed out that the individual must assume complete responsibility for his thoughts, words and actions. This drew a clear line between individuality and individualism (selfish and unrestrained desire) as understood by the Chinese. Hu Shih's definition was obviously much more comprehensive and clear-cut than the previous definitions by Yan Fu and Liang Qichao. A comprehensive and clear-cut definition made it possible to forestall attacks and slander by conservatives as well as instill prudence in awakened young people and prevent malpractices.

While advocating individuality during the New Culture Movement, forward-looking persons paid much attention to expounding the relationship between the individual and the state and nation, that is, the relationship between individuality and democratic government. Chen Duxiu pointed out: "The fundamental reason for conflicts between the interests of the state, society and the individual rests in the consolidation of the interests of the individual".<sup>82</sup> Hence, he also stated: "The one and only fundamental condition as to whether citizens' government can be realized rests purely in whether the majority of citizens can become politically aware of their active status as masters of the country".<sup>83</sup>

In this respect, Gao Yihan (1884–1968), a political scientist, wrote a more detailed exposition. He pointed out: "Europe has witnessed an upsurge of individualism (*xiao ji zhu yi*) in recent years. Although this has gone to extremes and is not without undesirable effects, Europe's civilization has registered constant advances because all people respect individuality and give free rein to the individual's talent and initiative for the betterment of life, and because the values of society and the state incorporate the values and best qualities of the individual. China's civilization has remained stagnant for thousands of years principally because individualism has not developed here. When those above use spurious étatism to mistreat and trash our people, our people have evaded them by taking cover once more under familialism. There is in consequence less and less solicitude for or loyalty to the nation's destiny, and in the end the country, society and the individual all suffer because of this." He explained: "Society is formed by bringing together a large number of individuals. Individuals are members of society, and society is an assemblage of individuals. Hence, society cannot advance if the interests of the individual are not taken into account." Individualism is therefore the foundation of social advance. He stated: "The hopes and aspirations of citizens of the republic are not centered on the state per se, but instead on what material benefits they can

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<sup>82</sup> "The Fundamental Differences in the Thinking of Eastern and Western Nations," see *Youth*, vol. 1, no. 4.

<sup>83</sup> "Our Final Awakening," *Youth*, vol. 1, no. 6.

obtain by relying on the state and how the state can improve the individual's life. The state is set up to fulfill the individual's desires, and has been devised by mankind in order to protect the individuals' right to freedom so that they may develop their natural abilities and, further, strive to fulfill the needs of human existence (*ren dao*). The truth of it is that the individual came into existence before the state, and not vice versa. The state was devised for the benefit of the individual, and one has never heard of the individual being created for the benefit of the state".<sup>84</sup> In another dissertation he stated: "The fact is, states were created for human beings; human beings did not come into existence for states. Human beings have existed apart from states, but there is no such thing as a state without human beings. People are the principals, and states are their endeavors. Have there ever been endeavors that are not used by the principals to serve their ends?"<sup>85</sup> Gao very clearly described the relationship of people and the state—which of the two came first, and which was the principal. That was quite different from the dogmatizing that the Chinese had been accustomed to hearing in the past. Hu Shih articulated this issue even more trenchantly. He said: "Some people are exhorting you to 'sacrifice your freedom for the sake of the country's freedom!' I say to you: 'Fighting for your own freedom means fighting for the freedom of the country! Fighting for your own individuality means fighting for the country's individuality! Free and equal countries are not built up by a pack of slaves!'"<sup>86</sup>

It is evident from the above that promoting individuality during the New Culture Movement was closely connected with the objective of pursuing democracy. In the view of Chen Duxiu, Hu Shih, Gao Han and others like them, a truly democratic system could not exist without individuality, without the emancipation of the individual, and without ample acknowledgement of the value of the individual. Hence, the contribution of the New Cultural Movement's concept of democracy did not lie in any blueprint for democracy that it put forward, but in the fact that it substantially deepened people's understanding of democracy. Henceforth, anyone who would again discuss democracy in vague and sweeping terms and leave out any mention of the value of the individual or the status of the individual or the rights of the individual was either ignorant or being deliberately deceptive.

### 8.3.3 *The Scientific Spirit*

There has been a trend to criticize and negate the New Culture Movement in recent years. Its main arguments are (1) that the New Culture Movement totally negated China's intrinsic traditions and (2) that it put blind faith in "scientism." I have

<sup>84</sup> "The Republican State and Young People's Awakening," *Youth*, vol. 2, no. 2.

<sup>85</sup> "The State is Not the Final Goal of Life," *Youth*, vol. 1, no. 4.

<sup>86</sup> "An Introduction to My Own Thought," *Hu shih lun hsieh chin chu* (Hu Shih's Recent Writings on Learning), 1st collection, p. 635; Commercial Press, 1935.

already commented on the first argument in my article, published in 1989, entitled “A Renewed Understanding of the May Fourth New Culture Movement” (*Chinese Social Sciences*, 1989, no. 3), in which I pointed out that the main leaders of the New Culture Movement such as Hu Shih, Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, and Lu Xun did not totally negate tradition, and that the extreme utterances of a few individuals did not represent the mainstream of the New Culture Movement. The extremist statements and actions on the part of some young people should not serve as the basis for appraising the New Culture Movement, and need not be repeated here. Regarding the second argument, I wish to briefly state my views here. First of all, none of the proponents of the New Culture Movement put forward the slogan “scientism.” The label “scientism” was tacked onto them by those who criticize the New Culture Movement. Let us see what the New Culture Movement’s proponents themselves said on the subject.

In the first issue of the magazine *New Youth*, Chen Duxiu put forward his proposition to “place equal stress on science and human rights” to denote that he laid much emphasis on the major significance of science for building up a modern state. The following is his understanding of science. He said: “What is science? It is our conception of things where the totality of objective phenomena is rendered by and does not conflict with subjective reason.” This definition was somewhat inept. Probably to make it more easily understood, he then juxtaposed science to fantasy and then said: “What is fantasy? It means that which is both detached from objective phenomena and forsakes subjective reason, which is fabricated without foundation, which has suppositions but no concrete evidence, and which cannot state its reasons or elucidate its rules by means of the wisdom that is already extant in mankind.” This comparison shows that the science that Chen understood was knowledge obtained through the exercise of reason and from objective reality. He emphasized that only actually proven knowledge was capable of helping people resolve the many different issues they faced. Unfortunately, the Chinese had given no importance to science in the past, and had often put so much blind faith in such things as Yin and Yang, the “five elements,” *feng shui*, talismans and auspicious signs that neither agriculture, nor industry, nor commerce, nor medicine could be adequately developed. He declared: “Thinking devoid of common sense and beliefs without grounds can only be remedied by means of science”,<sup>87</sup> which also showed that he believed science could help people get rid of various unfounded superstitions. A few years later, Chen Duxiu came up with a newer interpretation of science. He maintained: “Science is to be understood in two senses. In the narrow sense, science means the natural sciences, in the broader sense it [also] means the social sciences. The social sciences use the methods of the natural sciences for all branches of social and human learning, such as sociology, ethics, historiography, law, economics and so forth. Everything that is researched and explained by means of the methods of the natural sciences is counted as science. This is where science is most efficacious.” He targeted the narrow Chinese understanding of science since

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<sup>87</sup> “Notice to Young People” *The Youth*, vol. 1, no. 1.

the last years of the Qing Dynasty and pointed out: “We Chinese have never comprehended that learning outside and beyond the natural sciences also demands scientific authoritativeness; have never acknowledged that learning outside and beyond the natural sciences must also undergo the baptism of science; have never understood that the Western countries (also) possess culture other than the natural sciences and which should be brought to us in the East; and have never understood the need for China’s learning to undergo the baptism of science.” Hence, “to correct and eliminate previous errors, we must not only promote the natural sciences but also conduct research and explain that all fields of learning (including China’s national cultural heritage) must strictly abide by scientific methods, for only then can one avoid the all-pervading benightedness and foul atmosphere that emanates from delusional thinking and nonsensical utterances”.<sup>88</sup> Recommending that the methods of the natural sciences be used for researching all domains of learning would seem to smack of scientism. Yet, anything that deserves to be called “learning” should be studied with scientific methods and not encourage fanciful thinking that disregards facts and evidential proof, should it not? All who accuse the New Culture Movement of blind belief in scientism allege that proponents of the new culture believe all issues in current society can and should be resolved by the methods of science. Actually no one has said that. They have merely said one should strive to use scientific methods to resolve the issues one encounters. In fact, the history of human civilization is the history of mankind using its constantly developing and progressing rational faculties and the gradual augmentation of its empirical knowledge to resolve the issues it has faced. We do not know whether there is an end point to this history, or where this end point might be. Hence, we have no reason to arbitrarily declare where science as a means of deriving empirical knowledge should cease. True, we must admit there are no satisfactory scientific answers for the time being to certain questions in certain domains, but that does not mean questions in those domains can never be scientifically resolved. I believe there is no sense in artificially defining taboo zones for science in certain domains and on certain questions. That would very much resemble the attempts by some persons in the last years of the Qing Dynasty to limit the assimilation of Western culture to the domain of material life and categorically exclude Western culture from the spiritual domain—attempts that were as senseless as they were untenable.

Most of the discussions by those who advocated the new culture in those days were not about the natural sciences. People had already begun to see the enormous effects of the natural sciences on social development and progress toward the end of the Qing Dynasty. By the time of the New Culture Movement, their prime concern was how to apply the natural sciences’ spirit of emphasizing empirical proof and experimentation to studies in other domains of learning and to extend that spirit to the resolution of other issues. That was exactly what Hu Shih emphasized time and time again. He held that a scientific spirit, a scientific attitude and a scientific method were of more basic importance in the history of science than any specific

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<sup>88</sup> “What Is the New Culture Movement?” *New Youth*, vol. 7, no. 5.

scientific achievement. He explained: “The scientific spirit rests in seeking facts and seeking the truth. The scientific attitude rests in setting aside preconceived ideas, putting away feelings, recognizing facts only, and following evidence only. The scientific method simply means ‘bold hypothesis and careful verification.’ Where there is no proof, one must reserve judgment; where proof is insufficient, one may only hypothesize and must refrain from categorical decisions. Final decisions can be posited only after confirmations by facts”.<sup>89</sup> People who criticize what they call “scientism” are apparently unwilling to acknowledge the existence of a scientific spirit, scientific attitude and scientific method which have developed on the basis of the natural sciences and are of universal significance. Theirs is an extremely slanted and narrow view. Scientists with any grounding in philosophy do not deny the objective existence and universal significance of the scientific spirit, scientific attitude, and scientific approach. For instance, Ren Hongjuan (1886–1961), the famous Chinese chemistry specialist and one of the founders of China’s first science organization, the Science Society, published an article in the *Science Monthly* discussing the scientific spirit issue. “What is the scientific spirit? It is seeking the truth. . . The truth, as a phenomenon, is omnipresent. The knowledge of scientists is based on facts, checked by experiments, and determined by tests and verifications, and pays no heed to any readymade teachings or to pronouncements by predecessors. Yet scientists are not always so heedless. If readymade teachings or pronouncements by predecessors go against the truth as we see it, they do not balk at fighting these to the death despite the difficulties and dangers involved. That is what we call the scientific spirit.” His central meaning was that readymade teachings and other people’s pronouncements should be disregarded, and only facts and the truth should be respected. He said: Ever since experimentation has become widespread and science has taken root, “those who accept this kind of learning have vigorously exercised their intelligence, conducted extensive searches and enquiries, carried forward strong points and improved on them, and thereupon turned manifold heterogeneous phenomena into magnificently well-ordered academics. Where these have been put to practical uses, they have produced inventions in modern industry and commerce. Where these involve the handling of social affairs, they have motivated reforms in recent society. Where these affect people’s minds, they have altered the course of thought. Where they change material conditions, they have altered the course of life. It is no exaggeration to say that science has been the well-spring of Western culture”.<sup>90</sup> And he approved of “inculcating scientific methods into other branches of mental learning”.<sup>91</sup> In a speech of his on “Science and Modern Culture” he put this more

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<sup>89</sup>“An Introduction to My Own Thought,” *Hu Shih Lun Hsüeh Chin Chu*; Commercial Press, 1935.

<sup>90</sup>“On the Scientific Spirit,” originally carried in *Science*, vol. 2, issue no. 1, quoted from Fan Hongye et al. (2002, p. 68).

<sup>91</sup>“Teaching Materials on Scientific Methods,” originally carried in *Science*, vol. 4, issue no. 11; quoted from same book as above, p. 202.



explicitly: “The scientific spirit means seeking the truth; and the role of the truth is to lead mankind toward the beautiful and the good. . . One might say that the effect of science on people’s attitude toward life is to require that all things be rational. This use of reason to uncover the secrets of nature, to govern behavior in life, and to determine mankind’s relationships is a special feature of modern culture as well as the greatest contribution and value of science”.<sup>92</sup> We also note the views of Albert Einstein, one of the greatest scientists of the twentieth century, to show that acknowledging the existence of a universally significant scientific spirit, scientific attitude and scientific approach and demanding that these be extended to all domains of human existence are the missions of science per se and the necessary requirements for sound rationality in human beings. In Einstein’s opinion, belief that the world is essentially orderly and comprehensible (knowable) is the basis of all scientific work, and that except for endeavors that do not require any intervention at all from reason, all scientific work proceeds from a firm belief in the rationality and knowableness of the world. His understanding of science was that, proceeding from the basic premise that the world is knowable, science constitutes the tool, the way and the method that guide us in comprehending this world. He maintained that no one can stipulate beforehand that certain domains in the world cannot be understood by means of science.<sup>93</sup> This came quite close to Hu Shih’s way of thinking that we have mentioned above. People who criticize what they call “scientism” believe there is no way that science resolves the issue of people’s faiths. But Einstein took his belief that science is capable of knowing the world as his personal religion. Hu Shih, too, regarded what he called his scientific outlook on life as a sort of personal religion. “The scientific outlook on life,” he maintained, “consists in using the scientific spirit, scientific attitude, and scientific approach to deal with the issues of life”.<sup>94</sup> He also called this scientific outlook on life a “naturalist outlook on life.” He said: “This naturalist outlook on life is not without beauty, not without poetry, not without moral responsibility, not without opportunities to make ample use of ‘creative intelligence’.” These were his words when he summed up the debate over the matter of science and outlook on life. He also used these words as the concluding remark of his self-account entitled “What I Believe.” It is evident that this sort of scientific outlook on life, also called the naturalist outlook on life, bordered upon a religion to Hu Shih as it did to Einstein. Chen Duxui, on his part, declared unequivocally: “I stand for replacing religion with science.” His firm conviction: “Humanity’s future evolution should comply with the science that has only just begun to burgeon today, and as science gradually develops, (we should) amend all man-made laws and rules so that these take on the same effectiveness as the laws of nature, whereupon the universe and human life

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<sup>92</sup> “Science and Modern Culture,” originally carried in *Science*, vol. 7, issue no. 7; quoted from same book as above, p. 280.

<sup>93</sup> “On Science,” quoted from *Approaching Einstein*, p. 149; Liaoning Education Press, 2005.

<sup>94</sup> “Hu Shih’s Diary” March 25, 1922, see *Hu Shih’s Diary* (manuscript lithograph), vol. 2, Taiwan Yuan-Liou Publishing Co., Ltd. 1989.

will be in genuine correspondence. Is this not our greatest and ultimate objective?"<sup>95</sup>

Critics of "scientism" believe that science is incapable of resolving the outlook-on-life issue. However, Hu Shih, Chen Duxiu and most scientists took faith in science as their outlook on life, and all of them were able to rationally explain, from the standpoint of science, various outlooks on life that embody mysticism. The German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach long ago stated quite explicitly that humankind had created God and not vice versa; that man worshipped God not because he had witnessed God's actual existence, nor because God helped him resolve any actual problems, but simply because his psyche needed a God.

There is no doubt that the proponents of the New Culture wished to uphold the dignity and authority of science mainly because they saw the great role it played in the evolution of civilization. Yet, they also fully understood that Chinese society had for too long been dominated by all sorts of superstitions and arbitrary assertions. It has been very difficult for the scientific spirit, scientific attitude, and scientific approach to strike roots, germinate, and grow. Hence, there is no denying the significance of the battles of science against arbitrary assertions, superstitions, and various mysticisms in the controversies over science and outlook on life.

### 8.3.4 *The Open Culture Concept*

During the New Culture Movement, the controversy over cultural issues frequently took place on the topic of comparing Eastern and Western cultures. The writings of many people focused on discussing the differences and similarities of these cultures. I believe these are superficial phenomena. In reality, this New Culture Movement, which took place against the background of World War I and the basic motivation of which was to foster an ideological and cultural basis for China's reforms, embodied the awareness of a globalized culture as its point of departure.

In his article "Notice to Young People," published in the first issue of *New Youth*, Chen Duxiu put forward six major principles, the fourth of which envisioned a country "open and not closed to the world." He stated: "As things stand today, a policy of closing the doors of the country to the world is not only unfeasible but also patently disadvantageous. Countries exist side by side and at every turn affect one another. No matter how prosperous and strong one's own country, one cannot ignore external influences and contrive an atmosphere-in-itself. The institutions and forms of each country are not quite the same, but all who do not wish to drive their country toward danger and destruction should not go against the spirit of abiding by common principles; they should gradually advance toward consonance and keep up with the tide. Those who cling to contentions about special historical

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<sup>95</sup> "One More Discussion on the Problem of Confucianism," *New Youth*, vol. 2, no. 5.

and national circumstances in order to resist this tide are still immersed in the closed-door spirit and know nothing about the world. When a country's people know nothing about the world, how can they expect to survive in this world?"<sup>96</sup> Here, he clearly showed his comprehension of globalization. He subsequently published two articles in succession—"The French People and Modern Civilization" and "The Fundamental Differences in the Thinking of Eastern and Western Peoples"—in which he advocated bringing in and learning from Western culture. Chen Duxiu, who manifestly stood for globalization and subscribed to an open concept of culture, of course opposed the National Essentialist attitude of clinging to the defective and cherishing the flawed. He stated: "There are three schools among the proponents of the national essence of Chinese culture: The first school holds that barbarian European learning cannot hold a candle to the Dao of China's sages. This school is the most addle-pated and the most impervious to reason. The second school admits that European learning has its good points, but holds that one should first respect and study China's intrinsic academics and that there is no need to give up one's own learning and follow that of others. The third school maintains that all learning which the Europeans have, China also possesses".<sup>97</sup> This third national essentialist school loved to seek false analogies in [China's] ancient books and "pass off fish eyes as pearls," and was the most detrimental to the reform and advance of China's culture.

In the Introduction to his doctoral thesis, written on the eve of his return to China after studying abroad, Hu Shih quite clearly expressed his open culture concept. He wrote: "How can we Chinese feel at ease in this new world which at first sight appears to be so much at variance with what we have long regarded as our own civilization? For it is perfectly natural and justifiable that a nation with a glorious past and a distinctive civilization of its own making should never feel quite at home in a new civilization, if that new civilization is looked upon as part and parcel imported from alien lands and forced upon it by external necessities of national existence. And it would surely be a great blow to mankind at large if the acceptance of this new civilization should take the form of abrupt displacement instead of organic assimilation, thereby causing the disappearance of the old civilization. The real problem, therefore, may be restated thus: How can we best assimilate modern civilization in such a manner as to make it congenial and congruous and continuous with the civilization of our own making?" (Hu Shih 1983, pp. 7–8). One of the most basic concepts of the New Culture Movement was that China's culture should be in harmony and accord and continue to develop with world culture; this was a perspective based on globalization and a completely open cultural concept. There were three aspects to this open cultural concept that deserve special attention: first, it was unlike the thinking of relatively open-minded persons toward the end of the Qing Dynasty, most of whom, out of their subjective needs, chose only what they thought they could, or needed to, learn from world culture, with the result that they

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<sup>96</sup> See *The Youth*, vol. 1, no. 1.

<sup>97</sup> "Academics and National Quintessence," *New Youth*, vol. 4, no. 4; *Random Thoughts* (1).

rejected the more fundamental things while failing to do a good job of learning what they did accept. The new and open cultural concept saw China's culture as part of world culture, and brought China's culture in overall contact and harmony with world culture. Second, it acknowledged that the resplendent national culture created by the Chinese themselves was of special value, and that the special value of our own culture should not be lost in the course of assimilating world culture. And, three, as the aim was both to assimilate new world culture and not forfeit the value of our own culture, it was necessary to take a sober and reasonable attitude, exercise "organic assimilation," and steer clear of excessively disconcerting or perplexing situations when faced with new world culture.

Back in the last years of the Qing Dynasty, Lu Xun had given expression to a highly open concept of culture. In 1908, he wrote an article entitled "Talking about Cultural Deviation," in which he stated: "All perspicacious persons must thoroughly understand the major trends in the world, weigh the relative importance of things, discard the biased and partial, embrace the wise and enlightened, practice these in our country and conform to these at all times. By doing so, we will not fall behind world trends of thought externally nor lose our intrinsic birthright internally; the best of the new and the old will be drawn upon to set up new objectives, the significance of life will be taken to new depths, the people of our country will acquire greater awareness and individual stature, and our disunited and disarranged country will thereupon be turned into a state 'for and of the people' (*ren guo*)".<sup>98</sup> By the time of the New Culture Movement, Lu Xun's cultural concept had of course risen to higher levels of consciousness and reason. Based on his profound humanitarian ideals, he stated: "Since all us are human beings, there should have been no reason for our inability to understand each other. But times, territoriality, customs and prejudices are all capable of obstructing people's minds. Hence one often could not look into other people's hearts as clearly as though reflected by a mirror. Fortunately the times are different now, and this matter is by and large no longer a cause of concern".<sup>99</sup> Lu Xun believed that by the twentieth century there should not have been any more estrangements among peoples and that open cultural concepts should have been established to enable mutual communication, so that people would draw on others' strong points to make up for their weaknesses and advance and develop together. But later, in view of the traditionally closed mentality of the Chinese, Lu Xun specially advocated "bring-it-in-ism," i.e., he stood for taking the initiative in learning and referencing the cultures of other nations in the world in order to enrich our own culture. And to put his ideas into practice, he devoted a great deal of time and effort to the work of translating and introducing foreign literature.

Cai Yuanpei who had travelled and studied in various countries was quite outstanding as regards his globalized breadth of vision. He said: "Isn't the present era one of worldwide communication? In the past, we saw our country as the Land under Heaven, and Westerners also saw Europe as the world. Now that boundaries

<sup>98</sup> See *The Complete Works of Lu Xun*, vol. 1, p. 56; People's Literature Publishing House, 1981.

<sup>99</sup> Collected Novels from Abroad: Preface, see *Complete Works of Lu Xun*, vol. 10, p. 163.

are gradually melting away, we have acknowledged and accepted what we call Western civilization, while the Westerners, in spite of looking down on our country for being weak and having strange customs, cannot but admit that it is also a member of this world. . . However, worldwide communication is not limited solely to that between states or to contacts among countries. On the one hand, we are of course still members of a household or a nation or a state, yet on the other hand we do not allow ourselves be constrained by these relationships, but strive together with all human beings and as members of the world to enhance the world's culture. This is generally acknowledged by all who have the least bit of knowledge".<sup>100</sup> These words were uttered in 1914. After assuming the presidency of Peking University, Cai Yuanpei, in conformity with his all-embracing cultural spirit and his leading position in the nation's sciences and academics, worked even harder to promote an even more open cultural concept. Under his encouragement and leadership, Peking University became China's most important ideological and cultural center for the merging of Eastern and Western cultures. During a visit to the USA in 1921, Cai delivered a speech at Georgetown University, Washington DC on the synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures, in which he said: "A comprehensive overview of history shows that all contacts between different cultures are bound to produce a new culture. . . The Eastern countries have, in the last century, made efforts in every respect to introduce Western cultures, which have been extensively disseminated in Japan and Siam, for instance. The effects of such introductions are not yet widespread in China where there is a vast territory and population as well as resistance from an old culture dating back more than four millennia. However, in all localities, new-type schools have been set up which every year send students to study in countries of Europe and the Americas and put great efforts into translating the works of European and American scholars. I believe that all people in the country will have been brought in contact with European and American cultures after ten or twenty years." Cai also pointed out that Europeans and Americans were increasingly paying attention to and drawing on the experience of Eastern cultures. For instance, "the Cultural Resurgence Era (meaning the Renaissance—the Author) had been influenced to no small extent by Arabia and China. In more recent times, almost all of the famous thinkers have been influenced by Eastern philosophy." He also mentioned in his speech that the well-known German philosopher Rudolph Christoph Eucken (1849–1926) had wanted to visit China like John Dewey and Bertrand Russell, but Eucken's wife objected because he was over 70 years of age, so he asked Zhang Junli (1887–1968) to translate and narrate *The Ethics of the Chinese* for him. Cai recounted that the French mathematician Paul Painlevé (1863–1933) had sponsored a Chinese institute at the University of Paris and engaged numerous authorities on Chinese academics to serve as teachers, and that the British sociologist Herbert George Wells (1866–1946) had consulted Cai on the subject of China and Britain both recommending a number of scholars for organizing an academic

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<sup>100</sup> "Foreword to the Periodical *Scholasticism*," see *The Complete Works of Cai Yuanpei*, vol. 2, pp. 289–290; Zhejiang Education Publishing House, 1997.

agency which would exchange academic information and so on and so forth.<sup>101</sup> Cai pointed out that cultural globalization was bidirectional, and that as we strove to learn and assimilate Western culture, we should at the same time introduce China's culture to the West and to all countries in the world. Liang Qichao, too, laid much emphasis on this matter. In his *A Record of Impressions during Travels in Europe*, he stated: "A huge responsibility lies before us—the responsibility for using Western civilization to augment our civilization and using our civilization to supplement Western civilization, so that these may synthesize and form a new culture".<sup>102</sup> That was a requisite aspect of the open culture concept. During the New Culture Movement, however, proponents of the new culture more often stressed that the Chinese should strive to get rid of their closed concepts, abandon "the resistance put up by the old culture," and diligently study and reference all things more advanced than ours. Their concept of open culture was based on their understanding of the nature of mankind's culture. This, according to Hu Shih, was that: "Culture is the model and method for people's lives, and the various models and methods of people's lives are, fundamentally speaking, very much the same. Why? That is because life is simply the adaptation of living beings to their environment, and the physiological structures of human beings are, fundamentally speaking, very much the same. Thus issues that are very much the same call for solutions that are also very much the same. This is called 'the theory of limited possibilities'." Hu went on to say: "When we observe culture from the perspective of history, we see that diverse peoples all advance along the 'inherent road of life,' but because of the greater or lesser arduousness of their environments and the greater or lesser urgency of the problems they face, they advance at different rates and arrive at different times" (Hu Shih 1925b, pp. 64 and 67). Thanks to their environments, the European peoples had forged ahead in the last 300 years while the peoples of the East had to make efforts to catch up. This understanding was very important. Mutual exchanges and mutual supplementation between the cultures of various people were possible only if one saw the identity, or the sameness, among mankind's cultures. The need for the backward to learn from the advanced was recognized only if one acknowledged that all peoples advance along the "inherent road of life." It was on the basis of these concepts that the proponents of China's new culture assiduously engaged in translating and introducing Western culture; and even those whose work was to sort out and study Chinese culture emphasized the need to draw upon the theories and methods of the West.

After the rise of the New Culture Movement, Jiang Menglin wrote letters to Hu Shih and Cai Yuanpei respectively in which he proposed that new cultures in the world be translated and introduced [to China] in an organized and systematic manner. He proposed that this be done in cooperation with the Shanghai Commercial Press, which was best equipped to do so at the time, and that "in the spirit of progress, concerted efforts be made to bring in the basic cultures of Europe

<sup>101</sup> See *The Complete Works of Cai Yuanpei*, vol. 4, pp. 351–353.

<sup>102</sup> See *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Special Collection No. 23*, p. 35.

and the West” and “turn out a compendium on the basic civilizations of the West”.<sup>103</sup> Hu Shih and Cai Yuanpei fully approved of this. Zhang Yuanji (1867–1959) and Gao Mengdan (1870–1936), both old-timers among the sponsors of the Commercial Press, declared that “out of consideration for China’s cultural future, we cannot refuse” to print such books “even though this might entail a slight loss of capital”.<sup>104</sup> Soon afterward, an agreement was reached with the Commercial Press to set up a “World Book Series Office” and widely enlist like-minded persons to compile and translate Western books. These would consist mainly of modern Western masterpieces, among them *Das Kapital* and other representative Marxist works. Regrettably, little information has yet been found about the activities and progress made by the “World Book Series Office” and what books it actually put out. All we know now is that Cai Yuanpei, Hu Shih, Jiang Menglin and Tao Menghe were among the office’s key figures and that its headquarters were located at Peking University. It is not known whether their intention to set up branch offices in Shanghai, Nanjing, and Guangdong was realized. They set some basic standards for the books they published, i.e., that all should adopt the vernacular and new-type punctuation, indexes were to be compiled, and so forth.<sup>105</sup> To promote the development of book translation, the advocates of the new culture paid special attention to the matter of unifying the translation of Western names, places, etc. and set up a “Society for the Unification of Translated Names” in an effort to resolve relevant issues. However, so many complications and difficulties were encountered that some people later suggested using the method of appending the original spellings after Han-character transliterations. All in all, the advocates of the new culture made efforts in many respects to translate and introduce Western culture in an organized and systematic manner.

Under the open culture concept, the educational and cultural institutions in those days actively collected funds to conduct international academic exchanges. These consisted in the main of inviting well-known Western scholars to give lectures in China. Various schools and mass organizations invited numerous Western scholars other than the highly renowned John Dewey and Bertrand Russell to visit or give lectures in China. A substantial number of noted scholars gave lectures at Peking University, including Richard Wilhelm (1873–1930) and Max Planck (1858–1937) from Germany, Margaret Sanger (1879–1966) from the USA, Ershoff from Russia, and Fukuta Tokuzo (1874–1930) from Japan.<sup>106</sup> Worth noting is that Fukuta

<sup>103</sup> Letter from Jiang Menglin to Hu Shih (dated October 28, circa 1917), see *Hu Shih’s Posthumous Writings and Confidential Correspondence*, vol. 39, p. 403.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Regarding the world book series, normally the Commercial Press would have kept a complete set of files but these may have been destroyed during the war with Japan. Published materials about the Commercial Press do not contain any information about the world book series. Peking University’s archives were selectively compiled and no information in this respect has come to light. Some sketchy clues are to be found today only in the books and correspondence kept by Hu Shih.

<sup>106</sup> Ref. *Peking University Historical Materials*, part 3 of vol. 2, pp. 2312–2315.

Tokuzo lectured on the subject of Marx. The Lecturing and Learning Society run by Liang Qichao also invited Germany's Hans Adolf Eduard Driesch (1867–1941), India's Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) and others. The practice in China of inviting foreign scholars in an organized and systematic manner to give lectures entirely for the needs of academic and cultural exchanges was given impetus by the New Culture Movement. This was a direct outcome of the open culture concept.

### 8.3.5 *The Program and Objectives of the New Culture Movement*

Subsequent to the Literary Revolution in 1917 and the campaign for ideological revolution that rose in its wake, the New Culture Movement, galvanized by the May Fourth Movement, surged forward like a tidal wave. As Jiang Menglin stated: “There are always two reasons for huge waves like that one: The influences of academics, and the demands of the times”.<sup>107</sup> He explained that new academics and new thinking arise when the ills of society prompt people's reflections on ways of remedying those ills. Intense requirements in society for new thinking and new academics give rise to movements in which new thinking and new academics sweep away old thinking and old academics. Jiang's explanation for the basic significance and objectives of the New Culture Movement was simple, clear, and easily understood. But it was, if anything, a tad too simple. Chen Duxiu, too, frequently dwelt on issues regarding the significance and objectives of the New Culture Movement. In his “Rejoinder to Accusations against *New Youth*,” Chen said many charges had been leveled against *New Youth*. “However, when these are traced to their source, the comrades there are actually not guilty of any wrongdoing. They have been accused of heinous crimes only because they support Messrs. Democracy and Science. If one is to support Mr. Democracy, one must oppose the Confucian teachings, the rules of propriety and moral integrity, the old ethics and the old politics. If one is to support Mr. Science, one must oppose the old techniques and old beliefs. If one is to support both Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science, one must oppose the national quintessence and the old literature”.<sup>108</sup> This may be regarded as Chen Duxiu's summing up of the New Culture Movement.

Hu Shih felt that Chen Duxiu's formulation “still seemed somewhat too generalized.” He maintained: “The new ideological tide (i.e. the New Culture Movement—the Author) is basically a new attitude, which may be called a ‘critical attitude.’” He quoted a saying by Nietzsche and said: “The present era is ‘an era of reevaluating all values’. The formulation ‘reevaluating all values’ is the best

<sup>107</sup> “The Raging Tide of the New Culture,” see *Jiang Menglin's Random Notes on Academics and Culture*, p. 308; China Youth Press, 2001.

<sup>108</sup> See *New Youth*, vol. 6, no. 1.



explanation for the critical attitude”.<sup>109</sup> Hu Shih further noted that applying this critical attitude to social actualities “consists, on the one hand, of discussing various problems in society, politics, religion and literature and, on the other, of introducing the new thinking, new academics, new literature and new beliefs of the West. The former consists of ‘researching issues,’ and the latter of ‘importing scientific principles’”.<sup>110</sup> Hu Shih also stated that the basic intention in adopting a judgmental attitude toward the legacy of academics, or culture, was to “sort out the national cultural heritage.” In that case, what was the goal of the new trend of thought and the New Culture Movement? Hu Shih said it was to “regenerate the civilization.” And so Hu Shih put forward a complete program and explicit objectives for the New Culture Movement, which were “to study concrete problems of the day,” “introduce theories, doctrines, ideas from abroad,” “systematically study of our national heritage,” and “reconstruction the Chinese civilization.” Of all the formulations by leading figures in the New Culture Movement we have heard about to date, this one best summarizes the program and objectives of that movement. The connotations of those words are most abundant and profound. Their fundamental gist is that one must proceed from realities in all matters and start by researching issues. No results can be gained by making sweeping statements about isms, theories, and propositions—statements that stray from realities and from down-to-earth understandings of actual issues. One must understand and know where problems lie, reference all useful theories and teachings, find ways of solving the problems, and take society onto the road of sound development. And in the process of studying issues and drawing upon the teachings and theories of others, one must fully sum up one’s inherent cultural heritage and gain a precise understanding of the basis upon which one is to move forward. Only on such a basis can one truly build up China’s new culture.

By largely adhering to this program and goal, the New Cultural Movement obtained the concrete results described above plus some not yet mentioned. We have reason to believe that by continuing to advance in line with this program and these objectives, greater achievements could have been secured in the building of China’s new culture. But we all know that, constantly mired in civil and national wars as China was after the beginning of the 1920s, there was no way the work of researching issues, importing scientific principles and sorting out the national cultural heritage could proceed with any consistency. And, of course, reconstructing the Chinese civilization was out of the question.

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<sup>109</sup> “The Significance of the New Thought,” see *Collected Works of Hu Shih* (4), pp. 152 and 153.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

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## Chapter 9

# From Cultural Movement to Political Movement

Earlier, I emphatically pointed out that the May Fourth Movement emerged as a result of the fermenting effect of the New Culture Movement. Once the May Fourth Movement rose up, however, it conversely exerted a strong reaction on the New Culture Movement. This reaction was twofold. For one, it vigorously pushed the New Culture Movement toward development in breadth and scope, and for another, it impelled the cultural movement's transition toward a political movement.

At first, the leaders of the New Culture Movement were to varying degrees opposed to discussing politics. We know that Hu Shih was an outstanding representative in this respect. He once stated: "I heard the news of the Zhang Xun Restoration when my ship arrived at Yokohama on my return trip to China in July, 1917. But it was only after I landed in Shanghai and I saw the shallowness of the press and the lethargy of educational circles that I realized the Zhang Xun Restoration was a most natural phenomenon. I resolved not to talk politics for 20 years and to devote myself only to educational, intellectual and cultural activities, to build a political foundation by way of non-political factors".<sup>1</sup> In the first issue of *Qing Nian* (The Youth), Chen Duxiu explicitly stated: "Reforming the thinking of young people and guiding their cultivation is the bounden duty of this publication; commenting on current politics is not its purport".<sup>2</sup> However, neither Chen Duxiu nor *New Youth* adhered strictly to this rule, and, starting with the second issue, articles commenting on current politics cropped up every now and then. Thereafter, some readers critically remarked that the 3rd issue of *New Youth* fell short of its 2nd issue (in this respect) as did the 2nd issue in comparison to the first issue. One reader stated: "Teaching young people should be done by using pure academics to strengthen their foundations".<sup>3</sup> To which Chen Duxiu replied: "I do not blindly

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<sup>1</sup> "My Crossroads," *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, 2nd collection, vol. 3, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> See *Youth Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 1, "Correspondence: Answering Wang Yonggong."

<sup>3</sup> See *New Youth*, vol. 3, no 5, "Gu Kegang to Reporters."

believe in the omnipotence of politics, and I maintain that politics, as a phenomenon, has caused endless evil in society. However, human life must undergo such a phase, and in this phase politics is bound to be one of the important components of human life. If ignored, it will become the greatest hindrance to progress among the people. True, the fundamental reason for progress among the people rests in education and enterprise rather than in politics, but politics must rise above certain standards before latitude is made available for the development of education and enterprise. It is true that the purpose of this publication is not to criticize current politics, nor does the cultivation of young people consist of discussing current politics. Yet how can one remain completely silent about such major political issues as the life and death one's country?"<sup>4</sup> In a letter to Zhang Shizhao (1881–1973), editor of the political periodical *Jia Yin* (The Tiger), Huang Yuanyong, who had foretold the coming of the New Culture Movement, declared that remedies for problems could no longer be found in politics and that efforts toward reform should be made by means of ideology and the arts. Zhang Shizhao's reply to Huang Yuanyong came very close to Chen Duxiu's pronouncements when he said: "The fundamental remedy lies in promoting the new literature. But its political quality should reach certain standards before it may engage in discussions on social matters."<sup>5</sup>

While all of these precursors of the new culture were preparing to plunge into cultural reform to lay the groundwork for political and social reform, they were also fully aware that there was no possibility of breaking completely away from politics. Even people like Hu Shih, who had vowed to eschew politics for 20 years, eventually felt that discussions on politics could not be avoided when political issues closed in menacingly after the advent of the May Fourth Movement.

## 9.1 The Debate over Problems and Isms

Although *New Youth* occasionally carried some articles commenting on political affairs, it basically stayed away from contemporary and concrete politics and government. In December 1918, Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao started up *Mei Zhou Ping Lun* (Weekly Critic), a journal devoted chiefly to political discussions. Hu Shih did not participate in this initiative since he had returned to his hometown to attend his mother's obsequies. In June 1919, after the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement, Chen Duxiu was arrested, causing *New Youth* to go out of publication for a full 6 months. Meanwhile, Hu Shih was entrusted with running *Weekly Critic* (starting with issue no. 26). In the 31st issue of this journal, Hu Shih published his article "More Study of Problems, Less Talk of Isms!" which triggered a famous debate and which Lan Gongwu (1887–1957), sponsor of *Guo Min Gong Bao*,

<sup>4</sup> Same as above, "Correspondence: Response to Gu Kegang".

<sup>5</sup> Zhang Shizhao: "Response to Huang Yuanyong." See *Jia Yin*, vol. 1, no. 10.

reprinted in that journal and subsequently wrote an article to discuss the matter with Hu Shih. Hu Shih in turn reprinted Lan's article, "Problems and Isms," in the 33rd issue of *Weekly Critic*. Subsequently, in the 35th issue, Hu Shih reprinted a long letter from Li Dazhao to himself on the subject of problems and doctrines and entitled the letter "More on Problems and Isms." After publishing these two letters, Hu Shih penned two successive articles in response, which he entitled "A Third Discussion on Problems and Isms" and "A Fourth Discussion on Problems and Isms."

This controversy over problems and isms has heretofore been regarded as a struggle between Marxism and anti-Marxism, as between the camps of revolution and reaction. I intend here to realistically sort out the contents of their discussions and debates and the main differences between the views of each party and then analyze the nature and significance of the controversy.

### ***9.1.1 What Were the Problems Raised by Hu Shih?***

Hu Shih began his article by citing remarks he made 20 days earlier in a commentary on the new journal *Weekly Critic*. He had said: "A substantial danger facing the media today is that they tend toward doctrines written on paper instead of conducting field investigations of what today's Chinese society actually needs." And, "One should know that the first bounden duty of public opinion makers today is to carefully examine the actual situation in society. All doctrines and all 'isms' are but tools for such examinations. Having such doctrines as reference makes it easier for us to understand the circumstances of the matter we examine, and easier to understand the significance of certain situations and the remedial methods that should be employed".<sup>6</sup> These two passages by Hu Shih in fact expressed the basic theme of the article in question. Hu Shih was a devout believer in experimentalism (pragmatism). He firmly maintained that "thoughts of any value first begin with this or that specific problem".<sup>7</sup> No specific problems can exist apart from concrete facts, he opined, and no thought is formed apart from considerations of specific problems. If thought is to have content, it cannot be divorced from specific problems. He believed that there was indeed a plethora of problems in China's society, and all had reached the state where they needed urgent resolution. Yet the great majority of press personages was unwilling to carefully examine and study these specific problems and preferred instead to discuss this or that "ism." He maintained that "the tendency toward 'isms' is quite perilous, since mantras such as these are very likely to be exploited by shameless politicians for doing all sorts of evil things".<sup>8</sup> He also stated: "Those who prate about 'isms' instead of studying problems are merely

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<sup>6</sup> See *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 2, pp. 147–148.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

afraid of difficulties and go for what is easiest; they are simply lazy”.<sup>9</sup> For in his opinion, “empty blathering about ‘isms’ is quite easy; it is something every man jack can do, that parrots or phonographs can do”.<sup>10</sup>

Hi Shih did not negate the value of doctrines and isms. However, he emphasized: “All ‘isms’ arise in response to prevailing circumstances.” And all are remedial measures thought up by caring persons at the time and the place of their examinations of a social problem. Hence, “at their outset, the great majority of ‘isms’ were specific remedial ideas, but later, as these ideas spread afield, those who did the spreading simplified the process by using one or two words to represent a specific idea and called it a certain ‘ism.’ Once an idea became an ism, it changed from a concrete program into an abstract noun”.<sup>11</sup> If, after an ism was turned into an abstract term, people did not study the history of the formation of the ism or understand the original and specific propositions behind the ism but merely indulged in empty talk about the excellence and ingenuity of the ism, no good could come of it. Hu Shih maintained that all isms and all doctrines could serve us only as tools and references in our studies. Having such tools and references would help us understand specific facts and their significances more clearly and make it easier to find solutions. However, Hu Shih also stated: “The great danger of ‘isms’ is that they make people satisfied and complacent, believing that they have found a panacea or a ‘fundamental solution’ and that they need not waste their energies by studying ways to solve this or that concrete problem”.<sup>12</sup>

To put it simply, the problem Hu Shih posited was that press circles in those days were beset with a serious defect, or one might say a grave danger, in that they would rather discuss doctrines or isms on paper rather than conduct meticulous examinations or studies of specific social problems. This tendency presented the danger of being misused by shameless politicians, of nurturing the lazy habit of preferring to indulge in empty talk about isms and doctrines instead of buckling down to studies. The original sense of “ism” is of a proposition for remedying current problems; it ought not to be understood merely as an abstract term. Doctrines and isms can only be used as tools and reference material for studies and should by no means be seen as cure-all prescriptions or “fundamental solutions.” That was the issue Hu Shih raised.

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 149–150

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

### 9.1.2 *How the Problems Raised by Lan Gongwu and Li Dazhao Differed*

Lan maintained that Hu Shih's article "put too much emphasis on actual problems, wrote off the greater part of the effects of isms and doctrines, and was somewhat prone to throwing out the baby with the bathwater".<sup>13</sup> When specifically expounding his views, Lan voiced further opinions that differed substantially from Hu Shih's: (1) He believed if problems were to be understood by the majority of people, a few persons had to ponder them first so as to understand their significance and then publicize and promote these understandings among the majority of people. Such publicized and promoted truths were isms. In Lan's view, "When a problem first emerges it is bound to be abstract, and only later does it take on a specific character".<sup>14</sup> In other words, the significance of a problem was first understood by a minority of people, who then publicized and promoted this as an ism. Only when the ism was widely disseminated did the majority of people understand the specific problems. This view of Lan was quite peculiar. (2) Lan maintained that not all problems were specific; that some were abstract. His examples: The liberty, equality, and fraternity propagated by the French Revolution and the anti-Manchuism advertized by China's 1911 Revolution, both of which were abstract. (3) Lan stated: "The importance of many of the isms lies not in their transformation from specific opinions into abstract terms but in their ideals for the future. . . . Thus the ideals are the most important part of the isms".<sup>15</sup> (4) Lan maintained: "The ism is one thing, and the method of implementation is another. Although there is some relation between them, they are not necessarily inseparable".<sup>16</sup> And, "The study and advertising of isms is the most important and most realistic first step for resolving problems".<sup>17</sup>

The long and short of it is that, contrary to Hu Shih, Lan believed isms possessed absolute priority and importance as compared to problems.

Li Dazhao's articles differed somewhat from Lan Gongwu's articles in that Li clearly admitted "between 'problems' and 'isms' exists a relation that cannot be completely detached." However, he emphasized "if we wish to resolve an issue, we should try to turn it into an issue common to most people in society." And for this, one should cause the majority of people to "first hew to a commonly-oriented idealism." "Hence, while our social movements should study actual issues, they should also propagate the isms of ideals. Doing so will be of interactive benefit;

<sup>13</sup> See "Master Lan Zhixian's Problems and Isms," attached to *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 2. See p. 154 of the book.

<sup>14</sup> See "Master Lan Zhixian's Problems and Isms," attached to *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 2. See p. 159 of the book.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

parallel and not mutually exclusive”.<sup>18</sup> The major divergence between Li Dazhao and Hu Shih was Li’s explicit pronouncement: “I like to talk about Bolshevism,” whereas Hu Shih was seen at this time as (representing) “the orthodox thinking of democracy, which seeks to fight stubborn old superstitions on the one hand and, on the other, to stem the tide of Russian Bolshevism”.<sup>19</sup> Another major difference between Li Dazhao and Hu Shih was that Hu denied the existence of any prescription for “fundamentally solving” social problems. Li Dazhao, however, maintained: “If one is in a society where no organization or vitality exists, where all mechanisms have shut down, and no matter what tools you possess you have no chance of making them work—at such a time, a fundamental solution is probably needed if there is to be any hope of solving all of the specific problems”.<sup>20</sup> By “fundamental solution,” he meant revolution. Hu Shih denied the existence of a way to effect a “fundamental solution” and therefore negated revolution. Li Dazhao maintained that under the social conditions existing in China, revolution was a must if one was to look forward to solving the various problems in society.

### ***9.1.3 How Hu Shih Responded to Lan Gongwu and Li Dazhao***

Hu Shih printed the articles by Lan Gongwu and Li Dazhao in the 33rd and 35th issues of *Weekly Critic*, respectively. He then published in succession two articles—“A Third Discussion on Problems and Isms” and “A Fourth Discussion on Problems and Isms”—in the 36th and 37th issues. The first of the two responded specifically to the criticisms leveled by Lan and Li, and the second targeted the shortcomings of the press as it vigorously touted various isms and raised several matters that deserved attention when isms and doctrines were being introduced.

Hu Shih put forward many specific arguments against Lan’s and Li’s criticisms. On the whole, however, the two points listed below were the most important:

1. Hu Shih disagreed with Lan’s contention that isms were one matter and the methods for carrying them out were another, that isms did not necessarily include methods for carrying them out, and that such methods were not necessarily derived from the isms. Hu maintained that when isms were completely dissociated from the way they were carried out, as Lan advocated, isms became abstractions dangling in midair. Hu maintained that isms started out as specific propositions. Isms based on specific propositions were isms that could be experimented on and carried out; isms which did not contain specific propositions were merely hollow abstractions doomed to defeat when they encountered

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<sup>18</sup> “More on Problems and Isms,” *Collected Works of Li Dazhao*, vol. 3, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.



isms containing specific propositions. Hu believed that the separation of isms and methods and inordinate advocacy of isms was bound to result in “enthusiasm for outcomes” but “ignorance of methods” and that this was a major failing of humanity and of the Chinese in particular. Hu Shih pointed out that this tendency existed to a certain extent in Li Dazhao’s articles as well. Li’s statement—“if only we take this or that ism and use it as a tool in an actual movement, it will adapt to the times, the location and the matter and give rise to changes suited to the environment”<sup>21</sup>—showed a clear tendency to stress isms at the expense of methods for carrying them out.

2. Hu Shih disagreed in particular with Lan’s statement that “the more extensive the scope” encompassed by an ism, “the greater is its abstract character. This in turn widens its coverage, and the number of people converted to it will naturally augment.” Hu Shih believed there was some truth to Li’s assertion, but that this view should certainly not be advocated, as it represented one of mankind’s inherent weaknesses. People in general were often befuddled and deluded by high-sounding, abstract terminology. This was a product of people’s ignorance. “Because of their ignorance and benightedness, people are likely to be deceived by a few abstract terms into risking life and limb, serving as beasts of burden and becoming meat on other people’s chopping blocks. Many treacherous careerists and politicians in history have understood this inherent weakness of mankind, and for this reason have frequently used high-sounding abstract terms to delude the great majority of the people into fighting on their behalf for power and wealth and sacrificing their lives”.<sup>22</sup> We who study history cannot but acknowledge the truth of Hu Shih’s words.

In his “A Fourth Discussion on Problems and Isms,” Hu Shih made a special point of discussing how a good job should be done of translating and introducing scientific theory.

Although Hu Shih stated that he disapproved of empty discussion of abstract isms, he was fully in favor of endeavors to introduce scientific theory and trends of thought. He stressed that attention should be paid to three aspects when importing scientific theory.

First, when importing scientific theory, attention should be paid to the trend of the times and the circumstances that gave rise to the theory. He stated: “All living theory is the product of the times. . . . These trends and circumstances are important reasons for the birth of theories”.<sup>23</sup> This was like a physician treating a disorder and making out a prescription for a specific symptom. The more detailed his knowledge of the symptom, the greater the likelihood of his prescription being practical and effective. Likewise, “the more clearly and minutely one notes the social and political circumstances when an ism emerges, the more easy is it to fully understand

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> “A Third Discussion on Problems and Isms”, *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 2, p. 189.

<sup>23</sup> “A Fourth Discussion on Problems and Isms”, *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 2, p. 191.

the significance of the theory and the greater is the referential effect of the theory”.<sup>24</sup> The original intent of bringing in a theory or ism is to solve social problems in one’s own country. It is obviously irresponsible to introduce a theory or ism if one does not ask why and for solving what social problems it was put forward, to introduce it simply because one is enamored by its high-sounding verbiage.

Two, when importing teachings and theory, attention should be paid to the facts surrounding the life of the “theorist,” and the academic influences to which he was exposed. Hu Shih maintained: “One part of all isms and theories is a product of the trends of the times in question, another part is a natural expression of the theorist’s personal disposition and family circumstances, and still another part is a result of the ancient or contemporary theories to which the theorist has been exposed”.<sup>25</sup> Hu Shih said if one failed to acquire a thorough understanding of the theorist’s circumstances, one ran the risk of mistakenly regarding purely personal and coincidental factors as truths of a permanent value and of being duped.

Thirdly, when importing teachings and theory, one should pay attention to the effects they had already produced. “These effects, whether good or bad, are extremely important, and are the true manifestations of these teachings and theories. If one examines these effects, one can all the more clearly see the significance of the various teachings and theories and understand their function and value”.<sup>26</sup>

Hu Shih combined the three aspects named above under the title “historical attitude.” He said: “One should always seek the causes and effects of all matters and systems, and not regard them as things that come without a casting shadow and go without leaving a trace. This (attitude) is the historical attitude”.<sup>27</sup> He expressed the hope that “China’s scholars would be capable of using this historical attitude to study all teachings, theories and isms”.<sup>28</sup>

### ***9.1.4 The Essence and Significance of the Debate***

This controversy was once categorized as a “controversy between Marxism and anti-Marxism” and a “struggle between revolution and reaction.” We can, in all truth, hardly detect any such characteristic in the contents of the above debate. For one thing, Hu Shih, Li Dazhao, and Lan Gongwu all belonged to the New Culture camp at that time. Their debates consisted uniquely of discussions among friends in which there was certainly no sign of any saber-rattling animosity. Secondly, all recognized the presence of resemblances, similarities, and links among their respective views. For example, Lan Gongwu stated: “The advice in Hu Shih’s

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 193–194.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 196–197.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

articles to talk less about isms and study more issues is quite profound. Our press circles will no doubt benefit considerably from this article”.<sup>29</sup> Again, for example, Li Dazhao said that reading Hu Shih’s articles “has given rise to a number of reflections, some of which find reciprocal corroboration in Mr. Hu’s (i.e. Hu Shih’s—the Author) propositions, and others which are our own manifestos to society”.<sup>30</sup> Li Dazhao moreover acknowledged “many of our recent utterances tend toward being empty words on paper, and few touch upon actual problems. We pledge to work in future on the side of actualities. This awareness has arisen after perusing Mr. Hu’s treatise”.<sup>31</sup> Hu Shih, too, maintained that the articles he wrote and addressed to Lan and Li were the outcome of mutual comparisons of notes and mutual inspiration. Hu Shih said: “Many of the comments by Master Zhifei (i.e. Lan Gongwu) are replete with aspects that may add to and correct my former writings”.<sup>32</sup> In the article “A Third Discussion on Problems and Isms,” written in response to Lan and Li, Hu Shih also stated: “Messrs Lan Zhifei and Li Shouchang have produced lengthy writings to discuss things with me. They have developed some of my views, made them more penetrating, and have made corrections in many places, for which I am most grateful to them”.<sup>33</sup> The publication of Hu Shih’s articles evoked an active response among young people aroused by the New Culture Movement. For instance, Mao Zedong, the young people’s leader in Hunan province, was the first to launch a “society for studying problems.” There is clearly no basis for claiming that the debate between Hu, Lan, and Li was a struggle between revolution and reaction.

There is similarly no basis for the contention that the interaction between Hu Shih and Li Dazhao constituted a controversy between Marxism and anti-Marxism. First of all, the question Hu Shih raised about issues and isms was not directed at Marxism. In his article “More Study of Problems, Less Talk of Isms,” he mentioned Marxism only in one place and said “the socialism of Marx is not the same as the socialism of Wang Yitang”.<sup>34</sup> In no way did this imply any disparagement of Marxism. Secondly, Li Dazhao’s article mentioned Bolshevism and Marx’s materialist conception of history. However, Hu Shih’s responding article, rather than mounting any attacks against Marx’s materialist conception of history, came up with a fairly positive exposition. He said, for example, “The materialist concept of history points out the importance of material civilization and economic organization in mankind’s evolution and social history, initiates a new era in the study of history, lays countless new paths for social studies, and opens up many avenues

<sup>29</sup> See “Master Lan Zhixian’s Problems and Isms,” attached to *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 2. See p. 154 of the book.

<sup>30</sup> Li Dazhao: “More on Problems and Isms,” *Collected Writings of Li Dazhao*, vol 3, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Li Dazhao: “More on Problems and Isms”, *Collected Writings of Li Dazhao*, vol 3, pp. 1–2.

<sup>32</sup> See “Notes” to “Master Lan Zhixian’s Problems and Isms,” attached to *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 2. See p. 154 of the book.

<sup>33</sup> See *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 2, p. 177.

<sup>34</sup> See *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 2, p. 150.

for political studies”.<sup>35</sup> When he discussed another important Marxist teaching, i.e., class struggle, Hu Shih, while affirming its positive significance, did indeed come up with some criticisms. He stated: “This teaching is too much inclined to assert the ‘class consciousness’ aspect, which subtly fosters a sense of class animosity and makes the working people believe that capitalists are enemies with whom they cannot live side by side, and which also makes many capitalists feel that the working people are some sort of foes. The result of such animosity is to turn two major forces in society that can and should help one another into opposing camps pitted against one another, make many constructive remedial methods impossible, and precipitate numerous disasters in history that should not have occurred in the first place”.<sup>36</sup> This passage indeed smacks somewhat of an “attack” if seen from the perspective prevalent during the “mass criticisms and repudiations [of the Cultural Revolution years].” However, it can hardly be labeled an attack if one proceeds from the historical background of those times and conducts an objective and realistic critique. For one thing, with the exception of a minute minority of persons who had some slight knowledge of Marxism, the vast majority were quite unfamiliar with Marxism and regarded it as a foreign teaching that had little if any relation to their vital interests. Hence, there was no need either to deliberately laud or denigrate it. Hu Shih’s opinion was no more than a reflection of the thinking of the majority of middle-of-the-road and liberalist intellectuals. Thirdly, no social group that hewed to Marxism as its fixed belief had clearly emerged yet (in China), not to mention any Marxist or communist party, and interparty or interfactional conflicts of interests did not exist on the attitude toward Marxism. Hence, if any critical opinions about Marxism were voiced by either Hu Shih or anyone else, these opinions were merely a sort of criticism rather than “attacks.”

In that case, what was the significance of this debate?

Almost 3 years after the event, Hu Shih saw his article “More Study of Problem, Less Talk of Isms” which triggered the debate as “a preamble to political comments.” He said: “It was only in the middle of June, 1919, when Duxiu was arrested and I took over the running of *Weekly Critic*, that I felt I had to discuss politics. At the time the Anfu Clique [the militarist power group then in control of the Beijing government] was in its heyday and Shanghai’s Fen Zang He Hui (“Divide-the-Spoils” Society) had not yet disbanded. However, the ‘new’ elements in China refused to discuss specific political issues, and instead prated voluminously about such things as anarchism and Marxism. I could not stand or put up with this—since I am a believer in experimentalism, and so I firmly resolved to discuss politics. I put forward a preamble to my political comments in *Weekly Critic*, no. 31, and called it ‘More Study of Problems, Less Talk of Isms!’”<sup>37</sup> More than 2 years after he published his “preamble” to political comments, however, he had not produced

<sup>35</sup> Hu Shih: “A Fourth Discussion on Problems and Isms,” *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 2, p. 195.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>37</sup> Hu Shih: “My Crossroads,” *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 96–97.

any texts thereof. He said that “preoccupations with health have prevented me from diverting any time to the cause of public opinion.”

I maintain there were two significances to the debate over problems and isms. The first was its political significance. Hu Shih raised the problems-and-isms issue because he was incensed by the way press circles refused to discuss the myriad actual problems in society and limited themselves to talking about isms. As a believer in experimentalism, Hu Shih stood for resolving specific social problems one by one. Isms and teachings could only serve as tools and references for the solution of specific issues. Meanwhile, Li Dazhao and Lan Gongwu emphasized reliance on isms to mobilize the masses and in order to seek “fundamental solutions.” Their positions represent two diametrically opposed political lines, one of which consisted of peaceful reform and the other of violent revolution. The struggle between these two lines had existed ever since the last years of the Qing Dynasty and showed a tendency to grow more intense after the founding of the Nationalist Republic. The debate over problems and isms presaged the future state of political developments in China.

Secondly, I maintain that the debate over problems and isms also possessed important significance in terms of the history of ideology. It is true that not many persons participated in this debate and few articles on it were published. However, the two sides were already capable of giving expression to the ultimate difference between the two ideological tendencies. Hu Shih believed that all valuable thinking was derived from the study of specific problems and that all isms and learning were merely tools and references that helped solve specific problems. Problems came first, whereas isms and theories were generated in the process of studying problems. Lan and Li, on the other hand, believed that isms and theories represented the tendencies and ideals of the vast majority of people in society and possessed more importance than each and every individual problem. In Hu Shih’s opinion, the methods for solving problems were also to be found in the process of studying problems, while Li believed that the methods for solving problems were derived from isms and theories and were embodied in the isms and theories. Hu Shih was an experimentalist; Lan and Li were revolutionists, and Li Dazhao could at this time be regarded to a certain extent as a Marxist. The debate over issues and isms was, in essence, a debate between experimentalism and revolutionism and, to a certain extent, a debate between experimentalism and Marxism. Hence, one could also say that the debate over problems and isms was the prelude to the debate between Chinese Marxism and experimentalism.

Ultimately, this debate was the starting point of leaders of the New Culture Movement going from basically not discussing politics over to discussing politics and of the New Culture Movement going over to a revolutionary movement.

## 9.2 The Divisions Among Colleagues at New Youth

The debate over issues and isms had already begun to reveal the ideological differences among colleagues at New Youth. At the time of the debate, however, Chen Duxiu, the person principally in charge at New Youth, was in prison and did not take part in the debate. Chen Duxiu had been arrested on June 11, 1919, by the Capital City Police Department and was bailed out on September 16 after 98 days of imprisonment. This experience was no doubt a severe shock to him. There were two incidents that badly upset Chen Duxiu that year. One was his imprisonment; the other was his dismissal from his position as dean of the literary faculty at Peking University in March that year and his forced departure from the university. Those were times of chaos in China, of imminent foreign aggression, rampaging warlords, and venal politicians. That oppressive environment, compounded with those two major shocks, caused Chen Duxiu who already manifested a revolutionary spirit to be even more radically inclined toward revolution. Publication at New Youth had come to a standstill after Chen Duxiu's arrest. After his release, colleagues at the journal unanimously agreed to let Chen Duxiu do the editing. However, when Chen first took sole charge of New Youth's editing powers, it appeared he intended to largely continue with the journal's previous policies. Apart from declaring "although we do not have blind faith in the omnipotence of politics, we recognize that politics is an important aspect of political life",<sup>38</sup> indicating that New Youth would in future openly discuss political issues while in all other matters, it would stick to its original aims. In Vol. 7, no. 1, of New Youth, there was still very little discussion on politics. Chen Duxiu went to Shanghai in January 1920, after which the journal's editing was moved to that city. In the next period, Chen was too busy with political activities to perform the editing alone, so he delegated the work bit by bit to a few of his young followers, among whom were Chen Wangdao (1891–1977) and Li Hanjun (1890–1927). The May 1920 New Youth, vol. 7, no. 6—a special issue for May 4 Labor Day—was almost exclusively devoted to political articles. And starting with vol. 8, no. 1, New Youth had been turned wholly into an official publication for communist personages.

Let us look now at the changes that occurred in Chen Duxiu's thinking in this period.

Chen Duxiu arrived in Shanghai in January 1920 and took up residence at the Yadong (Oriental) Book Company from February to April of that year. He had numerous rendezvous there with representatives Luo Jialun (1897–1969), Xu Deheng (1890–1990), and Zhang Guotao (1897–1979) of the Beijing Students' Union, and all of his discussions with them had to do with Marxism, the Russian revolution, overthrowing warlords, and other such issues. In May, he initiated the establishment of Shanghai's Marxist Studies Society and also accepted a recommendation by Comintern Representative Grigori Voitinsky to start setting up the Communist Party of China, draw up the party's constitution, and put forth

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<sup>38</sup> See "The Declaration of the Magazine," *New Youth*, vol. 7, no. 1.

propositions for a worker-peasant dictatorship and producers' cooperatives. Participants at that time included many persons, such as Dai Jitao, Li Hanzun, Shi Cuntong, Chen Wangdao, Yu Xiusong, Li Da, Shen Xuanlu, and Zhao Shiyun, who were initially inclined toward communism and evinced interest in the workers and peasants and Soviet Russia. By August, preparations had been completed, the communist party's temporary central bureau was set up, and Chen Duxiu was elected secretary. In this capacity, Chen contacted diverse localities and set up party branches in them. It was also decided that New Youth would serve openly as the party's official publication and that a new theoretical monthly—*The Communist*—would be founded as the party's secret official publication. On September 1, New Youth put out vol. 8, no. 1, in which Chen Duxiu published an article entitled "Talking Politics." This article explicitly put forward the thinking about a "dictatorship of the working classes," which indicated that Chen Duxiu had quite consciously accepted Marxism's theory of revolution and that he quite consciously supported the path of the Russian revolution. On November 7, Chen wrote an article entitled "A Brief Statement" for the first issue of *The Communist* and stated more explicitly that one should "use the means of revolutionary warfare to overthrow all capitalist classes," seize political power, set up a "system of dictatorship of the laborers," and "prevent capitalist classes from ever taking shape".<sup>39</sup> It was quite obvious that the Chen Duxiu of this period had basically turned into a Marxist, into a communist party founder who was close to being a professional proletarian revolutionary.

It is probable that only Li Dazhao—among all of the colleagues at New Youth—had any understanding of Chen Duxiu's situation at that time. No one else knew much. However, they sensed that Chen Duxiu had shifted rapidly toward political activities and revolution. Meanwhile, except for Chen and Li, the colleagues at New Youth had undergone little change; they were still scholars and writers and still devoted their efforts to writing on such subjects as literature, history, and philosophy, and the only things they could contribute to New Youth were works on literature, history, philosophy, and the like. Their lack of rapport with Chen Duxiu and other communists had already become quite obvious. Moreover, all those who edited New Youth in Shanghai and their colleagues in Beijing—other than Lu Xun—had their own daily pursuits and, unless urged, no longer actively contributed articles to the journal. Soon after New Youth had moved to Shanghai, Chen Duxiu had already sensed that serious consideration should be given to the matter of how New Youth should be run in future and how he and his colleagues in Beijing ought to cooperate. On April 26, 1920, he wrote a letter to Hu Shih, Li Dazhao, and others in Beijing on whether they should continue to run New Youth, how further contracts between the journal and its publishers should be negotiated, and what dispositions should be made for the editing staff of New Youth. Should the editors work in rotation in Beijing? Or should one person in Beijing do the editing? Or

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<sup>39</sup> See *Selected Works by Chen Duxiu*, (vol. 2) p. 50; Sanlian Bookstore.

should Chen Duxiu himself do the editing in Shanghai?<sup>40</sup> To this day, we have not seen any letter of reply to these questions from the colleagues in Beijing. On December 16, when Chen Duxiu was about to leave for Guangzhou on an invitation from the Guangdong authorities, he wrote another letter to Hu Shih and Gao Yihan (1885–1968). He stated: “New Youth’s tone has become too distinctive, and to this I have lately taken exception. Chen Wangdao, too, stands for changing its content a bit and for placing continued emphasis on philosophy and literature in future issues. But to do this, our colleagues in Beijing will have to write more articles. The contents of recent issues has changed somewhat, and one of the reasons for this is that our colleagues in Beijing are submitting too few articles. I hope the two of you will conscientiously urge our colleagues in Beijing to send in more articles”.<sup>41</sup> When Chen Duxiu wrote this letter, New Youth had just put out vol. 8 no. 4, and, as we have said above, with vol. 8 no. 1, New Youth had already become the official publication of communist personages headed by Chen Duxiu. All the main contents of the four issues in vol. 8 dealt with Marxism and the Russian revolution. Articles sent in by the colleagues in Beijing were few in number, and apart from a sprinkling by Gao Yihan and Zhang Weici (1890–1976) which consisted of translations of or introductions to politics abroad, these were works of literature and art by such people as Hu Shih, Zhou Zuoren, Lu Xun, and Liu Fu. Chen Duxiu himself felt this was not in the journal’s long-term interests, and he wished to somewhat lighten its overly heavy revolutionary tone in the hope that the journal would continue to exert an influence in intellectual circles. He also wished to ensure New Youth’s long-term existence. However, there was clearly little substance to his contention that New Youth’s “excessively heavy tone” was due to the colleagues in Beijing sending in too few articles. As stated above, Chen Duxiu’s thinking had undergone a rapid transformation after he went to Shanghai and he had gradually become an adherent of communism, almost a professional proletarian revolutionary, whereas New Youth had changed from a publication for intellectual colleagues into one that publicized Marxism and the Russian revolution and into the official publication of the communist party. In these circumstances, the colleagues in Beijing—those university professors and liberal writers—were clearly unable to adapt to the radical changes in Chen Duxiu and New Youth. How could the colleagues in Beijing provide large numbers of articles when even an article on methods of teaching the Chinese language in secondary schools incurred Chen Wangdao’s displeasure?<sup>42</sup> In the letter cited above, Chen also reproved Hu Shih and Tao Menghe (1887–1960) for associating too closely with the Yanjiuxi (“Studies Faction,” a conservative offshoot of the Kuomintang).<sup>43</sup> This “close association” was no more than a rumor in South China and completely unfounded. And so Li Dazhao thought it was

<sup>40</sup> See *Hu Shih’s Posthumous Writings and Confidential Correspondence*, vol. 35, pp. 569–570.

<sup>41</sup> See *Selected Works by Chen Duxiu*, (vol. 2) p. 71.

<sup>42</sup> See Tang Baolin and Lin Maosheng (1988, p. 143).

<sup>43</sup> See *Selected Works by Chen Duxiu*, (vol. 2) p. 71.



necessary for everyone to draft a joint letter to Chen Duxiu to “clarify the matter”.<sup>44</sup> One can well imagine Hu Shih’s displeasure when he saw this letter!

Toward the end of 1920 or the beginning of 1921, Hu Shih wrote a reply to Chen Duxiu. In the letter he stated: “New Youth’s ‘tone is too distinctive’ and you say you ‘take exception’ to that. However, that is already an established fact, and our Beijing colleagues’ efforts to moderate its tone will certainly not be as amazingly swift as our Shanghai colleagues’ ploys for intensifying the same.” This passage expressed Hu Shih’s displeasure. Based on opinions voiced by his Beijing colleagues, he then put forward three possible solutions: One, “allow New Youth to become a specialty journal, and set up a separate magazine for philosophy and literature.” Two, move New Youth’s editorial board to Beijing starting with vol. 9, no. 1, and have the Beijing colleagues issue an announcement that emphasis will be placed on academic thought and literature and arts and that no politics will be discussed. Three, Tao Menghe said that since New Youth was no longer being delivered by the post office, it had best temporarily suspended publication. Hu Shih maintained that the third solution would hinder New Youth’s operations and that the first two solutions were better.<sup>45</sup> Upon reading Hu Shih’s letter, Chen Duxiu flew into a rage. He maintained that the first solution was “an attack against his person,” and he was especially angry about the announcement on not discussing politics (Lu Xun, too, was against making such an announcement). Thereupon, Hu Shih wrote an answer to Chen Duxiu on January 22, 1921, and passed it first among the colleagues in Beijing for their perusal. In it, he stated he was not against Chen Duxiu or New Youth. He merely hoped New Youth would “continue to place importance on philosophy and literature,” and the best solution toward this end was to bring its editing back to Beijing. He was also willing to drop his proposal for setting up another publication as well as the announcement of “no discussion of politics.” The Beijing colleagues’ opinions regarding this letter were as follows:

Zhang Weici and Gao Yihan seconded Hu Shih’s opinion.

Tao Menghe and Wang Fuwu approved of moving back to Beijing, but if that were not possible, publication should be suspended. On no account, however, should the journal be split in two, as that would damage New Youth’s spiritual unity.

Li Dazhao stood for the first solution. He was not against moving the journal’s editing back to Beijing if doing so did not damage New Youth’s spiritual unity. But he absolutely opposed suspending the journal, as that would be worse than splitting it apart. He subsequently changed his mind and only approved of moving the editing back to Beijing.

Zhou Zuoren and Lu Xun approved of editing in Beijing. They felt, however, that the tendency was toward splitting New Youth. Any compromise or unity would be grudging and unlikely, and the outcome would be the same whether the first or

<sup>44</sup> Letter from Li Dazhao to Hu Shih; see *Collected Works of Li Dazhao*, vol. 5, p. 299.

<sup>45</sup> “A Few Letters Regarding the New Youth Issue,” *Historical Materials on Publishing in Modern China*, Edition A, p. 7, Zhonghua Bookstore, 1954.

second solution were applied. Thus, one might as well let it split, and in that case, the first solution might be better. Lu Xun added a comment: “I see no need to vie for the New Youth title”.<sup>46</sup>

Most remarkable was Qian Xuantong’s (1887–1939) opinion. Qian was the most objective on this matter. When he learned about the divergence of opinions on New Youth between Chen Duxiu and Hu Shih, he wrote a letter to the brothers Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren on January 11, 1921, saying: “I was at first unaware that Messrs. Chen and Hu had gotten to the cut-and-thrust stage.” He declared: “I certainly do not wish to side with either of them, but if I asked my conscience, I would feel that Hu Shih’s proposal hews closer to realities.” He also said: “If Zhongfu [Chen Duxiu] suspects that Hu Shih is being manipulated by the Wise Men’s Faction (i.e. the Studies Faction—the Author), or even says that Peking University has fallen into the hands of the Wise Men, he is being oversensitive”.<sup>47</sup> On January 18, he wrote in his diary: “I learned about the divergence of opinions between Zhong and Shih when I received that letter from Shouchang [Li Dazhao]. It appears that the one stands for talking about workers and peasants and discussing politics, whilst the other is against [talking about] workers and peasants or discussing politics. Actually, that is merely a pigs-head issue”.<sup>48</sup> When we see the note he appended with regard to Hu Shih’s letter, we are further apprised of his relatively objective attitude. We see that his opinion “is close to that of the Zhou brothers.” He said: “I feel that splitting the journal into two publications would be best. If they insist on pushing and pulling this way and that, the only result will be both sides suffering and losing out. That will not only be pointless, but will make outsiders misunderstand and believe that the colleagues at New Youth stand for ‘uniformity of thought’ which would indeed be most disgraceful! [Tao] Menghe stands for suspending publication, whereas I concur with Shouchang [Li Dazhao] and absolutely disagree. I feel our friendship with Brother Zhongfu is the same as ever and has not been hurt in the least. However, New Youth is a group formed by free association, and when some of us fail to see eye to eye on some issues we usually deal with the situation by ‘temporarily recusing ourselves.’ There should certainly not be any talk of disbanding. If worst comes to worst and everyone’s feelings for Brother Zhongpu indeed deteriorate and our friendship breaks down, and if only he wants to continue with the journal, we still cannot ask him to suspend publication. As to whether the New Youth spirit can remain united, that will depend on the

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<sup>46</sup> See same as above, p. 10.

<sup>47</sup> See *Collection of Qian Xuantong’s Statements in the May 4 Period*, pp. 215–216; Dongfang Publishing Center, 1998.

<sup>48</sup> See *Diary of Qian Xuantong*, lithographic copy, vol. 4, p. 1,390; Fujian Education Publishing House, 2002. Note: The expression “is actually a pigs-head issue” may have been a colloquialism in a certain locale or period or among a certain group of people and its exact meaning is not known. In relation to the facts and background of the above narrative, it may mean that something is controversial. This, however, is merely a guess and not a final conclusion.

judgments made in the actual thinking of each individual and not on any golden signboard bearing the characters ‘New Youth’”.<sup>49</sup>

It seems quite clear that the main difference of opinion lay in the great majority of the colleagues in Beijing hoping to retain New Youth’s principal character as a literary and philosophical publication. Hence, they wished to move the editing of New Youth back to Beijing. This conflicted with the fact that New Youth had become an official publication of the Chinese Communist Party—a publication for publicizing Marxism and the Russian revolution. Meanwhile, Hu Shih and Chen Duxiu had stood out as the representatives of the different opinions in the ongoing debate, and people saw the debate mainly as a contradiction and conflict between the two men. As Qian Xuantong had said: “It appears that one stands for talking about workers and peasants and discussing politics, while the other is against [talking about] the workers and peasants or discussing politics.” However, Hu Shih’s “no discussion of politics” did not mean no discussion of any kind of politics. It only meant no discussion of revolutionary politics and worker and peasant politics. Hu Shih was quite interested in politics related to striving for freedom and peaceful reform.

By February 15, 1921, in a letter to Hu Shih, Chen Duxiu wrote: “Now that New Youth has been closed down, publication can only proceed by moving to Guangdong. Moving to Beijing is out of the question. I fully agree to you people setting up another newspaper. Since good newspapers are few and far between in China, whatever you turn out will pass muster. However, I will not have the time to write articles. And since publication will be in Beijing, it is not advisable that I write any articles”.<sup>50</sup> The debate at New Youth ended in this manner. As stated by Qian Xuantong and the Zhou brothers, the split between the colleagues at New Youth eventually became unavoidable. The current split, like the previous one caused by problems and isms, was also a split between doctrines of revolution and peaceful reform, an ideological split between intellectuals who had initially accepted Marxism and liberalist intellectuals. The difference was that the previous split had been ideological only whereas the current one was both political and organizational. On Chen Duxiu’s side, the pressures of internal and external crises had pushed him and others like him irrevocably onto the road of revolution. On Hu Shih’s side, similarly pressing politics had compelled him to tell his good friend—at the risk of breaking off their friendship—that he disapproved of his worker-and-peasant position. At the end of the day, the fundamental reason for the debate and ultimately the split between them was political. A group of intellectual elites who 4 or 5 years earlier had not wanted to discuss politics but wholeheartedly wished to lay an ideological foundation for China’s reforms from the aspect of literature and the arts had now parted ways over political issues.

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<sup>49</sup> “A Few Letters Regarding the New Youth Issue,” *Historical Materials on Publishing in Modern China*, Edition A, p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> “A Few Letters Regarding the New Youth Issue,” *Historical Materials on Publishing in Modern China*, Edition A, p. 13.

### 9.3 The Birth of the Communist Party of China

The May Fourth Movement brought a host of political problems in its wake. People urgently pondered and sought new ways of solving China's problems. The world situation had undergone major changes in this period. The holocaust of the First World War had raised doubts in people's minds about the capitalist system, whereas the Russian revolution generated a good deal of curiosity, interest, and even high hopes in the new path of revolution in Russia. Li Dazhao, in an article entitled "World Trends Following the World War: Bloody Social Revolutions and Bloodless Social Revolutions," stated: "Amid the raging flames of this world war, a surging tide has suddenly emerged from Russia and checked the momentum of the war. . . This is the tide of social revolution!" He also wrote: "Although this tide of social revolution commenced in Russia and Germany, it has spread to Central Europe and will inevitably permeate the whole world." He predicted that this tide of social revolution "will, in the course of time, hit Western Europe, or cross the Atlantic for a tour of the United States, or cross the Indian Ocean and the China Sea to pay a call on Japan. We in China may catch a glimpse of its countenance in the lands toward the northwest or the seacoast in the southeast".<sup>51</sup> Luo Jialun (1897–1969), who we may regard as a representative of the young people who came to the fore during the New Culture Movement and May Fourth Movement, wrote in his introduction to "Today's World Tides": "A vast and mighty new world tide has risen up today in Eastern Europe, from whence it has abruptly swept into Central Europe and from there to Western Europe. In Western Europe it will emerge from the English Channel and separate into two branches." And, "there can be no doubt" that these two branches "are bound to come to the Far East".<sup>52</sup> Yet Luo Jialun himself did not take to the road of the Russian revolution, which only goes to show that his views represented the general ideological tendencies of young people fostered in those times by the New Culture Movement.

After the last years of the Qing Dynasty, China's progressive elements had tried out diverse schemes for national salvation, none of which were successful. (It must be said, of course, that none of these schemes had been given sufficiently deep and conscientious study or down-to-earth implementation.) Now, as doubts in the capitalist system multiplied and curiosity in the Russian revolution grew, it was only natural that the theory and practice of the Russian revolution should be studied and explained.

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<sup>51</sup> Originally carried in the February 7, 8, and 9, 1919, issues of *Chen Bao*; quoted from *The Collected Works of Li Dazhao*, vol. 2, pp. 270 and 272.

<sup>52</sup> See *New Tide*, vol. 1, no. 1.

### 9.3.1 *The Widespread Dissemination of Marxism*

Marx and his teachings had appeared in Chinese documentation back in the final years of the Qing Dynasty. Brief accounts and explanations of Marx and his theories were to be found in foreign missionaries' publications and pamphlets and in the propaganda materials printed by revolutionary parties and constitutionalist factions. But the effects of such materials were quite limited as only a minute number of people had access to them. After the May Fourth Movement, however, Marxism spread with unprecedented verve due to the circumstances described above.

The first to describe and explain the Marxist theories during the May 4 period was a man who published articles under the pen name Yuan Quan. This was Chen Bosheng (1891–1957), who in those days was chief editor of the newspaper *Chen Bao*. Starting on April 1, 1919, Chen gave a fairly deep-going and systematic introduction to Marx's life and thought by publishing in the *Chen Bao Supplement* such articles as "Marx's Career of Struggle," "Marx's Materialist Conception of History" (original work by Japan's Kawakami Hajime), "An Explanation of Marx's *Das Kapital*" (original work by Kautsky), etc. In his *Record of Impressions from a Trip to Japan*, he also produced introductions to the contents of such publications as the "Studies of Social Issues" edited by Kawakami Hajime, "New Society" and "Socialist Studies" edited by Sakai Toshihiko (1871–1933) et al., and "National Socialism" edited by Takabatake Motoyuki (1886–1928) et al.

Another man who started introducing Marxist theory fairly early on was Professor Chen Qixiu (1886–1960) of Peking University. His article "Marx's Historical Materialism and Moral Integrity," published in *New Youth's* "Special Issue on Marxist Studies," drew a great deal of attention. He was later to become a mentor at the Society for Studies on Marxist Theory.

In this period, the publications *Min Guo Ri Bao*, *Construction*, *Weekly Critic*, as well as *Shi Shi Xin Bao* (Current Events Newspaper) once run by Zhang Dongsun of the "Studies Faction" published a large number of articles introducing Marxist theory. In addition to Kuomintang members Zhu Zhixin (1885–1920), Dai Jitao (1891–1949), and Hu Hanmin (1879–1936), writers of the articles included Li Da (1890–1966) and Li Hanjun (1890–1927). In Guangzhou, the introduction and publicizing of Marxist theory was done by Yang Pao'an (1896–1931).

The most substantial contributions to the introduction of Marxism during the May 4 period were, of course, made by Li Dazhao. He turned vol. 6, no. 5, of *New Youth* which he edited in rotation with others into a special issue for the study of Marxism. His most representative dissertation "My Marxist Views" was published in this issue (and continued and concluded in vol. 6, no. 6). It was highly influential; one might well say that of the people who first embraced Marxism in China, one and all were influenced by this dissertation. Though it contained a few errors and inaccuracies, it was one of the most comprehensive, systematic, and deep-going introductions to Marxism in those days. It provided a fairly detailed description of the three components of Marxism—historical materialism, political economics, and

socialism—and noted that the theory of class struggle permeated all three components. After “My Marxist Views,” Li Dazhao published a series of papers—“Material Changes and Moral Changes,” “An Explanation of the Reasons for the Changes in Modern Chinese Thought in Terms of Economics,” “Marx and Rickert’s Philosophies of History,” “The Value of Historical Materialism in Modern Historical Sciences,” and “The Value of Historical Materialism in Modern Sociological Science”—for the express purpose of introducing and interpreting the historical materialism of Marxism. In Li’s opinion, historical materialism constituted the most important theoretical basis of Marxist theory. Hu Hanmin (1879–1936), a member of the Kuomintang, also put special effort into introducing Marx’s historical materialism.

In the same period, New Youth’s special issue on Marxist studies also published “Marx’s Teaching” by Gu Zhaoxiong (1888–1972), “Critique of Marx’s Teaching” by Huang Lingshuang (1897–?), “Marx’s Historical Materialism and the Issue of Moral Integrity” by Chen Qixiu (1886–1960), “Marx’s Materialist Conception of History” and “Marx’s Career of Struggle” by Yuan Quan, and “Brief Biography of Marx” by Liu Binglin (1891–1956). Starting with vol. 8, New Youth started to publicize Marxism, and the number of articles introducing and discussing Marxism gradually increased. The journal also instituted a special column for “Russian studies” and published numerous papers that introduced and studied the Russian revolution and Russia’s policies and laws. For instance, papers that introduced and publicized Marxism included Li Hanjun’s translations of works on women’s issues by August Ferdinand Bebel, leader of the German communist movement, Zhen Ying’s (1894–1979) translations of Lenin’s writings on national self-determination, Li Da’s (1890–1966) translations of Lenin’s writings on women’s emancipation, Cheng Shewo’s (1898–1991) translations of Lenin’s writings on proletarian politics, Li Dazhao and Li Da’s articles introducing Marxist theory, and so forth. There were even more articles introducing the Russian revolution and the constitution, laws, policies, social realities, and other aspects of the new Russian government; more than 30 such articles appeared in vol. 8 of New Youth alone. Many articles publicizing Marxism, introducing the new Russia, and discussing socialism and other issues also appeared in such magazines as *Weekly Critic*, *Min Guo*, *Weekly Commentary*, and *Construction*. All three of the major supplements, i.e., the *Chen Bao Supplement*, the *Jue Wu (Awakening) Supplement of Guo Min Ri Bao*, and the *Xue Deng (Light of Learning) Supplement of Shi Shi Xin Bao*, carried a great number of articles about Marxism, the Russian revolution, and social issues. The *Communist*—the previously mentioned official publication of the communist party—in particular devoted all of its space to publishing articles on Marxism, socialism, and the Russian revolution. In this period, full translations had already been published of some of Marx’s original works, such as *The Communist Manifesto* and *Wage Labor and Capital* as well as Kautsky’s *The Economic Doctrine of Karl Marx*. Many Marxist works translated or rendered by Japanese scholars were also translated and published in the Chinese language.

Never since the opening of China’s ports of entry and over such a brief period of time had so much enthusiasm been shown for a trend of thought, or had so many

people written so many articles and papers to introduce and publicize various aspects of the trend of thought, or had such an intense response been generated in society.

There is an explanation for this.<sup>53</sup>

It should be borne in mind that Marxism's greatest contribution to society is its examination and critique of capitalism, which is why its basic theories and methods have gained such prominence. The Chinese had endured pillaging and oppression by capitalist powers ever since the Opium Wars. Most people—even among those who strove to learn from the capitalist nations—could not but evince aversion to them. Once an opportunity presented itself, many sensitive scholars and the long-suffering general populace gave expression to their thoughts and sentiments against the capitalist powers. Yet they had always lacked an essential understanding of those monstrosities from the West. Marxist theory, with its unparalleled force of logic, enabled people to understand the substance of capitalist exploitation and pillage. That was one reason why it was so much appreciated and welcomed. Secondly, the cataclysm of the First World War had planted the seeds of doubt in many people's minds about the Western capitalist system. Marxism's verdict that capitalism would inevitably die out was not immediately or necessarily convincing, but it certainly stoked people's interest in studying the matter. Third, the success of the Russian revolution had an exceptionally strong impact on the Chinese. For nearly 200 years, Russia, that northern power with which China shared a border extending thousands of kilometers, had been one of China's biggest worries. Uniting with or resisting Russia had been a major issue ceaselessly debated over the years at the Qing court's decision-making level. Meanwhile, Russia had exploited the corruptness of the Qing government and its overwhelming conflicts with the Western powers to seize large swaths of land, interests, and rights in China. And now that colossus, so feared and hated by the Chinese, had been overthrown overnight by a revolution and moreover had at once told the Chinese it was willing to forgo the unequal treaties concluded with China during czarist times and the attendant acquisitions of special privileges. This could not but arouse immense interest in the Russian revolution and in the policies of the new postrevolutionary government. Four, the Chinese had, since the last years of the Qing Dynasty, tried out all sorts of schemes to save and strengthen their country, but one and all had failed. The success of the Russian revolution aroused new hope in the Chinese. The young generation who had been tested by the May 4 Movement and people who had fought for revolution or reform ever since the last years of the Qing Dynasty were to varying extents imbued with the desire to learn from the Russian revolution. Also important was the fact that the Chinese had since ancient times placed fond hopes in communism. The scientific socialism of Marxism differed fundamentally from the socialism of ancient China and the ancient West, and even from modern Western utopian socialism, but that did not prevent people from taking an immense interest

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<sup>53</sup> Ref. Tang Baolin (1997, pp. 86 and 87). Also ref. written by Ishikawa Yoshihiro (2006, pp. 6–16).

in this brand-new communist doctrine. China's traditional culture strongly rejected the capitalistic culture of the West, yet was quite compatible with socialism, which also came from the West. This is something that deserves much attention when studying the history of modern Chinese thought.

One might well say that publicity on Marxism and the Russian revolution was very much in vogue in the not-so-long period of time from the May Fourth Movement to the founding of the Communist Party of China. It must however be pointed out that the introductions and publicity bore flaws. The persons who did such work relied in those days mostly on secondhand information culled from works and compilations produced by the Japanese, and hardly any were capable of translating and introducing Marxism from the original writings of Marx and Engels. This inevitably gave rise to certain difficulties for accurate comprehension of Marxism. Moreover, Marxism is a fairly close-knit system of thought. For years, people (in China) came in only partial contact with the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Kautsky through the translated summaries of a small number of pamphlets and brochures and were unable to obtain complete and exact information on original works by the founders of Marxism. This can only be described as an inherent defect in the theoretical preparation of China's Marxists.

### 9.3.2 *The Founding of the Communist Party of China*

Many good works contain conscientious and in-depth studies about the founding of the Communist Party of China, and there is no need for me to repeat their expositions here. However, I would like to put forward a few opinions of a general nature for the sake of better connectivity with the theme of this book.

Firstly, the founding of the Communist Party of China was an entire course of events.<sup>54</sup> The designation of July 1, 1921—the day when the First National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party was held—as the founding day of the CPC only meant choosing a symbolic date for commemorative and celebrative purposes. It does not mean the CPC was nonexistent prior to that date. In terms of logic alone, the premise for holding a party congress is the de facto existence of that party; otherwise, how would party delegates be generated? The communist groups present in diverse localities (mainly in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Wuhan, and Jinan as well as Japan and Europe) were in fact communist party organizations. Moreover, the title “communist party” had been in existence, and in use, long before July 1921. The currently existing “Manifesto of the Chinese Communist Party,” the first formal document of the Chinese Communist Party, was produced in November 1920. The quasi-clandestine weekly publication, *The Communist*, also appeared at this time. Hence, there are some who maintain that the actual date of emergence of

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<sup>54</sup> See written by Ishikawa Yoshihiro and translated by Yuan Guangquan: *History of the Founding of the Communist Party of China*, pp. 201–206, P. 153.



the Chinese Communist Party ought to be in November 1920. That, of course, is not an absolute fact, as we are not certain today about the process leading up to the writing of the manifesto. For example, when, where, and by who was it drafted? When and in what form was its ideological content defined? When and in what form was its manuscript approved? And so on and so forth. Hence, it is very hard to define an accurate and specific date for the founding of the Chinese Communist Party. One may probably regard the period from the genesis of the Shanghai Communist Group (August 1920) to the convening of the First Congress of the CPC as the entirety of the formative process of the Communist Party of China.

Two, the leaders, activists and mainstay elements among the early members of the Chinese Communist Party in its formative stage had all been important personages in the New Culture Movement. They had either figured as leaders of the New Culture Movement (i.e., Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao) or had emerged as young leaders and backbone elements during that movement (Mao Zedong, Zhang Guotao, Luo Zhanglong, Deng Zhongxia, Qu Qiubai, Yun Daiying, Zhou Enlai, Zhang Shenfu, Zhao Shiyuan, Shi Cunfu, etc.). Hence, the founding of the Chinese Communist Party was in reality closely and inseparably connected with the May Fourth New Culture Movement.

Third, the founding of the Chinese Communist Party was from beginning to end assisted by the Communist International. The Comintern sent representatives to take part in the establishment of the communist groups in Shanghai and Guangzhou. Similarly, the first national congress of the Chinese Communist Party was convened with the participation of persons from the Comintern. This is a known fact and needs no detailing.

Four, though there were deficiencies in the theoretical groundwork of the Chinese Communist Party in its founding stage, the spirit of practice was very much in evidence once the party had been set up. Communists began to establish links with workers and did much painstaking work among them even before the setting up of communist groups in various localities. For instance, communists in Beijing frequented the haunts of rickshaw pullers to do social investigations and conducted publicity among Changxingdian's railway workers. In Shanghai, Chen Duxiu took personal part in forming the Shanghai Maritime and Warehouse Workers Federation and spoke at its inaugural ceremony. Communists in Wuhan also went out among workers there to conduct social surveys and then publicized their survey results. Thanks to the efforts made by communists, the workers in Shanghai, Beijing, and Guangzhou held various kinds of commemorative activities on May 1 Labor Day in 1920 and 1921. Organizations were also set up for a number of vocational trade unions in this period. Facts show that the Communist Party of China was indeed the outcome of intellectuals—intellectuals who had initially embraced Marxism—linking up with the workers movement.

Five, the party program adopted by the Chinese Communist Party's First National Congress stipulated that the party would seize political power by means of armed force, implement dictatorship of the proletariat until social classes no

longer existed, and do away with the capitalist system of private ownership.<sup>55</sup> The congress also approved a resolution on current work, which emphasized the starting up of organizational and publicity work for the workers movement and the waging of struggles against the rule of warlords and bureaucrats as well as for freedom of speech, publication, and assembly. Both the program and resolution gave full expression to the party's orientation toward practice and militancy. And because members of the party had undergone actual training and tempering during the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Patriotic Movement, it was a foregone conclusion that their party program and resolution would be put into effect in the process of actual struggles.

It was clear from the above that the birth of the Chinese Communist Party would bring huge changes to China's politics. The CPC was an entirely new political party. It had long-term goals, guidance from scientific theory, close-knit organizations, and specific plans for common actions. It was also a party with an international background and internationalist spirit, and it was linked from the very outset with the international proletariat. Meanwhile, China had, on account of the First World War, more clearly become a "country of the world" (in Liang Qichao's words). The revolutionary struggles led by the Chinese Communist Party in China would inevitably be linked with the socialist movement worldwide. The CPC was unlike any other political party since political parties came into existence in China in that it maintained close ties with the broad masses of workers and peasants. Throughout China's history, only the secret societies and organizations of peasant uprisings had had any kind of links with the workers (handicraft workers) and peasants. But as the latter possessed neither political programs of their own nor received any guidance in terms of scientific theory, they merely served as tools for the successive dynastic changes and came to sad or tragic ends. The Chinese Communist Party, however, was a party that had a clear political program and was guided by scientific theory, and it could use the experience of Russia's Bolsheviks as reference. Its founding and the heroic struggles it was about to initiate would inevitably bring about immense and unprecedented changes in China's political life.

#### 9.4 The Restructuring of the Kuomintang

The restructuring of the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) between 1922 and 1924 was another important manifestation of the transition of the New Culture Movement from a cultural movement to a political movement after the May Fourth Movement. Sun Yat-sen's summing up of, and reflections on, the Kuomintang's

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<sup>55</sup> "The First Program of the Communist Party of China" was translated from a Russian-language text in the archives of the Chinese communist delegation to the Communist International. See *CPC Central Committee Documents*, vol. 1, pp. 5–7, CPC Central Committee Party School Press.

experiences and lessons since the 1911 Revolution, plus the inspirations he gained from the New Culture Movement and May Fourth Movement, prompted his determination to reform the Kuomintang. The New Culture Movement and May Fourth Movement had turned out a group of talented young people with new concepts and new ideals for the cause of national revolution. Meanwhile, the example of the Russian revolution and the Comintern's assistance to the Chinese Communists helped to bring about the Kuomintang's reorganization.

### ***9.4.1 Sun Yat-sen's Restructuring of the Kuomintang: Ideological Preparation***

After the defeat of the first Movement to Protect the Constitution, Sun Yat-sen returned to Shanghai where he reflected on the lessons of the repeated defeats he had experienced over the years. He concluded this was because comrades in his party had neither followed his behests nor united as one in fighting for the cause. And the reason was that they saw his behests as impracticable fantasies. Sun felt this was a misapprehension born of the traditional adage that "understanding is easy, implementing is difficult," and that this mindset had to be replaced by theories that were "difficult to understand but easy to implement." He believed this constituted the most basic "mental construction." Strictly speaking, the axioms "understanding is easy, implementing is difficult" and "difficult to understand but easy to implement" both contained some one-sided truth. However, in the specific context of China's situation prior to and following the May Fourth period, theorems that might be "difficult to understand but easy to implement" were of greater practical significance. This was a time when the Chinese were urgently seeking new ways to save their country. In the previous 50 or more years, they had tried out various means for national salvation, but the Westernization Movement had failed, as had the Reform Movement of 1898 and the Constitutional Reform and the 1911 Republican Revolution. China at the time was still being roiled by foreign invasions and domestic turbulence. What could be done to save China? All public-spirited persons cudged their brains over this matter, which was also the reason for the rise of the New Culture Movement. Sun Yat-sen put forward his proposal for theories that were "difficult to understand but easy to implement" in order to free his party colleagues from their erroneous concepts, win them over to his theories, unify their thinking, and instill determination to fight for the future. That was one aspect. The other aspect was something he had not fully realized earlier, i.e., that a new way for national salvation had to be found under the new domestic and international conditions. He had gradually awakened to this need after the May Fourth Movement, which is why we say Sun Yat-sen's thinking in this period was synchronous and convergent with the New Culture Movement.

Sun Yat-sen quite astutely perceived the great significance of the New Culture Movement and May Fourth Movement. On June 18, 1919, less than 6 weeks after

the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement, he wrote a letter to Cai Bingruo in which he stated: “The sudden upsurge of students all over the country in the last few months is due entirely to the inspiration and influences of new ways of thinking. Hence I believe that we should spread knowledge and propagate our party’s basic ideas nationwide to awaken all people in the country. Once conditions are ripe, we should rise up together, eradicate the old and foster the new, and bring about major successes in implementing our party’s doctrines”.<sup>56</sup> In his “Letter to Overseas Comrades of the Kuomintang” on January 29, 1902, he put it even more explicitly: “Ever since the May Fourth Movement took place at Peking University, all patriotic students have regarded renewing people’s thinking as a preparation for future reforms. They have been vigorously voicing their ideas, and public opinion nationwide has seconded their efforts. Diverse new publications started up by enthusiastic young people have blossomed rapidly and profusely, risen to the occasion, and brought enormous influences to bear on society. Even the bogus regime, as stubborn and despicable as it is, dares not meet their challenges head-on. This new culture movement indeed marks an unprecedented change in our country’s ideological circles. If it continues to grow, there is no doubt it will achieve immense and long-lasting results. If our party hopes to achieve success in the revolution, it must rely on changes in people’s minds. This is what military strategists mean by ‘*gong xin*’ (attacking people’s minds) and what we call ‘*ge xin*’ (revolutionizing people’s minds)”.<sup>57</sup> It was because of this understanding that Sun enjoined members of the Kuomintang to start up the Weekly Review only a month after the May Fourth Movement and the magazine *Jian She* (Construction) 2 months later. These two publications and the *Min Guo Ri Bao*’s supplement *Awakening* served members of the Kuomintang led by Sun Yat-sen as important media tools for their participation in the New Culture Movement. Sun Yat-sen was profoundly aware of the paramount importance of building up a good revolutionary party. On May 16, 1920, he told staff members at the Shanghai headquarters of the Kuomintang that if the intention was to build up a genuine Republic of China, “we must have a revolutionary party as the basis—a permanent basis—for there to be any hope of achieving ceaseless advances.” He also stated: “Party activity is the wellspring of revolution; before the revolution succeeds, we must regard the party as our life, and even after gaining victory we should absolutely use the party to sustain our endeavors. Hence administering the Party is of greater importance than anything else”.<sup>58</sup> Since the Party was so important, one had to reform the party before reforming China. Sun Yat-sen had already begun to understand that the Russian revolution had achieved its rapid successes mainly because it had a very strong party. That was why he used Russia’s revolutionary party as a model for reforming the Kuomintang. In the latter part of December, 1921, Sun Yat-sen met Comintern representative H. Maring (Henk Sneevliet) in Guizhou. Maring said he “discussed

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<sup>56</sup> See *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen*, vol. 5, p. 66.

<sup>57</sup> See same as above, pp. 209–210.

<sup>58</sup> See same as above, pp. 262 and 263.

the mass movement with Sun and the need to conduct propaganda in the working class and so forth”.<sup>59</sup> The successful experience of the Russian revolution consisted in fully mobilizing the masses, and fully mobilizing the masses depended on conducting publicity. This was one of the fundamental tasks of a revolutionary party.

Chen Jiongming’s (1878–1933) defection (from the Kuomintang) in June 1922 came as a great shock to Sun Yat-sen. After that incident, he specially entrusted Eugene Chen (1875–1944) with telling Sergei Dalin, Soviet representative of the Young Communist International: “I have given much thought to the destiny of the Chinese revolution and have lost faith in virtually everything that I previously believed in. I am deeply convinced now that Soviet Russia is the only real and sincere friend of the Chinese revolution”.<sup>60</sup> From then on, Sun Yat-sen gradually built up his belief that the Chinese revolution should learn from Russia. On October 9, 1923, at a dinner given in honor of Mikhail Markovich Borodin, an advisor sent by Soviet Russia, Sun Yat-sen delivered a speech in which he stated: “the Soviet Union is a worthy example for China”.<sup>61</sup> A week later, he declared at a party affairs meeting: “If we wish to have our party govern the nation in future, we must model ourselves on the Russians”.<sup>62</sup> Speaking at the Kuomintang’s general headquarters in Guangzhou on December 9, he said: “Our party takes Soviet Russia as its example for the current restructuring. It intends to win fundamental success in the revolution, and will change over to having our party members coordinate with the army in the struggle.” “If we examine matters from the perspective of the Russian revolution, we should see that success gained by means of a military revolution is not a true success whereas success gained by a party’s revolution is a true success.” He also declared: “Why is it that Russia’s revolution succeeded in six years while ours has not yet succeeded after twelve years? The reason is our party is poorly organized. Previously we had no one to model ourselves upon. . . Now, especially, we can learn from Russia”.<sup>63</sup> Sun’s basic conclusion was that the experience of the Russian revolution and the organizational methods of Russia’s revolutionary party should be used as models for reforming the Kuomintang and that the revolution would succeed if it were led by a reformed Kuomintang.

#### **9.4.2 *Impetus Given by Soviet Russia, the Comintern, and Chinese Communists***

The Bolsheviks who had only just gained success in Russia’s revolution were confronted with extremely grim situations both within and outside the country.

<sup>59</sup> Cited from *The Authoritative Chronological Biography of Sun Yat-sen*, vol. 2, p. 1413.

<sup>60</sup> See *The Authoritative Chronological Biography of Sun Yat-sen*, vol. 2, p. 1472.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1702.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1707.

<sup>63</sup> See *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen*, vol. 8, pp. 501 and 508.

They initiated a New Economic Policy to adjust and mitigate conflicts within Russia. They also strove to improve their diplomatic environment and supported revolutionary forces in peripheral countries as a means of attaining this objective. In those days, the Russian party and government frequently conducted its activities via the Comintern. Soviet Russia showed much concern for the situation in China, its biggest neighboring nation, and it paid great attention to Sun Yat-sen's thinking and ideas and the revolutionary movement under his leadership. On October 31, 1920, Georgii Chicherin, the Soviet Union's People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, wrote a letter to Sun Yat-sen expressing confidence that the Chinese people "will take to the road of struggle against imperialism's worldwide oppression," and hoped that "China will firmly take to the path of friendly cooperation with us".<sup>64</sup> Sometime around November 20, upon a suggestion and urgings by Chen Duxiu, Sun Yat-sen met Comintern emissary Grigori Voitinsky (1893–1965) in Shanghai and discussed with him the matter of securing Soviet Russian support. On June 14, 1921, Sun Yat-sen received a letter from the abovementioned Chicherin and wrote a reply on August 28, in which Sun expressed great interest in the organization of the Soviets and the organization of their army and education. Lenin took this letter very seriously. After perusing the letter, he told Chicherin to establish close contacts with Sun Yat-sen. Thereafter, articles appeared in publications of the Soviet Union and the Comintern criticizing the Chinese government in Beijing and praising Sun Yat-sen. In the latter part of December, Comintern representative Maring met Sun Yat-sen in Guilin and had a long and profound conversation with him. Upon returning to Moscow, Maring explicitly requested support for Sun Yat-sen and the Kuomintang led by Sun Yat-sen. Immediately afterward, the Comintern's executive committee passed a resolution asking the Chinese communists to move their headquarters to Guangzhou so that they might start working within the Kuomintang and also requested that members of the (Chinese) Communist Party join the Kuomintang. On August 17, the Chinese communists decided at their Xihu (West Lake) meeting to conditionally accept the Comintern's request that members of the Chinese Communist Party and Socialist Youth League join the Kuomintang. On August 25, Sun Yat-sen again consulted with Maring and then met Li Dazhao for a lengthy discussion on issues of restructuring the Kuomintang and of Kuomintang-Communist cooperation, after which Li Dazhao joined the Kuomintang. Chen Duxiu, Zhang Guotao, and Zhang Tailei (1898–1927), too, successively joined the Kuomintang to become key persons in advancing the restructuring of the Kuomintang and promoting Kuomintang-Communist cooperation. Upon returning to Beijing, Li Dazhao vigorously publicized Sun Yat-sen's thinking and ideas with regard to restructuring the Kuomintang. On September 4, Chen Duxiu participated in a meeting on improving Kuomintang party affairs convened in Shanghai. After that, Lin Zuhan (aka Lin Boqu, 1886–1960) was also invited to join the Kuomintang. On the 6th of that month, Sun Yat-sen appointed

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<sup>64</sup> See *The Authoritative Chronological Biography of Sun Yat-sen*, vol. 3, p. 1305.

Chen Duxiu as one of the nine members of the drafting committee for plans to ameliorate the Kuomintang.<sup>65</sup>

On January 12, 1923, the Comintern's executive committee passed a Resolution on Relations between the Communist and Nationalist Parties of China, which stated that the Kuomintang was the only major national revolutionary group in China and that the Kuomintang relied on the democratic factions of the liberal bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie as well as the intelligentsia and workers. Since the central task of the Chinese revolution was to fight imperialism and feudalism, this concerned the interests of the working class, but the working class had yet to become an independent social force. Hence, "cooperation between the Kuomintang and the young Communist Party of China is necessary." And "under the present conditions, it is advisable for members of the Chinese Communist Party to remain within the Nationalist Party." However, the resolution also explicitly raised the matter of the Communist party's independent status.<sup>66</sup> Starting on January 18, Sun Yat-sen held a number of meetings with Soviet Russian representative Adolph Joffe, and on January 26, the well-known Sun-Joffe Declaration was published. The declaration stated that the communist form of organization and the Soviet system "could not be applied to China," and it reiterated the Russian position of renouncing unequal treaties. Also mentioned were the issues of the Chinese Eastern Railway and Outer Mongolia. The significance of this declaration lay in establishing the political foundation for bilateral relations. On May 1, Joffe, who was in Japan at the time, wrote a letter to Sun Yat-sen informing him of the Soviet Russian government's response to the talks in Shanghai. The main emphasis was on the importance of ideological-political preparations and on the provision of two million gold rubles in aid and a small amount of weapons assistance. It asked Sun Yat-sen to maintain secrecy about these matters.<sup>67</sup>

Between June 12 and 20, 1923, the Chinese Communist Party held its Third National Congress in Guangzhou and passed a resolution on the national movement and the Kuomintang issue. This important resolution formally determined that there would be cooperation with the Kuomintang and that communist party members could join the Kuomintang.<sup>68</sup>

On November 28, the Presidium of the Comintern Executive Committee passed a draft resolution on the national liberation movement in China and the Kuomintang issue. This resolution emphasized that the revolutionary faction of the Kuomintang headed by Sun Yat-sen had already recognized the need to get close to the laboring masses and conduct extensive propaganda and organizational activities. It voiced the expectation that the Kuomintang would reinterpret its

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<sup>65</sup> Ju Zheng: "Outline of the Party Reforms," *Documents of the Revolution*, Collection no. 8, pp. 34–35.

<sup>66</sup> *Compilation of Documents of the Comintern, the Soviet Communist Party (Bolshevik) and the Chinese Revolution*, vol. 2, p. 436.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 414.

<sup>68</sup> See *Selected Documents of the Central Committee of the CPC*, vol. 1, pp. 115–116.

Three People's Principles and the hope that the Kuomintang would pay attention to further mobilizing the strength of the working class and support the political organization of that class—the Communist Party of China. It also requested that the Chinese Communist Party “render all-out support to the Kuomintang”.<sup>69</sup> By this time, Borodin, the advisor sent by Soviet Russia, had arrived in Guangzhou and Sun Yat-sen's restructuring of the Kuomintang had reached the wrap-up stage.

### 9.4.3 *The Restructuring*

The Kuomintang's Meeting for the Improvement of Party Affairs, held in Shanghai on September 4, 1922, may be seen as the official start-up of the Kuomintang's restructuring. At first, only 53 persons, including Chen Duxiu, took part in the meeting. Lin Zuhai (1886–1960), a member of the Communist Party, was later invited to participate. Both Liao Zhongkai and Hu Hanmin who had been active in the New Culture Movement took leading roles at the meeting. On October 19, 1923, Sun Yat-sen informed the Shanghai Kuomintang Affairs Office that he had nominated Liao Zhongkai (1877–1925), Wang Jingwei (1883–1944), Zhang Ji (1882–1947), Dai Jitao (1891–1949), and Li Dazhao as members of the Kuomintang Restructuring Committee. Noteworthy is the fact that among these five, Li Dazhao had been one of the principal leaders of the New Culture Movement, that Liao Zhongkai and Dai Jitao could be regarded as having actively participated in that movement, and that Wang Jingwei and Zhang Ji could be counted, at the least, as sympathizers and supporters of the movement. This circumstance best indicates the link between the New Culture Movement and the Kuomintang's restructuring and illustrates the movement's role in preparing leading cadres for that exercise. On October 24, Sun Yat-sen authorized Liao Zhongkai and Deng Zeru (1869–1934) to convene a special meeting of the Kuomintang to discuss restructuring issues. He simultaneously assigned Liao Zhongkai, Hu Hanmin, and seven others as temporary central executive committee members; among them was the communist party member Tan Pingshan (1886–1956). Wang Jingwei and four others were assigned as alternate committee members; among the latter was the communist party member Li Dazhao. Borodin was installed as advisor. This organization became the focal institution of the entire restructuring exercise. On November 11, the said institution was placed in charge of drafting the Proclamation on the Restructuring of the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) of China, the Draft of the Program of the Nationalist Party of China, and the Draft of the Constitution of the Nationalist Party of China. Five thousand copies of each were printed and distributed in pamphlet form. On November 25, the Kuomintang Weekly was started up and proceeded to publish these documents. It was stated in the Proclamation: “We

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<sup>69</sup> See *Compilation of Documents of the Comintern, the Soviet Communist Party (Bolshevik) and the Chinese Revolution*, vol. 2, pp. 547–550.



believe that China's government is in a parlous state, the economy is facing bankruptcy, disintegration is imminent, and poverty and exploitation are endemic. Any hope of recovering from these grave afflictions is contingent upon a theoretically mature, well trained and well organized political group of people who dedicate themselves to this historical mission, comply with the ardent wishes of the populace, guide it in its struggles, and fulfill its political aims. . . . Our party has fought for many years under its Three People's Principles, which have frequently been renamed in the course of time, but have never diverged from their original aims. Hence, we have been unable to gain successes, our organization has been faulty and our training unsatisfactory. . . . In view of this circumstance, our party, based on a clear estimation of our weaknesses and on the courage to make our own decisions, issues this proclamation on restructuring to show the necessity of doing so. The Prime Minister has first assigned nine persons to organize a temporary central executive committee as a first step, after which a meeting of party representatives both in China and abroad will be convened to discuss the matter. As regards the drafting of the party's program and constitution, it is imperative that the theories be detailed and explicit, and that the policies be realistic and feasible and consistent with the yearnings of the populace. Matters related to organization and training must be fully made known and serve as a guide to all party members, the undesirable among whom should be eliminated and only the good ones retained. Let our comrades make concerted efforts toward this end, as the success of our party's struggle depends upon it".<sup>70</sup> On November 26, Sun Yat-sen personally presided at the temporary central executive committee, which decided to establish a military academy and convene a national meeting of representatives.

While the work of restructuring of the Kuomintang proceeded quite smoothly under Sun Yat-sen's leadership, it was not without twists and turns. On November 29, soon after the agenda and program of the Kuomintang's national congress had been confirmed, 11 members of the Kuomintang's Guangdong branch, including senior party member Deng Zeru who was also head of that branch, submitted a memorandum to Sun Yat-sen, viciously attacking communist party members Chen Duxiu and Tan Pingshan for allegedly "scheming to destroy our party" and insisting that Sun Yat-sen "take precautions." After reading the memorandum, Sun Yat-sen penned detailed comments on it. He diligently criticized their wrong understandings of the imperialists and warlords as well as their misconceptions regarding the electoral system. He pointed out, for example, that "the capitalist nations certainly evince no sympathy for our party; we can only expect sympathy from Soviet Russia and from downtrodden countries and peoples." He also said: "The principle of democracy starts with elections; if we were to forego elections merely on account of a few shortcomings, would we not be going against our own principles?" In the meantime, he also painstakingly explained a number of ambivalent terms.<sup>71</sup> Then in January 1924, on the eve of the national congress, Lin Sen (1868–1943), Deng

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<sup>70</sup> See *Documents of the Revolution*, Compilation no. 8, p. 72.

<sup>71</sup> Li Yunhan (1994, pp. 403–406).

Zeru, and Huang Jilu (1899–1985) attempted to strike down the decision that enabled members of the Communist Party and Socialist Youth League to enter the Kuomintang as individuals for the sake of Kuomintang-Communist cooperation. Sun Yat-sen again came out with criticisms. The activities of Lin Sen, Deng Zeru, and others failed to derail the restructuring.

The Kuomintang's First National Congress, convened and satisfactorily concluded between January 20 and 30, 1924, marked the successful completion of the restructuring of the Kuomintang.

The congress counted 196 deputies, 26 of whom were members of the Communist Party; present at the congress were a total of 165 persons, 24 of whom were members of the Communist Party. Li Dazhao was among the five members of the congress presidium. Of the 24 regular members elected by the congress to the new central executive committee, two were members of the Communist Party, and of the 17 alternate members, seven were members of the Communist Party.<sup>72</sup> Both the composition of the congress deputies and of the central executive committee reflected the fact that Kuomintang-Communist cooperation had taken shape. The congress' most important result—which also reflected the fundamental spirit of the Kuomintang's restructuring—was the manifesto passed by the congress; and the part of the manifesto that deserves the most attention was the reinterpretation of the Sanmin Zhuyi (Three People's Principles). About Minzu Zhuyi (the Principle of Nationalism), it was pointed out: “the Kuomintang's nationalism has two meanings; the first is the Chinese nation's striving for emancipation, and the second is equality for all ethnic groups within the borders of China.” It was very clearly stated in the manifesto: “For the majority of the populace, the objective of the struggle for national liberation is none other than to oppose imperialism.” As regards Minquan Zhuyi (the Principle of Democracy), it emphasized: “In addition to indirect democracy, direct democracy shall also be practiced.” Especially important was the statement: “In recent times, the system of democracy in all countries is often monopolized by the bourgeoisie and turned into an instrument for oppressing the general populace. The democracy of the Kuomintang shall be exercised in common by the populace and shall not be taken over by a few for their private ends.” With regard to the Minsheng Zhuyi (the Principle of the People's Livelihood/Welfare), it pointed out: “The two most important principles of the Kuomintang's Minsheng Zhuyi are none other than, first, equal ownership of land, and secondly, regulation of capital.” The manifesto emphasized in particular the importance of relying on the populace and assisting the peasants and workers. It stated: “Any hope for the true freedom and independence of the Chinese nation will first emerge only after the Kuomintang establishes close links with the populace.” And, “the movement of national revolution must have the participation of peasants and workers nationwide before it can be victorious.” Hence, with regard to the peasants' and workers' movements, the Kuomintang had to “render all-out support to their advances, assist their economic organization and cause them to become increasingly developed so

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<sup>72</sup> See *Documents of the Revolution*, Collection 8, pp. 92–95 and p. 97.

as to increase the strength of the national revolutionary movement.”<sup>73</sup> The Explanation of the Purport of the Manifesto of the Kuomintang of China, delivered by Sun Yat-sen at the congress, very prominently emphasized the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolutionary missions of the Kuomintang. He said: “We are, by means of this Manifesto, re-assuming the responsibilities of the revolution and projecting a thorough revolution, ultimately to overthrow the warlords and completely liberate our oppressed people. This concerns our internal responsibilities. Our external responsibilities include opposing imperialism, linking up and uniting with peoples in the world who are oppressed by imperialism, and acting in concert and assisting one another for the cause of liberating all oppressed people’s in the world”.<sup>74</sup>

In the course of, and especially after, this restructuring, large numbers of young people who had undergone baptism by the New Culture Movement joined the Kuomintang. There was, in addition, the large number of extremely spirited, proactive, and capable young communists who went to work within the Kuomintang. The two groups swiftly swelled the ranks of the Kuomintang and substantially strengthened its revolutionary capabilities.

Guided by the reinterpreted Three People’s Principles, steered by the basic policies of alliance with Russia and the Communist Party and assistance to the peasants and workers, and working within the organizational framework of Kuomintang-Communist cooperation, the restructured Kuomintang pushed forward and developed the national revolutionary movement and swiftly ushered in a high tide of revolution.

## 9.5 All-Round Upsurge in the Intellectuals’ Concern for Politics

There was a universal upsurge of patriotism among the people after the May Fourth Movement. Confronted with the domestic and international crises, intellectuals—the most sensitive stratum in society—gave increasing voice to their ideas for rescuing the country from its plight.

### 9.5.1 *Interprovincial Autonomy*

The most outstanding domestic issue at the time was the turbulent fighting among warlords and the country’s lack of unity. Only two paths existed for achieving unity: One was by political means; the other was through armed force. There had never been any unity in China since Yuan Shikai’s usurpation of state power.

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<sup>73</sup> “Declaration of the First National Congress of the Chinese Nationalist Party,” *The Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen*, vol. 9, pp. 118, 119, 120 and 121.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

Various means had been tried out but none had succeeded. Some people hoped unity could be brought about by armed force, but no warlord or political faction had the strength to do so at the time. In these circumstances, numerous intellectuals put forward a by-and-large similar proposition, i.e., exercising interprovincial autonomy. The subject of interprovincial autonomy had already been “slightly broached” toward the end of the Qing Dynasty and somewhat elaborated after the founding of the republic. However, discussions in this regard were the most animated in the years 1920–1922, after the May Fourth Movement. Among the many who participated in these discussions were, for example, Sun Jiyi, Tang Dechang, Yang Duanliu, Zhang Jiluan, Zhang Taiyan, Ding Xielin, Hu Shih, Li Jiannong, Zhou Gengsheng, Wu Yugan, and Zhu Xizu. Their ideas differed but in the main concurred, and their theoretical basis was the Western federal system. All maintained that in China’s extant situation, there was no other way to bring about national unification. They believed the advantage of interprovincial autonomy lay in its ability both to avert overcentralization of power and to prevent warlords from carving the country into separate regimes. But its biggest advantage was that it would get people to show concern for and participate in politics and that it would enable people to exercise supervision over state power and implement democratic government.

Political discussions by intellectuals are frequently tinged with idealism. However, these intellectuals had full reason to oppose separatist warlord regimes, seek national unity, and bring about democratic government. As is often the case in China, the moment a good idea or proposal turns up, careerists or politicians try to make use of it, and in those days, a few warlords and the politicians who pandered to them voiced support for interprovincial autonomy. For no better reason than this, some radical political factions categorically rejected all proposals regarding interprovincial autonomy.<sup>75</sup>

### 9.5.2 *The “Good Governance” Proposal*

Since many of those who engaged in the discussions about interprovincial autonomy had always shown concern for political matters, the discussions in this period hardly explain the major uptick in the attention to politics among intellectuals. The shift among intellectuals from declining to discuss politics to feeling compelled to talk politics is best reflected by Hu Shih and the group of persons he represented. As mentioned earlier, Hu Shih regarded his article “More Study of Problems, Less Talk of Isms” as his “preamble to political discussion,” whereas the text of his political essay “Our Political Proposals” appeared only in 1922. What happened in between?

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<sup>75</sup> For views and ideas about inter-provincial autonomy and criticisms thereof, cf.: (1) Gao Jun et al. (1990); (2) Geng Yunzhi et al. (2003).

In August 1920, Hu Shih had, jointly with Jiang Menglin, Tao Menghe, Wang Zheng, Zhang Weici, Li Dazhao, and Gao Yihan, published a “Manifesto of the Struggle for Freedom,” criticizing the Beiyang warlord government and demanding the minimum basic freedoms. However, Hu Shih personally was not the initiator of this exercise.

In May 1921, Hu Shih began to sense the need to contact and organize comrades for activities oriented toward political reform. He invited Wang Zhi, Ding Wenjiang, and Jiang Menglin to a discussion on setting up an organization called the “Endeavor Society.” Among the four principles they enunciated was one which declared: “We shall make all efforts—either as individuals or cooperatively—to improve China’s politics and advance society.” The other principles were improving their professions, contacting and helping one another, and assisting useful talent whenever and wherever possible. The Endeavor Society enlisted such intellectuals as Wang Yunwu, Cai Yuanpei, Ren Hongjuan, and Zhu Jingnong.<sup>76</sup> It clearly showed their intent to engage in political activities but its participants never openly did so in the name of that society.

Not long after the Endeavor Society was established, it planned to run a “small weekly newspaper”,<sup>77</sup> but it was 10 months later only that this “small weekly” appeared under the title “Endeavor Weekly.” Its foreword, written by Hu Shih, was actually a poem entitled “Song of Hard Work” with these lyrics: “Do not fear obstacles! Do not fear militarism! Fear only lack of hard work! Work hard! Work hard!”<sup>78</sup> As well as being oriented toward their own academics and educational endeavors, their efforts were also directed at social and political activities.

Proceeding from his intention to “do more studies of issues and talk less about isms” and his attitude of putting hard work into all endeavors, social and political, Hu Shih summed up his political position in this period in the slogan “strive for good governance.” In August 1921, he was invited to deliver speeches on “good governmentality” at Anqing in Anhui and in Shanghai. Endeavor Weekly, in its 2nd issue after being set up, published an article “Our Political Proposals” drafted by Hu Shih. This article was clearly a political declaration. Sixteen persons jointly signed and issued this declaration, including Cai Yuanpei who headed the list; members of the Endeavor Society Hu Shih, Ding Wenjiang, Tao Menghe, Zhu Jingnong, Gao Yihan, and Wang Zhi; and nonmembers Wang Chonghui, Luo Wengan, Tang Erhe, Tao Zhixing, Wang Boqiu, Liang Shuming, Li Dazhao, and Xu Baoheng.

This political declaration comprehensively expounded Hu Shih’s “good governance” proposal. It posited: “We should all equably and universally accept the ‘good governance’ objective as the minimum requirement for reforming China’s governance today. We should with one heart and mind use this common objective to fight against the forces of evil in China.” Hu Shih pointed out that the standard for

<sup>76</sup> See Geng Yunzhi (1989, pp. 95–96).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>78</sup> See the opening issue of Endeavor Weekly (May 7, 1922).

governance consisted, firstly, of “a government of constitutional governance”; secondly, of “open government”; and thirdly, of the implementation of “planned government.” And how was one to bring about such good governance? Hu Shih said: “I am deeply convinced that the first step in reforming politics is to imbue good people with the spirit of struggle. All good members of society should concern themselves about their own protection, concern themselves about society and the country, and step forward to battle the forces of evil”.<sup>79</sup> The declaration also put forward specific proposals pinpointed at the political situation in those years, i.e., at such issues as the North-South peace talks, disarmament, laying off officials, the electoral system, and financial problems.

This declaration triggered an enthusiastic response in intellectual circles, and a great many people took part in the discussions. An overwhelming majority expressed approval and put forward supplementary opinions or subjects for consideration, indicating that concern for politics was rising swiftly among intellectuals. Meanwhile, as Hu Shih and intellectual circles were carrying on lively discussions on the “good governance doctrine,” Hu Shih, Li Dazhao, and others were directly engaged in concrete political activities aimed at persuading (the Beiyang warlord) Wu Peifu to join Sun Yat-sen. I have dealt with this matter in detail in my paper on “Wu Peifu, Soviet Russia and Beijing’s Intellectual Circles”<sup>80</sup> and will not go into it here.

In those times, the newspapers and publications *Endeavor Weekly*, *Pacific Eastern Magazine*, *Chen Bao*, and *Shi Shi Xin Bao* carried a vast number of articles on political matters in which intellectuals criticized the Beijing government and its officials and policies and put forward their views about the political situation.

The May Fourth Movement had become a major turning point. It was, on the one hand, the turning point for the transition from a cultural movement to a political one. Hereafter, the focus of concern would be on political rather than cultural issues. Heretofore, culture had been used to lay the groundwork for and guide politics. Hereafter, politics would determine all matters, and culture would submit to the needs of politics. This, of course, was dictated by the dire internal and external circumstances that confronted China, but it also led to the subsequent long-term tendency in China toward pan-politicization. On the other hand, it was a turning point in the course of modern politics in China. Of the succession of political movements that previously took place in Chinese society, such as the Westernization Movement, the Constitutional Reform and Modernization of 1898, and so forth, basically all were played out in the upper levels of society. The 1911 Republican Revolution and Constitutional Movement had seemed, to a certain extent, to bear a mass character, and Sun Yat-sen had hoped that the revolutionary movement he led would become a national movement. In reality, the main forces of these movements consisted merely of intellectuals, enlightened gentry, and business people. The same applied to the Constitutional Movement led by the

<sup>79</sup> See *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, 2nd collection, vol. 3; pp. 27–33.

<sup>80</sup> This paper is carried in the book *China in the 1920s*, Social Sciences Academic Press, 2005.

constitutionalist faction. It was only in the revolutionary movements after the May Fourth Movement that the main body of the nation's populace—the broad masses of workers and peasants—was truly mobilized to become the main force of the revolution. Only then did the revolutionary movement turn into a national revolution, or even a revolution of the workers and peasants. And only then was the popularization of culture truly carried out. However, this also brought certain shortcomings in that the worker and peasant masses were often instilled with half-baked knowledge owing to the fact that the cultural movement had yet to reach a state of relative maturity. For example, the “science” and “democracy” concepts were bandied about almost like clichés, and few people understood their true significance. Even today, those who take delight in criticizing the May Fourth New Culture Movement have only a hazy idea about such matters.

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## Chapter 10

# Evolutions in the Role of Conservatism in the Transition to a Modern Culture

Conservatism has played an important role during China's transition to a modern culture. It has served as a protector of tradition in diverse periods of time, yet the scope of the traditions it has protected or been able to protect has constantly diminished in the course of history.

In "Tradition and the Future," a short article I wrote ten or more years ago, I said: "Traditions are those things that have been passed down by a people or a social group generation after generation, that are condensed in their culture, and that for extended periods of time have conditioned and standardized people's thinking, behavior and sentiments." I stated that the three principal characteristics of tradition are stability, establishment of patterns, and exclusivity. I also indicated that, historically, tradition has at times played entirely different roles, that "it may be a force for progress, and it may also be a force of inertia." Most important is the attitude one takes toward tradition.<sup>1</sup>

Since traditions are things that have accumulated over generations of human existence and that are closely linked with the lives of nations and social groups, they cannot be written off at will or proscribed on short notice. Conversely, since they are shaped during and by the flow of history, they cannot remain fixed and immutable. What counts is the way one approaches tradition. The history of China's transition toward a modern culture is not lacking in advanced elements who have made use of traditions to develop progressive endeavors or in persons who have clung tenaciously to traditions in attempts to resist progress.

As for conservatism, its meaning has never been quite certain. The term "conservatism" may be used in relation to the doctrine of openness, to mean conservation of the culture of one's own nation and rejection of foreign cultures. It may also be used in relation to any tendency toward reform or revolution, to denote maintaining the status quo and safeguarding things intrinsic or inherent. It is also

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<sup>1</sup> See my book *Polygonum Grass (Liao cao ji)*, pp. 126–130, China Social Sciences Press, 2000.



used in relation to radicalism—such as violent revolutions or extremist reforms—to mean standing for moderate or go-slow reforms and disapproval of sudden or sweeping changes of the current state of affairs. In China’s modern history, forms of conservatism have appeared in various guises and their ideas have differed, as have the roles they play and the effects they produce on history. This matter is worthwhile exploring.

## 10.1 Conservatism During the Westernization Movement

“Learning the best of foreign skills,” as proposed by Wei Yuan (1794–1857), and “acquiring Western knowledge,” as advocated by Feng Guifen (1809–1874), may both be regarded as cultural concepts pertaining to the doctrine of openness. And both of those men may be described as ideological forerunners who directly initiated the Westernization Movement. China’s learning from the West could only begin with obvious matters such as making ships, guns, and machines and soon extended to mathematics. In December 1866 and January 1867, Hereditary Prince Gong Yixin (1833–1898) who presided over the Westernization Movement submitted two memorials requesting that a division for astronomy and mathematics be added to the Tongwenguan (see Chap. 2). The reason he gave was that “All Western skills in terms of manufacturing machinery and fire-arms, navigating ships and deploying armies are derived from astronomy and mathematics.” Hence, he intended to select and enlist students aged 20 years and older from among successful Manchu and Han candidates at provincial imperial exams as well as imperial protégés, individuals recommended by local governments, and so-called “proper-path” officials ranked below the fifth grade. The scope of enlistments was later expanded to administrators of various ranks and grades at the Hanlin Academy and officials below the fifth grade from all over the country who were under 30 years old and rated as *jinsi* (successful candidates from the highest imperial civil exams). The recruits were required to reside full time at the academy and undergo monthly and yearly exams. Foreigners were engaged as teachers and instructors. This matter was one form of Westernization, its purpose was to turn out talent, and it would have been beneficial if conscientiously pursued.

No sooner were the memorials submitted than they drew opposition from conservative court ministers. The first to dispute them was Zhang Shengzao, the Imperial Supervisor of Shandong. He objected mainly to sending “top-tier proper-path” scholars to study at the academy. He maintained: “Should top-tier proper-path persons be made to study those cunning crafts and thereby be granted promotions and beguiled with money, doing so would mean placing fame and fortune ahead of moral integrity. And without moral integrity, what meritorious services could one expect from them?” He maintained that should such an academy be operated, “one should instruct the imperial yamens of education and culture to enroll only young and bright students of astronomy and mathematics for studies at the academy. . . ; as for ships and guns, the ministry of works should select clever craftsmen or

ingenious persons from the army's lower ranks to concentrate on such studies and transmit the methods," and on no account should top-tier proper-path officials be put to studying such things.<sup>2</sup> Zhang's memorial was rebutted by the imperial court. At this juncture, Woren (1804–1871) came up with a memorial against a proposal put forward by Yixin (1833–1898). Woren was originally a member of the Manchu garrison in Kaifeng, Henan. Born in an impoverished family, he had distinguished himself through studies, became a *jinshi* in the ninth year of the Daoguang reign (1829), was awarded the position of *shujishi* at the Hanlin Academy where he associated with scholars high and low in the capital city, and made much progress by exchanging views with them. He had originally adhered to Wang Yangming's Xin Xue, or School of Mind, but influenced by Wu Tingdong (1793–1873) and Tang Jian (1778–1861) after arriving in Beijing; he became a follower of Cheng and Zhu. After that, he devoted himself to propagating the teachings of Zhu Xi, took it as his duty to defend traditional morality, gradually gained influence among his colleagues, and became regarded as the "highest Confucian authority since the Daoguang reign." His official career, too, advanced swimmingly as he gained the positions of Teacher to the Emperor and Dean of the Hanlin Academy and, later, Grand Secretary and concurrently Minister of Revenue. When the Tongwenguan controversy arose, Woren was already a minister-philosopher of high prestige both inside and outside the imperial court and a leading Confucian authority in scholastic circles. Although his strenuous representations were dismissed by the imperial court, they nevertheless exerted a powerful influence. According to some studies, a great many of the proper-path scholars who fell within the range of the recruitment terms set in Yixin's memorial rose in merit and prestige between the years 1862 and 1867. And it was precisely in these years that Woren was Dean of the Hanlin Academy and held the positions of Chief Examiner of the metropolitan examinations as well as Chief Examiner of the palace examinations or examination-paper reader of court examinations. Hence, virtually all of the eligible candidates for the exams could be regarded as his pupils or disciples and, as such, were of course most susceptible to his influence. Add to this Woren's prestige as Teacher to the Emperor, Grand Secretary, top-ranking minister-philosopher, and "highest Confucian authority," and one can well visualize the powerful influence he exerted on young scholars. That was the fundamental reason why so few of them sat for the Astronomy and Mathematics Institute's entrance exams.<sup>3</sup> However, the emphasis of our discussion here and now is what, in the final analysis, were Woren's considerations and objections as regards the Astronomy and Mathematics Institute's recruiting high-tier proper-path personnel. This will help us understand the state of mind and characteristics of the conservatives in this period.

There were two main aspects to Woren's opposition to Yixin and the imperial court's plan for setting up the Astronomy and Mathematics Institute.

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<sup>2</sup> See *The Complete Account of Our Management of Foreign Affairs (Tongzhi Reign)*, vol. 47, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> See Li Xizhu (2000, pp. 174–178).

First is erecting strict boundaries between China and foreign countries. Woren was most intolerant of the concept of “having scholars of the Songs and Classics (*The Book of Songs* and the *Collection of Ancient Texts*) take foreigners as their teachers”.<sup>4</sup> Here, “scholars of the songs and classics” referred to scholars in general and naturally included the top-tier proper-path scholars who would be recruited by the Astronomy and Mathematics Institute. Woren maintained: “Ever since the peace negotiations, Christian teachings have been in vogue, and many are the benighted persons who have been misled by these teachings and who depend on learned scholars to explain the universal truths to them so that their hearts/minds may remain on the right track. In the last years, however, too many talented persons fostered by our country for its own uses have shifted allegiance to the barbarians. For this reason healthy morals have declined and an unhealthy atmosphere has been spreading, and in a number of years will drive all of China’s populace into the arms of the barbarians”.<sup>5</sup> In Woren’s view, Chinese scholars who studied the books of the sages constituted the mainstays for preserving the sacred morals and ways as well as the national elite that held China together as a country. If these were allowed to accept tutelage from the foreigners, “they will not excel in anything they learn, and even if they do excel, can we expect them to remain morally upstanding and devote themselves to their own country? There will probably be very few who are not put to use by the barbarians”.<sup>6</sup> Woren emphasized that foreigners were China’s enemies. “In the tenth year of the Xianfeng reign, they dispatched troops to attack our domains, encroached upon our capital city and its environs, roiled our ancestral lands, burned and destroyed our homesteads, and killed our officials and subjects, subjecting our imperial court to humiliations unprecedented in two hundred years. . . Can such grievances and shame be forgotten overnight?”<sup>7</sup> He also pointed out: “The barbarians are exceedingly sly, cunning and deceptive. They know we intend to learn their secret skills so as to send them to their graves. They may only be outwardly making a show of teaching us, and who knows what tricks they have up their sleeves?”<sup>8</sup> Woren stated: “I hear the foreign missionaries despise our scholars for being unwilling to learn their religion. If our proper-path scholars are

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<sup>4</sup> Woren: “Memorial on the Harm of Taking Foreigners as Teachers and Stating that Propriety and Righteousness Should Still Serve as the Foundation for Self-Strengthening”; see *The Complete Account of Our Management of Foreign Affairs*, vol. 48, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Woren: “Memorial on Why Learning the Western Countries’ Astronomy and Mathematics Is of So Little Benefit and Having Westerners Teach Orthodox-path Scholars Is So Harmful”; see same as above, vol. 47, pp. 24–25.

<sup>6</sup> Woren: “Memorial on the Harm of Taking Foreigners as Teachers and Stating that Propriety and Righteousness Should Still Serve as the Foundation for Self-Strengthening”; see same as above, vol. 48, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Woren: “Memorial on Why Learning the Western Countries’ Astronomy and Mathematics Is of So Little Benefit and Having Westerners Teach Orthodox-path Scholars Is So Harmful”; see same as above, vol. 47, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> Woren: “Memorial on the Harm of Taking Foreigners as Teachers and Stating that Propriety and Righteousness Should Still Serve as the Foundation for Self-Strengthening”; see same as above, vol. 48, p. 11.

made to study under them, they will likely not become proficient in what they learn, whereas those who have already been misled by them are simply the victims of their wiles”.<sup>9</sup>

Woren insisted that foreigners and Chinese were incompatible and that the boundaries between the Chinese and foreigners should never be broken down. By allowing proper-path scholars to be instructed by foreigners, one would only be letting the foreigners make use of the mainstays that China would otherwise have relied on to maintain the Confucian morals and people’s minds, thus harming China and driving China’s populace into the arms of the foreigners. In his view this was tantamount to helping the foreigners destroy our country, our nation, and our beliefs. That was the fundamental reason for his intense opposition to setting up the Astronomy and Mathematics Institute and letting foreigners instruct China’s proper-path scholars.

Second, he insisted that the fundamental way to build up a nation lay in people’s minds, not in skills in the mechanical arts. It was on this point that Woren based his opposition to Yixin’s memorial to the throne. He said: “I have been apprised that for building up a nation one should place greater store on propriety and righteousness than on political trickery; that the fundamental way rests in people’s minds and not in technical skills and mechanical arts. Today, as people seek the trifling details of technical skills, they take foreigners as teachers, yet these crafty foreigners will not necessarily teach the best of their skills. And even if the teachers are indeed willing to teach and the students are indeed willing to learn, the only result will be some persons becoming capable of juggling numbers and figures. Never, since ancient times, has one ever heard of skills with numbers and figures sufficing to strengthen a weak nation.” One should admit that there was some reason to Woren’s statement. Yixin labored under the misapprehension that “we ought to devote ourselves to studies and learn all the subtleties of mathematics, physics and chemistry, the techniques of manufacturing and mechanics, and the methods of geology and water conservancy, for it is in these that the way to China’s self-strengthening lies”.<sup>10</sup> That was obviously an oversimplification. Any country that seeks to become strong and prosperous should first of all have a relatively sound system that enables all people to obtain what they are entitled to. A country can only be strong and prosperous when all people high and low pull together and everyone puts forward their best efforts. However, Woren did not understand what such a political system should consist of and continued to adhere to the ancient sages’ preachings about rites, etiquette and public morality—things that served no useful purpose in this respect. The rites and etiquette he talked about consisted of a set of “cardinal guides and constant virtues” based on the teachings of Confucius and Mencius and focused on monarchical power and autocracy, and the public morality he discussed

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<sup>9</sup> Woren: “Memorial on Why Learning the Western Countries’ Astronomy and Mathematics Is of So Little Benefit and Having Westerners Teach Orthodox-path Scholars Is So Harmful”; see same as above, vol. 47, p. 25.

<sup>10</sup> See *The Complete Account of Our Management of Foreign Affairs*, vol. 46, p. 4.

was made up of moral standards closely linked to these, including loyalty, filial piety, virtue, righteousness, honor, integrity, and the like. Notably, he pushed to extremes the traditional scholar-officials' view regarding the fundamental (*ben*) and the nonessential (*mo*). The classical theorem on fundamentals and nonessentials indeed stressed that one should place more emphasis on fundamentals than on nonessentials, but did not advocate focusing on fundamentals only and disregarding nonessentials. Woren, however, explicitly opposed learning technical skills from Westerners. He said: "Astronomy and mathematics are mere non-essentials. Not teaching or learning these non-essentials will be of no detriment to matters of fundamental importance in China, and it cannot be said that mathematics must be taught if the country hopes to strengthen itself".<sup>11</sup> The implication was that setting up the Astronomy and Mathematics Institute was essentially superfluous and recruiting proper-path scholars and taking foreigners as teachers was a gross misstep that would only harm the country.

Woren's position and ideological propositions were typical of the conservatism during the Westernization Movement. Taking the building of "strict boundaries between foreign countries and China" as a pretext for rejecting Western culture was none other than the cultural mind-set of insularity. It was quite clear that Wei Yuan's proposal in the early 1850s to "learn the best of foreign skills" and Feng Guifen's proposal in the early 1860s to "adopt Western learning" and his stand that "China's teachings on the traditional relationships should serve as the basis and should be supplemented by the techniques used in other countries for achieving prosperity and strength" had already broken out of the traditional concept of "erecting strict boundaries between foreign countries and China." Hence, Woren was taking a big step backward when, in 1867, he used "erecting strict boundaries between foreign countries and China" as an excuse to oppose setting up the Astronomy and Mathematics Institute and especially to oppose enlisting proper-path personnel in the academy and taking foreigners as teachers. It should be borne in mind that the Westernization Movement had only just begun at the time and no Chinese were aware yet of the advantages of the political systems in the West. They could only perceive things worthy of emulation from the most superficial aspects of the might of the Western countries. That, as a cognitive phase, was quite natural and unavoidable. Hence, the persons who were initiating the Westernization Movement represented the trend toward progress in those days. By opposing the endeavors initiated by officials of the Westernization school, Woren was in fact blocking China's progress. He was, arguably, the first person in the ruling group's upper level to systematically formulate China's conservative thinking and position subsequent to the conclusion of the Opium Wars and the opening up of China's coastal ports.

The first characteristic of Woren's conservatism was his continued attitude of dealing with foreigners from the overweening "Celestial Empire" complex. To him,

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<sup>11</sup> Woren: "Memorial on Why Propriety, Righteousness and Public Morals Are the Basis for Building Up the Country and Why Astronomy and Mathematics Are Merely Non-Essentials," Same as above, vol. 48, p. 19.

Westerners were no different from the barbarian tribes China had encountered in past history, and he refused to recognize any redeeming features in their cultures. He believed that the religions spread by Westerners were not proper religions and saw these as “evil ambiances.” He asserted that Westerners were “sly, cunning and deceptive,” and he regarded all Westerners indiscriminately as “our foes.” This was wholly consistent with the stance taken by China’s scholar-officials in ancient times toward all surrounding peoples.

The second characteristic of Woren’s conservatism was his belief that the tenets of Confucius and Mencius were the only “proper learning” and the correct principles for governing state affairs. He stated: “Since the sages’ important institutions and essentials are already well explained and established, why seek ways, over and above these, to achieve self-strengthening?”<sup>12</sup> Hence, he insisted that the sages’ principles of propriety and virtue should serve as the basis for self-strengthening. Only those persons who studied the sages’ books could become “loyal and true persons” and “men of propriety and virtue.” And only those faithful, true, and virtuous persons could “promote healthy trends,” “extirpate evil ambiances,” “uphold morals,” and “put the country in order.” One might well say that in Woren’s mind, no real learning existed other than the tenets of China’s sages Confucius and Mencius, and the Westerners’ “few nonessential skills” were not worthy of mention.

Woren was convinced that no highly civilized peoples existed outside China, and no superior learning existed beyond the teachings of Confucius and Mencius. Such were the basic ideological features of conservatism during the Westernization Movement.

We should also be aware that conservatives like Woren were certainly not individual exceptions in that period. On the contrary, he was emblematic of the state of mind of the great majority in society in those days. In an article entitled “Woren and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Tongwenguan (School of Combined Learning),” Xu Yishi (1890–1971) stated: “When the Qing Dynasty’s yamen in charge of foreign affairs set up the Tongwenguan (Note: Referring to the setting up of the Astronomy and Mathematics Institute—the Author), most scholar-officials took a conservative stance, held that ‘foreign learning would subvert China,’ and a great many objected. Woren, who enjoyed widespread prestige as Imperial Teacher, opposed it with exceptional vigor. Although he violated an imperial edict by doing so, he was held in great esteem by Qing public opinion” (Xu Yishi 1984, p. 380). He then quoted numerous accounts from the *Diary of Weng Tonghe* to substantiate his statements. On the 13th day of the second month in the sixth year of the Tongzhi reign, Weng (1830–1904) wrote in his diary: “A great many rumors swirl around the establishment of the Tongwenguan. An antithetical couplet goes like this: ‘Many tricks employed to have the court set up the Tongwenguan; Our

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<sup>12</sup> Woren: “Memorial on the Harm of Taking Foreigners as Teachers and Stating that Propriety and Righteousness Should Still Serve As the Foundation for Self-Strengthening,” same as above, vol. 48; vol. 48, p. 12.

best sons beguiled into learning from foreigners since military devices prove ineffective”.<sup>13</sup> An entry on the 24th of the same month said: “Tumultuous comments fill the capital city. Posters pasted on front gates, penned with such vulgar jibes as: ‘What rubbish! What rot! Everyone made to believe in Catholicism!’ and so forth, or couplets averring: ‘Language not yet learned; Refined behavior gone!’ and ‘Disciples of Confucius; Teachers from Guigu (the Valley of Demons)’”.<sup>14</sup> All of these were reflections of the indignation evinced by ordinary scholars at the Tongwenguan’s practice of recruiting orthodox-way scholars and stemming from the view that “boundaries should be defined between barbarians and Chinese.” Their thinking and mentality were cut from the same cloth as Woren’s. Xu also quoted a passage from the diary of Li Ciming (1830–1894). Li, after learning of the imperial court’s rebuttal of Yang Tingxi’s memorial on the Tongwenguan as well as the imperial edict to Woren ordering him to take office at the Qing government’s general administration for foreign affairs, wrote: “I, the humble minister Ciming, declare: When the General Office of Foreign Affairs was established toward the end of the Xianfeng reign, I said in private that doing so was improper. I said that such matters should be placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, that a *shilang* (vice-president of the board) should be added to take overall charge in conjunction with the Residence of the Hereditary Prince, and that it was inadvisable to set up a separate office. I had attempted to speak about this matter to two or three persons concerned, but no one would listen. . . . This year, before the opening of the Tongwenguan (Note: This should be “before the addition of the Institute of Astronomy and Mathematics” – the Author), Commissioner of Foreign Affairs Xu Jiyou (1795–1873) was appointed superintendent of promotions and transfers, and Hanlin scholars and top-tier members of the ministry under 30 years of age were selected to take up studies. No Chinese Confucian scholar with a modicum of self-respect should be willing to become a student under those unsightly barbarians, yet many were those who hastened to do so. (Note: Li was unclear about the circumstances as he had returned to his hometown at the time to attend obsequies for his parents. The fact was that few persons had applied to take the exams because of the conservative pressures applied by Woren et al.—the Author). This probably came to pass because the traditional values are insufficiently clear, all sense of propriety has been lost, and scholars and officials behave in a despicable manner. If things go on like this, there will be no difference between Chinese and barbarians, all morality will be lost, and there is no predicting what grief the country will come to.” Li, moreover, took Yang Tingxi’s memorial to task for not being to the point and for failing to expose “the inadequacies of Western methods, the unenlightened character of the Western mind, the indispensable nature of our national institutions, and the need to reject evil teachings”.<sup>15</sup> Li was not yet a *jinshi*, but his scholarly

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<sup>13</sup> See *Diary of Weng Tonghe*, vol. 1, p. 510; Zhonghua Book Company, 1989.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 521.

<sup>15</sup> See *Yuemantang Diary*, 3rd day of the 7th month of the Tongzhi reign.

attainments were gradually becoming known, and his thoughts and views were quite representative of the attitude of the general run of scholars. There is an entry in the *Diary of Guo Songtao* which states that after Woren and Zhang Shengzao came in conflict with the General Office of Foreign Affairs over the Astronomy and Mathematics Institute's recruitment of proper-path scholars, "members of the Council of Hunan Officials in the Capital who enter the academy and engage in studies with foreigners are no longer welcome at the Council's premises, and officials in the various departments may not share stamped documents of guaranty. People from Shanxi do the same thing".<sup>16</sup> This could reflect the attitude of officialdom as a whole.

In sum, on the matter of the General Office of Foreign Affairs setting up the Astronomy and Mathematics Institute and recruiting proper-path personnel for studies at the institute, Woren garnered fairly widespread sympathy and support for the controversies he initiated over the issues of "defining boundaries between foreigners and Chinese" and "the fundamentals (*ben*) and nonessentials (*mo*) for building the nation." This shows that the conservatism that rejected Western culture was quite broad based in China at that time.

## 10.2 Conservatism in the Period Between 1889 and 1911

### 10.2.1 Conservatism During the 1898 Reform Movement

Whereas the conservatism as represented by Woren in the early stages of the Westernization Movement targeted the Westernization Movement and was intended to protect and conserve the inherent state of affairs prior to the advent of Westernization, the conservatism that arose after the Constitutional Reform and Modernization of 1898 was no longer directed against Westernization as such but instead at criticizing the Constitutional Reform and Modernization Movement that arose on the basis of the Westernization Movement. The conservatism of this period could acknowledge the rationality of the Westernization Movement, but it opposed any further institutional reforms. Hence, it differed from the original form of contemporary conservatism as represented by Woren and instead reflected the views of people who took a conservative attitude toward the scope and depth of change.

The locale of the most spirited and dramatic events during the 1898 Reform Movement was Hunan Province, which encompassed a group of extremely active reformists and a group of typical representatives of the conservative school. Here, the attacks mounted by the conservatives against the reformists were more intense than anywhere else in China, and their conservative thinking and pronouncements were of a fairly systematic and representative nature.

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<sup>16</sup> See *Guo Songtao's Diary*, 3rd day of the 4th month of the Tongzhi reign.



The most conspicuous features of the Hunan reformist movement were the Shiwu Xuetao (Current Affairs School), Nan Xue Hui (Reform Society of South China), and the newspapers Xiang Xue Bao (Journal of Hunan Studies) and Xiang Bao (Hunan Journal). The Nan Xue Hui, which reformist activists intended to turn into something akin to a local parliament, would at regular intervals assemble personages from among the gentry and academic circles to hear lectures, elucidate new theories and principles, and discuss contemporary politics. The Shiwu Xuetao was for them a venue for fostering and training new talent. And the two newspapers were used by the reformist school to create consensus for promoting political reforms. In all three fields, friends and followers of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao served as backbone elements. On the other hand, the conservative faction seized upon problems in these three fields to launch attacks against the reformists. Their chief representatives were Wang Xianqian, Ye Dehui, Bin Fengyang, Zeng Lian, and Su Yu, the most important among them being Wang and Ye. Their utterances and statements enjoyed support from Zhang Zhidong, the then viceroy of Huguang Province.

Wang Xianqian (1842–1917), a native of Changsha, was a *jinshi* during the Tongzhi reign. He held such posts as Senior Compiler at the Hanlin Academy, Libationer of the Directorate of Education, and Educational Intendant of Jiangsu Province. He had also held the positions of Provincial Civil Service Examiner of Yunnan, Jiangxi, and Zhejiang provinces and Dean of the Yuelu and Chengnan academies in Changsha. Highly erudite and a prolific writer, he enjoyed great renown in Hunan and even nationwide. He had once taken a highly active part in Hunan's Westernization efforts and even headed the list of petitioners requesting the establishment of the Shiwu Xuetao which later become an important target of conservative attacks. Thus, Wang was not a conservative element in the ordinary sense. Ye Dehui (1864–1927), a native of Xiangtan and *jinshi* during the Guangxu reign, had held the position of Secretary of the Ministry of Personnel. He had acquired some slight knowledge of Western learning and Western matters and once said: "Those who claim that Westerners have no moral principles are poorly informed; but those who say that the Western teachings surpass the Confucian teachings are greatly mistaken".<sup>17</sup> He had also participated in some local Westernization initiatives.

An analysis of their thoughts and pronouncements may clarify their characteristics in different periods and the effects of their varying roles in history.

Wang Xianqian had said: "What we call Western learning today extends all over the globe and to contacts between all countries, and the court cannot but pay attention to the skills of translation. Westerners have built up their countries by means by industry and commerce. . . Since we cannot forbid their material goods from entering China or forbid our people from purchasing these goods, we must seek the techniques and skills whereby to boycott these, and then it will be possible

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<sup>17</sup> *Ming Jiao* (The Orthodox Teachings), quoted from *Essays in Defense of Confucianism*, vol. 3, p. 35; Wuchang wood-block edition from the 8th month of the 24th year of the Guangxu reign.

for us to improve China's circumstances. Hence we should encourage the spirit of learning about acoustics, optics, chemistry, electricity and all sciences of manufacturing and mining and strive for excellence. Having the government lead the Chinese people by means of Western learning is also a way to seek self-improvement amidst all our difficulties, and it would not be wrong for high-ranking officials to take the lead in doing so, or for the gentry to render assistance".<sup>18</sup> And for this reason, he himself "invested a great deal of wealth in manufacturing, for if China failed to develop such skills it would never be able to stand on its feet."<sup>19</sup> Ye Dehui, too, maintained that "China absolutely must energize manufacturing if it hopes to strengthen itself".<sup>20</sup> He himself took part to some extent in the Westernization effort. As to Zhang Zhidong's (1837–1909) relationship to the Westernization cause, that is already common knowledge and needs no further elaboration.

There were also some disparities as regards their understanding of and attitude toward Western learning. Broadly speaking, Zhang was relatively open-minded, Wang came next, while Ye was fairly backward. In the Preface to *Exhortation to Studies*, Zhang wrote: "Western *yi* (skills, techniques) are absolutely necessary, whereas Western *zheng* (politics, administration, management) is important." The "*zheng*" he referred to here of course did not mean "political institutions" and was obviously not restricted to "*yi*." It meant something higher than "*yi*" and must have referred to skills in terms of management. Such an understanding—i.e., that importance should be placed on studying the West's management skills in the fields of administration and social endeavors—was quite avant-garde by any standards in those days. In *Ming Gang* he even averred, to a certain extent, that people in the West also adhered to *lun ji*—the ethical bounds and order of seniority between rulers and ruled, father and son, and husband and wife. This understanding may have originated in hearsay and it served the purpose of criticizing advocates of radical Westernization. However, among China's literati-officials, such an understanding also fell within the "liberal views" rubric. In contrast, Wang Xianqian maintained that among people in the West, "all learning essentially pertains to the learning of crafts and techniques." Hence, he declared: "Western learning, whether big or small, is dominated by studies of nothing more than crafts and techniques".<sup>21</sup> He was clearly less broad minded than Zhang Zhidong. As for Ye Dehui, his understanding of Western learning was even more out of touch than Wang Xianqian's. He said, for instance: "The West is in the habit of practicing the method of having large numbers of persons making decisions because it has no rules of seniority for ruler and ruled. It does not define seniority for ruler and ruled because it has no rules governing seniority between fathers and sons. And it does not define seniority between fathers and sons because it has no rules governing seniority

<sup>18</sup> "Letter from Wang Xianqian to the Student Wu Xuejing"; see same book as above, vol. 6, p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> "Wang Xianqian's Letter of Reply to Bi Yongnian"; see same book as above, vol. 6, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> "Letter from Ye Dehui to Yu Keshi"; see same book as above, vol. 6, p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> "Response to Wan Boren"; see same as above, p. 21.

between husband and wife”.<sup>22</sup> He did his utmost to prove that China and the Chinese held a special position in the world. He declared: “Asia is situated in the southeast of the world, China is right at the center of the southeast, and China’s central position determines the difference between Eastern and Western things. Just as the order of the four seasons begins with spring and summer, the order of the five elements begins in the southeast. Chinese and Westerners both understand this, and it is not the Middle Kingdom which makes other peoples outsiders. Of the five colors, yellow represents the Earth, and the Earth is situated at the center. The Chinese are defined by Westerners as a yellow race, and have implicitly taken the central position ever since the creation of Heaven and Earth. Westerners deride the Chinese as being self-centered. Should the above reasons not apprise them why that is so?”<sup>23</sup> He also entertained the most bizarre view that Western religions were in reality offshoots of China’s Confucianism and Daoism. He declared: “The teachings of Laozi gave rise to Confucianism, which in turn gave rise to the teachings of the Legalists. This was adopted by the surrounding barbarian peoples and became [the teachings of] Buddha and then Sakyamuni. The Sakyamuni teachings proliferated in the state of Sindhu, which is today’s India. Today, all religions in the Western Regions and West, such as those of *huihui* (Islam), *tianfang* (Mecca), Catholicism and Christianity as well as vestiges of the tributaries and descendants of the original Sakaymuni teachings, are spread over the length and breadth of the five continents”.<sup>24</sup>

In spite of the disparities in their cognitions of Western learning, their levels of thought were at least in synch with the Westernization Movement. What they wished to retain and protect were the treasures of Chinese tradition that foreigners could not be expected to attain, i.e., the so-called Three Cardinal Principles and Five Constant Virtues which the Chinese had revered virtually as heavenly law over thousands of years or, to put it bluntly, the system of monarchical autocracy and the patriarchal rules and regulations. We can see that Zhang, Wang, and Ye most strenuously opposed all talk of civil rights and equality and adamantly upheld the inviolability of the abovementioned principles and virtues. Zhang Zhidong declared: “Respect for parents, respect for seniors and respect for elders, and the difference between men and women are truths that commoner reformists may not tamper with. The five cardinal principles of Confucian ethics are the basis of all comportment. Passed down for thousands of years, these are not to be disputed and are the real reason for the Sages being Sages and for China being China. Hence, knowing that the ruler must command respect from his subjects, we should know that the civil rights theorem is not feasible; knowing that the father must command respect from the son, we should know that even if father and son are subject to the same criminal sanctions, the funeral and sacrificial rites still may not be dispensed with; and knowing that the husband must command respect from the wife, we

<sup>22</sup> “Letter from Ye Dehui to Yu Mingzhen”; see *Essays in Defense of Confucianism*, vol. 6, p. 34.

<sup>23</sup> “Letter from Ye Dehui to Pi Xirui of the Southern Studies Society”; see same as above, pp. 20–21.

<sup>24</sup> Ming Jiao (The Orthodox Teachings); see *Essays in Defense of Confucianism*, vol. 3, 3, p. 32.

should also know that equal rights for men and women is not practicable”.<sup>25</sup> He maintained that “parliament” in the West meant no more than “enabling the populace to give expression to public opinion and popular sentiment, but that the intent is merely to permit the public to express their feelings and not take over power.” He insisted that the formulation “civil rights” (*min quan* in Chinese, which may also be read as “popular rights” and “people’s power”—Tr.) was an error caused purely by a mistranslation of a Western term. If *min quan* (civil rights, people’s power) were advocated and people were taught the doctrine of contending for power, then “once the *min quan* doctrine was promoted, the ignorant would certainly rejoice, trouble-makers would become unruly, laws would be flouted, and great chaos would everywhere ensue.” Hence, “the *min quan* doctrine brings no benefit, only inestimable harm”.<sup>26</sup> Wang Xianqian held that “the cardinal guides and constant principles should remain forever unchanged.” He declared: “Liang Qichao has accepted the teachings of his master Kang Youwei, promotes these as a doctrine of equality and equal rights, and then turns around to teach others. . . Tan Sitong, Tang Caichang, Fan Zhui, and Yi Nai, on their part, are riding the winds, driving up billows and willfully raising a hullabaloo. These feckless young scholars know not the harm they cause by their fallacious utterances and believe these to conform to the times. They have strayed from their intrinsic nature, vie to curry favor, and mouth arrant nonsense as though they have gone out of their minds”.<sup>27</sup> Wang Xianqian came up with a highly original thesis. He maintained that Kang, Liang, and their like “prate about equality, but there is no equality in countries in the West; prate about *min quan* (people’s power/civil rights), but rulers in the West in fact keep *quan* (rights/powers) to themselves”.<sup>28</sup> What he meant was that no foundation existed for Kang and Liang’s civil rights advocacies and that these were no more than deceptive subterfuges. Ye Dehui maintained: “The principles of reverence for Heaven, filial piety toward parents and love for others are the same in China and the West. Solely as regards loyalty to the sovereign are the Confucian teachings unique and the Western teachings lacking”.<sup>29</sup> Kang’s and Liang’s promotion of civil rights, he said, was an obvious violation of the principle of fealty to the sovereign and a departure from the Confucian teachings. Zeng Lian (1856–1928) went even further and accused Kang Youwei of “advancing the Western theories about civil rights and equality with the intention of turning Confucius into a Moses and presenting himself as Jesus. He fully intends to set himself up as China’s pontiff and make use of a sanctified Confucius to introduce alien values into our country and reconfigure our land. . . As he gradually widens his powers, heretical

<sup>25</sup> See “Exhortation to Studies: The Cardinal Guides,” *Internal Essays*, p. 17; block-printing of the 24th year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>26</sup> See “Exhortation to Studies: Centralization of Power,” *Internal Essays*, pp. 30 and 29.

<sup>27</sup> “Petition by Hunan Gentry,” *Reform Movement of 1898*, (Part 2), p. 640.

<sup>28</sup> “Letter from Wang Xianqian to the Student Wu Xuejing”; see *Essays in Defense of Confucianism*, vol. 6, p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> “Letter from Ye Dehui to Yu Mingzhen”; see *Essays in Defense of Confucianism*, vol. 6, p. 34.

teachings will run rampant and take the country onto a path where there is no more respect for either parents or rulers.”<sup>30</sup> Bin Fengyang (1861–?) and others also seized upon Kang and Liang’s utterances about civil rights and petitioned their mentors, requesting that Kang and Liang be reported to the higher authorities. They wrote in their petition: “We have naught to stand upon other than the Confucian canons, and nothing with which teach people other than the moral principles of loyalty and filial piety. Kang and Liang are presently using such things as civil rights and equality to confuse people. We would ask, if rights [i.e. powers] are devolved, who is to govern the country? If the populace may rule itself, what will the rulers do? Those are prescriptions for chaos in the country.”<sup>31</sup>

It is evident that the conservatives of this period were most concerned about preserving China’s Confucian principles and virtues. Their main reason for opposing Kang and Liang was that the latter advocated civil rights, and the rise of civil rights presaged the fall of the Three Cardinal Principles and Five Constant Virtues.

They made two determinations with regard to the teachings of Kang and Liang. One was that the ideas Kang and Liang propagated were in reality not Western learning, but things they had devised to attain their own ulterior motives. Wang Xianqian declared: “The teachings Wang and Liang use today to hoodwink others are their own concoctions, not Western teachings. . . . Kang and Liang’s use of false Western teachings to push their own fallacies is indeed a great malfeasance in China, and one would hardly imagine that such a devilish stratagem would be played out in broad daylight.”<sup>32</sup> Bin Fengyang, in his “Letter to Principal Wang Yiwu,” explicitly stated about Kang and Liang that “a careful study of the theories they expound are not Western teachings, but in reality Kang’s teachings.”<sup>33</sup> One should admit there was some truth to Wang’s and Bin’s accusations. Kang and Liang indeed knew little about Western learning at the time. But, distressed by the parlous state of current affairs, they produced theories for conducting political reforms and saving the nation that were little more than Confucian teachings refurbished with a smattering of Western learning. The other determination asserted that Kang and Liang were doing everything possible to espouse Western ideas and Western teachings. Wenti (?–c. 1900), in his memorial calling for the impeachment of Kang Youwei, stated: “Attention is being given of late to Western law. Commendably, this enables people in China to understand how Western law can be used in China to strengthen China. The intention is not to cast aside and destroy all of China’s decrees, regulations and historical records and convert entirely over to Western law.” However, Kang Youwei “focuses entirely on Western learning and

<sup>30</sup> “Proposal Put Forward upon the Emperor’s Request,” *Reform Movement of 1898*, (Part 2), p. 492.

<sup>31</sup> “Letter from Bin Fengyang and Others to Principal Wang Yiwu”; see *Reform Movement of 1898*, (Part 2), p. 638.

<sup>32</sup> “Letter from Wang Xianqian to the Student Wu Xuejing”; see *Essays in Defense of Confucianism*, vol. 6, p. 9–10.

<sup>33</sup> See *Essays in Defense of Confucianism*, vol. 5, p. 5.

wishes to make a clean sweep of the major classics and fundamental laws that have been passed down in China for thousands of years.” This, presumably, would “exert a subtle influence on the character of the Chinese people and turn them all into Westerners”.<sup>34</sup> This accusation smacked somewhat of the (Cultural Revolution years’) “mass criticisms and repudiations.” And it was evident that the conservatives’ criticisms of Kang and Liang were mutually contradictory. Some declared that what Kang and Liang called “Western learning” was not Western learning but merely “Kang’s learning.” Others insisted that Kang and Liang stood for applying Western learning only and converting wholesale over to Western law. Such contradictions showed how feeble the conservatives were in terms of theory.

Here I would like to point out that the conservative faction’s speechifying displayed much of the language and manner of speech characteristic of the abovementioned “mass criticisms and repudiations.” Su Yu (1874–1914), for instance, declared that Fan Zhui “has been the first to propagate specious theories, betray the Confucian teachings, corrupt and destroy the order of seniority in human relationships, delude society and mislead its people, and would be most happy if the Chinese people were to become mere birds and beasts.” In an article entitled “Refuting the Proposals Regarding the Rules and Regulations of Nan Xue Hui Branch Society,” he asserted that the term “inaugural rules” in the Rules and Regulations implied that new rules would be instituted once the branch society had been inaugurated and that the term “broad outline” was used “since it was best to avoid mentioning details, so as to facilitate arbitrary changes once the society’s membership expanded and enable willful behavior with regard to all acts of uncouth equality.” He also commented on the equality theorem, saying: “Equality of all persons and equality of all rights is tantamount to making no distinction between persons high and low and persons close and distant. Making no distinction between the high and the low means negating one’s rulers. Making no distinction between the close and the distant is tantamount to negating one’s parents. If even rulers and parents are negated, where does that leave the relations between elder and younger brothers, between husbands and wives, and among friends? Hence, if there is indeed no equality, so be it! Equality can only drive all matters on a reverse course. It ought to be declared a crime and not just a fallacy!”<sup>35</sup> All such statements clearly bore the characteristics of the “mass criticisms and repudiations,” where crimes were alleged without proof of criminality, demonization was taken to the highest extent, criticism was exaggerated to extremes, and strenuous efforts were made to groundlessly attribute ulterior motives.

An overview of the conservative thinking of this period shows that it basically fell within the conceptual framework of Zhong Ti Xi Yong (“Chinese learning for fundamental principles and Western learning for practical applications”). That formulation can nowhere be found in Zhang Zhidong’s *Exhortation to Studies*, yet the Zhong Ti Xi Yong spirit runs through the whole book. His so-called *Nei*

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<sup>34</sup> See *Reform Movement of 1898*, (Part 2), pp. 484–485.

<sup>35</sup> See *Essays in Defense of Confucianism*, vol. 5, pp. 1–2.

*Bian* (Internal Chapters) dealt with *ben* (fundamentals, basics), and his *Wai Bian* (External Chapters) dealt with *tong* (communication). Attending to fundamentals meant establishing Chinese learning—the cardinal principals, constant guides, and Confucian teachings—as the foundation. Attending to communication meant acquiring Western learning for the sake of application and resolving practical issues. He scolded the general run of “conservative scholars for not knowing how to communicate, and the reformists for ignoring the fundamentals.” “By not communicating,” he said, “one cannot acquire the skills with which to deal with our enemies and administer changes, and by not knowing the fundamentals one is bound to belittle the Confucian canons”.<sup>36</sup> The substance of his thinking was *Zhong Ti Xi Yong*. The same applied to Wang Xianqian when he emphasized that “the intention in setting up schools is to take Chinese learning as the foundation and at the same time adopt the strong points of Western learning”.<sup>37</sup> The petition submitted by Wenti (?–c. 1900) calling for the impeachment of Kang Youwei stated: “We must thoroughly study such books as the writings of Confucius, Mencius, Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi, the Four Books, the Five Classics, the Primary Variorum and the Xing Li, and implant these as our roots, so that people will be well-informed about the principles of filial piety, loyalty, the rites, integrity, the cardinal guides and constant virtues, the ethical principles, the Confucian teachings and moral character in order to establish a sound basis, and then only study foreign writings, languages, skills and techniques for practical application”.<sup>38</sup> This, too, expressed the intent of “*Zhong Ti Xi Yong*.” Hence, we say that the cultural concepts of the conservative faction during the Reform Movement of 1898 had taken a step forward as compared to conservative faction at the outset of the Westernization Movement.

### ***10.2.2 The “Preservation of National Essence” Doctrine During the High Tide of the Anti-Manchu Revolution***

A “national essentialist” trend of thought emerged in China in the last years before the collapse of the Qing Dynasty’s rule. This trend of thought was connected, to a certain extent, with the national essentialist trend of thought in Japan. Huang Jie (1873–1935), in a 1902 article entitled “Doctrine of the Preservation of National Essence” carried in *Bulletin of Politics and the Arts*, stated: A major force of reaction was suddenly born amidst the huge waves and the many surging currents of the Meiji Reform and Europeanization in Japan in past years, and that force was the doctrine of the preservation of national essence. At the time, purely Western thought had entered and was dominating the thought of the Japanese people. For instance, when some matter was deliberated, the proponents would stand for

<sup>36</sup> See “Preface to Exhortation to Studies.”

<sup>37</sup> “Petition by Hunan Gentry”; see *Reform Movement of 1898*, (Part 2), p. 640.

<sup>38</sup> See *Reform Movement of 1898*, (Part 2), p. 485.

implementation, citing Western scientific principles, while the opponents would object, also citing Western scientific principles. None would present arguments based on considerations of their own country's national institutions or popular sentiments. On this matter, Minister of Education Inoue Kaoru, seconded by Miyake Yujiro and Shiga Shigetaka and others, issued loud calls to the nation's people. They maintained one should learn from other people's strong points to offset one's own weakness, but "should not become so enamored of foreign cultures and material things as to adopt their shortcomings and abandon one's own strong points".<sup>39</sup> Huang's statement showed that his and his colleagues' thinking had been influenced by the national essence trend of thought in Japan. But in fact, and more importantly, their trend of thought had been inspired by developments in China's current affairs. China was faced with a grave national crisis at the time. It was being invaded and oppressed by the Western powers on the one hand, and on the other, large numbers of people could no longer tolerate the despotic oppression they suffered under a minority of Manchu aristocrats. Hence, it was most necessary to stoke national fervor and promote national awakening to push forward an anti-Manchu revolution. In his "Preface to the Journal of National Essence," Huang Jie gave voice to his distress at being under the control of "a state system dominated by a foreign race" and "teachings dominated by a foreign race." He believed that vigorous efforts had to be made to promote the doctrine of national essence if one hoped to rejuvenate China and Chinese learning. He stated: "Distressed by China's inability to rise to its feet and by the daily decline of its learning, our colleagues have embarked on wide-ranging studies of natural phenomena and history and society, and started up the Journal of National Essence".<sup>40</sup> His pronouncements about China's inability to stand up and the progressive decline of its learning were aimed both at the Western powers and at the Qing court. He and his colleagues tied China's essence and China's learning closely together. What they meant by China's learning was the learning that made China what it was. China's learning and China's essence could not be simplistically identified as one and the same thing, yet the former indeed constituted the cream of China's essence. They believed that "if a country that falls has learning, it may rise again; but if a country that falls has no learning, it remains permanently fallen".<sup>41</sup> Believers in the doctrine of national essence, as, for instance, its chief proponents Deng Shi (1877–1951), Huang Jie, Ma Xulun (1885–1970), Zhang Taiyan (1868–1936), Liu Shiwei (1884–1919), and so forth, were all proponents of anti-Manchu revolution. They made no bones about their use of China's essence and China's learning to stir up racial sentiments and promote revolution. In his reminiscences, Ma Xulun once said that by promoting the doctrine of national essence and running the Journal of National Essence, they "in fact schemed to use these to stimulate an anti-Manchu revolutionary trend of

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<sup>39</sup> *Politics and Arts Collection: 1913 Writings on Political Studies*, vol. 5.

<sup>40</sup> See *Journal of National Essence*, first issue in the first year of publication.

<sup>41</sup> Xu Shouwei: "On National Essence Not Being a Barrier to Europeanization," *Journal of National Essence*, issue no. 7 in the first year of publication.



thought”.<sup>42</sup> It must also be noted that one aspect of the rise of the national essence doctrine was that it indeed had something to do with the intensifying trend toward Europeanization. Huang Jie said: “All literati in the realm are distressed by the growing crises in the nation’s circumstances and, persuaded that the Central Kingdom has never been able to change since ancient times and that its learning is inadequate to save the country today, they have become enamored of Europeanization. They make use of it in all matters to expunge malpractices, and even subject irrelevant customs and habits to scrutiny in terms of Eastern and Western learning.” He maintained this was “learning that made slaves of people”.<sup>43</sup> He believed that this deviant practice should be corrected and China’s own learning built up, and the way to do this was by vigorously promoting the doctrine of national essence.

As we studied the sayings and writings of the national essentialists, we found that they were conservationists in form yet, in substance, they tended toward the new and the revolutionary.

Let us first discuss their substantive aspect.

All promoters of the doctrine of national essence had some knowledge of Western learning; they had either taken studies abroad or toured other countries or had been able to peruse Western books obtained via their teachers or friends. Although they disapproved of being infatuated with Western learning, they did not reject it. They believed that “the national essence gains in stature by assisting Europeanization, not by putting up defensive resistance against Europeanization”.<sup>44</sup> They moreover stood for drawing on the experience of Western learning in order to reorganize China’s old learning. In “On the Intention to Set Up a School for National Essence Studies,” an article which represented views shared among adherents of the doctrine of national essence, they stated: “In each and all of its subtleties and profundities, China’s learning can draw upon the learning of the light-complexioned races for the purpose of mutual evaluations and comparative studies; doing so will facilitate dissemination and bring far-reaching results”.<sup>45</sup>

Their pursuit of the new and the revolutionary was also manifested in their analyses and comments with regard to China’s old and traditional learning. Bear in mind that the general run of conservatives believed, without making any distinction, that all of China’s old and traditional learning was worth treasuring. Not so the national essentialists. They defined China’s old traditional learning as two different sorts. One was the so-called “imperial learning” touted by the rulers of successive dynasties. The other was the knowledge assiduously studied by noninstitutional

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<sup>42</sup> Ma Xulun: “Essays of the Stone House,” quoted from Zheng Shiqu (1997, p. 10).

<sup>43</sup> “Preface to the Journal of National Essence,” *Journal of National Essence*, first issue in the first year of publication.

<sup>44</sup> Xu Shouwei: “On National Essence Not Being a Barrier to Westernization,” *Journal of National Essence*, first year, first issue.

<sup>45</sup> See *Journal of National Essence*, third year, second issue.

scholars over the centuries; this was the true “national learning.” Deng Shi stated: “Imperial learning, which emperors and kings throughout the ages have held sacred, established as their own doctrine, and taken as the basis of their edicts and decrees, has been held up as the highest canon for governing the country and the best model for managing state affairs. . . . As for national learning, no more than a few non-official scholars have written books on it behind closed doors and used it to appraise current affairs and instruct others. . . . Moved by a sense of patriotism, they have consecrated themselves to this as a lifetime endeavor and wait for recognition only from later generations”.<sup>46</sup> They maintained that imperial learning should be discarded and that only national learning was worthy of being passed down and promoted. Such an understanding was indeed quite revolutionary.

That was not all. It is generally acknowledged that Confucius and Confucianism are the leading factors in China’s traditional old learning. And that which all conservatives put their greatest efforts into protecting and maintaining is none other than Confucius and Confucianism. The national essentialists, however, did not feel constrained to revere Confucius and Confucianism and were very much inclined to adopt an analytical and critical attitude. Deng Shi wrote: “Confucianism was looked up to as the highest authority in the Han Dynasty, and this has gone on for more than a thousand years. But now a new race has entered our country, bringing with it new teachings. This, at first, did not draw much attention. As time passed, however, one noticed that the teachings they believe in were apparently effective for managing their own countries, which are governed much better than China. So one suddenly realized there are teachings other than Confucianism, and sages other than those who produced the Six Classics, and so the ‘highest authority’ allegation was ruptured”.<sup>47</sup> They also specifically described the harm done by sole reverence for Confucius and Confucianism. For instance, they pointed out that the close link between the Confucius-cum-Confucianism theory and monarchical autocracy had become so powerful an instrument in the hands of despotic rulers that “its teachings caused all people under Heaven to become submissive and docile and subject to manipulation by their rulers” (Huang Jie 1907). They also pointed out that the effect of sole reverence for Confucius and Confucianism was to ossify and stifle thought and academics. Setting up Confucius and Confucianism as the highest authority had “stamped out the learning of other sages in China”.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, once sole reverence for the teachings of Confucius and Confucianism was established as the official creed and controlled by the rulers, everyone had to comply with the dictums of one school of thought, different views were not permitted, and “Confucius was used as a means to shackle the thoughts and speech of all people under heaven.” No sooner did different views emerge than they were suppressed by all

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<sup>46</sup> “A Rebuttal of the Argument that National Learning Is Useless,” *Journal of National Essence*, third year, issue no. 6.

<sup>47</sup> “On the Revival of Ancient Learning,” *Journal of National Essence*, first year, issue no. 9.

<sup>48</sup> Deng Shi: “On the Revival of National Learning,” *Journal of National Essence*, first year, issue no. 9.

available means, including persecution, burnings, and killings. Zhang Taiyan and others also laid bare the various evils of the Confucian creed per se. In *A Cursory Account of the Teachings of the Pre-Qin Philosophers*, Zhang criticized the Confucians as being “obsessed with wealth, rank and status” and “bowing to current trends.” He said: “These gentry are at times middle-of-the-roaders and at other times flexible or weak, and so there is no point in demanding that they adhere to either morals or ideals. The best one can expect of them is that they may provide conveniences in the handling of various affairs.” Hence, “Among people who profess Confucian morality, nowhere does one find anyone who attains distinction through hard work, and everywhere one sees those who rush around in a frenetic quest of fame and position.” And, “the aims of those who profess Confucian ideals waver between the permissible and the impermissible, and any discussions thereof do not go beyond vague equivocations.” Thus, “Confucian studies are harmful in that they generate confusion in people’s minds”.<sup>49</sup> These were among the sharpest criticisms of Confucius and Confucianism in the last years of the Qing Dynasty, and they attested to a trend toward change and revolution among adherents to the doctrine of national essence.

However, one cannot deny the conservative aspect of the national essentialists. We say their conservatism was manifested predominantly in terms of form because it was heavily cloaked in nationalism. They emphasized that the very existence of the country and its people was tied to national learning. They preached that the nation’s soul should be forged by means of national learning and the national essence. They stated: “The soul of the nation exists in national learning.” Hence, “preserving national learning is a matter of prime importance”.<sup>50</sup> In terms of culture, nationalism inevitably bears the characteristics of conservatism; this has been clearly demonstrated by history, ancient and modern and Chinese and foreign. Precisely because of this, the national essentialists were unable to repress their misgivings about Europeanization despite their assurances that they did not oppose it. For instance, the aforementioned Huang Jie, in his “Preface to the Journal on Studies of National Essence”—an article of an import equal to the “Introduction” to that periodical—accused all those who were “infatuated with Europeanization” of “taking example in all matters from the learning of Japan and the West” and pursuing “learning that turns people into slaves.” This state of mind was quite logical. Since nationalism was their basic anchor point, it was only natural that they should be highly guarded against things that did not pertain to their own people and things from abroad. In reality, their understanding and knowledge of the West was quite meager. Suffused as they were with a perception that their mission was to preserve the national learning and the national essence, the keynote of their endeavors consisted in touting and singing the praises of the old Chinese learning, and it was in such matters that they excelled. The article “On the Intention to Set up a School for National Essence Studies” began by expressing deep anxiety over the

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<sup>49</sup> See *Journal of National Essence*, 2nd year, issue no. 8.

<sup>50</sup> Xu Zhiheng: “Responses after Reading the National Essence Journal,” first year, issue no. 6.

perception that contemporary people “place no value on the old” and even lamented “Alas! The books in all households date from contemporary times, entire families study the writings of Western lands, academics pack up their books and depart, scholars learned in the Confucian classics lean back and no longer impart their knowledge, all the elegant exegeses in the Three Ancient Wordbooks, the refined teachings in the Six Classics, and the well-nigh forgotten doctrines of the Nine Sages which domestic tyrants and foreign invaders were unable to destroy are now being stamped out in a society where education is being universally promoted. This is indeed tragic!”<sup>51</sup> Truly, an expression of profound feelings for and sentimental attachment to the old Chinese learning! Despite the profound criticisms of Confucian learning voiced by Zhang Taiyan, his greatest forte was, after all, his expertise and erudition in the old learning. In his thesis *Original Studies* he enumerated in detail many matters in which China excelled and the “distant West could not compare” and then stated: “Most common people abandon such things and are mortified that these bear no resemblance to things from the West; I, however, take pride in their difference from Western things and see nothing shameful in that”.<sup>52</sup> These words shed some light on the conservative inner world of the national essentialists.

The national essentialists once compared themselves to Europe’s ideologues and thinkers of the Renaissance era and believed their endeavors constituted a Chinese renaissance. Such feelings were understandable. However, where the China of those times was concerned, neither the subjective nor the objective conditions were present for any such endeavor. And so amid the ebbs and flows in current affairs, their national essentialism at times manifested itself as a steamed-up revolutionary spirit and at times as a hide-bound conservative frame of mind. They themselves had little knowledge of the West or any grounding in new theories and methods and at the same time lacked sufficient accumulations in terms of sorting out the old Chinese learning. Hence, the progressive and revolutionary spirit stimulated in them by their direct participation in the anti-Manchu revolutionary struggles was inhibited and even stifled by their inherent form of conservatism when the tide of the 1911 Revolution ebbed. All that remained was nostalgia and a yearning for things past. And for that reason, their conservatism was taken over and carried on by their successor, the Critical Review (Xue Heng) school that opposed the new culture.

However, it is clear that what the national essentialists wished to preserve differed considerably from that which the conservatives of the 1898 Reform wanted to preserve. The latter wished to preserve the so-called Cardinal Guides, Constant Virtues and Confucian canons, and principally the system of monarchical autocracy. The national essentialists not only rejected the system of monarchical autocracy, they wanted to overthrow that system. In that case, what were they striving to

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<sup>51</sup> See *Journal of National Essence*, 1st issue in its 1st year.

<sup>52</sup> See *Journal of National Essence*, 4th issue in its 6th year.

preserve? That calls for a look at what exactly their so-called “national essence” consisted of.

Huang Jie said: “National essence is that essential quality which originates in the state system, extends throughout the country, permeates its people, and constitutes an independent way of thought. National essence possesses refinement and beauty devoid of anything crude and coarse, robust vigor devoid of anything puerile or frail, openness and broadmindedness free of any trammels or impediments; it is the cerebral essence that enables people to evolve”.<sup>53</sup> Deng Shi stated: “For a nation to build itself up, there must be the spirit that enables it to do so; if the spirit that constitutes the essence of that nation does not die out, the nation too will not perish.”<sup>54</sup> And Xu Shouwei declared: “National essence is that which a nation’s spirit depends on. As a form of learning, it is based on history, derives from politics and practice, matches the feelings which people share in common, and is in fact the wellspring for building up the nation.” A close examination of these statements reveals a number of concepts. One, the national essence they describe is not something of a material nature but a sort of spirit. Two, this spirit should be unique to the nation, as implied by the qualifier “that essential quality which originates in the national system, extends throughout the country, permeates its people, and constitutes an independent way of thought.” Three, this spirit enables a nation or people to stand on their own feet. Without this spirit, a nation will perish. Hence, it is something that the survival of the nation or people is tied to. Four, this spirit is condensed and forged from the entire history of the nation or people. This is implicit in the words: “It is based on history, derives from politics and practice, and matches the feelings which people share in common.” These descriptions of the spirit that forms the national essence of a country, as stated by the national essentialists, are unavoidably vague and abstract, since it is very hard to directly and specifically define exactly what constitutes national essence. However, it is relatively easy for us to posit that which national essence was not. First of all, it was certainly not any material object or thing. And secondly, it was not a country’s system; the national essentialists quite explicitly opposed China’s inherent system of monarchical autocracy. Hence, the national essence they referred to was definitely something other than an object or a system. It is evident that what the national essentialists wanted to preserve was only those spiritual things that made China the country it was. This was a step forward from the conservatism of the 1898 Reform period. And this was also an important reason why they were able to link up with the Critical Review School, formed in later years mainly by students who were studying or had studied abroad.

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<sup>53</sup> “The Doctrine of the Preservation of National Essence”; see *Politics and Arts Collection: 1913 Writings on Political Studies*, vol. 5.

<sup>54</sup> See *Bulletin of Politics and the Arts*, no. 24, 1903.

### 10.3 The Critical Review School During the New Culture Movement

Various forms of conservatism existed during the New Culture Movement. For instance, in the initial period there was the Gu Wen (Ancient Language) School as represented by Lin Shu (1852–1924). The so-called Dongfang Wenhua (Eastern Culture) School as represented by Liang Shumin (1893–1988) appeared somewhat later, and in the last stage, there was the Xue Heng (Critical Review) School as represented by Mei Guangdi (1890–1945) and Wu Mi (1894–1978). The Critical Review School was, of course, the most important among them, as far as the momentum, duration, and especially the intensity of their opposition to the new culture were concerned. For that reason, our appraisal here will be directed chiefly at the Critical Review School.

Let us take a look at how the Critical Review School assailed the new culture.

First of all, they accused those who advocated the new culture of renouncing China's traditions. Wu Mi maintained: "[Supporters of] the New Culture Movement oppose China's traditions." He said they "strike down all cultural norms of a universal nature" that pertained to China's traditional culture and thereby "harm humanity's basic virtues and noble sentiments".<sup>55</sup> Mei Guangdi attacked the New Culture School by claiming that "they consider it their mission to overthrow the ancients and all intrinsic institutions, vilify their own country as having no culture and the old literature as being a defunct literature, and make exorbitant claims in order to frighten people and bewilder the uninformed."<sup>56</sup> Hu Xiansu (1894–1968) said those who advocated the new culture, "for the sake of casting off the restraints of etiquette and customs, do not hesitate to fundamentally subvert the moral basis which has held our country's society together and sustained our culture for thousands of years"<sup>57</sup> and that this would inevitably invite political corruption and moral degeneration and destabilize the country's foundations. This was tantamount to declaring that the New Culture Movement was a crime against China's society, governance, and culture.

Secondly, the Critical Review School accused the new culture advocates of failing to conduct any studies of Western culture, hardly understanding it, and propagating a "spurious Westernization." Mei Guangdi stated: "What they laud, fabricate and flaunt before the Chinese are no more than a few theorems that became the vogue in Europe and America or that were fashionable a few decades ago but that are regarded today as fallacies and absurdities and ignored. . . Marx's socialism has long been refuted by economists, yet those people still worship it as their bible. When they talk politics, they praise Russia, and when they discuss literature, they champion the Decadent Movement of recent years to which pertain

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<sup>55</sup> See "The Old and the New in China," *Chinese Overseas Students Weekly*, vol. 16, no. 3.

<sup>56</sup> "A Commentary on Those Who Advocate the New Culture"; see *Critical Review*, no. 1.

<sup>57</sup> "The New Culture Movement China Needs Today for National Salvation"; see Guo Feng (*National Ethos Newspaper*), vol. 1, no. 9.

such schools as Impressionism, Mysticism, Futurism and the like. Their so-called vernacular poetry does no more than borrow some trifling twaddle from *vers libre* and the recent Imagism in the United States, both of which are also offshoots of the Decadent Movement. These pundits lose sight of their ancestral origins, vaunt their own creations, and do no more than dupe China's people. . . . Since these persons have not engaged in any extensive or concise studies of European and American cultures, their knowledge and understanding of these are both shallow and erroneous. The Westernization brought in by these persons is a gross distortion of Westernization".<sup>58</sup> Wu Mi spared no efforts to drive this point home. He said: "The propositions of their New Culture Movement in fact draw upon the fallacies of individual schools. They do not see the overall picture, do not draw upon the essence of Westernization, and can in no way represent the true features of Westernization as a whole." He maintained: "They draw particulars only from the thinking of one recent Western school or the dissertations of a single faction—things that are already seen as dross and toxic waste in the West—and hold these forth as representative of the entirety of Western culture." In an even more vehement assault, he asserted: "Today, the adherents to the New Culture Movement make a special point of bringing in other countries' garbage to distract people in our country. I have heard that American motion picture businesses are sending out films banned by government censors because of their indecency and show all of them in our country, and that merchants are selling substandard, non-marketable goods far away in other countries and thereby secure hefty profits. This is called 'dumping.' Alas, the dissertations, philosophical theories and arts peddled here by the New Culture Movement are virtually all of the same ilk. What 'new' is there to speak of in such things?"<sup>59</sup> Mei and Wu were regarded as the moving spirits behind the Critical Review School as well as the most extreme among the faction's opponents to the new culture. They disparaged all of the theories and principles brought in by proponents of the new culture as being the worst possible things and utterly unconvincing.

Secondly, they accused the new culture of propagating populism. Mei Guangdi asserted: "The leading personages of the so-called 'new culture' in our country have, in recent years, advocated taking populism as the criterion in all matters. Although they adamantly insist their intention is to teach people the venerated ways, their deeds give the lie to their claims. Time and again they borrow from the outdated stratagems of [the peasant rebels] Chen She and Song Jiang, make a few changes to these, and seek therewith to awe the common laymen and win for themselves reputations as persons of unsurpassed talent".<sup>60</sup> They also stated: "Today, so-called scholars in our country attempt in vain to apply populism to diverse aspects of learning that by their nature do not belong to the same level. They

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<sup>58</sup> "A Commentary on Those Who Advocate the New Culture"; see *Critical Review*, no. 1.

<sup>59</sup> For all of the above quotations, see Wu Mi: "On the New Culture Movement," *Critical Review*, no. 4.

<sup>60</sup> "On the Methodology Promoted in Today's Scholarship"; see *Critical Review*, no. 2.

fail to differentiate between the refined and the vulgar, regard the wise and the benighted as equals, and make persistent efforts to denigrate the intelligentsia. That explains their turning out large numbers of simplistic book series and publications, all of which are no better than fungus and weeds”.<sup>61</sup> Comparing all of the New Culture School’s book series and publications with fungus and weeds was a deliberate vilification. Mei also stated: “Academics is the domain of the few, for which reason the intelligentsia are called the intellectual aristocracy in the West. Human beings are born with varying levels of natural talent, and become still more disparate in the process of education and cultivation. Hence, there is no so-called equality in terms of academics. . . The source of all advances in culture lies in the sacrifices made for humanity by a small number of gifted, outstanding and dedicated persons. There would be no so-called advances if such matters were left to the mediocre and indolent masses”.<sup>62</sup> Hence, in Mei’s opinion, “the fundamental value” of all cultural phenomena “is determined by a minority of wise and able persons, and should not depend on the preferences of commoners”.<sup>63</sup> And all cultural creation was the business of only a tiny minority of the most outstanding personages and had nothing to do with the general populace. Wu Mi and Hu Xiansu, too, subscribed to this “intellectual aristocracy” position and strenuously rejected populism. Of course, Mei Guangdi once said: “The true essence of populism lies in raising the standards of the majority so that they may share in the enjoyment of genteel culture and all things in life that are rare and precious, such as philosophy, fine arts and science, without having to lower the standards of the erudite minority to achieve concurrence with the majority”.<sup>64</sup> There was of course nothing wrong with that statement. But by secluding themselves high up in their “ivory towers,” paying no heed to the common people and having no inkling of their needs, how could they possibly go about “raising the standards of the majority so that they may also enjoy genteel culture and all things in life that are rare and precious?” Their professions of “raising the standards of the majority” were no more than empty talk.

Thirdly, the Critical Review School also charged proponents of the new culture with “believing in and pursuing progress.” Wu Mi said: “The material sciences are formed cumulatively. Hence their development proceeds in a gradual manner. Development is more comprehensive the longer it goes on, and becomes more exquisite and ingenious the later it is completed. However, human learning, such as history, governance, essay writing, the arts and so forth are either dependent on the existing state of society or on the natural talent of individuals, and there is no beaten track for their advancement. Successors are not necessarily better than their predecessors, nor do later-comers necessarily outdo their precursors. Hence, as far as learning is concerned, excellence must be judged by its own merits and certainly

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<sup>61</sup> “On What Is Needed in Today’s National Scholarship”; see *Critical Review*, no. 4.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> “Humanism in the West Today”; see *Critical Review*, no. 8.

<sup>64</sup> “On the Needs of Academics Circles in Our Country Today”; see *Critical Review*, no. 4.



not be supplanted by novelty”.<sup>65</sup> In those days, advocates of the new culture were firm believers in evolution. They held that history was evolutionary, and for that reason all human beings sought progress; they held that promoting the new culture and critiquing the old culture were the means whereby society was carried forward and the people’s happiness enhanced. The Critical Review School on the other hand held that evolutionism was completely devoid of rhyme or reason and that it was one of the prime agents for the decadence and decline of society. When Hu Shih first raised the issue of literary revolution, Mei Guangdi argued with him and criticized Hu as “believing that all of mankind’s civilization is evolutionary,” with which Mei profoundly disagreed. He stated: “Science and the practical sciences in society, such as politics and economics, may evolve, but that is not so with the fine arts, literature and morality.” He maintained that people believed in evolutionism because they had been influenced by the so-called “romanticist movement” since Rousseau’s times. “Its drawback is that various schools vie for preeminence without distinguishing between the true and the false or the good and the bad,” and the result is “confusion in values, extinction of standards, and everyone in the country becoming like sightless men and beasts. In the end, the ability to discern is lost and the development of intellect falls back a thousand *li*”.<sup>66</sup> In Mei’s opinion, because of blind belief in evolutionism, mankind’s civilization regresses instead of going forward. He even arbitrarily asserted that the First World War was an outcome of blind faith in evolutionism.

In some specific domains of academics and culture, as, for instance, the Literary Revolution, the Critical Review School mounted a great many attacks against the new culture. However, it is unnecessary to go into those details here, as the four aspects mentioned above basically reflect the standpoint and attitude of the Critical Review School vis-à-vis the new culture.

Since the Critical Review School accused the new culture of abandoning tradition, what was their own attitude toward tradition? They firmly believed in the indelible value of China’s traditions, the most nuclear among which was the *ru xue* (Confucian teachings) as represented by Confucius. Many years earlier, Mei Guangdi had asserted: “Confucius indeed comes first in greatness, whether in ancient or modern times and in China or elsewhere”.<sup>67</sup> And the Confucian learning was the best material for shaping “a gentlemanly (genteel) personality.” He had never wavered in this belief. Wu Mi had stated: “The Confucian teachings are the pivot of Chinese culture”<sup>68</sup> and that the fundamental spirit of Confucius and Confucianism found concentrated expression in the Confucian ethical code. Liu Yizheng (1880–1956), one of the most prolific writers of the Critical Review

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<sup>65</sup> “On the New Culture Movement”; see *Critical Review*, no. 4.

<sup>66</sup> For the above quotations, see “Hu Shih and Mei Guangdi: The Epochal Significance of the Literary Revolution as Seen from Their Controversy,” *Collected Writings of Geng Xuezhì*, p. 431; Shanghai Dictionary Publishing House.

<sup>67</sup> See *Collected Writings of Geng Xuezhì*, p. 432.

<sup>68</sup> “On the New Culture Movement”; see *Critical Review*, no. 4.

School, had written in his *The Essentials of China's History*: "The ethical code is the core of China's entire history over thousands of years".<sup>69</sup> Wu Mi stated: "As we live in today's world, we are highly desirous of explicating the spirit and substance of the Confucian ethics for the sake of preserving them." And in his view, "the spirit and substance of the Confucian ethics will remain forever unchanged." Miao Fenglin (1899–1959), a latecomer to the Critical Review School and one of the main contributors to the *Critical Review* magazine, put it even more succinctly: "The Confucian ethics are the foundation of Chinese culture" and "the greatest achievement of China's culture lies in the profundity and logic of the Confucian ethical code".<sup>70</sup> Since the Confucian ethical code consists of what are generally referred to as the Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues, it was these old ethical teachings that took the brunt of the criticisms leveled by the proponents of China's new culture. One can well say this was the most contentious issue between the two schools. Li Mi more than once insisted that he wished to preserve and carry forward only the spirit and essence of the code of ethics and not adhere rigidly to minor details. Yet neither he nor any other adherents to the Critical Review School ever conducted any open-minded and sober studies or analyses of what, after all, constituted the spirit and essence of the Confucian ethical code. Thus, their blind and indiscriminate advocacies of the Confucian ethical code were bound to teach people to accept the fetters of the old ethics' Cardinal Principles and Constant Virtues instead of striving for spiritual emancipation.

The Critical Review School assailed the Western culture brought in by the New Culture School as consisting wholly of dregs and even noxious weeds. They themselves were not averse to bringing in Western culture, but they emphasized that special attention should be given to selectivity. So what did they select? They chose what they considered to be one of the least harmful aspects of Western culture, i.e., the so-called New Humanism of their "esteemed teacher" Irving Babbitt (1865–1933). Their extreme trust and belief in New Humanism was by and large attributable to the following reasons: (1) Babbitt and others among the New Humanists believed that human nature consists of two aspects—self-discipline and control and impulses seeking liberation from all restraints. They maintained that a person who honestly desires to become an upstanding person cannot follow his natural instincts and expand freely and indiscriminately; he must apply restraints to these natural instincts and see to it that they develop in a constrained and balanced fashion.<sup>71</sup> This formulation was quite similar to that of China's Li Xue proponents, i.e., "use *li* (reason, self-restraint) to govern *yu* (desires, impulses)," "conserve *tian li* (cosmic or Heavenly reason), and obliterate *ren yu* (human desires, impulses)." (2) Babbitt and other proponents of the new humanism shunned all of the mainstream thought on science, democracy, and human rights

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<sup>69</sup> *The Principal Meanings of Our Nation's History: Probing History Takes First Place*, p. 9.

<sup>70</sup> "A Few Words about the Ethical Code"; see *National Ethos Journal*, vol. 1, no. 3.

<sup>71</sup> See translated by Hu Xiansu: "Babbitt Discusses Chinese and Western Humanist Education," carried in *Critical Review*, no. 3.

advocated in the West in modern times and denigrated these as “mechanism” and “romanticism.” They maintained it was such trends of thought that led to intemperate desires, to moral decadence, and even to the launching of wars and mutual slaughter. This last was consistent with the Critical Review School’s perception concerning the First World War. (3) Most importantly, the fact that Babbitt and most of the new humanists held China’s Confucius and Confucian thought in high regard came in tacit agreement with the Critical Review School’s sentimental attachment to tradition. Babbitt et al consistently claimed that their New Humanism had been formed by synthesizing the spirit of ancient Chinese and Western cultures. They held that Western civilization, having suffered from the aforementioned “mechanism” and “romanticism” in modern times, had begun to decline and was in urgent need of finding remedies in the spiritual civilizations of ancient Asia.<sup>72</sup> Babbitt even maintained that the theories of Confucius were in certain ways superior to those of Western humanism, and he hoped to combine the teachings of Confucius and Aristotle to form a sort of humane and genteel internationalism.<sup>73</sup> As mentioned earlier, Mei Guangdi maintained that the greatest value of Confucius and Confucian thought lay precisely in their ability to shape a “gentlemanly (genteel) personality.” It was quite evident that teacher and students were in implicit agreement. Wu Mi, when explaining his teacher’s theories, declared: “Master Babbitt neither touches upon religions, nor establishes precepts, nor borrows from myths and legends, nor resorts to profound theories, and his instructions are unlike those of Buddhism. . . In fact, he assembles the teachings of Shakyamuni, Jesus, Confucius and Aristotle and combines the great achievements of all four. One might also say he employed the mind/heart of Shakyamuni and Jesus to perform the deeds of Confucius and Aristotle”.<sup>74</sup> The various exponents of the Critical Review School pontificated about creating a “new culture” of universal and everlasting value—a culture that would transcend all material and temporal constraints and all other cultures worldwide. And indeed, a few Critical Review scholars such as Wang Guowei (1877–1972), Chen Yinke (1890–1969), Tan Yongtong (1893–1964), and Liu Yizheng—men imbued with a professional spirit and who conducted specific and in-depth studies of ancient Chinese and Western scholastics—did produce writings of merit within their own vocational fields, but they were the exceptions. Regrettably, neither Mei Guangdi nor Wu Mi nor any other of the “moving spirits” in the Critical Review School turned out any achievements worth mentioning.

In past years when Leftist dogmatism ran rife, reviewers of the Critical Review School’s works generally dismissed these works as reactionary writings. Such a conclusion, however, would seem to be somewhat arbitrary and simplistic. There has in recent years been a substantial number of studies on the works of the Critical Review School, two of the most important being Shen Songqiao’s *The Critical*

<sup>72</sup> “Babbitt on the Cultures of Europe and Asia”; see *Critical Review*, no. 38.

<sup>73</sup> “Babbitt Discusses Chinese and Western Humanist Education”; see *Critical Review*, no. 3.

<sup>74</sup> “Babbitt on Popular Governance and Leaders”; see *Critical Review*, no. 32.

*Review Group and the Movement against New Culture During the May Fourth Period*” printed by the Taiwan University Publishing Committee in 1984 and Zheng Shiqu’s *Between Europeanization and National Essence: A Study of the Cultural Thought of the Critical Review School*, printed by the Beijing Normal University Press in 2001. The former basically affirms the Critical Review School’s thoughts and advocacies and offers but slight criticism. In the latter, affirmation and criticism are mixed more or less 55. Both came to their conclusions after conducting systematic and in-depth studies of the Critical Review School’s relevant documentation. The fact that researchers may arrive at differing and even opposite viewpoints in studies on similar matters is a common and even reasonable occurrence in both past and present academics. It may be the result of differences in temporal environments, tutorial traditions, or previous academic accumulations and their respective foci.

I myself take a basically negative stand toward the Critical Review School’s vehement attacks against the New Culture Movement since, in my opinion, their propositions do not hold water. They alleged, for instance, that the proponents of the new culture abandoned all of China’s traditions, yet they failed to produce any convincing arguments for such a claim. That, too, was by and large the case with all subsequent negators of the New Culture Movement, who at most came up with some impassioned statements, such as “all thread-bound books are being tossed into latrines” and other intemperate and sophomoric utterances which were manifestly too shallow and superficial to serve as grounds for passing judgment on the New Culture Movement. The principal leaders and moving spirits of the New Culture Movement, such as Chen Duxiu, Hu Shih, Li Dazhao, Lu Xun, and the movement’s patron saint Cai Yuanpei, at no time thought of or advocated abandoning all of China’s traditions. They did take a critical attitude toward traditions—an attitude that ought to be taken by all rational thinkers and scholars. However, the question of which among the traditions should be discarded and which should be carried forward was one that calls for long-term and unhurried discussion. Statements like that of Chen Duxiu, who declared that “no latitude for discussion must be granted to opponents,” were patently unacceptable, which was why Hu Shih criticized his old friend and disapproved of his arbitrary attitude.

Another example: the Critical Review adherents criticized the new culture proponents as bringing in new theories from the West, all allegedly “dregs” and “noxious weeds,” and thereupon claimed the latter were carrying out “pseudo-Westernization.” This claim was even less convincing. Regardless of whether the new Western theories introduced by the new culture’s proponents had an enlightening effect on the Chinese, one may well ask what it was in the theories of the new Western Humanism School so favored by the Critical Review School that made them “genuine Westernization?” And why were the experimentalism, realism, individuality, science, democracy, and so forth introduced by the new culture proponents decried as “pseudo-Westernization?” No person with the least objectivity would be persuaded by such an argument.

Again, the Critical Review School assailed the new culture proponents as advocating populism. Even if we abstain from discussing whether the gradual

elimination of the cultural gap between aristocrats and commoners is conducive to social advancement, what reason is there for us to believe there is any good in preserving and even deepening that gap? Mei Guangdi once stated: “The true essence of populism lies in raising the standards of the majority so that they may share in the enjoyment of genteel culture and all things in life that are rare and precious, such as philosophy, fine arts and science, without having to lower the standards of the erudite minority to achieve concourse with the majority.”<sup>75</sup> As I said earlier, there is of course nothing wrong with that statement. However, the fact is that the New Culture Movement did indeed popularize new education and new literature among the broad masses of commoners, which is why the newly rising generation of young scholars and all young people who had received some of the new education said gratefully that the ease with which they expressed themselves verbally and in writing had been bestowed upon them by the New Literature Revolution and the new culture. Conversely, how many people had Mei Guangdi or his colleagues elevated to their own level of “sharing in the enjoyment of genteel culture?” Practice is the sole test of the truth, and high-sounding talk cannot take the place of facts.

The criticisms leveled by the Critical Review School at evolutionism and the progress theorem were not entirely without reason. Among those persons who advocated new culture, there were indeed some who at certain times and on certain issues took an overly simplistic or absolutist view of evolution and progress and failed to see China’s complexities and intricacies. These, however, did not constitute reasons for advocating a return to the ancients or for excessively extolling ancient culture and negating the cultural advances obtained in modern times.

The Critical Review School’s greatest weakness lay in their deeds failing to match their words. With the exception of Wang Guowei, Chen Yinke, Tan Yongtong, and Liu Yizheng whom I mentioned earlier as being truly imbued with the spirit of professionalism, the most violent assailants of New Cultural Movement, as represented by Mei and Wu, more often than not professed lofty principles but had very limited visions, spoke and wrote valiantly but displayed little breadth of mind, and set themselves ambitious objectives yet achieved negligible results.

Mei Guangdi once said: “When reforming an intrinsic culture, one must first carry out thorough studies, conduct the most lucid appraisals, go through the most precise and appropriate procedures, cooperate with a great many erudite scholars and masters who thoroughly understand both China and the West, inform and guide our country’s people, and foster a flourishing atmosphere, and then, after forty or fifty years, one will certainly see results”.<sup>76</sup> One cannot fault this statement either. However, in no specific field of China or Western academics did Mei himself ever conduct any “thorough studies” worth mentioning. His highly tendentious attacks against experimentalism, Marxism, literary realism, and Rousseau can hardly be

<sup>75</sup> “On the Needs of China’s Academic Circles Today”; see *Critical Review*, no. 4.

<sup>76</sup> “A Critique of the New Culture Promoters”; see *Critical Review*, no. 1.

described as “lucid appraisals.” And one can hardly believe that these criticisms and attacks of his were conclusions drawn by means of “the most precise and appropriate procedures.” Wu Mi, too, voiced grand aspirations when he stated: “If one wishes to create a new culture for China, one must of course draw from the essence of Chinese and Western cultures and meld and thoroughly master both. Our country’s ancient and current academics, moral teachings, literature and arts, and institutions should all be studied, preserved, developed, brought into play and carried forward. The West’s ancient and current teachings, moral teachings, literature and arts, and institutions, too, should be studied, assimilated, translated, narrated, comprehended and benefited from. Since the materials are extensive and voluminous and our present manpower is limited, we should differentiate between the fundamental and the incidental, the important and the trivial, the large and the small and the refined and the crude, choose the best among them, and work on these first”.<sup>77</sup> This, one might say, outlined quite a good program for building up China’s new culture. It is a pity that, with the exception of a few scholars such as the aforementioned Wang, Chen, Tang, and Liu, most Critical Review exponents, including Wu Mi, Mei Guangdi, and others, never set their hands to any actual work. Allowances may be made for Wu Mi, as he spent most of the productive years of his life editing publications and organizing educational and teaching endeavors. However, Mei Guangdi was—in Wu Mi’s words—“prone to high-flown speechifying but has no work capability”.<sup>78</sup> Had he applied his energies to some useful, profound, and meticulous research in one or two specific fields of Chinese and Western culture—as did Wang, Chen, Tang, and Liu—he, with his grounding in Chinese and Western academics, should have had some attainments to his credit. Regrettably, he and his colleagues did no such thing but found pleasure solely in grandiose demagoguery and attacks on others. Later generations find this regrettable, not only for them but also for China’s culture.

Thought, academics, and culture rely on criticism and debate for progress. Marx once stated that history emerges amid the sorting out of contradictory narratives, that truth becomes clearer as it is debated. However, criticism and debate should follow certain norms. They should be dispassionate, reasonable, and well founded and not degenerate into expressions of personal feelings, attacks, vituperation, unbridled exaggerations, or vehicles for groundless accusations. Some among the Critical Review School frequently violated these taboos. A striking example was Mei Guangdi. Articles he published in *Critical Review*, such as “A Critique of the New Culture Promoters” (issue no. 1), “A Critique of the Methods for Making People Promote Academics” (issue no. 2), and “On the Needs of China’s Academic Circles Today,” are often cited by researchers as representative works of the Critical Review School. These articles, however, contained outright infractions of the code of scholarly conduct and were suffused with abusive and defamatory criticism, as, for instance, “Scholars in China today... behave like politicians and

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<sup>77</sup> “On the New Culture Movement”; see *Critical Review*, no. 4.

<sup>78</sup> See *Self-Compiled Chronology of Wu Mi*, p. 235; Sanlian Bookstore, 1955.

prostitutes”<sup>79</sup> and “Rather than say these people opt for the standards and intuitive behavior of learning, better is it to say they go for the morals of merchants and the virtues of whores.”<sup>80</sup> And he reviled others as “greenhorns and presumptuous, mediocre show-offs”<sup>81</sup> and so forth. Wu Mi and others, too, used abusive language. This was indeed a far cry from the “calm discourse and abstention from invective”<sup>82</sup> they advertized. Moreover, Mei Guangdi and his colleagues were given to malicious and ill-intentioned criticism. He stated, for instance: “In the years of autocracy, rulers and high-ranking court officials used their powers of conferring merit and promotions to order people around, and underlings suited their actions to the likes and preferences of the rulers and officials. Since republican days, the powers of granting merit and promotions have been in the hands of the masses, and the more meager the intelligence and sagacity of the masses, the greater are their powers. Today’s secondary and elementary school students are exactly like the rulers and high-ranking officials of former days. Were that not so, why would those who seek fame and fortune go for poetry and prose in the vernacular and all those fashionable ‘isms’?”<sup>83</sup> Claiming that secondary and elementary school students in republican days were exactly like the rulers and high officials of former times in terms of their powers to confer merit and rank, and that Hu Shih and others promoted vernacular literature in order to solicit praise and promotions from these students, constituted the acme of defamatory slander. Both abusive language and defamatory slander were typical and characteristic of the “mass criticism campaign.” Going through Mei Guangdi’s article “A Critique of New Culture Promoters” is like reading a denunciatory manifesto from olden times or a “big character poster” of the Cultural Revolution era. Mei accused the promoters of the new culture of four major crimes: “One, those people are not thinkers, they are masters of sophism. . . Two, those people are not creators, they are imitators. . . Three, those people are not men of learning, they are seekers of rank and fame. . . Four, those persons are not educators, they are politicians.” The entire article contained nothing but charges unsupported by any evidence, and the entire paper was filled with accusations but held not a shred of concrete analysis. It attacked people for a single fault without considering their other aspects and launched into tirades upon the least excuse. Defamatory slandering is one of the worst traditions of China’s Confucianists (they do have many good traditions, but there is no denying their bad ones). Initiated by Mencius and carried on in later times by persons who saw themselves as true disciples of Confucius and Mencius, its pernicious residues surged up everywhere like wildfire during the “Cultural Revolution.” If the Chinese truly intend to build up a modern civilization, they must learn

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<sup>79</sup> See “A Critique of the Methods for Making People Promote Academics,” *Critical Review*, no. 2.

<sup>80</sup> See “A Critique of the New Culture Promoters”; see *Critical Review*, no. 1.

<sup>81</sup> “On the Needs of China’s Academic Circles Today”; see *Critical Review*, no. 4.

<sup>82</sup> “Preface”; see *Critical Review*, no. 1.

<sup>83</sup> “A Critique of the New Culture Promoters”; see *Critical Review*, no. 1.

to respect their opponents, play by the rules of the game, and discuss issues with them in a calm and dispassionate manner.

The cultures of all nations contain their own ineffaceable spiritual elements, and it is not without reason that the Critical Review School laid stress on preserving the basic spirit of Chinese culture. However, this basic spirit should have been subjected to specific analysis and not promoted and touted in such a sweeping and abstract manner as to generate an atmosphere of “going back to the ancients” and suppressing the development of the new culture. The Critical Review School had its negative effects, but it is also true that culture has always developed and advanced in the course of interactions between progressivism and conservatism. Rather than conduct an overall assessment of the Critical Review School, our focus here is on identifying the role and characteristics of the Critical Review School in the genealogy of conservatism during the modern Chinese culture’s process of transition.

The foremost characteristic of the Critical Review School was its use of Western learning as weapon to contend with the New Culture Movement. In this, it differed radically from the conservatives of previous eras. While the conservatives in China’s thought and culture from the mid-1800s to the early twentieth century had always and to varying extents adopted an attitude of exclusion or cautious selection as regards Western culture, the Critical Review School was the only one that, conversely, based its work of conserving China’s traditions on the teachings of a Western school of thought. This was an indication that excluding Western culture was no longer possible, that the overall trend toward globalization could not be held back any longer, and that one had to conform to this trend if one did not wish to be entirely eliminated. Nor could China’s conservatives steer clear of this global tide. They eventually found common spiritual ground and a common language in the New Humanism of the West. They said: Just look, these renowned Western thinkers and scholars also stand for preserving traditions. You people advocate learning from the West, do you not? Then the right thing for you to do is preserve traditions, otherwise you will only be going for “pseudo-Westernization”! The intention of the conservatives was to use a Western tool to impede the advance of the new culture. That Western tool, however, had been designed to deal with excessive expansions of certain modernist things in the Western world, but those modernist things had yet to take shape in China and were even eagerly welcomed by a great majority of the Chinese. And so the Critical Review School’s wishes basically fell through.

At this point, let us briefly review the evolutionary role of modern China’s cultural conservatives and their significance in the history of culture.

1. The conservatives were extremely xenophobic at first and rejected everything that had to do with Western culture. In the 20 or so years after the Opium Wars, a Westernization Movement for “learning from the strong points of the foreigners” gradually arose, but such learning was limited to material things and techniques. These foreign things were gradually being acknowledged by the somewhat more open-minded among China’s scholar-officials. However, most people stuck to their belief that China’s political and educational institutions and



its ethics and morals were far superior to those of the West, and any loss of these, however slight, was inadmissible. People called this *Zhong Ti Xi Yong* (i.e., “Chinese learning for fundamental principles and Western learning for practical applications”). There were a great number of steadfast conservatives in those days, and the “Chinese learning” they sought to preserve was China’s inherent system of sovereign autocracy and the Confucian Cardinal Principles and Constant Virtues. But as pressures built up internally and externally in the 1890s and the early years of the twentieth century, reformist and revolutionary factions arose in quick succession. These reformers and revolutionaries were profoundly aware that saving the nation depended on strengthening the country; and if China was to become strong, the corrupt sovereign autocratic system had to be abolished and a modern constitutional democracy set up. (The reformists hoped to avoid a violent revolution and stood for setting up a constitutional monarchy by carrying out peaceful reforms, whereas the revolutionaries sought to overthrow the Qing Dynasty’s sovereign autocracy and institute a democratic republic by means of a violent revolution.) From then on up to the early years of the Nationalist Republic, most conservatives—by then substantially fewer in number—realized that the system of sovereign autocracy could no longer be preserved, and so they took a step backward and defended things that pertained solely to the spiritual culture, such as China’s inherent ethics and morals, the various teachings and precepts passed down from sage to sage, and so forth. The National Essentialists toward the close of the Qing Dynasty, the “reverence-for-Confucius” proponents in the first years of the Nationalist Republic, and some of the conservatives in the early days after the rise of the New Culture Movement all fell in this category. Broadly speaking, adherents to the Critical Review School also belonged in this group. However, they were unique in that, no longer able to preserve the general run of old morals and archaic thoughts and precepts, they were putting more effort into promoting the basic and commonly shared spiritual values passed down since ancient times in the cultures of both China and the West. It was evident that the extent of the Western culture that China’s conservatives were able to keep out, and the Chinese traditions they could preserve, had been progressively shrinking, and as they ran out of options, they eventually sought sanctuary in a unique conservative school of thought newly emergent in the West.

2. One thing here was quite interesting, i.e., one of the theoretical grounds of the new culture’s promoters was the recognition that the cultures of China and the West were essentially capable of communicating with each other. They held that certain internal and external environmental factors had enabled Western culture to advance a bit faster and take the lead and that the Chinese had to catch up. The Critical Review School, on the other hand, emphasized that the West, by blindly rushing forward as it did, would land itself in serious trouble, that people over there were waking up to this fact and wished to revert to the cultural spirit of olden times. They maintained that this ancient cultural spirit was common to both China and the West, and if China was to learn from the West, it should study the New Humanism of the West and aspects of Western culture that could

interconnect with the cultural spirit of ancient China. Thus, the controversy between the two schools turned out to be quite different from the erstwhile controversy between progressivism and conservatism in Chinese and Western culture; the controversy now was not about learning or not learning from Western culture, but from which Western school of learning guidance should be sought. That is to say, the need to open up communication between the Chinese and Western cultures was no longer in doubt. And China's culture would inevitably take to the road of globalization.

3. It is very hard to define what, in the final analysis, the cultural spirit consists of; and it is even harder to explain what, in the final analysis, the inter-communicable cultural spirit of China and the West consists of. Strained attempts at elucidation will inevitably be abstract and ambiguous—so abstract and ambiguous as to appear pallid and weak and hardly convincing. Still, it should not be denied that every national culture possesses its own particular spirit. That spirit does not exist merely in literature or the ancient codes and records; those are no more than traces and vestiges left by that spirit. The true spirit of a national culture lives in the life and practice of thousands upon thousands of ordinary people. When Hu Shih got into a controversy with the eventual proponents of “*benwei wenhua*” (“standard culture”), he pointed out that the true standard of culture “are those myriads and myriads of people.” His formulation was indeed far more pertinent than, and far superior to, those of the ten professors who talked about “standard culture” and of the Critical Review School which spoke of “the spirit of culture.” Such being the case, we cannot ignore the thousands upon thousands of ordinary people when talking about issues of culture and especially about cultural traditions. We find today that some truly fine things from Confucian culture are being preserved—and very well preserved—in Confucian cultural circles outside the Chinese mainland. Does that not provide food for deep thought? A peaceful and stable life is the people's most fundamental need, and fine traditions are best preserved only when people lead peaceful and stable lives. This clearly tells us that the most noteworthy of the Critical Review School's opinions was their opposition to violent change. On this matter there was no basic divergence between them and Hu Shih—the promoter of the new culture and the target of their sharpest criticisms. Hu Shih had stated in his doctoral thesis that a nation which possessed a glorious history and had created a brilliant culture of its own would certainly feel ill at ease with a new culture. And if that new culture were seen as being imported from abroad and were forced upon the nation due to extrinsic needs for national survival, such lack of ease would be quite natural and reasonable. Indeed, humanity as a whole would sustain a major loss if the introduction of a new culture took the form of a sudden substitution instead of an organized assimilation and thereby brought on the extinction of the older culture. Thus, the true issue could be described as what constituted the most efficient means of assimilating modern culture so that it might act in concert and harmonize and develop together with our inherent culture. The difference here was that Hu Shih pursued a modern new culture and not the old classical cultures of China and the West sedulously wooed by the Critical Review School.

Proceeding from the above, we may further perceive that on matters of culture, the greatest attention should be paid to not taking things to extremes. Excessively radical reforms or extreme conservatism are both detached from the great majority of the people and hardly, if ever, produce good results.

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# Chapter 11

## Political Change and Cultural Transition

Chinese society entered a period of modern transition after the Qing Dynasty ended. Starting with the Reform Movement of 1898, changing the political system became the most urgent preoccupation, and political revolution and reform became the most central topics of discussion during the major changes taking place in society. As we study the transformation of culture, we will everywhere come up against the question of the relation between cultural transformation and political change. It is therefore necessary to explain that relationship in theoretical terms.

### 11.1 The Definitions of Politics and Culture

Understanding the relation between politics and culture requires that we first of all produce clear definitions of the two. Regrettably, no universally acknowledged and authoritative definitions exist to this day for either politics or culture. To put forward our views about the relation between cultural transformation and political change, we will have to synthesize the views of others and advance our own definitions of politics and culture.

The Political Science volume of the Encyclopedia of China describes politics in this way: Politics is “the specific behavior of various power entities in the domain of the superstructure for upholding their own interests and the specific relationships thereby entered into. This is an important social phenomenon that arises when human history develops to a certain stage. Politics is manifested mainly in class society as struggles between the classes; and after the exploiting classes eventually die out as classes, it will be manifested mainly as the regulation of relationships within the people and as the management of public affairs. Politics exerts a major influence on and plays a major role in all aspects of social life.” It then points out:

“This social phenomenon is highly complex. Experts on political science and politicians in all eras have from different angles and different foci advanced various expositions about politics, but to this day have not come up with a generally acknowledged or exact definition”.<sup>1</sup> The book also provides some general information about definitions of politics by Western scholars and cites the following examples: “The contention that politics are the activities of states, the governance of states, and actions to seize and retain power”; “the contention that politics are power struggles and the manifestation of power in interpersonal relations”; “the contention that politics are activities for expressing personal will and interests in the course of handling public affairs”; “the contention that politics is the process of formulating and implementing policies”; and “the contention that politics constitutes a sort of social benefits relationship and an authoritative allocation of social values”.<sup>2</sup> The book also quotes a number of expositions by the founders of Marxism, such as “all class struggles are political struggles,” “politics is a concentrated expression of economics,” “politics is the struggle among various classes,” and “politics consists of participation in state affairs, setting the direction for the country, and defining the form, tasks and contents of national activities”.<sup>3</sup>

From the above definitions, one can see that—as the editors of the encyclopedia have put it—none of the definitions of politics made by political science experts or politicians in past years from various angles and different foci have so far gained universal acknowledgement as the sole authoritative definition. That is one aspect. The other is that we are nonetheless able to perceive that these different definitions contain certain commonalities. First, all involve the principals of various social acts—i.e., the various social classes, strata, groups, collectives, and individuals—and their powers and benefits. As the authors of *Political Science* have pointed out, “power is the most important component of politics” (Roskin et al. 2001). Secondly, all of the definitions are related to state affairs, participation in which constitutes the means whereby people strive for and protect the powers and benefits of their own class, stratum, group, collective, and their own person. And thirdly, the state formulates and implements policies via given institutions in order to regulate the allocation of powers and benefits. From these commonalities, we may try to work out a definition that by and large covers all of the above factors: Politics are the activities conducted by diverse classes, strata, groups, collectives, and individuals in society through participation in state affairs for the sake of striving for and protecting their powers and benefits and the processes whereby the state formulates and implements policies for the sake of regulating the allocation of powers and benefits.

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<sup>1</sup>*Encyclopedia of China: Political Science Volume*, p. 481; China Encyclopedia Publishing House, 1992.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 482.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 482.

The definitions of culture have always been more numerous, complex, and inconclusive. In the very beginning of this book, I have stated that we are constrained to adopt a narrow definition of culture. In its broad definition, culture is the totality of the material and spiritual wealth created by mankind. In its narrow definition, culture refers exclusively to the spiritual wealth mankind creates. Defined in a slightly broader sense, culture consists of the spiritual products (e.g., technology, science, as well as politics, laws, military affairs, the arts, and so forth) devised by mankind in the process of refashioning nature in order to secure its means of subsistence, continuously ameliorate its conditions of existence, and constantly pursue progress as well as the beliefs, morals, customs, and habits formed during this process.

According to the above definition of culture, politics falls within the scope of culture. Thus, when the relation between political change and cultural transformation is discussed, the scope of culture is bound to become narrower. In this case, culture stands in opposition to economics, politics, and military affairs and only includes technology, science, the arts, beliefs, morals, and customs and habits. And because it stands in opposition to politics and so forth, it is clearly positioned on the same level as politics. In principle, its relation with politics is one of interaction, not one of determining and being determined or one of the principal and the subordinate. However, since politics is the concentrated expression of economics and since it directly involves the allocation of powers and benefits, it exercises a tremendous influence and role on social life and thereby plays a powerful asymmetrical role and influence on other aspects of spiritual culture.

It should also be noted here that the political changes we refer to, including violent revolution and peaceful reform, mean replacing the system of monarchical autocracy with a certain form of modern democracy (a constitutional monarchy or a democratic republic). And the cultural transformation we refer to means a transition from an ancient culture that is virtually closed and insulated, that is tied to the monarchical autocracy of great national unity and centralized power, that establishes Confucius and Confucianism as the object of “sole veneration,” and that gravely suppresses individuality over to a modern culture that is open, that is linked to a certain form of modern democracy, and that negates the authority of “sole veneration” and encourages the development of individuality. These two changes (i.e., political change and cultural transformation) are oriented in the same direction, advance in concert, and are linked by an interactive relationship.

## **11.2 Political Awakening Fuels the Trend Toward Cultural Renovation**

The concept of political change was first broached among the Chinese around the year 1895. At that time, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and others of the reformist faction were focusing their attention on reforming the political system and gave no

independent thought to cultural change. Whatever they said about culture proceeded merely from the needs of political change. It was only in the early twentieth century, after the revolutionary and constitutional movements had gone into full swing, that people became increasingly aware that the setting up of a new political system required a change in people's ideological concepts, a cultural transformation that would alter prevailing customs and habits. It was quite evident that people were still considering issues in terms of political change at that time. Yet even after the 1911 Revolution had overthrown the Qing Dynasty and the Nationalist Republic was established, "people underwent greater sufferings under the democratic form of government" because the old forces were so strong and the democratic forces so weak. Only then did people begin to realize that people's ideological concepts had to be changed and a new culture had to be created, as only that would provide the social and ideological foundations necessary for a democratic system. Chen Duxiu called this "our ultimate awakening."

It is evident that people in modern China were politically awakened before they were culturally awakened. However, political awakening can to a certain extent spur cultural changes; and conversely, cultural awakening may furnish the corresponding ideological basis for political awakening in terms of setting up institutions.

### ***11.2.1 The Political Awakening of the Chinese in Modern Times***

The political awakening of the Chinese in modern times began under the dual pressures of national crises and domestic political crises. When China was forced to cede territories, pay indemnities, and open up entry ports after the Opium Wars, it was repeatedly subjected to invasions, sackings, and oppression by imperialist powers. Its territories and sovereign powers were progressively whittled away, and its people were afflicted with a sense of impending national subjugation. Its people mounted various forms of resistance and opposition: organized and spontaneous wars against aggression, movements against Western Christian incursions, and so forth. The so-called Westernization Movement for "learning from the strengths of the barbarians," too, was one of a succession of acts of opposition. However, these acts could only be seen as an instinctive reaction of national self-defense and not as political awakening. Why did these fail to qualify as a political awakening? For one thing, people still did not know the reasons for, or the hows and whys of, the strengths of the Western powers. And secondly, they had not yet awakened to the fundamental reasons for China's own weaknesses and failings. Prior to the 1890s, only a very few Chinese had acquired any insight into the political and systemic sources for the might of the Western countries, and they suggested that the essence of China's politics was quite the opposite of that of the Westerners, which was why China ended up as the vanquished when it encountered

stronger nations.<sup>4</sup> It was only after the 1890s that a few forward-looking persons first realized that China had to reform its political system if it was to avoid being beaten and subjugated. Zheng Guanying (1842–1921), Wang Tao (1866–1937), Ma Jianzhong (1845–1900), Chen Zhi (1855–1900), and even important Qing court officials Zhang Shusheng (1824–1884) and Cui Guoyin (1831–?) proposed taking example from the West and setting up a parliamentary system.<sup>5</sup> After undergoing the baptism of 1898 Reform Movement, relatively open-minded and forward-looking intellectuals and some gentry and officials were swept into the whirlpools of reform and revolution or at least expressed sympathy and support for reform and revolution. The revolutionary movement gradually rose to a high tide after 1903, as did the constitutional movement after 1904. Both movements, whether revolutionary or constitutional, demanded the replacement of the system of monarchical autocracy with some form of democratic government and all wished to set up a modern nationalist state. That was the essential content of the political awakening of the Chinese in modern times. Where the revolutionaries were concerned, these contents could be represented by Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles, which in spirit coincided with Abraham Lincoln's "of the people, for the people, and by the people." As regards the constitutionalists, the contents could be represented by Liang Qichao's thinking. His thinking on sovereignty of the people and his advocacies about parliament and responsible government quite clearly expressed the political demand for a modern constitutional monarchy. The ideological substance of both the above was to have the people assume responsibility for national sovereignty. Regrettably, very few Chinese were capable of genuinely understanding and embracing Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles. The fate of Liang Qichao's thinking was little better. Hence, although the revolutionary party and the constitutional schools briefly joined forces to achieve the goal of overthrowing the Qing Dynasty and setting up the Nationalist government, they were incapable of bringing about a democratic system in China.

We can see, however, that the political awakening did to a certain extent give impetus to cultural change. Driven by the need for talented people during the 1898 Reform period, the reformists vigorously advocated refashioning the imperial civil examination system and setting up new-type schools and published and distributed newspapers and magazines which publicized new thinking and new concepts. Commendably, some of them proposed using the vernacular to enlighten the masses and draw the latter into joining political reforms and took the movement against foot-binding as a starting point for women's emancipation. Given these circumstances, it has always been acknowledged that the 1898 Reform, too, was an

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<sup>4</sup> Guo Songtao (1818–1891) acquired some understanding of the evolution and maturity of Britain's political system and of the soundness of its parliamentary politics, political party system, and legal system in second and third years of the Guangxu reign, i.e., in the years 1877–1878. See *Diary of Guo Songtao*, entries on the 18th day of the 11th month of the second year of the Guangxu reign and on the 18th and 20th days of the 11th month and the 18th day of the 12th month of the third year of the Guangxu reign.

<sup>5</sup> Ref. Sect. 2.5, Chap. 2 of this book.



important movement for ideological enlightenment and that it generated, in certain aspects, rudiments of a modern culture. The traditional concept of “loyalty to the ruler and reverence for Confucius” was severely shaken when the revolutionary and constitutional movements subsequently reached a high tide (see Chap. 5 of this book). Since both the revolutionary party and the constitutional factions needed to vigorously enhance their publicity and educational campaigns, more and more persons put even greater efforts into turning out newspapers and publications, promoting studies abroad and funding such studies by promising young students. According to a search of the “Annex of Names of Newspapers and Magazines” attached to *Annals of the News Media of (Modern) China* compiled by Fang Hanqi et al., it is estimated that about 190 vernacular newspapers and publications had been set up in the last years of the Qing Dynasty to agitate for revolution and reform.<sup>6</sup> New-type education developed swiftly after the abolishing of the imperial civil examinations system; the author of this book estimates that as many as two or three million persons may have been educated in the new-style schools by the end of the Qing Dynasty.<sup>7</sup> The vast increase in newspapers and publications and the growth of the new-style education widened the dissemination of new knowledge, new thoughts, and new concepts. More people began to gain some understanding of such new concepts as freedom, equality, fraternity, democracy, republicanism, as well as self-governance, constitutionalism, and constitutional government. Ideas about women’s emancipation and equality between the sexes no longer seemed so strange. There also was a gradual upsurge in the movement to change existing customs and habits. Even such core concepts of modern culture—globalization and individuality—had begun to emerge. All of this was closely bound to the revolutionary and reformist movements that were robustly developing at the time. However, precisely for that reason, the cultural awakening was bound to be fairly narrow and shallow—narrow mainly because the aspects it involved were still quite limited and shallow mainly because the various new thoughts and new concepts it brought up still remained at very tentative levels and barely broached certain issues.

Liang Qichao in his well-known work *An Outline of Scholarship in the Qing Era* voiced some fairly pertinent criticisms regarding the shallowness and simplicity of the new thinking and concepts of this era. He pointed out that the period after the Opium Wars up to the 1898 Reform was one of “intellectual famine,” and that “fostered as they were amidst this environment of ‘intellectual famine,’ Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Tan Sitong and their like had cudged their brains to devise a new school of learning which was ‘neither Chinese nor Western and both Chinese and Western.’ This, however, was not accepted in those times, due in part to the deep roots of the China’s old thinking, but certainly because the new thoughts from abroad came from shallow and shaky sources and were quickly exhausted, for which reason it was not surprising that they were quashed soon after they

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<sup>6</sup> See Chap. 5, Sect. 5.2 of this book.

<sup>7</sup> See Chap. 4, Sect. 4.1 of this book.

emerged”.<sup>8</sup> Liang also noted the presence of at least three kinds of shortcomings in the period after the 1898 Reform and the 1911 Revolution: (1) Although the new thoughts swept into the country like wildfire, “all are seen as ‘Liang Qichao-type’ imports — disorganized, indiscriminate, incoherent, of uncertain origins and valued only because of their sheer quantities. Yet even so, they are welcomed in society. People behave as though they live in districts long afflicted by natural disasters. They devour everything from grass roots and tree bark to frozen sparrows and decayed rats, caring not whether they can digest such things and even less whether they will be sickened”.<sup>9</sup> (2) Since this movement to bring in the new thinking did not have the participation of anyone who had taken studies abroad (the only exception being Yan Fu), “the prime movers and the core force of the movement still consist of persons unversed in either the written and spoken languages of the West. Thus their capabilities are limited and all such ills as mechanical copying, disjunctions, vague generalities, shallowness and errors cannot be avoided. And for that reason, the movement has not acquired a sound foundation after almost twenty years”.<sup>10</sup> Thirdly, people in those days had not learned to think independently. The mean-minded among them made the new learning serve them as a stepping stone to wealth and position, while even the high-minded among them were able to use it only for practical applications. Hence, in Liang Qichao’s opinion, the New Learning Movement under the Guangxu and Xuantong reigns in the last years of the Qing Dynasty “hardly deserve to be called New Learning for Enlightenment”.<sup>11</sup> This was a caustic comment, but we should give it full credence since Liang Qichao was a person who had been there and was the chief representative of the New Learning Movement toward the end of the Qing Dynasty. Sun Yat-sen, too, often voiced similar reflections after the establishment of the Nationalist Republic. He stated, for example, “Of China’s 400 million people, few can be said to clearly understand the significance of republicanism or think in terms of republicanism”.<sup>12</sup> And not only were they few in number. As Sun Yat-sen further elaborated after the Yuan Shikai restoration, “Yuan Shikai has been able to preserve his power and position because of the masses’ ignorance, their befuddled addiction to fallacious claims, illogical lack of discernment and confusion as to what to support and what to oppose”.<sup>13</sup> Sun Yat-sen even declared: “The lack of knowledge among the Chinese people. . . is actually worse than the lack of knowledge among black slaves and immigrant outsiders in America”.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Special Collection No. 34*; p. 71.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>12</sup> “Speech at the Meeting in Shanghai to Welcome Overseas Chinese Joining the Army,” *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen*, vol. 3, p. 374, Zhonghua Book Company, 1984.

<sup>13</sup> “Letter to the Directors of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association”; see Wang Gengxiong (1990).

<sup>14</sup> “Overall Strategy for National Construction: Psychological Construction,” *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen*, vol. 6, p. 209.

In my article “How Ready They Were for Democracy as Seen from the Debates between the Revolutionary Party and the Constitutionalists,”<sup>15</sup> I conducted a special review of the exact extent to which the so-called forward-looking elements understood democracy. I noted that members of the revolutionary party were quite naïve in that they thought the democratic system was something that could be optionally transplanted according to anyone’s will. This in itself showed that they did not understand that democracy, as a system, could be set up only when the necessary social base was present. The constitutionalists, as represented by Liang Qichao, were slightly more knowledgeable about the democratic political system and realized that such a system could hardly be established in China as it was then and certainly not by means of violent revolution. Yet they failed to understand that there could be differences in the starting points for the growth and development of the democratic political system and in its forms of application in various countries.

That was a time of political awakening as well as of politics guiding cultural trends, and since the elitists’ comprehension of the most important political concepts was like that, little else can be said of other matters! Where education was concerned, there already were new-type schools at the time, but as Liang Qichao put it: “No sooner did the new rulers use fame and fortune to tempt people, than schools switched back to the imperial examination system and the new learning reverted to the ‘eight-legged essays’; eight or nine out of ten students became impurely motivated and pursued the new learning merely as a ‘stepping stone’ which they eventually abandoned when no longer useful”.<sup>16</sup> Liang’s account was somewhat exaggerated. However, the new education toward the end of the Qing Dynasty was largely borrowed from Japan, and most of those who did the borrowing knew little about Japanese education and failed to capture its essence, so that by the early years of the Republic, the set of educational institutions and teaching contents they had formed far from suited China’s circumstances. Moreover, their achievements, even if judged by the minimum goal of literacy, were woefully meager since a mere two or three million children and young people out of China’s population of 400 million had acquired any sort of education at the new-type schools. As regards newspapers and magazines turned out by the modern media, a rough count—according to the “Index of Names of Newspapers and Magazines” attached to *Annals of the News Media of (Modern) China* compiled by Fang Hanqi et al.—shows that some 1,500 newspapers and publications were founded in the last years of the Qing Dynasty and up to 1911; about 1,300 were founded between 1912 and 1919; and about 190 newspapers in the vernacular had emerged in the late Qing years up to 1917. That is to say, no more than 2,800—some newspapers and magazines had appeared in China in the 80 years from the late Qing to the early years of the Republic. Of the above, the newspaper with the longest life-span, *Shen Bao*, had had a history of no more than 40—some years when the New Culture Movement began; those with the shortest life-spans often survived no more

<sup>15</sup> Carried in *Modern History*, issue no. 6, 2001.

<sup>16</sup> *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Special Collection No. 34*, p. 72.

than a month; and some magazines were terminated after having turned out just one issue. Those with the largest circulations put out no more than 1,000 or 2,000 issues, and those with the smallest, only a hundred or so issues. The masses of peasants and the urban underclass that constituted the great majority of China's population had virtually no contact with these newspapers and magazines. Hence, it was very hard for new knowledge, new thinking, and new concepts to seep down to the overwhelming majority of the people. Little change took place in the thinking and culture of most sectors of China's populace. In most cases, the majority of people continued to pray to Buddha for peace and security, kowtow to the God of Wealth for their dreams of getting rich, kowtow to Confucius before taking scholarship exams, plead to the gods for rain in times of drought, and pray to the Dragon King when floods arose. In years of turmoil, they mouthed silent prayers for the coming of true Sons of Heaven. During such events as marriages, funerals, arrivals, and departures, people for the most part stuck to the conventions of their forefathers. Hence, Chinese society in the early years of the Republic—as reflected in the many novels written by Lu Xun—was still immersed in the murky traditions of past times. And the things that Hu Shih witnessed when he returned to China after 7 years of studies in the United States caused him to lament: “The China I have not seen for seven years is still as I knew it seven years ago!”<sup>17</sup>

It was evident that the cultural changes brought about by political awakening were very limited and slight and superficial.

### ***11.2.2 Cultural Awakening of the Chinese in Modern Times***

We have noted earlier that the hallmark of political awakening was the recognition of the need to change the political system and the direction of such a change, i.e., replacing the system of monarchical autocracy with a system similar to Western democracy (including constitutional democracy and constitutional monarchy). So what was the hallmark of cultural awakening? When did the Chinese people begin to awaken culturally? In other words, how did the Chinese people progress from political awakening to cultural awakening?

We already touched on this issue in Chap. 7 of this book and will now attempt to discuss it in greater depth.

In the final 10 or more years of the Qing Dynasty, when people were enthusiastically engaged in revolutions and reforms and fought to overthrow or transform the old autocratic monarchy and establish some form of democracy, they felt they had found the ultimate magic key for saving China. Sun Yat-sen and his colleagues never doubted that after they had overthrown the corrupt and despotic Qing Dynasty government and established a democratic republic, the Chinese people would thereafter set forth on the broad road of freedom and equality. Reading the

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<sup>17</sup> “Some Thoughts upon Returning from Abroad,” *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 4, p. 1.

last testaments of the Huanghuagang martyrs today, we are still moved by their conviction that the republic they would secure in exchange for their lives would be the fundamental guarantee for the happiness of future generations. The constitutionalists were somewhat more realistic than the revolutionaries, but they too believed that, even if transforming the monarchical autocracy into a constitutional monarchy did not resolve every issue once and for all, it would help avoid further bloodshed and turmoil and establish an effective political mechanism for adjusting various social conflicts.

However, soon after the 1911 Revolution, both the idealistic revolutionaries and the relatively realistic constitutionalist were disenchanted. They began to rethink things, especially after experiencing several years of chaos and two restoration charades. Sun Yat-sen's introspections came up with the conclusion that the revolution had not succeeded because the great majority of his party members thought his pronouncements were too idealistic and impracticable and therefore did not act on them. He attributed this to the old mentality that deemed "knowing is easier than doing," and he wished to start by inculcating people with the doctrine that "doing is easier than knowing," which he called "mental construction".<sup>18</sup> Liu Yazi (1887–1958), the veteran Tongmenghui member, maintained that all Chinese were conversant with the anti-Manchu Principle of Nationalism (of Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles formulated in 1905) during the revolution but knew nothing about the Principle of Democracy and were completely in the dark about the Principle of People's Livelihood.<sup>19</sup> Tian Tong (1879–1930), another of Sun's old comrades-in-arms, believed that genuine republican democracy had not materialized because no one had realized that the essence of democratic republicanism was the spirit of self-governance.<sup>20</sup> On the whole, most of the rethinking by the original members of the Kuomintang remained at the political level. Sun Yat-sen went slightly further and raised questions related to "mental construction," but his main concerns remained on politics.

Liang Qichao's reflections, however, rose to the level of ideology. In early 1915, before Yuan Shikai's restoration came entirely out in the open, Liang had already indicated his intention to withdraw from politics and engage instead in ideological construction. In his own words, "I shall concentrate on the things that cause human beings to be what they are, and discuss these with our people. . . I shall concentrate on the things that make citizens what they are, and discuss these with our citizens".<sup>21</sup> He wished to study the reasons that made people what they were, which in fact meant discovering the value of human beings. Actually, "culture," or *wen hua*, has always been *ren hua*, "the cultivation of man." When we say "cultural

<sup>18</sup> Ref. *The Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen*, vol. 6, pp. 157–159.

<sup>19</sup> See *The Selected Works of Liu Yazi* (2) p. 1030; People's Publishing House, 1989.

<sup>20</sup> Ref. *The 1911 Revolution and Twentieth Century China* (2), pp. 1592–1593; Central Literature Publishing House, 2002.

<sup>21</sup> "How Am I Going to Devote Myself to the National Cause from Now On," *Collected Works of Yinbingshi*; Collection No. 33, p. 54.

transformation,” we are in fact talking about the transformation of man, the transformation of people of older times into modern people. This transformation is essentially a renewed understanding of man’s value, a reconstitution of man’s values. Liang Qichao did not divulge all of these implications, though his propositions obviously encompassed them. It was Huang Yuanyong and Chen Duxiu who clearly brought forth these implications. Despite being younger than Sun Yat-sen or Liang Qichao, both had experienced the revolutionary and reformist movements of the last years of the Qing Dynasty and personally witnessed the political disorder and intellectual confusion of the early years of the Republic. Hence, their reflections evinced a great deal of authenticity and depth.

Huang Yuanyong (1884–1915), a well-known journalist in the early years of the Republic, was the first to keenly note that the conflict between the new and old thinking of the Chinese was reaching an unprecedented crux. He emphasized that the most important kernel of the new thinking was the acknowledgement that man himself possesses absolute value and that consciousness of this value calls for the presence of free individual will and independent personality, or in other words, the individual’s desire for self-emancipation. Obviously, this thinking differed radically from the old thinking which fettered people’s minds, held people in insulated ignorance, and regarded human beings as machines and slaves. And so, converting people in the latter circumstances into people pertaining to the aforementioned circumstances would inevitably lead to major changes in society as a whole and its culture. Where vision and perspicacity were concerned, Huang Yuanyong was in no way inferior to the leaders of the New Culture Movement.

Chen Duxiu was a veteran revolutionary party member in the last years of the Qing Dynasty. However, he did not join the Tongmenghui, possibly because he already entertained critical views about it. In any case, soon after the Nationalist Republic was established, he directed his efforts from political awakening to cultural awakening and devoted boundless ardor into running *The Youth*, the magazine he founded. In his article entitled “Advice to Young People,” which doubled as an introduction to the magazine, he came straight out with the blunt admonition “be independent rather than slaves” and thereby firmly seized on an idea that the abovementioned Huang Yuanyong also wished to develop. He stated that since the rise of the modern doctrine of human rights, any treatment of another person or oneself as a slave was no longer to be tolerated. Hence, the history of modern Europe should be called “the history of emancipation.” He interpreted emancipation as follows: “Emancipation is the term used for the removal of enslaving fetters and the attainment of one’s own autonomous and free personality. . . . When people believe they have attained independence and autonomy of personality, all conduct, all rights and all matters of faith are determined solely by their own inherent intelligence and there is absolutely no blind obedience or slavish subordination to others”.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See *Selected Writings by Chen Duxiu* (1), p. 74; Sanlian Bookstore, 1984.

The kind of people that exist in a society determines the culture of that society. People in the years of slavery were only capable of creating a slave-era culture. People in feudal times were only capable of creating a feudal-era culture. And only modern people are capable of devising a modern culture. The reason for the years upon years of chaos and the repeated attempts to restore old systems and dethroned emperors was that old ideas and thinking were still solidly entrenched in people's minds. There was no fundamental difference between the social culture at that time and the old culture of the era of autocracy. To uphold and consolidate the republic and the republican system, it was necessary to remove the antirepublican thinking from people's minds and replace it with new thinking that supported republican democracy. Changes take place in the social and cultural atmosphere only when popular thinking has changed. Cultural awakening is based on the recognition of man's own value and the establishment of the individual's free will. These are the most important hallmarks of cultural awakening.

Another important hallmark of cultural awakening is the concept of open culture.

After China's gates were blown open by the guns of foreign powers, the Chinese came into forced and involuntary contact with the Western world. Such contact was for a long time restricted to the domains of economics and trade, military affairs, and diplomacy. The scholar-official stratum, in particular, contemptuously refused to face up to Western culture, and so that culture was at first wholly rejected. But then the doctrine of "learning from the barbarian's strong points" was raised, followed by the *Zhong Ti Xi Yong* doctrine. Complete rejection had meant locking up the country in its ignorance, whereas "learning from the barbarians' strong points" and *Zhong Ti Xi Yong* held the gates half open and half closed. One might well say that, where the great majority of Chinese and especially the scholar-official stratum were concerned, this semi-open and semi-closed cultural concept held mainstream status right up to the rise of the May Fourth New Cultural Movement.

When forward-looking people recognized that the democratic system could not take root if people's ideological and cultural concepts failed to change, their awakening rose to the level of cultural awakening. This realization signified that China would thereafter open up to, and carry on exchanges with, the outside world not only in the domains of economics, trade, military affairs, and diplomacy but also in the domain of culture. The open-culture concept began to take shape.

As we mentioned earlier, Huang Yuanyong pointed out that the conflict between the new and the old thinking in China was reaching an unprecedented phase. The new thinking he referred to was none other than the new ideas and concepts brought in from the West. Chen Duxiu, in his "Advice to Young People," emphasized that the formulation "global rather than isolationist" clearly expressed his open-culture concept. His thesis "Frenchmen and Modern Civilization," published simultaneously with the above article, in particular expressed his admiration for modern Western civilization and his desire to have the Chinese share their influences and thus advance together with world civilization. Hu Shih, who enjoyed equal renown with Chen Duxiu in the New Culture Movement, stated in his doctoral dissertation completed in April 1917 that "the greater and more fundamental issue the New China must face up to" was "how can we Chinese remain at ease in this new world

which at first sight appears to be so much at variance with what we have long regarded as our own civilization? . . . How can we best assimilate modern civilization in such a manner as to make it congenial and congruous and continuous with the civilization of our own making?"<sup>23</sup> Here, Hu Shih posited a very significant problem, i.e., in the circumstance of an all-round opening up to the outside, how should China deal properly with the relation between Chinese culture and the new world culture, and how should it fully absorb modern culture and at the same time enable Chinese culture to harmonize with the new world culture and continue to develop? There should not be the least feeling of wariness or fear of cultures from the outside, nor any reckless, headlong hurry to replace China's inherent culture with Western culture. One should instead face the new world culture calmly and conduct unhurried and cautious explorations of ways to combine China's culture with the new world culture. This was the most open cultural mentality ever since the Western culture began to come in during the last years of the Qing Dynasty as well as the most rational state of mind. No wonder Hu Shih was the only person during the New Culture Movement capable of proposing a complete, rational and far-sighted program for building up China's new culture, a program enunciated as "research issues, input scientific theories, sort out the national heritage and rebuild the civilization."

In two of my articles, "The Source of the New Culture and Its Tendencies" and "World Culture and Individuality: The Two Important Trends of Modern Culture," a fairly in-depth discussion has been conducted of the essential features of the modern new culture.<sup>24</sup> This matter is closely related to our present discussion. Since the essential characteristics of the modern new culture are globalization and individualism, it was inevitable that cultural awakening should find prominent expression in these aspects. The abovementioned discussions by Huang Yuanyong, Chen Duxiu, and Hu Shih in this respect were only preliminary instances of awakening prior to the rise of the New Culture Movement. By the time the New Culture Movement was in full swing, these two manifestations of cultural awakening had become more abundant and variegated and much more profound.

For example, all such things as personal value, free will, personal independence, and personal emancipation were, during the New Culture Movement, condensed in a single concept called "individuality," for which a clear and rational definition was produced. In the West, too, a single concept, called "individualism," was usually employed to represent these significations. However, "individualism" has almost always used in a negative sense in Chinese documentation, which was why most leaders of the New Culture Movement used "individuality" to denote the importance of such things as personal value, free will, personal independence, personal

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<sup>23</sup> *Pre-Qin History of Famous Schools*, p. 8; Xuelin Press, 1983.

<sup>24</sup> "The Source of the New Culture and Its Tendencies" was published in *Historical Research*, 2nd issue, 1994. "World Culture and Individuality – The Two Important Trends of Modern Culture" was published in *Bulletin of the Academic Committee of the Chinese Academy of Social Science*, 1st edition; Social Sciences Academic Press, 2005.



emancipation, and so forth. Hu Shih said there were two kinds of individualism; one was “false individualism, which is egoism,” and the other kind was “genuine individualism, which is individuality”.<sup>25</sup> Hu Shih’s definition of individuality was brief and concise. He pointed out that to develop the individual’s personality, “it is necessary, first, to have freedom of will and, secondly, to assume duties and responsibilities”.<sup>26</sup> Hu Shih’s definition emphasized the absolute necessity of the person’s freedom of will without which the person would be no better than a slave; slaves were merely “tools that can talk,” bereft of all freedom of will. He also emphasized that, since individuals enjoyed freedom of will, the individual should take full responsibility for his or her words and actions. If an individual was incapable of taking full responsibility for his or her actions, he or she was no different from a slave. These definitions for individuality drew a clear line between individuality and the customary Chinese understanding of selfish individualism.

During the New Culture Movement, the functions and significance of individuality were explained primarily from two aspects. On the one hand, the significance of individuality was elucidated in terms of its universal and most common social significance. It was pointed out that only when the value of individual was firmly established could the talents and capabilities of the individual find full expression, society as a whole be imbued with vitality, and the country and the nation develop and advance. On the other hand, the major significance of individuality was propounded from the aspect of individuality’s relationship with democratic politics. In-depth expositions were made to show that the state was composed of individuals and that there could be no state in the absence of individuals, that the state was set up to protect the rights of each individual, that individuals were not born merely for the benefit of the state, and that the power of the state could be consolidated only when the rights of all individuals were ensured.

The New Culture Movement was a time where the concept of open culture found its clearest expression in modern-day China; it was also a distinctive sign that the Chinese people’s cultural awakening had reached a new height. All leaders of the New Culture Movement harbored a tendency toward globalism, and all, without exception, held to a very open concept of culture. Hu Shih and Chen Duxiu were well known for this. Lu Xun had stated his ideas about a globalized culture way back in the last years of the Qing Dynasty,<sup>27</sup> and after the rise of the New Culture Movement, he was one of the most active translators and introducers of Western culture. He maintained, “since we are all human beings, there is absolutely no reason we should not be able to understand each other”.<sup>28</sup> This already came close to an understanding of the identity of human culture.

<sup>25</sup> “The Non-Individualistic New Life,” *The Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 4, p. 174.

<sup>26</sup> “Ibsenism,” *The Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol. 4, p. 35.

<sup>27</sup> “The Lopsided Development of Culture,” originally carried by He Nan, no. 7 (August, 1908); see *The Complete Works of Lu Xun*, vol. 1, p. 56, People’s Literature Publishing House, 1981.

<sup>28</sup> “Anthology of Foreign Fiction,” *The Complete Works of Lu Xun*, vol. 10, p. 163.

Cai Yuanpei was a broadminded cosmopolitan. His vigorous advocacy of the spirit of “inclusiveness” after he became president of Peking University was based on his open-culture concept. Liang Qichao, too, manifested an increasingly mature concept of open, globalized culture. When an overall review of the open-culture expositions in this period, the following points are particularly worth noting: (1) The theory of the identity of human cultures was put forward. When criticizing Liang Shuming’s (1893–1988) subjectivist view of Eastern and Western cultures, Hu Shih pointed out: “Culture is an exemplification (*yang fa*) of the life of a nation, and the exemplifications of the lives of nations are essentially similar. Why? Because life is the living being’s adaptation to the environment, and the physiological structures of human beings are essentially more or less similar. Hence in the face of similar problems, the solutions do not go beyond the few that are also similar. This is called the ‘theory of limited possibilities.’” In line with this theory of the identity of human cultures, Hu Shih further stated: “When we observe cultures from a historical perspective, we see various nations taking to that ‘matter-of-course path.’ However, the urgency of the problems encountered differs because of the arduousness or otherwise of the environments. Hence, the alacrity with which the road is traversed differs, as does the sequence of arrival”.<sup>29</sup> The positing of the theory of the identity of human culture was most important. Only when it is recognized that the cultures of human beings are essentially similar is it possible to fully recognize the possibility of different cultures in the world communicating with and accommodating each other and to fundamentally break away from all xenophobic and insular cultural concepts. (2) They all believed that mutual contacts and mutual exchanges between different cultures were bound to promote cultural advances and renovation. When Cai Yuanpei made a speech entitled “The Combining of Eastern and Western Cultures” at Georgetown University in Washington, United States, he noted it was a widely recognized fact that at various times in history, such as during the Renaissance, Western cultures had been influenced by the Arab and Chinese cultures. In more recent times, he said, all Eastern nations were striving to learn and take example from Western culture, “but even at this time, of the many thinkers in the West virtually all have been influenced by Eastern philosophy”.<sup>30</sup> Another very important concept was that heterogeneous cultures could intersect to produce new cultures. Hu Shih more than once mentioned that China’s assimilation of India’s Buddhist culture had contributed to the flourishing of Li Xue during the Song Dynasty, and he firmly believed the assimilation of modern Western culture was bound to promote the birth of a new Chinese culture. (3) Cultural exchanges under the open-culture concept would not be unidirectional but complementary. Liang Qichao proposed that the Chinese should “take Western civilization to broaden our civilization, and also use our civilization

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<sup>29</sup> “Reading Liang Shuming’s Eastern and Western Culture and Philosophy,” *The Collected Works of Hu Shih* (collection 2), vol. 2, pp. 64 and 67.

<sup>30</sup> See *The Complete Works of Cai Yuanpei*, vol. 4, pp. 351–353.

to complement Western civilization, so that the two might combine to form a new civilization,” and they should then offer this new civilization to the world and enjoy its achievements together with mankind.

Since these thinkers and scholars—leaders all in education and culture—steadfastly upheld the open-culture concept, they personally did everything within their power to promote East-West cultural exchanges. For instance, they invited well-known West scholars such as John Dewey and Bertrand Russell and the German philosopher Hans Driesch to China to give lectures, actively organized translations of Western masterpieces (Cai Yuanpei, Hu Shih, and Jiang Menglin organized the “World Series Society” in preparation for a systematic translation of cultural masterpieces worldwide), dispatched scholars abroad to open up avenues, sent more students for studies in other countries, and so forth.

Another notable phenomenon in this period was the enthusiastic promotion of Esperanto by some persons including Qian Xuantong (1887–1939), Qu Shengbai (1892–?), Huang Lingshuang (1897–?), and Sun Guozhang (1884–1965). Chen Duxiu, Lu Xun, and Zhou Zuoren, too, empathized with this initiative. The reason they gave was that the Han language used by the Chinese was no longer practicable and a new language should be studied “to serve as a substitute for the Han language”.<sup>31</sup> “Esperanto grammar is neat, simple and easily learned”<sup>32</sup> and responded exactly to this need. They were convinced that “Esperanto will be the common language of mankind,” that “the world’s evolution, now in the 20th century, is not far distant from the inauguration of the Great Commonwealth,” and that promoting Esperanto would be of great help to “the cause of globalization”.<sup>33</sup> Hence, vigorous promotion of Esperanto was a duty not to be declined. They saw Esperanto as a sort of shortcut to promoting globalization in China. Whether this thinking was correct or not is another matter; the fact is that it constituted a unique reflection of the expectations and enthusiasm for globalization on the part of some of China’s cultural elite in that period.<sup>34</sup> This, of course, should also be seen as a manifestation of the open-culture concept.

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<sup>31</sup> Qian Xuantong: “Letter to Sun Guozhang”; see *New Youth*, vol. 4, no. 4, “Correspondence.”

<sup>32</sup> T. M. Cheng: “Letter to *New Youth* Reporters”; see *New Youth*, vol. 2, no. 3, “Correspondence.”

<sup>33</sup> “Letter from Qian Xuantong to Chen Duxiu”; see *New Youth*, vol. 3, no. 4, “Correspondence.”

<sup>34</sup> In fact the initiative to promote Esperanto met with criticisms at the time. Those by Tao Menghe and Zhu Wonong were the best founded and reasoned. They pointed out that Esperanto was a purely artificial language that could only be described as “a set of personally contrived symbols” which had no basis in any nation’s life or history and no national character, and was therefore devoid of vitality and insufficient for conveying thoughts and sentiments. In particular, Esperanto and globalization were definitely two separate things that should not be lumped together. The so-called Grand Commonwealth of the World only meant a similarity of interests; not identity in all matters. (See *New Youth*, vol. 3, no. 6 and vol. 4, no. 4, “Correspondence”.)

## 11.3 Major Impacts of Cultural Awakening on Politics

We have mentioned earlier that political awakening could to a certain extent lead to cultural awakening. Let us focus now on the reactive effects of cultural awakening on political awakening. If we closely examine the political changes and evolutions in the period from the end of the Qing Dynasty to the Nationalist Republic, we will find that the May Fourth New Culture Movement is a boundary marker, prior to which the Chinese had focused mainly on the pursuit of the right to participate in government and the right to oversee government. Revolutionaries led by Sun Yat-sen emphasized that “in the national government set up by a civilian revolution, all citizens are equal and have the right to suffrage”.<sup>35</sup> The constitutionalists led by Liang Qichao focused on mobilizing the masses to call for setting up a parliament and a system of responsible government. (For them,) the core issue of setting up a parliament lay in resolving the matter of people’s participation in government, while the emphasis on responsible government concerned the realization of the power to supervise. In view of China’s national conditions, Liang Qichao stressed in particular that for a popularly elected parliament, the right to supervise government was far more important than the right to legislate.<sup>36</sup> Sun Yat-sen and Liang Qichao represented the most basic political consciousness of progressive Chinese toward the end of the Qing Dynasty. In the early years of the Nationalist Republic, Song Jiaoren (1882–1913) regarded parliament as the focus of the fight for democratic governance, which was aimed precisely at resolving the issues of the people’s right to participate in government and their right to supervise government. And to this end, he even lost his life. Thus, it was evident that the right to participate in government and the right to supervise government were the most fundamental matters for democratic governance. Three things are the most important for democratic governance. The first consists of elections, which is the most basic means for bringing about the people’s right to participate in government; the second consists of checks and balances, which constitute the necessary institutional mechanism for ensuring the right to supervise government; and the third consists of guarantees for the people’s individual rights—an indispensable content of any kind of democratic governance as well as the bottom line of all democratic systems. A country in which people do not have even the most basic rights to freedom is definitely not a democratic country. We have seen that the first two of those three aspects were the main concerns of the Chinese in their struggles for democracy prior to the New Culture Movement. After the rise of that movement, however, people’s attention

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<sup>35</sup> “Revolutionary Strategy of China’s Tongmenghui,” *The Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen*, vol. 1, p. 297.

<sup>36</sup> See the two articles by Liang Qichao: “Some Personal Comments about China’s Parliamentary System” (originally carried in the journals *Zheng Lun* and *Guo Feng Bao* and incorporated in *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 24*) and “Petitions for Setting Up a Parliament Should Run Parallel to Petitions for Responsible Government” (originally carried in *Guo Feng Bao*, no. 7, and incorporated in *Collected Works of Yinbingshi: Collection No. 23*).

began to shift to the rights of the individual, or in other words, the human rights issue. Such things as freedom of the person and emancipation of the personality had been barely mentioned in the last years of the Qing Dynasty. And it is quite probable that few people understood Yan Fu when he said, in 1895, that Western freedom was a bit similar to China's "*xieju*" (temperance, rules for the defining of boundaries) and the primary significance of which was "preservation of self." In the times of the journal *Xin Min Cong Bao*, Liang Qichao had advertized freedom, but he had then gradually changed over to emphasizing freedom of the state and the nation instead of freedom of the individual. It was only during the New Culture Movement that freedom of the person, emancipation of the individual, independence and autonomy, and so forth were elevated to prominent positions. During their baptism by the New Culture Movement, almost an entire generation of young people was galvanized by the calls for emancipation of the individual, though not all of them understood the true meaning of freedom of the person. From the May Fourth period up to the Anti-Japanese War (1937–1945), all struggles for freedom clearly highlighted such contents as individual freedom and basic human rights. This was a new trend in politics brought about by the cultural awakening during the New Culture Movement.

In August 1920, New Culture Movement leaders Hu Shih, Jiang Menglin, Tao Menghe, Zang Weici, Li Dazhao, Gao Yihan, and Wang Zheng jointly issued a Declaration on the Struggle For Freedom, which stated: "The warlord political party's audacity to behave in such a flagrant manner in the last few years is a manifestation of our citizens' lack of the true spirit of free thought and free judgment. We have ascertained several basic and minimal freedoms as being the lifelines of the survival of the people and society. These we now solemnly set these forth and request that our compatriots nationwide rise up and fight for them." The basic and minimal freedoms they put forward were the freedom of the person and of inhabitation, freedom of speech, freedom of writing, freedom of assembly and association, confidentiality of correspondence, residential mobility, and freedom of property transactions. Among these, they highlighted freedom of speech, freedom of publication, freedom of assembly and association, and confidentiality of correspondence, which they regarded as the most important and the most basic freedoms and rights. They demanded repeals of the existing Law-and-Order Police Ordinance, the Publication Law, the Newspapers Ordinance, the Advance Warnings Ordinance, and other laws that endangered personal freedoms. They also called for the enactment of a habeas corpus law to prevent government authorities and military police from infringing on personal freedoms. These demands were directed at the Beiyang Warlord Government. Although there was no way these demands would be met, from them we can see the political changes brought about by cultural awakening.

In the late 1920s, the Kuomintang replaced the Beiyang Government and established a one-party authoritarian rule. At this time, some devotees of democracy and freedom targeted the Kuomintang's one-party autocracy and reissued the call for protecting human rights. Hu Shih again became the leader of this movement.

In May 1929, Hu Shih issued his well-known article “Human Rights and the Constitution” in volume 2, no. 2, of *Xin Yue* (New Moon). In this article, he vehemently criticized the Kuomintang’s “various government agencies or agencies that act under the guise of government and party departments” in “infringing on the people’s personal freedoms and property.” He cited multiple examples to expose tragic instances of abuse of power and persecution of innocent people by the Kuomintang and its military and political agencies and of people suffering wrongs with no hope of being cleared and having nowhere to voice their complaints. He called for “quickly formulating a provisional constitution to determine the basis of the rule of law” and “quickly formulating a provisional constitution to safeguard human rights.”

Hu Shih’s article aroused strong repercussions. Luo Longji (1896–1965) wrote such articles as “On Human Rights” and “A Message to Those Who Suppress Free Speech,” and Liang Shiqiu (1903–1987) published an article entitled “On the Uniformity of Thought,” all of which criticized the Kuomintang’s one-party dictatorship and demanded safeguards for the most basic human rights. In his article “On Human Rights,” Luo Longji listed 35 human rights requirements, and in “A Message to Those Who Suppress Free Speech,” he laid special emphasis on the importance of freedom of speech. He pointed out: “In reality, the danger posed by suppressing freedom of speech is greater than the dangers posed by freedom of speech” and that “a great many autocrats in China and other countries, and in ancient and modern history, have arrogantly suppressed freedom of speech for the sake of consolidating their rule, only to end up falling from power themselves”.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, freedom of speech or expression is the most important of all the many rights to freedom. Hence, it has always been in relation to this matter that fierce flames of antiauthoritarian struggles have broken out in past history. And it was during this struggle to protect human rights and freedom of expression that Hu Shih was subjected to a collective siege mounted by hired Kuomintang hacks and to harsh warnings from the Kuomintang’s Education Ministry, soon after which he had to resign from his post as principal of a public Chinese school. Luo Longji, on his part, was not spared the ordeal of doing prison time.

During the Anti-Japanese Resistance, the Kuomintang government, under the pretext of concentrating state power for the war, continued to practice its one-party autocracy and even touted a dictatorial doctrine defined as “one party, one doctrine, one leader.” Pro-democracy parties as well as people from all walks of life time and again issued calls for lifting restrictions on democracy and for freedom of speech, both of which calls were rejected by the Kuomintang authorities. After the failure of the first constitutional movement in 1939 and up to the time of the second constitutional movement initiated by middle-of-the-road parties during the second session of the Kuomintang’s Third National Political Council in September 1943, the human rights issue and especially freedom of speech and personal freedom drew the most attention. After the conclusion of that Political Council, multiple activities

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<sup>37</sup> See *New Moon*, vol. 2, combined issues nos. 6 and 7.

were launched. These were centered on lifting restrictions on freedom of speech and ensuring personal freedom, and their backbone elements consisted of democratically minded persons from centrist parties. Examples of these activities included setting up the Constitutional Government Weekly, engaging in vigorous publicity, and such personages as Zhang Junli (1887–1968), Huang Yanpei (1978–1965), and Tao Menghe (1888–1960) publishing articles and delivering lectures calling for lifting restrictions on freedom of speech and protections for personal freedom. Motions were also put forward, requesting improvements to the regulations on news and book censorship, getting rid of such abuses of power as arbitrary arrests and detainments and long-term imprisonments, and calling for implementation of an arraignment law as soon as possible. One might well say that the second constitutional government movement centered on lifting restrictions on freedom of speech and protecting personal freedom was a continuation of the new trend in the pro-democracy movement after the May Fourth Movement and a reflection of the profound impact produced on Chinese politics by the New Culture Movement.

Clear proof of the New Culture Movement's significant impact on politics was also provided by the enormous role played by populism (*ping min zhu yi*).

We know that the ideological concept of populism had already emerged in the last years of the Qing Dynasty, but that it assumed the proportions of a powerful trend of thought in society during the May Fourth New Culture Movement. That was because the rise of the New Culture Movement was based on the need to awaken the populace. At the time all of the leading elements who initiated the new culture eagerly sought and adopted effective ways and means to inculcate the most basic modern ideas and concepts in the minds of the general public. All endeavors, including Huang Yuanyong's intention to make "modern trends of thought... pertinent to ordinary people",<sup>38</sup> what Hu Shih called "dissemination among the great majority of people in the country",<sup>39</sup> and Chen Duxiu's expectations regarding the "ultimate awakening of the majority of citizens,"<sup>40</sup> were focused on the ordinary people. And all their initiatives, including promotion of the vernacular, developing education for the populace, setting up civilian mass organizations,<sup>41</sup> etc., manifested their efforts to put their populist thinking into practice. Participating in such practice were not only the broad masses of young students; many college professors also strove to set personal examples. The populist trend of

<sup>38</sup> Letter from Huang Yuanyong to the editor of Jia Yin (Tiger); see Jia Yin Magazine, vol. 1, no. 10.

<sup>39</sup> See *Hu Shih's Overseas Diary*, p. 956, Commercial Press, 1947.

<sup>40</sup> See *Selected Articles by Chen Duxiu* (1), p. 107, Sanlian Bookstore, 1984.

<sup>41</sup> Many were the groups and organizations in those days that explicitly assumed the banner of populism. Among them were the Commoners' Education Lecture Corps, Popular Education Society, Common People's Weekly, Association of the Common People, Society of the Masses, etc. There were also a great many publications, the main contents of which promoted populism, as, for example, New Life Popular Weekly, Popular Education, New Women, Hunan Popular Newspaper, The Common People, The Commoners' Guide, World of Labor, Labor Weekly, Workers Weekly, Labor Weekly Newspaper, Awakened Peasants, and so forth.

thought grew by the day. Populism at this time was no longer limited to politics, but included economic populism, populist education, and even populist literature and arts.

The populism fueled by the New Culture Movement differed substantially from the populist concepts toward the end of the Qing Dynasty in that it did not remain at the level of issuing sweeping appeals to the populace in general, but directly addressed the great majority of workers and peasants. Soon after the May Fourth Movement began, students at a technical school in Tangshan organized themselves and went into nearby villages to conduct publicity among the masses.<sup>42</sup> Thereafter, going down to the rural areas and factories to make contact with workers and peasants, conducting publicity among them, engaging in populist education work, or performing social surveys gradually became a common practice among young intellectuals. In 1920, Zhou Enlai and others of the Tianjin Juewu She (Tianjin Awakening Society) together with representatives of some youth groups in Beijing and with the participation of Li Dazhao drew up a Declaration and Charter aimed at “going out among the people.” This signified that the new generation of young people baptized by the May Fourth New Culture Movement had developed the consciousness of combining with the worker and peasant masses—a matter of immense historical significance. In a backward country like China, the combining of intellectuals with the worker-peasant masses would generate social effects of extreme magnitude because both the intellectuals and the worker-peasant masses could be transformed into new social forces as a consequence of such combining. Scholars who were divorced from the people, knew little about the ways of the world and had few practical abilities could become organizers and leaders of the masses; myriads of people who were deeply mired in ignorance and superstition because of lack of enlightenment could become a populace with a certain amount of knowledge and awareness as well as willingness to participate in political activities. Such a combination would surely produce forces capable of shaking society. And that was exactly what happened. After the May Fourth Movement, a number of intellectuals imbued with some preliminary communist ideology went among the masses and did a great deal of publicity and organizational work, which in turn readied the conditions for the emergence of the Communist Party of China. It is quite obvious that the birth of the Chinese Communist Party was the fundamental cause of the subsequent series of momentous changes in China. And the reorganization of the Kuomintang in the early 1920s was clearly related to the impetus of the populist trend of thought, as evidenced by the attention paid by the Kuomintang to the popular worker-peasant movement after that reorganization. One can say that if not for the upsurge of the populist trend of thought, the torrential worker-peasant mass movements in the ensuing years would not have taken place, nor would the rise of the national revolution have been so swift and powerful.

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<sup>42</sup> See “Letter from Zhongxiang and Xu Yuanxi to Hu Shih,” carried in *Hu Shih's Posthumous Writings and Confidential Correspondence*, vol. 8, p. 134.



The rise of the populist trend of thought and the worker-peasant movement was due, for one, to the awareness and strength manifested by the masses of workers and peasants during the May Fourth Patriotic Movement and, secondly, to the belief among intellectuals influenced by the Russian October Revolution that China's revolution had to follow the Russian path if it were to succeed. An article by Li Dazhao about the October Revolution was entitled "The Victory of the Common People." Luo Jialun, in his thesis "Trends of Thought in Today's World," also asserted that all future revolutions should be of the Russian type—real revolutions of the common people. This showed that intellectuals at the forefront of the new culture in those days had quite evidently realized that the successful Russian October Revolution had benefited from the consciousness and vigorous rise of the masses of workers and peasants. Thus, the sublimation of populism during the New Culture Movement resulted in all later political movements and revolutions in China taking on the distinctive stamp of mass movements.

In the next few decades, mass movements became a highly important means for political operations in China. This obviously had a substantial and positive effect on political developments in China. However, there is no denying that, under some circumstances, negative effects of no small extent have transpired because of an excessive and blind belief in mass movements.

The relationship between politics and culture is complex, and we only conduct a brief discussion here of their mutually promotional relationship. Historical realities have shown that political consciousness or political change can propel cultural change; conversely, cultural awakening or cultural movements can also bring significant impacts to bear on politics. However, due to the international and domestic environments in which modern China found itself, the historical choices facing the Chinese people gave greater prominence and more urgency to political issues than to other issues. No appropriate solutions could be devised for any other issues if political issues were not resolved. Persons of discernment had understood this both before and after the rise of the New Culture Movement. Zhang Shizhao, when responding to Huang Yuanyong, had said: "Promoting the new culture is, of course, the fundamental solution. However, social matters can be addressed only when the quality of the country's political governance is no longer deemed to be below certain standards".<sup>43</sup> Chen Duxiu had announced when he first set up the magazine *The Youth* "its purpose is not to criticize current politics".<sup>44</sup> But a year or so later, he came to this realization: "True, the fundamental reason for the evolution of groups of people rests in education and industrial development, but there can be room for the development of education and industry only when political governance evolves above certain standards".<sup>45</sup> Later, Liang Shuming stated even more explicitly that where politics could not get things done, culture would not get things done either. That, one might say, was the bottom line. Whenever political

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<sup>43</sup> See Jia Yin (*Tiger*), vol. 1, no. 10.

<sup>44</sup> First issue of *The Youth*, "Correspondence".

<sup>45</sup> *New Youth*, vol. 3, no. 5; "Correspondence".

governance has been put on the track of stable operations, whether in the era of slavery, feudalism, or capitalism, culture has entered a period of splendid development. Conversely, whenever political governance has defaulted from that track, culture has rarely if ever gotten an opportunity for sound development. That is an unalterable rule, proven by history both ancient or modern, in China or abroad.

The basic issue facing politics in modern China has been that of achieving independence and democracy. To gain independence, one had to oppose imperialism; and to achieve democracy, one had to oppose autocracy. Opposing imperialism and opposing autocracy were closely related problems. The problem facing culture in modern China was—as we have said earlier—that of transitioning from a virtually closed ancient culture which was linked to a monarchical autocracy of grand unity and centralized power, which decreed sole reverence for Confucius and Confucianism and which severely inhibited the personality, over to an open-type new culture which is adapted to the democratic system of modern times, which negates sole authority, and which encourages the development of the personality. Ancient Chinese culture is not entirely devoid of factors capable of nourishing the growth of a modern culture. However, these factors, repressed as they were by a mainstream culture closely tied to authoritarian politics, could hardly grow and mature without being activated by external stimulants, let alone replace the old mainstream culture and become the new mainstream culture. That said, it so happened that the external stimulants which activated those factors came from imperialist Western countries that were engaging in various forms of aggression against China. This made the transformation much more difficult, since it was indeed difficult for a nation that had a history of 5,000 years of civilized development, yet gravely lacked any accumulations of internal change, to ponder and resolve problems in a calm and measured fashion when abruptly confronted with the culture of Western powers that were inflicting so much harm and humiliation on it. Hence, achieving independence and democracy in terms of politics was a vital condition for bringing about a modern transformation of culture in China. This meant that getting things done culturally was contingent on getting things done politically. And this also determined the undeniable leading role of politics in the course of modern China's social transformation and cultural transformation. This situation has had both positive and negative effects. Its negative effect is a long-term and well-nigh insuperable tendency toward pan-politicization in the fields of academics, ideology, and culture.

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## Closing Remarks

In the preface to this book, I said our main intention was to provide an approximate description of the path taken by China's cultural transformation in modern times and to reveal the intrinsic basis and extrinsic conditions of this transformation. In fulfilling those two tasks, the length of the time intervals chosen for each chapter differs because the emphases differ and the issues we dealt with vary. In the preface we also presented a brief account of the internal evolution of China's traditional culture during the three hundred plus years of the Ming and Qing dynasties up to the Opium Wars, the bottom timeline of which narrative extends to the New Culture Movement. The first part describes the intrinsic basis of China's cultural transition in modern times and does not need too much elucidation. Some explanations of the second part are contained in the preface. The basic considerations: (1) The Chinese of modern times may well be said to have undergone a relatively complete process of national awakening. On this point, academic circles are in broad agreement. (2) In a number of basic aspects, the New Culture Movement opened up a path for China's modern development. For example, it initiated the open-culture concept, disseminated a scientific spirit and scientific methods, emphasized the implementation of liberty and democracy, linked these closely to the emancipation of the personality, and so forth. One could say that Chinese culture is continuing to advance basically in the direction initiated by the New Culture Movement. Hence, although China's cultural transformation is still ongoing, the period from the Opium Wars to the New Culture Movement was a relatively complete phase in the process of China's cultural transformation. Accordingly, in the closing remarks of this book, we will do a general summing up of some of the main issues present in that major phase of China's cultural transformation.

## The Perplexities of the Cultural Transformation in Modern Times

A no small number of people today emphasize that the modern transformation of Chinese culture had already begun in the late years of the Ming Dynasty. However, most also acknowledge that the powerful monarchical autocracy set up by the Qing Manchus after they drove through the Great Wall cut short that process of transformation. This means acknowledging that the modern transformation of Chinese culture began as a continuous process subsequent to the Opium Wars and that there is no need for any in-depth exploration here on whether the late Ming Dynasty initiated the modern transformation of Chinese culture. Hence, we will engage only in some reflections and discussions on the period from the Opium Wars up to the New Culture Movement as well as on the perplexities that confronted the Chinese and their intellectual stratum in particular on matters of cultural transformation.

The first major perplexity arose over the East versus West issue.

China is known to have a 5,000-year-long history of independent and uninterrupted civilized development, which is why its cultural accumulations were extremely abundant, and these had never come up against any real challenges over thousands of years. The cultural development of other peoples within the visual range of the Chinese was to varying extents inferior to their own. Chinese scholars had spent all their waking hours among mountains of cultural classics and never imagined there were other peoples with advanced cultures that could measure up to China's. This mentality was virtually unshakeable. After the Opium Wars, when China was repeatedly encroached upon and ravaged by the Western powers, it had to cede territories, pay indemnities, and submit to all sorts of humiliations. Yet even under those circumstances, the great majority of scholar-officials still refused to admit we were in any way inferior to others. For one thing, the appearance, language, and behavior of those Westerners were outlandish and alien, and, in the concept and lexicon of the Chinese, "alien" was equivalent to "barbarian." The ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras had said: "Man is the measure of all things." One might say all relatively stable groups of people took themselves as the measure when observing diverse matters outside their own group. That was quite natural since they had no other measure or yardstick. As nations outside and beyond their own people were—in the intrinsic concepts of the Chinese—"barbarians," those strange and unfamiliar Western peoples could only be "barbarians," let alone the fact that the Western powers forcibly sold drugs, seized lands, brutally slaughtered people, and behaved in ways that were indeed akin to those of barbarians. It was a long time before these deeply ingrained concepts could be dispelled. Wei Yuan's "learn from the foreigners' strengths" and Feng Guifen's "adopt Western learning" were based solely on extremely superficial and shallow understandings of the cultures of the Western powers. Moreover, the Westernization Movement triggered by these understandings failed to gain acknowledgement from the majority of Chinese scholars and was constantly subjected to criticism and vilification. In the minds of Chinese scholars, one could only "use things Chinese to improve

barbarian things” and not vice versa. This, too, was a deeply ingrained attitude. Right up to collapse of the Westernization Movement, the adoption of Western ways never gained universal acknowledgement among Chinese scholars and was merely tolerated in practice. It was tolerated, because in the view of China’s traditional scholar-officials, even though the West enjoyed some slight advantages as regards industrial technologies and related “exotic and decadent skills,” these could in no way detract from the superior status of China’s civilization in terms of its ethics and rites. Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao came up against intense opposition when they advanced proposals for systemic and institutional changes, the reason being that neither changes to the laws of the ancestors nor any tampering with the code of ethics could be countenanced. Little matter that the foreign powers’ seizures of land, their imposition of concessions, and their controls over Customs and consular jurisdiction had reduced the rules and laws of the ancestors to tatters! And little matter that the Eight Allied Powers’ incursions and the Emperor and Empress Dowager’s panic-stricken flight from Beijing had made a mockery of Confucian etiquette and rites. Within their own homesteads, the great majority of the scholars of the Confucian writings were still deeply persuaded that China’s civilization was better than that of other countries. And for that reason, having gone through the constitutional and revolutionary movements and even after the monarchical system had been toppled and a democratic republic set up, the great majority of China’s *dushuren* (traditional scholars)—some of them highly learned men such as Wang Guowei (1877–1927), Luo Zhenyu (1866–1940), and Shen Zengzhi (1850–1922)—still believed revolution and reforms to be detrimental to the traditions of Chinese culture, preferred to remain as adherents to the Qing Dynasty, and flatly refused to cut off their queues and change their garb and become citizens of the republic. Even where I was born—a poor, out-of-the-way, and culturally underdeveloped little village of less than a hundred households next to the Liaohé River—I personally came across an old scholar who had never succeeded in passing the imperial examinations at the county level but who nonetheless declined to snip off his queue. That was already in the 1940s.

Because of the absence of a social basis after the republic was established and the lack of necessary support, the republican faction was unable to hold onto state power. Meanwhile, since the factions in the old camp were disunited, their hopes and plans of restoring the old order fell through. And so society as a whole fell into a state of disarray. Persons posing as protectors of Chinese culture emerged in droves and prated that the root of all problems lay in imitating Western ways. Since ancient times, they said, China had depended on the teachings of Confucius and Mencius, ranging from customs and habits handed down from the Three dynasties era to the principles of propriety, righteousness, loyalty, and filial piety; and if one hoped to shake off the perilous situation caused by the current chaos and disorder and decadent morality, the only way was to abandon the Western ways and return to the path pointed to by the teachings of Confucius and Mencius. Or in other words, return to the inherent traditions of China. They maintained that everything in China would get better if one truly stuck to the ways of Confucius and Mencius, that all previous failures were not due to the inability of the Confucian teachings to deal

with social change but to people's ignorance of the true essence of these teachings. Those, on the other hand, who advocated taking example and learning from the West declared that the cause of all current maladies lay not in emulating the West but in people not yet grasping the real significance of Western learning and Western ways.

There were certain merits to both arguments. However, the former argument highly idealized the teachings of the Confucius and Mencius. Actually, those teachings were, in their origins, of a highly idealized nature. Everything that had to do with managing state affairs and putting the country in order fell in the category of ideals, but the methods, ways, and means of realizing these ideals were on the whole either left unsaid or described only in general and unrealistic terms. Hence, there was no way those teachings could be put into effect. In past eras when peace reigned, one or two wise rulers and virtuous ministers might have observed some of the ideals in the Confucian teachings, paid some attention to national conditions and popular sentiment, and implemented good governance which enabled the ordinary people to obtain a modicum of what was due to them and thereby preserved peace in the nation for a period of time. In most cases, however, the rulers merely preached the precepts of Confucius and Mencius regarding benevolence, virtue, loyalty, and faith in order to gull the rulers' ignorant subjects and carry on their predatory and extortionist practices. From the positive aspect, the greatest value of the Confucian teachings was that they helped people cultivate a gentlemanly personality. This—and certainly not the previously described aspect—was the chief reason for these teachings being held in esteem for thousands of years. Beyond keeping oneself fed and clothed, character cultivation and improving ones' morals are matters the most intimately related to people's lives, which is why the teachings of Confucius and Mencius exerted such an influence on the people. Thus, at every important juncture in the evolution of China's culture, traditional ideology and concepts were able to place the teachings of Confucius and Mencius in contention with new ideas and concepts and mount resistance against the latter. However, the acute challenges brought by the new times and new trends were matters that affected the destiny of the country and nation, and, unable to find direct and useful answers to these matters in tradition and the Confucian teachings, people were compelled to "look to the West for the truth." Moreover, despite the presence of a good many useful things for shaping moral integrity in the teachings of Confucius and Mencius, those teachings also contained a vast store of patriarchal ethics that imposed rigid controls over the personality. Thus, the great majority of trend-sensitive young people were unwilling to observe or comply with the traditional morality which constituted the core of the Confucian teachings. But young people of as-yet unformed character were prone to going to extremes or to indulging in licentious behavior in a volatile social atmosphere, and this also provided ammunition for criticisms launched by those who defended traditional ways and the teachings of Confucius.

As for those who stood for learning from Western ways, their arguments were also correct. But even after the coming of republican times, the Chinese still had a very limited understanding of the West and Western culture in particular.

The channels whereby the Chinese gained any understanding of the West and Western culture in those times were no more than the following:

1. Foreigners arriving in China from the West, including diplomats, business people, missionaries, and a few persons in such fields as teaching, news, finance, and border Customs. However, those Chinese who could come in contact with such persons were quite rare.
2. Chinese who were sent abroad, i.e., personnel stationed in embassies and consulates abroad, persons sent to work in commercial institutions abroad, overseas students, and visiting scholars. However, the overwhelming majority of these persons rarely mixed with the people in those foreign countries or learned much about local ways, and they were therefore unable to give the ordinary Chinese people any systematic accounts, either written or verbal, of the cultures of foreign lands.
3. Newspapers and publications. In the last years of the Qing Dynasty, newspapers and publications gradually became the mainstays of China's modern media system (radio broadcasting started up quite late and gained little popularity in those days). Some of the newspapers and publications were able to provide reports about incidents, personalities, and customs and habits in other countries. These reports, of course, were quite superficial and fragmentary, and mistakes were unavoidable.
4. Book translations. The foreign books translated toward the end the Qing Dynasty and in the republican era consisted mainly of scientific and technical works, writings in the political and legal fields, books pertaining to literature and the arts, higher education teaching materials, and a few volumes on academics. Owing to the pervasive chaos and warfare in China, translation work was in general poorly organized or planned, either because it was done to deal with emergencies, or for commercial gain, or to meet random requirements. The information obtained through such unsystematic translation could, of course, hardly be expected to produce the best of results. Thus, after China had opened its gates in modern times, the Chinese, including their intellectual class, still lacked understanding of Western Culture, and all the controversies that took place over culture in those years showed that while those who opposed Western culture were estranged from it, those who approved of learning from and drawing on the experience of Western culture had only scant knowledge of it.

The Chinese-versus-Western culture issue has never been simply one of comparing cultures for their differences or even of establishing their relative strengths and superiorities. The important thing is to recognize the commonalities of mankind's cultures through contacts and exchanges among them and to comprehend the entire trend of development of human cultures and so bring about a profound cultural consciousness. There should certainly be no worries about the most positive parts of a culture being lost, so long as external compulsion is not exerted during cultural contacts and exchanges. Also, culture certainly is not to be equated with ancient scriptures and texts; it consists of all such things as written records, oral legends and accounts, material relics and artifacts, individual and group behavior, customs and habits, and so forth. Under special circumstances and especially when

there are enormous external compulsions, these things may perhaps be temporarily and partly distorted or dissembled, but they certainly will not be completely lost or supplanted. After the Chinese and Western cultures met up with each other, the Chinese were for a long time unable to satisfactorily solve their cultural state of mind or deal with problems in a dispassionate, reasonable, and rational manner. The main reason—in addition to China's chronic seclusion from and ignorance of Western culture—was that people willing to devote themselves to the cause of culture were unable to consistently and systematically engage in the work of sorting out and building up culture at a time when the old order was unraveling, the new had not yet been set up, and politics were not on the right track. Whenever controversy arose on cultural matters, calm and collected discussions frequently gave way to radical onslaughts or stubborn resistance and were often dominated by politics or exploited by politicians. That was an important reason why the Chinese were incapable of breaking away from their state of perplexity for such a long time.

The second major perplexity arose over the old-versus-new issue.

As I noted earlier, China built up an extraordinary accumulation of culture over its 5,000-year history. That was an immense asset. However, it could also become an encumbrance if incorrectly understood. Faced with challenges from the West and from modern times, and seeing their country so poor and weak and subject to national humiliation, many Chinese consoled themselves by bragging to each other about their glorious ancestors and their country's magnificent history. This, conversely, benumbed their sense of national enterprise and delayed China's advance toward modernization. Even more troubling was the banding together of some tenaciously conservative literati and some politicians who exploited people's nostalgic feelings for former glories in order to turn their eyes backward and who zealously touted a return to old ways and the ancients. This obviously did even more to mislead people and prevent them from seeking a correct path of advance.

It is only natural that the cultures of all nations should frequently encounter problems of the old versus the new or what people often refer to as problems of tradition versus modernity. This, in China, took the aspect of what is called an "old, big, and knotty" problem—one that perplexed a good many scholars who were unable to extricate themselves from its effects. The reason for this was closely linked to the first issue. In the minds of numerous *dushuren* fettered by old concepts, the Chinese could very well have lived comfortably and at ease within their own traditions were it not for the invasions by foreign powers and the turmoil caused by Western culture. In their view, the way out for culture should be to resist Western culture as far as possible, and even if one were indeed compelled to learn something from that culture, restrictions should be placed on the scope of such learning. Meanwhile, everything possible should be done to preserve China's intrinsic traditions and keep them from being tainted. The obvious thinking behind this course was to "use the old to beat the new." It was quite clear that such thinking would not resolve any problems. But that thinking would continue to find a broad market so long as China's society and Chinese culture had not yet taken to a new path of sound development and so long as the great majority of the Chinese people had yet to see the first light of a new society and a new culture. People who encounter insuperable obstacles as they advance or hesitate at a crossroads are



quite likely to look backward and be tempted to return the way they came. Few are the brave spirits who have the courage to forge ahead and search for ways and means to surmount the obstacles. Where a populous nation with cultural traditions as exceptionally ancient as China is concerned, mobilizing the entire people to adventurously explore new channels and avenues is by no means an easy matter. That so-called adventurism—to put it in milder terms—simply means the spirit of innovation, and getting a vast nation to leave behind the traditions to which it is accustomed and try out a new way of existence is not easy.

Objectively, there are other powerful forces which intensify people's convictions that the present cannot compare with the past. Those are invasions and oppression by external powers, internal chaos rife with struggles, and such things as natural disasters and epidemics, all of which make life utterly miserable for the people. Trapped in such social realities, what could possibly give the Chinese even a modicum of confidence in China's culture other than comforting reminiscences of their ancestral glories? It is quite probable that only individuals who in those days had an extensive understanding of China's inherent culture and Western culture were able to avoid perplexities over the old-versus-new (or ancient-versus-modern) issue, adopt a judicious and analytical attitude toward China's traditions, and adhere to an open view and open state of mind about Western culture. Such people were indeed few and far between in China. They were, moreover, often labeled "national nihilists" or even with the more insulting epithet "worshippers of things foreign." This made it even harder to extricate oneself from the perplexities over ancient and modern culture.

Described above are the two most important perplexities that bedeviled the Chinese in the course of China's cultural transformation in modern times. There were, of course, various other perplexities, all relatively minor as compared to the two described above. However, we will take one that is somewhat better known for a brief discussion here.

That is the perplexity over the relation between material culture and spiritual culture.

The greatest importance is attached in Chinese tradition to spiritual life (*jingshen shenghuo*), as witnessed by the sayings "man is the soul of all matters" and "the value of man rests in his spirit." In the view of traditional scholar-officials, one fails to reach the criterion for a human being if he regards material life as equal to or even more important than spiritual life, that doing so "makes him little different from an animal." In Chap. 2 of this book, we mentioned a true story about foreigners taking a Chinese official aboard a foreign warship and the official's subsequent impressions. He said the Chinese had always attached less importance to techniques and skills of this sort than to essays. The essays he referred to quite evidently should not be understood simply as written texts and compositions, but should extend to spiritual and cultural life in general. Amid the debate over Woren's opposition to attaching an institute of astronomy and mathematics to the Tongwenguan, amid the controversy over constitutional reform and modernization during the Reform Movement of 1898, amid the debates over morality in the first years of the Nationalist Republic, amid the debates over Eastern and Western cultures and new and old cultures during the New Culture Movement era, and

even amid the various cultural debates in the 1920s and 1930s, the parties that tended toward conservatism consistently brought up the argument that the spiritual side of Chinese culture was unquestionably superior to that of other nations. Not a few people explicitly stated that China's culture was a spiritual culture and Western culture was a material culture. In other words, China's was a culture that emphasized matters of the spirit, whereas Western culture put greater importance on material matters.

It is true that this contention by Chinese who adhered to a conservative stand on culture was not entirely without cause. Ever since the Qin and Han dynasties had founded the monarchical autocratic system of grand unity, the officially affirmed mainstream culture with Confucianism at its core had indeed consistently emphasized the importance of the spiritual culture. And there was, generally speaking, nothing wrong in appropriately emphasizing the important significance of people's spiritual life and stressing the importance of spiritual culture. However, it was quite wrong to think that spiritual culture could exist apart from material culture. In fact, even in Confucianism the two were not entirely separated, and Confucius had said something to the effect that "they should be taught after they attain wealth." It is common knowledge among modern peoples that advances in material wealth provide the necessary basis for advances in spiritual culture. Yet a substantial number of people toward the end of the Qing Dynasty and in Nationalist Republic era refused to acknowledge this fact. Even when faced with invasions and oppression, when subjected to humiliations, and when witnessing their country mired in unending political chaos and their people plunged in misery, they consoled themselves with the contention—a contention incapable of standing up to any factual tests—that China's spiritual culture was of a higher quality than that of the West, and they thereby shut their eyes to and evaded the grim challenges posed by realities. It is obvious that this conception and mentality to a substantial extent prevented people from correctly understanding the new cultures in the West and the rest of the world, from correctly understanding China's traditional culture, and from becoming aware of the need to change things and blaze new trails.

The so-called perplexities we have talked about imply that people—or most people—were affected by some hard-to-resolve "mental fixations" on the matter of China's cultural transformation in modern times. We also point out that a vital factor for the existence of, and the difficulty in resolving, these "mental fixations" was that they derived from social realities. Let us, then, discuss these social realities.

## **The Constraints of Social Conditions**

We have repeatedly stated that the culture we refer to when discussing cultural transformation in this book generally means culture as a spiritual phenomenon. Needless to say, this type of culture is based on certain social conditions, which include material conditions, conditions of an institutional nature, as well as such conditions as people's basic qualities.

Conditions of an institutional nature mean such factors as social systems and institutional structures. These factors hardly need explaining. We all know that China was deeply mired in war and chaos in modern times, and maintaining any sustained social endeavor was well-nigh impossible. This was the situation described earlier as “the old order unraveling and the new not yet set up,” as society not having an effective set of institutions to maintain stability and finding itself in state of disarray. Such a situation was most detrimental to the transformation of culture and especially to efforts to build up a new culture. No further elaboration is necessary on this matter. However, we may discuss in somewhat greater detail the issues regarding material conditions and people’s basic qualities.

As regards material conditions, modern culture is dependent on the modern-day economic base. In the absence of a modern economy developed to a certain extent, one cannot develop a modern culture or may at most devise certain individual and not very clear-cut perceptions that embody some modern characteristics. Observations over extended periods of time show that the extent of modern cultural development correlates with the extent of modern economic development. Or, one might say that a modern transformation of culture is in general hardly possible before modern economic transformation takes place.

Most scholars maintain that China’s modern economy began to emerge at the time of the Westernization Movement, i.e., in the 1860s. Yet economic historians estimate that by the 1920s, after six decades of development, the total value of output of the modern economy as whole accounted for less than 8 % of the entire national economy.<sup>1</sup> That is to say, more than 90 % of the national economy still consisted of old-type agriculture and handicrafts. There was no possibility of effecting a transition from traditional culture to a modern-day culture on such an economic basis. When the great majority of the country’s population still existed in small-peasant economies and by virtue of production units dominated by clans and households, it was inevitable that the household, clan, and local environments should overwhelmingly cramp people’s perspectives and continue to shore up and consolidate the traditional patriarchal mentality. Under those circumstances it was extremely difficult or even absolutely impossible to get people to accept the concepts of modern culture. That is the fundamental reason for modern culture being limited for so long to narrow regions along the seacoast and rivers or areas accessible only to modern means of transportation.

Situated as the feeble modern economy was amid a vast sea of an old-type economy, the superficial impression was of the advanced cities leading forward the backward rural areas, but in reality the latter exerted substantial restraints on the cities. A great many of the capital owners in the cities still had roots in the rural areas. Even if capital owners were completely separated financially from the rural areas, that separation had taken place only a generation or two earlier and those capital owners still could not break away from the influences of the rural areas in terms of mentality, behavior, and habits. Vestiges of those influences could be seen

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<sup>1</sup> See Xu Dixin and Wu Chengming (1990, p. 1051).

in their economic concepts, administrative methods, and ways of interacting both in and outside their professions.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the twofold oppression exercised by foreign imperialism and despotic domestic rulers made any development extremely difficult for China's modern national economy. Wage laborers in China's cities were basically all peasants who had only recently shed their peasant garb. Few, if any, multigenerational industrial workers were to be found in China, and despite being different from peasants, they could not completely rid themselves of peasant concepts and habits. As regards the structure of society, capital owners and workers constituted the principal forces of modernization, yet these forces as well as being numerically small in China were also fettered by traditional thinking and concepts which inevitably placed limits on the strengths they could bring to bear for creating a modern new culture. In fact, the main force behind the creation of a new and modern culture in China was a portion of the intelligentsia. Ideologically acute and with wide-ranging fields of vision, these intellectuals were engaged principally in such professions as teaching, wellness, law, and journalism—domains most likely to influence broad sections of society and the masses. However, intellectuals as a social stratum were unstable and lacked independence, and it was often hard for them to achieve stable and sustained advances in their occupations. Moreover, the social circumstances of compulsion and coercion by domestic forces of reaction and constant warfare and chaos made their endeavors even more arduous. Evidence of this is the fact that Hu Shih, Jiang Menglin, and others on several occasions had to give up halfway on systematic plans to translate and introduce classical Western works on academics and culture and systematically sort out Chinese history classics.

Now, a look at basic national qualities. National qualities comprise so many aspects that a comprehensive discussion of these is not possible here. We can only do a brief examination of the people's levels of education. Elementary education has the most fundamental effect on the qualities of a nation. Prolonged efforts in China were aimed at popularizing elementary education, since educations at or above the secondary level were entirely out of the question for ordinary citizens. Such being the case, what has been the state of development of elementary education in China in modern times?

In Chap. 4 of this book, we mentioned the state of development of China's education in the last years of the Qing Dynasty. According to the *First Yearbook on Education in China*, there were a mere 1,532,746 pupils in elementary schools throughout China in the year 1909. Needless to say, that was an utterly negligible figure in a country with a population of more than 400 million. By the time of the

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<sup>2</sup>The endeavors of well-known industrialist Zhang Jian, a pioneer in the founding of modern industries in China, petered out soon after his death. His son Zhang Xiaoruo, who inherited his business, passed away when still in the prime of life. Liu Heng, a good friend of Zhang Jian, once remarked that the tragedy of Zhang's endeavors was that neither father nor son had been unable to shake off old-type clan influences ("Letter from Liu Heng to Hu Shih"; see my book *Hu Shih's Posthumous Writings and Confidential Correspondence*, vol. 39, pp. 571–573; Huangshan Bookstore, 1994).

Nationalist Republic, if we take 1930 statistics compiled by the Ministry of Education as an example, the 9,145,822 students in lower elementary schools and the 1,396,704 students in higher elementary schools throughout China added together came to 10,542,526 persons. This total figure of slightly more than ten million was still miniscule as compared to the then population of 450 million.

A look now at the figures for elementary school graduates in those years will help us reckon the approximate number of people with elementary educations in the country's entire population. In 1930, there were 2,712,383 graduates from lower elementary schools and 763,677 from higher elementary schools, making a total of 3,476,060.<sup>3</sup> We estimate that by end of the Qing Dynasty, the number of persons who had undergone various kinds of new education was between two and three million. Assuming a 2 % rate of increase in elementary education during the Nationalist Republic, then calculating by the 1930 figures and adding those of each year, the total we should get is that by 1930, 55,402,726 persons had received various kinds of education (those who had secondary and higher education would naturally have had elementary education). This, of course, is an inaccurate estimate, with overestimates probably more likely but not necessarily too much so. Add to these figures those from the last years of the Qing Dynasty, and one gets of a total of 57 or 58 million, which still comes to about 55 or so million after deductions for deaths and emigrations in this period. That amounts to approximately 12.2 % of the total population, calculated at 450 million. The aforementioned Education Ministry statistics contain other figures that serve as reference and are worth citing. The book contains a table entitled "Comparisons of Elementary Education in China and Other Countries," according to which the number of persons with elementary education per 10,000 of the population in 1930 was 236 in China, 2,082 in Canada, 1,768 in the United States, 1,582 in Japan, and 1,580 in Britain.<sup>4</sup> That indicated a 6.7- to 8.8-fold disparity between us and those developed nations. Many factors determine a nation's basic qualities, but one cannot deny that level of education is the most basic and most important of all factors.

The tiny number and low level of educated persons in China created a yawning gap between the upper and lower levels of culture and handicapped the efforts to extend the dissemination of advanced culture. Meanwhile, the comparative backwardness of the mass media in Chinese society and the country's underdeveloped means of transportation (China had only 10,000 km of functioning railways in 1920, while the United States with a land surface comparable to China's had more than 100,000) made the renovation of culture all the more difficult.

A very important characteristic of modern culture is the popularization (plebification) of culture. The fundamental significance of popularization rests in the absence of excessive disparities in the possession and enjoyment of cultural products in society. Examples are watching movies and listening to music, which in

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<sup>3</sup> See *Statistics on Elementary Education Nationwide*, compiled by the Department of General Education of the Ministry of Education (printed and issued in 1933), p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

developed countries do not count as luxuries even among relatively indigent strata of the populace. However, in China during the last years of the Qing and the early years of the republic, such things lay beyond the most extravagant dreams of the poor lower-stratum masses. Their enjoyment of the arts was by and large limited to watching local plays, acrobats, jugglers, and street performances during New Year festivals, rural temple fairs, or religious processions. The disparities were even more pronounced as regards the possession and enjoyment of material cultural products. The basic necessities of life—food, clothing, shelter, and means of travel—enjoyed by bureaucrats and wealthy households were worlds apart from those of the poverty-stricken masses.

This vast contrast between the upper and lower levels of culture was exacerbated during the revolutionary conditions fueled by China's internal and external contradictions and grew, in people's minds, into a conflict and struggle between the culture of the reactionary ruling classes and that of the revolutionary and oppressed masses. During revolutions—in this case referring mainly to violent revolutions—the natural course of development is disrupted or interrupted. This applies to culture as well. Cultural renovation and cultural transformation are brought about only when a certain amount of new and original things accumulate. When the natural course of development is interrupted, this requisite process of accumulation becomes virtually impossible. In times when revolutionaries and revolutionary ideologues are fervidly engaged in revolutionary struggles, they tend to believe that revolution should be able to accelerate this process, i.e., the process of cultural transformation. That, however, is not the case, as history both ancient and modern and both in China and abroad has shown. All violent revolutions are closely focused on the issue of political power, and although certain cultural changes may be precipitated during revolutions, all such changes are subordinated to the needs of seizing political power. If the intention is to bring about the modernization of culture, one must, after the revolution, set about doing things one had no time to do before, or could not do during, the revolution, i.e., down-to-earth accumulation and development of new culture. If most people found this argument hard to comprehend in the past, now, after going through the ups and downs of a prolonged period of "uninterrupted revolution" and after experiencing nearly three decades of reform and opening up, all who are capable of rational reflection should clearly understand this reasoning.

It is quite natural and normal that differences should exist in a society between its higher and lower tiers of culture, or in other words, between elitist and popular cultures. The problem lies in forming a benign relationship between the two. In the conditions of a peacefully developing and harmonious society, lively lower-tier cultures frequently give rise to new things that deserve attention. These things are taken in and assimilated by high-tier cultures and thereby enrich and advance those cultures. Conversely, the enriched and advanced high-tier cultures in turn influence and elevate the low-tier cultures. This benign relationship has, in China's modern-day history, often been interrupted and severed by acute internal and external conflicts and struggles. True, certain forms of interaction have also existed between upper- and lower-tier cultures within the camps of both revolution and reaction.

However, where the nation and society as a whole were concerned, this benign relationship was, to all purposes, imperfect or even broken off. Only in the 1980s was such a benign relationship initially and gradually established between upper- and lower-tier cultures and between the elitist and popular cultures in China's society. There is reason to believe that under the conditions of reform and opening up, the modern transformation of China's culture, or in other words the modernization of culture, will advance more easily and smoothly than in any previous era in history.

## Origins and Trends of China's New Culture

The modern transformation of China's culture began after the Opium Wars, and the new culture gradually took initial shape in the period from 1898 to 1911 and during the New Culture Movement. This process has often been misunderstood by some who believe the transformation of China's culture was merely a process of passively reacting to Western culture and that China's new culture in modern times is simply an outcome of Westernization. That is obviously incorrect. The most fundamental meaning of "cultural transformation" is of a culture altering its own direction of advance and development and thereby refashioning its character and forms of expression. Such changes take place on a culture's own foundations. They are by no means completely passive, nor are they substitutions by other types of culture. We need not deny the enormous stimulatory effects of the Western invasions, nor do we need to write off certain activating effects exerted on ancient Chinese culture by the eastern advance of Western culture. However, that cultural transformation had to have some things in China's intrinsic culture that could serve as the foundation for a new cultural existence; there was no way a new culture could be devised out of thin air no matter how great the external stimuli. Thus, it must be made clear that cultural transformation has to have an intrinsic foundation. I believe that certain nonmainstream elements in China's traditional culture and changes within the traditional culture both could have accumulated intrinsic conditions for a modern transformation of culture and that theoretically, when these accumulations reached a certain stage, they could have started up a cultural transformation. However, China's historical reality is that before such accumulations had yet reached a certain level, Western invaders came and blew open the nation's closed doors, and an extremely challenging and never-before-encountered culture confronted the Chinese. While the great majority resented, resisted, and rejected that culture, a small number of forward-looking persons who themselves either belonged to nonmainstream factions in the traditional culture or who had been exposed to some heterodox ideology rose up and responded to the challenge of Western culture, proposed changes, strove to devise a new culture, bit by bit stepped out of the barriers imposed by traditional culture, and opened up new paths for cultural development. Defeat after defeat in the efforts to resist external aggression, added to incurable corruption within the country, convinced more and

more people that they could no longer follow the old road and had to choose a new one. Such were the historical conditions that gave rise to the cultural transformation. There is little sense here in conducting a dogmatic discussion on the relative importance of internal causes and external causes; a more fundamental principle had taken effect: people had to achieve consistency with their conditions of existence, either by adapting the conditions of existence to themselves or by adapting themselves to their conditions of existence. It was obvious that in the China of those times they could not change the new world created by capitalism; they could only do their best to adapt to that new capitalist world. Such was the overall trend that made some Chinese at the leading edge of events sense that China was facing a situation of unprecedented change.

It was pointed out in this book when describing the approximate trajectory of the cultural transformation of modern times that all forward-looking persons in various periods paid much attention to making use of traditional resources for promoting the dissemination of new ideological concepts and new culture. This feature was also quite clearly manifested during the New Culture Movement. In an article I wrote 10 or more years ago, I noted: “At a time when various ideologies were in sharp conflict during the New Culture Movement, Hu Shih, Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren devoted a great deal of attention to drawing upon traditions for the strength to defend themselves and hit back. They cited as ‘persons with the same ideals’ all men from pre-Qin times and up to the end of the Qing Dynasty who exhibited any willingness to face realities and engage in independent thought, and they strove to bring to light all ‘heterodoxies.’” I also noted: “We can by and large discern from the works and pronouncements of the new personages in ideological and academic circles of those times several of the principal unorthodox tendencies that directly influenced the thinking of these persons: First, the non-Confucian schools of thought in pre-Qin times. Second, folksongs, folk ballads and all vernacular-type works since the time of the Book of Odes. Third, the sentiments of the Pure Talk school in the Wei and Jin eras. Fourth, the skeptical and critical attitudes against blind belief in authority on the part of Wang Chong in the first century AD to Kang Youwei and Zhang Taiyan in the early twentieth century. Fifth, nonconformist attitudes, from the emphasis on efficacy in the *Technological Volumes of Mozi*, through Wang Chong’s *Abhorrence of Fabrications*, to the importance placed on empiricism and pragmatism by Gu Yanwu and Yan Yuan, and to the revival of practical thought by the mid-Qing thinkers of the “statecraft school.” And sixth, the thought and activities of Wang Mang, Wang Anshi and Zhang Juzheng down to the 1898 reformers such as Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao and Tan Sitong” (Geng Yunzhi 1994). I could also mention more nonmainstream and heterodox thinking which had the effect of nourishing and boosting the New Culture Movement. Examples are Yang Zhu’s “*wei wo*” (Serving the Self) and Li Zhi’s pursuit of free thought and should even include certain aspects of Confucian thought that had previously escaped attention or new interpretations thereof.

I stress this matter because it is of major significance both theoretically and in practice. The transformation of a culture does not mean a culture suddenly changing into another culture overnight, nor does it mean one culture being replaced all at



once by another culture. It means the emergence of a new culture on the basis of a gradual accumulation of changes within a culture, exposures to stimulations from outside, and assimilations of useful elements from those stimulations. Those transformations, no matter how momentous and how profound, in the final analysis take place on the basis of accumulations in the previously existing culture, and it is certain that none of the useful elements in the old culture will be lost. In past years some people persistently cited the loss of fine traditions as their reason for resisting any critical rethinking of traditions and the assimilation of outside cultures. There was absolutely no theoretical foundation for such behavior. Their resistance was probably based on two circumstances: First, their actual interests were too closely linked to the old order, and secondly, they were too far separated from the masses of people, and the traditions they cherished had been culled from outdated books and writings. They did not realize that the truly vital traditions in the national culture—the indelible and indestructible traditions of their national culture—were rooted in the everyday lives and accreted to the cultural mentality and the most basic norms of behavior of millions upon millions of Chinese. No matter what changes take place in China's culture, such changes cannot turn the Chinese into foreigners. Thus, on the issue of cultural transformation, we should hew to an open cultural state of mind and welcome all outside cultures that are beneficial to us and at the same time boost our national self-confidence—a steadfast self-confidence erected on the standpoint of the broad masses of people. After undergoing inevitable transformations, a great national culture will certainly radiate still greater vim and vigor.

Here we must unavoidably devote a few words to the future development of China's new culture.

I believe the most basic developments and advances of culture in a modern world proceed along two paths: globalization and individualization.

Globalization means dealing with the relations between Chinese culture and world culture with an open cultural state of mind. When expounding on the progressiveness of capitalism, Marx put much emphasis on the overall trend toward globalization brought by capitalism. While communism moves forward on the basis of the advances brought by capitalism or eliminates its irrationalities and drawbacks, for instance, it eliminates class oppression domestically and national oppression internationally, it by no means constitutes a retreat from the path of globalization back to a state of isolation from the outside world. Anyone with the least bit of common sense can understand that cultural closed-doorism is detrimental to the development and advance of culture. As we look back at our country's cultural progress in modern times, it is evident that all cultural advances of any importance have had to do with reference to and assimilations from cultures other than our own. For example, education and the publishing of books and newspapers—both of which are most closely linked to cultural development and progress—as well as the modern foundations laid for literature and art and the sciences could not have become realities without reference to and assimilations from Western culture. True, twists and turns and mistakes were unavoidable in this process, but there was no circumventing the process. Nor was it at all possible to

count on smooth sailing throughout the course of comprehending, referencing, and assimilating outside cultures. The Chinese communists experienced a great many twists and turns and made mistakes, some very grave, in the process of learning and practicing Marxism. And as we review China's history in modern time, we see that our social and cultural advances were somewhat faster when we consciously implemented policies of openness or somewhat slower when we did not. For instance, it is common knowledge that China's modern cultural endeavors made slow progress during the 60 years from the Opium Wars to the time of the Boxer Incident. We have cited some statements by Liang Qichao regarding this matter in Chap. 10 of this book. But the social and cultural advances in the 6 or 7 years after the Qing government's 1905 decision to prepare a constitution according to the Western model were swifter than those in the preceding 60 years. A tendency toward more openness emerged when China took a more conscious part in world affairs in the wake of the First World War. That tendency fueled the rise of the great New Culture Movement which in turn further promoted openness in society. This—the heretofore most open era in modern Chinese history—brought about unprecedented advances in culture. All unbiased persons today acknowledge it was the New Culture Movement which opened up new paths for many of the aspects of modern Chinese culture. For a long period of time around the 1950s, China was reduced to a closed or semi-closed state as a consequence of wars, turmoil, and imperialist embargoes, and social and cultural progress slowed down considerably. After the Decade of Turmoil [of the Cultural Revolution] ended and ever since the government has implemented the policy of openness, the advances we have achieved in less than 30 years virtually surpass the sum total of all advances made in the past hundred plus years. This is the best proof of the important relationship between openness and cultural progress.

Only with an open cultural mentality is it possible to have a sound understanding of the globalization of culture, which means realistically recognizing that China's culture is a part of the world culture, that the useful things we draw from world culture enrich and develop our own culture, and that contributing the best of our culture to the world also promotes advances in world culture. Hence, the globalization of culture certainly does not mean transcending the cultures of the world's countries and nations to fabricate another so-called world culture, nor does it mean having the culture of one given nation supplant the cultures of other countries and peoples to become a so-called world culture. The globalization of culture only means devising mutual exchanges and communication among the cultures of all of the world's countries and peoples, wherein each takes what is beneficial to itself to develop its own culture, and wherein each contributes its best to enrich and promote advances in world culture. For a long time in the past, we failed to form a world culture concept. Our minds were preoccupied with thoughts about sharp conflicts between Chinese and Western cultures and were never able to dispel obsessions about "guarding against the barbarians" or diverse perplexities about the Chinese and Western cultures. And so we had no understanding of, and little or no awareness or self-confidence regarding, the relationship between Chinese culture and world culture. However, we Chinese will certainly gain an ever clearer understanding of this matter along with the deepening of reform and openness and as China's

modernization effort progresses. And China's culture is bound to play an ever-increasing role in the development of world culture as a whole.

Now, about individualization.

"Individualization" means emancipating people, emancipating people's individuality, and emancipating the creative spirit and the capabilities of each and every person. When we explained the significance of cultural transformation, we stressed that it means causing China's culture to change from a medieval culture which was suited to the needs of a unified monarchical autocracy and a patriarchal system, looked up to one person as the supreme authority, was relatively closed, and fettered the personality over to a modern culture which is suited to some sort of democratic system, is relatively open, and respects the personality. An important content here is changing from "fettering the personality" over to "respecting the personality." Indeed, "respecting the personality" and "emancipating the personality" were major issues of fundamental significance in the China of modern times, because the unified system of monarchical autocracy that lasted more than 2,000 years in China and the patriarchal system related to it had consistently denied and suppressed people's personality, regarded any thoughts, utterances, or actions that manifested personality as "heterodoxies" and as rank insubordination, and did all it could to extirpate them. It was quite evident that respect for the personality would require that the individual be permitted freedom of thought and speech and that the individual's freedom of action should be acknowledged as long as such actions did not infringe on other people's freedoms. But in that case the unified system of centralized power and monarchical autocracy could no longer exist. Under that autocratic system, "all lands under heaven belong to the monarch, and all who live on these lands are the monarch's courtiers and subjects." Under that system, if the ruler ordered a court official to die, the court official had to die, and that was not to mention ordinary people! There could be no freedom of personality for either courtiers or the common people under monarchical autocracy. Over more than 2,000 years, this system developed an entire coordinated system of rites, rituals, and Confucian moral concepts and values. From the time a person was born, he or she was taught a series of ethical norms, such as the Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues, the Three Obediences and Five Virtues for women, and so forth, which together wove a tight web around each person. Wrapped in this web, people were denied freedom of action and even freedom of thought. As Liang Qichao put it, from the time the Chinese were born, they had to behave themselves within the bounds of a given mold and would be unable to hold themselves upright if they digressed from that mold. Hence, people were inherently timid and overcautious and shied away from the least excesses. How could people give any play to their independent initiative or creativity under such social conditions? And how could one expect vigorous and unhindered development in a society that suppressed people's independent initiative and creativity? Brief intervals of prosperity could yet be seen in ancient times during occasional appearances of wise rulers and virtuous ministers, but even such chance appearances petered out in the last years of feudalism. And so, forward-looking persons in modern times issued call after call for emancipation of the personality, from Yan Fu's expositions on Western individualism which he likened to "preservation of the self," to Liang

Qichao's evocation of "new people" to awaken people's personalities, and to the explicit promotions of individuality by Hu Shih and others during the New Culture Movement. Only then did the concepts of individuality and the individual gradually acquire legality in the minds of the Chinese.

As I recall, Liang Shuming, who had always been seen as a cultural conservative, once said something that has won my respect. He said the greatest deficiency of Chinese culture was that the individual was nowhere to be found. Arguably, the greatest contribution of the New Culture Movement was that it discovered the individual and that it enabled the concepts of individuality and the emancipation of the personality to openly and overtly take their places in Chinese culture and the minds of many Chinese.

On close thought, the New Culture Movement made three important contributions on the individuality issue. (1) It set forward clear definitions for individuality: First, there had to be freedom of the individual will, and, secondly, the individual had to assume responsibility. The first drew the line against all forms of slave mentality, and the second drew the line against self-indulgence and willful behavior by self-serving persons. The presence or otherwise of these clear definitions made a difference. These clear definitions gave individuality a legitimacy which made it possible for all people—excluding those whose interests were directly tied to authoritarianism or those who were ideologically utterly intransigent—to accept, or adopt a sympathetic attitude, or at least adopt a neutral stance toward the concept of individuality. (2) It defined the correct relationship of individual freedoms with the freedoms of the state and the nation. Yan Fu and Liang Qichao were the most important initiators of and publicists and agitators for the early concept of freedom in China. However, both of them became mired in perplexities about the relationship of individual freedoms with the freedoms of the state and the nation. They even maintained that personal freedoms should be relinquished and sacrificed for the sake of the freedoms of the state and the nation. This was clearly incorrect. History has shown that if all people relinquish freedoms of the individual, then the freedoms of the state and the nation they have fought for will only become the best excuse and grounds for new autocrats to suppress personal freedoms. Hence, leaders of the New Culture Movement explicitly pointed out that the individual's fight for freedom was fundamentally consistent with the fight for the freedoms of the state and the nation. Only free people could create a free country; and the people of a free country must be free. (3) It directly linked individuality and personal freedom with the implementation of the democratic system. Affirmation of personal autonomy and independence and of personal freedom is the fundamental basis of a modern democratic state. Individuals are not appendages of the state, and the state's fundamental mission is to protect the rights and interests of every one of its citizens. Hence, a genuine democratic system is based on the safeguarding of the individual's rights.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Geng Yunzhi: "Globalization and Individualism: Two Important Trends in Modernization," carried in *Quarterly of the Academic Board of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*, 2nd collection, Social Sciences Documentation Publishing House, 2005, and Chap. 8 of this book.

The first consideration when promoting individuality is to free “individuals” from the fetters of autocracy and the patriarchal system so that all become autonomous and independent persons. Thereafter the people, the populace, and the public no longer figure as abstract entities but become society’s mainstay formed of real and specific individuals. Only when this mainstay of society is identified can the democratic system be fully implemented. And only under such conditions can each person give full rein to his or her initiative and creative abilities, and society be imbued with vitality and make constant progress. Under such social conditions, culture can be said to have genuinely embarked on the path of modern development.

Fostering an open cultural state of mind and bringing about a benign interaction of China’s culture with world cultures externally and fully emancipating the personality and giving full rein to the initiative and creative abilities of each member of society internally—such are the basic approaches toward the development of China’s new culture in modern times.

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## Postscript

This book contains the first volume and the introduction of the original nine-volume *Study of Modern China's Cultural Transformation* which I compiled and edited. That book drew a good deal of attention in academic circles after its publication, and not a few of my friends told me that the present book should be published separately from the nine-chapter version. It so happened that the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press decided to publish an English translation of this book and hoped I would do some suitable condensing of the content. The book's original preface was written for the entirety of the nine-chapter book. Researcher Liu Zhiqin had been asked to compile the original Chapter 1 "Mutations and Changes Within the Traditional Culture at the Juncture of the Ming and Qing dynasties," while Assistant Researcher Wang Fazhou was asked to do Chapter 2 "Rheological Changes in Qing Ideology, Academics and Culture Before the Opium Wars," and both had conducted lengthy in-depth studies on these topics. Since no clear demarcation had been made in the original book between these two chapters and the other ten, some readers mistakenly believed that I saw the juncture of the Ming and Qing dynasties as the beginning of China's modern era. Thus, the publication of the English-language version and the need to condense it have served me as an opportunity to compress and restructure chapters 1 and 2 as the introduction of the present book (Chap. 1) as well as to renumber the succeeding chapters 3 to 12 as Chaps. 2 to 11, respectively. I feel this has improved the structure of the book. Nevertheless, the revised Introduction (Chap. 1) of the book still embody the labors of researchers Liu Zhiqin and Wang Fazhou, and I am especially grateful to Liu and Wang for their understanding and support for this compressed and restructured version.

This book was rendered in English by Wang Huimin, an experienced and esteemed veteran in the field of translation, and I hereby extend to him my sincere gratitude and respect.

The compressing and restructuring of this book has abbreviated it by some 45,000 Chinese characters. I also once more express my thanks to Researcher Cui

Zhihai who helped me check and approve the texts of the original book, to Assistant Researcher Chen Yuwu who compiled the index of names for the original edition, and to Doctor Wang Daili who assisted me in checking and verifying the quotations in the original edition.

Geng Yunzhi

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