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Peace under Heaven:

The (Re)Making of an Ideal World Order in Chinese Utopianism (1902-1911)

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

in Asian Languages and Cultures

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Professor Shu-Mei Shih, Chair

This dissertation explores the visions of an ideal world order in Chinese utopianism at the turn of the twentieth century. Utopian works produced at this time are addressed both as literary texts and as thought experiments. Reflections about an ideal world order first arose in pre-Qin times in the concept of *tianxia* (All-under-Heaven). Over time, a whole set of institutions evolved around *tianxia*, which became the kernel of state ideology. Only in the late Qing period, when China encountered unprecedented crisis occasioned by its introduction to the modern world by Western and Japanese imperialism, did intellectuals significantly revive the utopian implications of *tianxia*. Among the concerns of late Qing utopians, prospects for the Chinese/yellow race, the potential of science and technology, and the critical role of morality are the most prominent in their consideration of an ideal world order. Driven by “obsession with

China,” they were inclined to envision a new China that restored its power through moral, social, and political reforms as well as technological progress, then to go on to establish the Chinese/yellow race’s global hegemony. Interestingly and importantly, the imagined Sinocentric world order in these works features a tension between the desire to seek vengeance on the West and the hope to realize universal peace and prosperity. In some cases, the aim for universal peace, in the form of Pax Sinica, was actually complicit with Chinese global hegemony. However, there were also thoughtful proposals for a genuine universalism, such as Kang Youwei’s *Book of Great Unity*. As discursive attempts to transcend Western modernity characterized by nationalism, colonialism, and industrial capitalism, these utopian works provide important perspectives not only for understanding Chinese history since the late Qing but also for imagining the future of a rising China where the discourse of *tianxia* has regained its prominence.

The dissertation of Guangyi Li is approved.

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INTRODUCTION

Envisioning an Ideal World in Transitional China

Peace under Heaven explores the (re)construction of an ideal world order in Chinese utopianism over the last decade of the Qing dynasty in relation to three major issues of modernity—ethno/race-nation, science and technology, and morality—their utopian presentation, combination, and contradiction.¹ Late Qing utopianism not only provided inspiring designs for domestic reform, but also raised daring challenges to the ruling hierarchy of the world system at the time. Its importance, while ignored for a long time, has now become evident as China restores its regional and global influence. Hereinafter I will first state the historical and practical significance of the ideal world order in late Qing thought, bringing forth major issues, main texts, and my analytical framework. The second section comments on how this project contributes to and is informed by the existing research in studies of the political theories and institutions of “All-under-Heaven” (*tianxia* studies), late Qing intellectual history, and utopian studies. Section three offers an overview of the four chapters of my

¹ Here I try to clarify a few crucial notions pertinent to my research. Contemporary utopian studies has defined utopia as broadly as “the expression of the desire for a better way of being” and utopia as “social dreaming”. Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, London: Philip Allan, 1990, 8; Lyman Tower Sargent, “In Defense of Utopia,” *Diogenes* 53.1 (2006): 15. To be specific in my work, I am employing a rather traditional definition of utopia: “A narrative describing an ideal society with detailed account of its political institutions and social organization.” “Utopianism” includes both narrative and non-narrative materials relevant to an ideal society, thus allowing the latter to serve my analysis. In addition, “world order” means the political arrangement of the whole world. The basic unit of the world may be race, nation, state, commune, or even individual person, depending on the context. A cosmopolitan utopia is a utopia that depicts an ideal world order. Terms such as “cosmopolitan utopia,” “world utopia,” and “world ideal” are to be used interchangeably. For a full review of the evolution of the concept of utopia and derivative concepts, see Fátima Vieira, “The Concept of Utopia,” *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010: 3-27.

dissertation.

It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that the significance of China's economic, political, and military might in the 21st century has aroused world-wide curiosity about China's ideas on the world order. Some acute observers have sensed that "a new worldview is emerging."² What is this new worldview? The Chinese authorities have been promoting the concept of a "peaceful rise," while giving little clue as to how the future world system that China envisions will actually be shaped. In contrast, Chinese scholars have been much more active in proposing and debating various notions of ideal world order that China's rise has occasioned. A case in point is Zhao Tingyang, who argues for a revival of the traditional *tianxia* system. According to Zhao, the idea of *tianxia*, as the most important foundational element of Chinese political thought, *mutatis mutandis*, promotes a tolerant Chinese universalism, which is more effective than any Western political theory in solving conflicts.³ Zhao's theory has excited a lively discussion among Chinese and Western scholars, who nonetheless have not arrived at a consensus on the significance of the revived *tianxia*.⁴ Overall, there is still great uncertainty as to how China is positioning itself in a new world order and what that order might be like.

China's global strategy, in some sense, has been deliberately ambiguous, as can be seen in Deng Xiaoping's low profile policy of *taoguang yanghui* (hide one's capacities and bide one's time).⁵ Such a policy, coupled with China's desperate

² Mark Leonard, *What Does China Think?* New York: PublicAffairs, 2008, 133.

³ Zhao Tingyang, *Tianxia tixi: shijie zhidu zhexue daolun*, Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2005.

⁴ See Zhao Tingyang, "Tianxia tixi de yige jianyao biao-shu," *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (2008.10): 57-58.

⁵ In response to the disintegration of the USSR-led socialist bloc and the international isolation imposed upon

emphasis on economic development, gave rise to a profound sense of uncertainty and even bewilderment about the values China should cherish and pursue in the world.

This vacuum of values regarding the world has still earlier origins, however. As opposed to the turbulent geopolitical reshuffle of East Asia in the twentieth century, the pre-modern inter-state system of this region had remained fairly consistent.

Whoever took over what is now called “China Proper,” be it a Han or non-Han regime, had assumed East Asian hegemony, and accordingly developed Pax Sinica, or in John K. Fairbank’s words, “the Chinese world order.”⁶ It asserts the Chinese emperor’s, or the Son of Heaven’s role as the supreme ruler, and maintains a concentric hierarchy subordinating all the tributaries around China.⁷ Such a Sinocentric order began to take shape in the pre-Qin times, came to full growth in the Qin-Han period, underwent significant changes from the Song onwards, especially in the Qing dynasty, and finally crumbled as a consequence of the European powers’ invasion in the 19th century. However, China’s recognition of the real world order in the nineteenth century—in which European powers colonized and controlled almost the entire world, while China, large but feeble, risked collapse and disintegration on the periphery—was never identical to its definition of an ideal world order developed in the meantime. Both contributed to China’s national revolution from the late Qing onwards, but the latter, though latent in Chinese political thought, functioned in a

China after the Tiananmen event, Deng called in the fall of 1989 for calming down and concentrating on China’s own business. The very phrase *Taoguang yanghui* was only used three years later. With regard to Deng’s exact strategic intention, there continue to be controversies. One thing is clear, though: Deng’s China did not take the lead of the socialist camp after the USSR’s collapse.

⁶ John K. Fairbank, “A Preliminary Framework,” *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China’s Foreign Relations*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968, 1.

⁷ For a comprehensive description of this ideal pattern, see *ibid.*, 4-11.

more profound and persistent way. Communism, for instance, set up an ideal world order to be achieved through world revolutions. In the post-Mao era, however, communism is no longer the dominant ideology. Different ideologies are now competing for China's future, but only recently was there a real return of theories of *tianxia* in the landscape of Chinese political thought.

Late Qing utopianism deserves a new look, since it is the beginning of the (re)making of an ideal world order in Chinese thought.⁸ Confronted with a hostile, real world, Chinese intellectuals in the late Qing fought back in their imaginary worlds. With a major exception in *Zhouli* (Rituals of Zhou), the Chinese classics had hardly depicted an ideal inter-state system. The aforementioned normative pattern of world order as described by Fairbank, although well evidenced by ritual and diplomatic practices of the tributary system, was not fully theorized in historical documents. It was the late Qing utopian thinkers who were preoccupied with the question of the world order, and it is to their work that we must turn in order to grasp new theories of world order from Chinese perspectives. The last decade of the Qing dynasty, in terms of the amount of world utopias composed in this period, dwarfs any time in the history of Chinese utopian thought. Besides its quantity and global dimension, late Qing utopian writing is also remarkable for the illustrious thinkers who took part in it: Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Cai Yuanpei, Wu Jianren, to name but a few. Should this list extend to those who never authored any utopian narrative per se, yet contributed to utopian thought, Sun Yat-Sen also comes to mind. Mao

⁸ Succeeding to the pre-modern Chinese world order, late Qing utopianism reconstructed a world ideal. This world, however, is for the first time equal to the entire real world in scale. In this sense, late Qing thinkers made a groundbreaking effort to theorize a genuinely all-inclusive ideal world order.

Zedong's anarchist thought, although emerging only in the 1910s, is also worth noting. The involvement of such a constellation of important thinkers and politicians, whose ideas and practices laid the foundation for modern China, indicates the profound significance of utopian thought.

This project is, therefore, intended to examine the world ideals imagined in the initial years of China's twentieth century. To reveal their significance and influence in a transitional period of Chinese history, I will address the following issues: 1) What are the core elements of an ideal world order which they proposed? 2) How did they negotiate between Chinese and Western utopian traditions? 3) With regard to the new world ideals in modern Chinese utopianism, in what sense are they creative and revolutionary, as opposed to their Chinese progenitors and Western counterparts? Answering these questions will shed new light on the trajectory of modern Chinese utopianism, whose important role in the formation of modern China is yet to be illuminated.

My analytical focus falls upon selected late Qing utopian narratives, including Liang Qichao's *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* (A story of future new China, 1902)⁹, Kang Youwei's *Datong shu* (Book of great unity, 1902)¹⁰, Cai Yuanpei's "Xinnian meng" (New Year's dream, 1904), Wu Jianren's *Xin shitou ji* (A new story of the stone, 1905), Xu Zhiyan's *Dian shijie* (Electrical world, 1909), among others. Related newspaper essays, magazine articles, and political treatises will also be taken into account. These works demonstrate diverse political views, which in turn offer very distinct

⁹ My study begins from the year of 1902 since it was *A Story of Future New China* that led to the rise of utopian narratives in late Qing.

¹⁰ *Book of Great Unity* is not a narrative work. In this book, though, Kang Youwei has indeed described the future evolution of human history.

formulations of utopian worlds. For example, Cai Yuanpei, as a noted early Chinese anarchist, advocates the abolition of states and aspires to the global realization of anarcho-communism, while Wu Jianren, in support of constitutional monarchy, imagines a sage-king who rules China and maintains world peace by “civilized autocracy.”

These utopian works share some common features, which I analyze under the rubric of “utopian modernity.” The connotation of utopian modernity is threefold. First, utopian *modernity* deals with various issues brought forward by the modern world. Modern utopian novels and theses are intended to echo the concerns of industrial capitalism, nation and nationalism, and colonialism. In terms of the works to be surveyed in my research, most of them have explored China’s industrial modernization and the ensuing remaking of the world order. At stake in my dissertation are the implication and agency of the three previously mentioned issues of modernity—ethno/race-nation, science and technology, and morality. Second, *utopian modernity* signifies disruption, radical transformation, and even revolution. Modernity, in the context of late Qing China, is less a natural outgrowth of local history than a set of imported foundational ideas and institutional arrangements. Some Chinese thinkers wrote down their doubts and critiques; however, their intellectual resistance was overwhelmed by popular utopian hopes invested in industry, nationalism, and the nation-state, and later in science and democracy. The revolutionary and progressive potential of these concepts was celebrated, while their dark side was less noticed. Third, utopian *modernity* defines a new period of utopian writing. While most pre-modern utopian ideals are recorded in poems, anecdotes, and sketches, modern

utopias adopt the form of fiction, especially the novel, and thus contain much more detail and greater elaboration. Similarly, thanks to the growth of print culture and public education, modern utopianism has a much broader readership. Writing utopia and utopianism, therefore, became a more influential project, and eventually part of revolutionary practice. Utopian modernity, characterized by societal transformation, intellectual radicalness, and genre innovation, is particularly important in our understanding of late Qing China.

Literature Review

1, *Tianxia* Studies

This dissertation, while focusing on the final years of imperial China, is based on and part of an inquiry into China's ideas and practices related to world order throughout its long history. Scholarship on *tianxia*, the concept central to Chinese worldview, as well as the ideologies, institutions, and activities evolving around *tianxia*, are thus of primary significance for my research. So far, there has been no comprehensive account of the development of *tianxia* in Chinese thought, but two works provide basic information and helpful references. In his master's thesis on the transformation of the view of *tianxia* in the Zhou, Qin, and Han dynasties, You Yi-fei has built his argument upon a solid textual basis. He points out that *sifang*, rather than *tianxia*, was the symbol of world order in the Western Zhou period. The emergence of *tianxia*, a word remarkable for its universalistic implication, reflects the general need of peace and order resulting from frequent wars among Eastern Zhou states. The

scope of *tianxia*, territorially and conceptually, varied along with the transformation of imperial power under the Qin and Han. In the Han dynasty, the implementation of the *fengjian* institution resulted in a dual system of counties and states that coexisted within the imperial *tianxia*.¹¹ In comparison with You, Watanabe Shinichiro is more concerned with the political institutions based upon the idea of *tianxia*. In the third chapter of his book on classical Chinese kingship and *tianxia* order, “The Concept of *tianxia* and the formation of Chinese Classical State Institution,” he appropriates Yoshida Takashi’s study of classical Japan, arguing that all civilizations have developed in ancient times their respective state institutions and cultures that set up the foundation for later generations. In the case of China, the “classical state institution” (*kotenteki kokusei*) is a combination of *tianxia*, “a specific Chinese concept of political unification” and “various substantiated ideological devices.”¹² To analyze this fundamental institution, it is necessary to explore the formation of the concept of *tianxia* itself (chapter 2) as well as institutionalized ceremonies (chapter 5), symbolic spaces (chapter 4), and the ideological structure they represent (chapter 1).

Watanabe’s research is inspiring because his analysis of *tianxia*, rather than a mere conceptual inquiry, examines different aspects of the political institution centered on the idea of *tianxia*. Representing traditional Chinese worldview, the notion of *tianxia* is a synthesis of knowledge and value. “The ingredients in a world view may have cognitive significance to the thinker; he may find them true. But a

¹¹ You Yi-fei, “Sifang, tianxia, jingguo—Zhou Qin Han tianxia guan de biange yu fazhan,” M.A. thesis, Taiwan University, 2009.

¹² Watanabe Shinichiro, *Zhongguo gudai de wangquan yu tianxia zhixu: cong rizhong bijiaoshi de jiaodu chufa*, trans. Xu Chong, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008, 78.

worldview is preeminently a structure of values, a credo responding to man's need for anchorage in life."¹³ *Tianxia* came forth in the transformation of politics and society, and its importance lies in the political operation and social organization it inspires people to accomplish. To understand the specific *tianxia* as a polity that shaped historical China, which accords fully with neither "empire" nor "nation" in modern political theories, it is necessary to refer to the thematic studies Watanabe has suggested.¹⁴ My dissertation, for its concern with the relation between *tianxia* institution and world order, pays close attention to two more fields:

1) Orthodoxy. In Chinese history, *zhengtong* (orthodoxy 正統) has remained a crucial question in politics. According to Rong Zongyi's study, the idea of orthodoxy derived from the Qin's unification of *tianxia*. In Han scholars' interpretation of the beginning of *Chunqiu* (Annals of spring and autumn), the king, endowed with the Heavenly Mandate, changes the calendar, alters the color of clothes, sets up rites and music, and occupies *zhongguo* (Central Terrain) to rule over the whole *tianxia*.¹⁵ The prerequisite to be the recipient of the Heaven's Mandate is *de* 德. As Wang Jianwen has pointed out, in the re-construction of political legitimacy in the Zhou-Qin-Han transition, a dominant interpretation of *de* is the inherent and sometimes mystic nature

¹³ W. Warren Wagar, *Worldviews: A Study in Comparative History*, Hinsdale: The Dryden Press, 1977, 4-5.

¹⁴ In terms of the pre-Qin and Qin-Han period, the following works provide valuable discussions about *tianxia*: 1) conceptual history: Hsing, I-tien, "Tianxia yijia—chuantong zhongguo tianxiaguan de xingcheng," *Qinhan shi lungao*, Taipei: Dongda tushu, 1987, 3-41; Luo Zhitian, "Xianqin de wufuzhi yu gudai de tianxia zhongguo guan," *Minzu zhuyi yu jindai zhongguo sixiang*, Taipei: Dongda tushu, 1998, 1-34; Yuri Pines, "Changing Views of *tianxia* in Pre-imperial Discourse," *Oriens Extremus* 43 (2002): 101-16; Chang Chi-shen, "'Zhongguo' yu 'tianxia' gainian chutan," *Dongwu zhengzhi xuebao* 27.3 (2009): 169-256; Kan Huai-chen, "Tianxia gainian chengli de zaitansuo," *Beijing daxue zhongguo guwenxian yanjiu zhongxin jikan* 9 (2010): 333-49. 2) rituals and ceremonies: Kan Huai-chen, "Qin han de 'tianxia' zhengti: yi jiaosili gaige wei zhongxin," *Dongya lishi shang de tianxia yu zhongguo gainian*, ed. Kan Huai-chen, Taipei: Taiwan daxue chubanshe, 2007, 93-148; 3) space: Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; Mark Edward Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006; 4) ideology: Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999.

¹⁵ Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue shang zhi zhengtong lun*, Shanghai: Shanghai yuandong chubanshe, 1996, 3-7.

rather than any moral quality or obligation the rulers have to display or shoulder for *tianxia*.¹⁶

2) Hua-Yi relations. Although *tianxia* is remarkable for its all-inclusive connotation, in Chinese history there was a constant practice to distinguish the inside from the outside, the Hua 華 (“the Chinese”) and the yi 夷 (“the barbarians”). Luo Zhitian’s analysis reveals the duality of such divisions. The alleged difference between the Hua and yi is based on culture, and therefore these two identities are interchangeable. On certain occasions, however, the political situation gave rise to a sharp Hua-Yi opposition that denied the possibility for the yi to become the Hua. This hostile view against the yi persisted in Chinese thought and dramatically promoted the reception and spread of modern nationalism in late Qing times.¹⁷ Yuri Pines has a more careful analysis of the Hua-Yi dichotomy. He reveals that, although the Hua people called the yi and *di* birds and beasts, this was not a racist rhetoric, since for people at that time humans differ from beasts by their distinctive practice of rites. In other words, what matters is still culture. Moreover, many pre-Qin thinkers such as Mozi and Zhuangzi challenged the distinction between the Hua and yi as well as the cultural superiority of the former. Along with the rise of the concept of *tianxia* and increasing communication between the Hua and yi, the line between them became even more blurred. The universal ideal of *tianxia* has greatly contributed to the formation of multi-ethnic China.¹⁸ It is necessary to contrast Pines’ article with Wang

¹⁶ Wang Jianwen, *Fengtianchengyun: gudai zhongguo de “guojia” gainian jiqi zhengdangxing jichu*, Taipei: Dongda tushu, 1995, 65-95.

¹⁷ Luo Zhitian, “Yixia zhibian de kaifang yu fengbi,” *Minzu zhuyi yu jindai zhongguo sixiang*, Taipei: Dongda tushu, 1998, 35-60.

¹⁸ Yuri Pines, “Beasts or Humans: Pre-Imperial Origins of Sino-Barbarian Dichotomy,” *Mongols, Turks, and*

Mingke's emphasis upon the marginal ethnicities' significance for the emergence of *zhongguo* (Central States), and read them in conjunction with Wang Ke's genealogical overview of the distinct Chinese thought about constructing a multi-ethnic state.¹⁹ Overall, the changing Hua-Yi relation reflects the flexibility of what Watanabe has termed the "*tianxia* state."

A less explored topic relating to *tianxia* is its function in the dynamics of the inter-state system. Before the foundation of the Qin-Han dynasties, the ideal of *tianxia* encouraged the project of unification; after the Han dynasty successfully established a complex *tianxia* institution, historical China, through its foreign policies, gradually created an East Asian world order, in which other polities, by emulating China, made different attempts to build their own *tianxia* institution. We should therefore shift our attention from a unified, single China to ancient and medieval East Asian inter-state systems. Concerning the pre-Qin *zhongguo* states, Yan Xuetong and his colleagues have contributed inspiring research to further inquiries.²⁰ About the inter-state system from the Han to Tang dynasties, the scholars working on East Asian history have provided admirable macro-historical accounts of the formation of the East Asian world and the communication and competition among East Asian states.²¹ The

Others, eds. Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran, Leiden: Brill, 2005, 59-102.

¹⁹ Wang Mingke, *Huaxia bianyuan: lishi jiyi yu zuqun rentong*, Taipei: Yunchen wenhua, 1997; Wang Ke, *Minzu yu guojia: zhongguo duominzu tongyi guojia sixiang de xipu*, Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2001.

²⁰ Yan Xuetong et al., *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

²¹ Important works include: Nishijima Sadao, "Dongya shijie de xingcheng," trans. Huang Yuese, *Riben xuezhe yanjiu Zhongguo shi lunzhu xuanyi*, vol.2, ed. Liu Junwen, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992, 88-103; Hori Toshikazu, *Chugoku to kodai ajia sekai: chukateki sekai to moro minzoku*, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1993; Holcombe, Charles, *The Genesis of East Asia, 221 B.C.-A.D. 907*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001; Kao Ming-shih, *Tianxia zhixu yu wenhua quan de tansuo: yi dongya gudai de zhengzhi yu jiaoyu wei zhongxin*, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008; Han Sheng, *Dongya shijie xingcheng shi lun*, Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2009.

question remains as why the theories about *tianxia*, unlike in pre-Qin times, did not promote regional unification in a larger scope? An important reason may be the focus on the state level politics since the Han. As imperial territory, *tianxia* by that time no longer meant a realm that transcends *guo* (state) and constitutes a truly universalistic ideal. Hence, neither China nor neighbor polities sought any grand unification beyond state boundaries. In other words, the East Asia world ended up being a system of multiple *tianxia*. I will make further efforts to elucidate the mechanism of the spread of *tianxia* institution and the development of multi-*tianxia* system below.

In this light, the situation after the Tang dynasty's collapse is interesting. In the chaotic years of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms, a great portion of Tang's territory was lost to non-Han regimes. The scope of both *tianxia* and *zhongguo* shrank considerably.²² For scholars working on the Tang-Song transition, especially the historians of Kyoto school who have raised the famous argument of the "early modern East Asia" (*tōyōteki kinsei*), i.e. modern state (nation-state), economy (capitalism), and culture (secular belief and thought) first emerged in Song China, it is natural to identify and highlight the rise of patriotism and proto-nationalism at this time, especially in the Southern Song years.²³ The still prospering maritime trade notwithstanding, the inward turn at this time is evident. Through a comparison of the

²² Yamazaki Satoshi, "Wuyue guowang yu 'zhenwang' hanyi: wudai shiguo de zhonghua zhixu," *Songdai shehui de kongjian he jiaoliu*, eds. Hirata Shigeki, Endo Takatoshi, and Oka Motoshi, Zhengzhou: Henan daxue chubanshe, 2008, 127-54.

²³ See Miyazaki Ichisada, "Dongyang de jinshi," trans. Huang Yuese, *Riben xuezhe yanjiu Zhongguo shi lunzhu xuanyi*, vol. 1, ed. Liu Junwen, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992, 153-241; Rolf Trauzettel, "Sung Patriotism as a First Step toward Chinese Nationalism," *Crisis and Prosperity in Sung China*, ed. John Winthrop Haeger, Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1975, 199-213; Hoyt C. Tillman, "Proto-Nationalism in Twelfth-Century China? The Case of Ch'en Liang," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 39.2 (Dec. 1979): 403-28; Ge Zhaoguang, "'Zhongguo' yishi zai songdai de tuxian: guanyu jinshi minzuzhuyi sixiang de yige yuanyuan," *Zhai zi Zhongguo: chongjian youguan "Zhongguo" de lishi lunshu*, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011, 41-65.

different interpretations of certain passages of *Liji* (Book of rites) by Kong Yingda and other Tang scholars in *Liji zhengyi* and by Zhu Xi in *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, we can easily find that the discourse of *tianxia* underwent a subtle shift from being a political to social and moral concept. Yet, the idea and practice of the *tianxia* institution did not step down from the stage of history, even if the Chinese world order, for a moment, had disappeared.²⁴ Drafted by Confucians, imperial edicts in the Yuan Dynasty maintained the use of the idea of *tianxia*. We may ask whether the sheer enormity of the Yuan Empire brought any changes to this concept. We may also ask whether Zheng He's expeditionary voyages to Southeast Asia and further regions unsettle the mainstream view of *tianxia* in the Ming dynasty. Also, to what extent did the Han nationalistic consciousness that arose in the Song period inspire later literati? The scholarship on cartography, tributary system, and Sino-foreign relationship has provided helpful clues.²⁵ However, about *tianxia*'s transformation in the Song-Yuan-Ming transition, especially the changes in the ideological dimension, more historical studies are necessary.

For my dissertation, the changes that the concept and institution of *tianxia* underwent in the Qing dynasty are certainly the most important. On the one hand, the Qing Empire expanded its imperial territory, maintained a gigantic tributary system, and developed a unique multiculturalism to rule its large population characterized by

²⁴ See Wang Gungwu, "The Rhetoric of a Lesser Empire: Early Sung Relations with Its Neighbors," *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries*, ed. Morris Rossabi, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983, 47-65.

²⁵ For the history and important case studies of Song-Yuan-Ming cartography, see Ge Zhaoguang's discussion and the works he has cited. Ge Zhaoguang, *Zhai zi Zhongguo*, 132-147. For tributary system, see Li Yunquan, *Chaogong zhidu shi lun: Zhongguo gudai duiwai guanxi tizhi yanjiu*, Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 2004. For China's *tianxia* view, self-identity, and foreign policy, a meaning attempt to negotiate different perspective is Fudan daxue wenshi yanjiuyuan ed., *Cong zhoubian kan Zhongguo*, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009.

ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity. The Manchu emperors, through learning Confucianism, managed to employ the rhetoric of *tianxia* with new interpretations that fit their needs. In the meantime, the particular cosmology, religion, and ritual system of the Manchus played a critical role in placing the non-Han population under their control.²⁶ To some extent, the universalistic idea of *tianxia* was revived. On the other hand, anti-Manchu sentiments, although suppressed ruthlessly, remained among the Han people and finally evolved into Han racism and nationalism. For many Han radicals, the *tianxia* to be recaptured from the Manchu was confined to the traditional ethnic Han area. For those who did not share their abhorrence of the Manchu regime and even the Manchus in general, *tianxia* is often conceived as a larger unit than the Han Chinese realm, sometimes as large as the whole world. Joseph Levenson has made a famous assertion about the *tianxia* tradition's "modern fate": "In large part the intellectual history of modern China has been the process of making *guojia* of *tianxia*. The idea of *tianxia* had indeed been identified with a Way, the Confucian way, the major indigenous Chinese tradition, and when, for one reason and another, modern Chinese turned to foreign ways for China, the exaltation of nation over culture, of *guojia* over *tianxia*, was one of their manoeuvres."²⁷ In contrast to Levenson's oversimplified description, Luo Zhitian has provided a more nuanced appraisal of the late Qing attitude towards *tianxia*. In the transitional period, many intellectuals embraced both nationalism and cosmopolitanism. For them, they are not necessarily

²⁶ See James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1995; Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999.

²⁷ Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy*, vol. 1, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968, 103-04.

conflicting aims. “Although the literati at that time, to different extents, adhered to certain ideas of national community, their worldview was focused on universal order. Nation-state was not their eventual goal. Instead, it was just a stop on the way to the great unity.”²⁸ Yet, Luo, as well as Chang Hao whom he has cited, opposes nationalism to utopianism. But the fact is that, envisioning a powerful new China, late Qing nationalism also had a conspicuous utopian orientation. Luo’s account of late Qing thought further emphasizes the great tension between Chinese and Western civilizations, but the fact is that, either drawing upon local tradition or turning to the self-critique derived from the West, late Qing utopians, who were concerned with “universal order,” tried to overcome the dominant Western universalism through an alternative universalism. Their intellectual effort therefore deserves a second look.

2. Late Qing Intellectual History

Just as the history of *tianxia* features the entanglement of ideas and politics, the specific period under scrutiny, i.e. the last decade of the Qing dynasty, is also marked by the interaction between intellectual progress and political development. In this regard, a couple of notable works have already set a solid foundation for related discussion. In *Rescuing History from the Nation*, Prasenjit Duara has brought our attention to the view of linear history prevalent in Chinese historical studies, revealing its significance for the formation of Chinese nationalism, and proposed “bifurcated history” as a substitute. Duara argues that the notion of bifurcated history will shed new light on historical development and help us overcome the singular role of the

²⁸ Luo Zhitian, “Lixiang yu xianshi: qingji minchu shijiezhuyi yu minzuzhuyi de guanlian hudong,” *Jindai dushuren de sixiang shijie yu zhixue quxiang*, Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2009, 103.

nation-state in conceptions of modernity.²⁹ Whereas Duara has abandoned the linear temporal framework for thinking of modern history, Rebecca E. Karl has created new possibilities for reflecting on Chinese nationalism from a spatial perspective. Through her study in *Staging the World*, we are exposed to the meaningful interactions in the late Qing period between China and other (semi)colonies, which brought a better sense of “the uneven world of modernity” to late Qing thought.³⁰ Building on the insights of Duara and Karl, I argue that it was within such a new spatiotemporal framework—the conception of linear history and capital/colonial world system—that Chinese utopian thinkers began to imagine a new world in the late Qing. More appropriately, it was this framework that to a large degree made Chinese utopianism modern. In the meantime, this framework’s incompleteness also left room for diverse imaginings of world utopias.

Wang Hui’s ambitious four-volume work, *Xiandian Zhongguo sixiang de xingqi* (The rise of modern Chinese thought) is relevant. In his second volume, under the title of *Diguo yu guojia* (Empire and state), Wang offers a lengthy narration of the revival of New Text Confucianism in the late Qing, highlighting its crucial significance to the changes and eventual reconstruction of a Chinese worldview. According to Wang, early and high Qing scholars who worked on New Text Confucianism creatively employed its political philosophy to argue for ethnic equality within the Manchu-ruled Qing Empire. In response to the rising danger along the empire’s frontiers—the threat of Russian and British Empires—late Qing Han

²⁹ Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

³⁰ Rebecca E. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

scholars, however, began to identify more with the Qing Empire and promoted state-building through New Text Confucianism. Wei Yuan, through compiling *Haiguo tuzhi* (Illustrated gazetteer of the oceanic kingdoms), developed his impressive strategic vision within a much enlarged worldview. In the meantime, the Qing Empire was gradually forced into the system of international law. Finally, the empire lost its struggles with the European powers, as did the Sino-centric tributary system, which was confronted with the Euro-centric treaty system. Despite the failures on the battlefield and at the negotiation table, Chinese intellectuals maintained their confidence and creativity in Confucianism. A remarkable example is Kang Youwei, whose *Book of Great Unity* presents a sharp critique of all kinds of human societies alike, while envisioning a perfect state-less future world based upon a renovated Confucian universalism.³¹ Wang Hui's book provides a very important background account of intellectual history for my project. To fully understand the rise of modern Chinese utopianism, however, his singular emphasis upon New Text Confucianism is insufficient. Take *Book of Great Unity* as an example: Kang Youwei was evidently informed by Western socialism and even anarchism, which received little attention in Wang's analysis. In truth, anarchism was important in the formation of late Qing and utopianism—at least for many core works and figures—that any serious study of modern Chinese utopianism has to take it into full consideration.

My discussion of modern Chinese cosmopolitan utopias, for its specific focus on world order, may also enhance our understanding of science in modern Chinese thought. In terms of the concept of science, extant studies have so far focused on two

³¹ Wang Hui, *Xiandai Zhongguo sixiang de xingqi*, vol.2, Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2004.

aspects: first, the spread of science in media and education; second, late Qing thinkers' varied understandings of *gezhi* (pre-modern Chinese natural studies) and *kexue* (modern science). Benjamin A. Elman has traced the development of *gezhi* from late Ming to late Qing, narrated the invasion of *kexue*, and lamented the former's displacement by the latter.³² Zhang Fan, in contrast, carries out a nuanced analysis of *kexue*'s establishment in Chinese thought. It was in Yan Fu's discussion of national salvation in the late 1890s that the notion of science became familiar to the late Qing intelligentsia. The Japanese translation of science, *kagaku*, was better received among Chinese intellectuals to the point that Yan Fu had to finally give up his use of the term *gezhi*. Ironically, although Yan Fu's later use of *kexue* was closer to the standard usage of "science" in English, other understandings and uses of *kexue*, often imprecise due to the confusing uses of *kagaku* in Japan, were more popular in late Qing China.³³ Furthermore, Wang Hui's exploration of the integral significance of science in the thought of Yan Fu and Liang Qichao, as well as his effort to locate the rise of the concept of science within the *longue durée* of Chinese intellectual history, especially in terms of how traditional Chinese learning has developed certain ideas analogous to those of modern science, is also helpful for my research.³⁴ Wang is also concerned with the function of science in the reconstruction of world order in Chinese thought. However, his interest lies in how late Qing thinkers "sought to provide or discover a

³² Benjamin A. Elman, "From Pre-modern Chinese Natural Studies 格致學 to Modern Science 科學 in China," *Mapping Meanings: The Field of New Learning in Late Qing China*, eds. Michael Lackner and Natascha Vittinghoff, Leiden: Brill, 2004, 28-73.

³³ Zhang Fan, "Cong *gezhi* dao *kexue*: wanqing xueshu tixi de guodu yu bieze," *Xueshu yanjiu* (2009.12): 102-114.

³⁴ Wang Hui, "The Fate of 'Mr. Science' in China: The Concept of Science and Its Application in Modern Chinese Thought," trans. Howard Y. F. Choy, *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*, ed. Tani E. Barlow, Durham: Duke University Press, 1997, 21-81; Wang Hui, *Xiandai Zhongguo sixiang de xingqi*, vol.3.

world order that provided people with a source of value and meaning, as well as criteria for action.”³⁵ In other words, he is more concerned with the role of science in the metaphysical world order. In contrast, my focus is on how science matters to the imagined physical and political world order. In addition, I will examine the concept of technology, which in late Qing thought underwent changes dissimilar to those that happened to the notion of science.

Late Qing utopian thinkers’ obsession with *minzu guojia* (ethno-nation) is also an interesting phenomenon. To examine this feature of late Qing utopianism, I need to base my discussion on the studies of race, ethnicity, and nation in modern Chinese thought. Frank Dikötter has offered a lengthy discussion of the recurrent concept of race in Chinese thought, although his all-inclusive use of the word “race” is sometimes open to question. Consistent with his reluctant mention of “Western influence”, Dikötter is most concerned with the indigenous origin of modern Chinese racism.³⁶ Pamela K. Crossley has provided a detailed account of how the Manchu-Han (in her words, Manchu-China) contradiction translated into racial tension in the late Qing period.³⁷ The above works have proved helpful for us to understand late Qing Han racism, but are far less capable of elucidating the upsurge of

³⁵ Wang Hui, “The Fate of ‘Mr. Science’ in China: The Concept of Science and Its Application in Modern Chinese Thought,” 46.

³⁶ Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1992, 91-95.

³⁷ Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*. For an informative statement of Manchu-Han relations in the late Qing, see Edward J. M. Rhoads, *Manchus and Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861-1928*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2000. For the rise of anti-Manchu race-nationalism and related debates, see Wang Chunxia, “*Paiman*” *yu minzuzhuyi*, Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2005. Crossley argues that the consensus among late Qing nationalists on translating Qing’s territorial integrity into the new China was only a kind of political realism, while Zhao Gang disagrees with her, pointing out that the Manchu rulers, in order to build a multiethnic empire, had made considerable effort to install within the imperial ideology a renewed concept of China/*Zhongguo* that refers to the whole imperial territory. *A Translucent Mirror*, 341; Zhao Gang, “Reinventing China: Imperial Qing Ideology and the Rise of Modern Chinese National Identity in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Modern China* 32.3 (2006): 3-30.

what can be called “yellow racism,” i.e. the racism arguing for the superiority and unification of the yellow race. The catch-phrase of late Qing yellow racism, *huangzhong* (yellow race), was not derived from traditional Chinese thought. On account of the Western influence on late Qing racial thought, we can refer to Michael Keevak’s *Becoming Yellow* for some clues, since this book gives a comprehensive explanation of how the category of yellow race was formed in the Western discursive field.³⁸ In addition, considering Japan’s role in the diffusion of Western racial discourse, Lydia H. Liu’s penetrating discussion of “translingual practice” has prepared a useful analytical tool for my study.³⁹ Last but not least, Wang Hui’s study of late Qing New Text Confucianism forms a dialogue with the work of Crossley: the former draws our attention to the valorization of racial and ethnic equality in New Text Confucian scholars’ theory, while the latter criticizes their moderate racism and other intellectuals’ harsher racism alike. I will make an attempt to draw a full picture of late Qing ideas in relation to race and ethnicity based upon various relevant discussions in late Qing utopianism.

3. Utopian Studies

Early Western utopian studies maintain that utopia is a Western phenomenon, only available within the societies with a Classical and Christian heritage.⁴⁰ Even if utopian stories are found in non-Western traditions, it was averred, in no way can their

³⁸ Keevak, Michael, *Becoming Yellow: A Short History of Racial Thinking*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

³⁹ Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity--China, 1900-1937*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1995.

⁴⁰ Krishan Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987, 428.

quantity be compared with “the profusion of Western utopias.”⁴¹ Recently, the idea of “non-Western utopia” has gained more attention in utopian studies, and Chinese utopia and utopianism has also attracted new attention.⁴² Research to date, however, is either focused on pre-modern Chinese utopia and utopianism, or on the utopian thought and practice during the twentieth-century Chinese Revolution. Regarding the rise of modern Chinese utopianism in the late Qing, most noteworthy are Hsiao Kung-chuan’s elaboration of Kang Youwei’s utopian thought, Wolfgang Bauer’s thoughtful review of the trajectory of Chinese utopianism from the 1800s onwards, and David Der-wei Wang’s insightful discussion of late Qing science-fiction utopias.⁴³ In contrast to the above studies, I will provide a close look at the motivation, mechanisms, and modes of modern Chinese utopianism in its nascent years. In my discussion, Kang Youwei is still an important figure, but I also include Wu Jianren, Liang Qichao, and many other utopian writers who map an ideal world in very different ways.

The complexities within the surge of utopianism in the late Qing can be understood by how competing ideologies promised different utopian futures. My analysis of modern Chinese utopianism will deal with the various ideals that emerged during China’s momentous transition in the early 1900s. Some of them have already

⁴¹ Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in The Western World*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979, 1.

⁴² Jacqueline Dutton, “‘Non-Western’ Utopian Traditions,” *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 223-259. See also the special issue of *Utopian Studies* about “Utopianism in Other Traditions.” *Utopian Studies* 24.1 (2013).

⁴³ Hsiao Kung-chuan, *A Modern China and a New World: K’ang Yu-wei, Reformer and Utopian, 1858-1927*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975, chaps. 10 & 11; Wolfgang Bauer, *China and the Search for Happiness: Recurring Themes in Four Thousand Years of Chinese Cultural History*, trans. Michael Shaw, New York: The Seabury Press, 1976, chap. 5; David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-si ècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849-1911*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1997, 269-86.

been realized with various consequences. Others, having remained in oblivion for quite a long time, may be revived in the future. Different concepts were often found in symbiosis within the designs of world order. For example, Cai Yuanpei's "New Year's Dream" (1904), narrating a world revolution towards anarcho-communism led by China, projects the possibility of the cooperative and competitive relationship between communism and nationalism—two major impetuses for the Chinese Revolution.

Noteworthy as well is the convergence of different utopian traditions. Western utopianism entered into China as part of *xixue* (Western Learning). Unlike the dominant ideologies in the West, utopianism embodied a bitter critique of capitalism. In conjunction with Chinese thinkers' observation of Western civilization, Western utopianism inspired Chinese imaginations of a better society as well as of an ideal world. In the meantime, different branches of Western utopianism competed for ground in China. For instance, among those thinkers who had aroused great interest in China, Edward Bellamy proposed a powerful state, whereas Peter Kropotkin demanded the state's abrogation. The tension between them is clearly detectable in the different Chinese utopias which they inspired, respectively. In most cases, however, the Chinese thinkers imbued their utopian writing with strong Confucian undertones. Such syncretism yields utopias with a unique style, which is best represented by Wu Jianren's *A New Story of the Stone* (1905), in which Confucian values are realized in a modern industrial society. In addition, it is again necessary to understand the mediating role of Japan. Most late Qing thinkers were exposed to Western utopianism and/or utopian literature through Japanese translations. These thinkers derived almost all the modern concepts—important building blocks of an ideal world order—via

Japan.

In Chinese scholarship, there are also very few studies of modern Chinese utopianism, while neither Chinese nor Western scholars have dealt specifically with late Qing utopian writers' remarkable concern with the world. Having read late Qing utopian narratives, one can hardly ignore the imagined China's close association with the world—the secular, worldly world, the world comprised of earthly peoples and nations. As many researchers have noted, the pre-modern Chinese utopian tradition has two prototypical concepts: Daoism's *taiping* (great peace) and Confucianism's *datong* (great unity). *Taiping* is best captured in Tao Yuanming's fifth-century story “Taohua yuan ji” (Peach blossom spring), whereas, in pre-modern times, the word *datong* referred to the Confucian political ideal. Coupled with *datong*, *tianxia* evolved into a Confucian cosmopolitanism, envisioning the universal realization of the great unity. In the late Qing, while the tributary system disintegrated, the ideal of *tianxia* never dissolved. Rather, it embraced a broader new world—its size now equal to the global world—in utopian narratives. With regards to the utopian genre in the Western sense, Dutton had categorized utopian works into four major types: the Golden Age, the Land of Cockaigne, the Millennium, and the Ideal City.⁴⁴ However, the Western utopian tradition “was...rooted in early Hellenistic images of the perfect city or a perfect past.”⁴⁵ For this reason, such a polis-oriented utopian tradition does not

⁴⁴ Jacqueline Dutton, “‘Non-Western’ Utopian Traditions,” 225. The Golden Age refers to the primordial stage of human history characterized by peace and harmony. The Land of Cockaigne (or Cockayne) is a fantastic land of sheer affluence, a reverie shared by many popular medieval literary works. The Millennium means the one-thousand-year period of holiness during which Jesus rules on earth. The Ideal City springs from ancient Greek thinkers' discussion of the ideal polis, especially Plato's imagination in *The Republic*.

⁴⁵ Adam B. Seligman, “The Comparative Study of Utopias,” *Order and Transcendence: The Role of Utopias and the Dynamics of Civilizations*, ed. Adam B. Seligman, Leiden: Brill, 1989, 2.

contain a model implying an ideal world order. Benjamin I. Schwartz points out that “a notion of universal kingship linked to a widely shared sense of participation in a high culture” is common in the ancient civilizations, each building up a universal authority upon its peculiar religio-cosmic basis.⁴⁶ In modern times, imaginations of the world state or the world order are not unique in Chinese utopian writing, either.⁴⁷ I therefore propose to examine all the cosmopolitan utopias under the name of *tianxia* or “All-under-Heaven.” As a new major type of utopia, the All-under-Heaven is well suited to the cross-national perspective or the comparative approach of utopian studies.⁴⁸ In such an era of globalization when utopia becomes “pragmatic,” no longer aspiring to “change the world at a macro-level,” while many urgent problems such as food crisis, environmental protection, and terrorism call for global cooperation at a macro-level, the All-under-Heaven model, putting together all the imaginations of ideal world order for critical analysis, seems very relevant.⁴⁹

My research will also contribute to postcolonial utopian studies by inquiring into the nature of utopian modernity exemplified by late Qing utopianism.

Non-Western utopian studies may be Euro-centric for two reasons. First, in some ex-colonies, utopianism, despite its importance, “was initially based on themes drawn

⁴⁶ Benjamin I. Schwartz, “The Chinese Perception of World Order, Past and Present,” *The Chinese World Order*, ed. John K. Fairbank, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 277.

⁴⁷ “[L]iterary utopias of the last decades of the nineteenth century...normally described a post-historical socialist-communist society on a world-scale.” Fátima Vieira, “The Concept of Utopia,” 14. H. G. Wells is another good example of Western utopian thinkers’ interest in a single world state. See W Warren Wagar, “Science and the World State,” *H. G. Wells under Revision*, eds. Patrick Parrinder and Christopher Rolfe, London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1990, 40-53. For an overview of cosmopolitan utopias, see W. Warren Wagar, *The City of Man: Prophecies of a World Civilization in Twentieth-Century Thought*, New York: Penguin Books, 1967, 13-66.

⁴⁸ Lyman Tower Sargent, “The Necessity of Utopian Thinking: A Cross-National Perspective,” *Thinking Utopia: Steps into Other Worlds*, eds. Jörn Rüsen, Michael Fehr, and Thomas W. Rieger, New York: Berghahn Books, 2005, 1-14.

⁴⁹ Fátima Vieira, “The Concept of Utopia,” 22.

from the colonial power,” only over time could it have its own voice “as it was adapted to the conditions in the new country.”⁵⁰ The underdevelopment of indigenous utopianism may result in its underrepresentation in academic studies. Second, due to the insufficiency of scholarship on non-Western utopianism, researchers often draw mostly upon studies of Western utopian traditions, taking for granted a plethora of assumptions, e.g. the arbitrary Western versus non-Western dichotomy.⁵¹ I argue that modern Chinese utopianism provides a good case for challenging such Euro-centrism. On the one hand, China produced perhaps the richest utopian tradition outside the West. Late Qing thinkers like Kang Youwei, when exposed to Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward, 2000-1887*, readily associated Bellamy’s utopia with the Confucian ideal of great unity. Most late Qing utopias were based on distinctive Chinese themes as much as on Western themes, the Sino-centric world order being a case in point. On the other hand, the aforementioned term “utopian modernity” will bring attention to the context of political economy underlying the formation of modern Chinese utopianism. This term draws much inspiration from “colonial modernity,” by which Tani E. Barlow insightfully calls attention to the indivisibility of colonialism and modernity.⁵² All three aspects of utopian modernity—societal transformation, intellectual radicalness, and genre innovation—have been evinced in Western utopias over time. Only in China, however, were they so clearly demonstrated in the eruption of late Qing utopianism within one short decade, as an

⁵⁰ Lyman Tower Sargent, “Colonial and Postcolonial Utopias,” *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 215.

⁵¹ Jacqueline Dutton, “‘Non-Western’ Utopian Traditions,” 224.

⁵² Tani E. Barlow, “Introduction: On ‘Colonial Modernity,’” *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*, ed. Tani E. Barlow, Duke University Press, 1997, 1-20.

indication of the country's desperate need for modernization in resistance to the threat of colonialism. In addition, with *Book of Great Unity* as a major exception, almost all the late Qing utopian narratives were exclusively written and published in the semicolonial metropolis of Shanghai, the booming economy of which nurtured anti-colonial utopianism.⁵³ Unlike their May Fourth successors, late Qing intellectuals were less trapped in radical anti-traditionalism, and therefore displayed more diversity in response to the semicolonial condition of Shanghai and China. Their varied experience in other colonies, such as Liang Qichao's travels to Hawaii and Kang Youwei's sojourn in British India, further demonstrated colonialism's formative significance upon their utopian thought. In discussing modern Chinese utopianism, I will put much stress on contextualization, which is precisely what Pordzik's *Quest for Postcolonial Utopia*—the only extant full-length study of postcolonial utopia—unfortunately lacks.⁵⁴

Overview of Chapters

The main body of the dissertation includes four chapters. Chapter 1 traces the conceptual evolution of *tianxia*, a political key word that remained crucial throughout the history of Chinese thought. The concept of *tianxia* emerged in the development of early Chinese political cosmology and worldview, and gave discursive impetus to the

⁵³ For an acute analysis of the cultural politics of semicolonialism, see Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001, 30-40, 371-77.

⁵⁴ Ralph Pordzik, *The Quest for Postcolonial Utopia: A Comparative Introduction to the Utopian Novel in the New English Literatures*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2001.

unification of warring states. Over time, this concept integrated multiple meanings of all-inclusive natural, political, and social space, as well as utopian hopes for an ideal society. As historical China reached its geographical limits, the meaning of *tianxia* transformed depending on the dynamics in East Asia, even beyond, varying from China Proper to the whole world. With the rise of neighboring states, however, *tianxia* referred more and more to the territories in which the Qin-Han regimes had maintained firm administrative control for a long time, and lost most of its energy in mapping and shaping the world order in a real sense. Interestingly, while the conceptual ambiguity of *tianxia* eventually caused the decline of its use in the late Qing context, unprecedented changes and impacts reinvigorated the intellectual tradition of thinking about the world order *tianxia* represents.

Late Qing utopian visions of an ideal world order are examined in Chapter 2 through 4. Chapter 2 delves into late Qing utopian thought from the perspective of race and nation. This chapter begins with a historical account of the origin and development of modern racism, especially the concept of the “yellow race” and the racial discrimination and discourse against the people categorized as the “yellow race.” In response to Western racism, Japan and China adopted very different strategies. The yellow color had no special significance in Japanese culture, and Japan therefore disliked and resisted the label of the “yellow race” until it was appropriated to facilitate the Japanese Empire’s expansion. In contrast, for China, a country where the color yellow remained the symbol of greatness, nobility, and royalty for thousands of years, Western racial discourse such as the “Yellow Peril” surprisingly became a catalyst for yellow racism and nationalism. A considerable number of Chinese

intellectuals regarded the xenophobic fear of the “yellow race” in the West as recognition of the potential of the yellow race, from which they derived a utopian prospect for the future of the Chinese as well as the yellow race. It is noteworthy that there are interesting divergences between different utopias thus imagined, reflecting very dissimilar aims and hopes. A new utopian typology based upon the relations between utopia and other societies is thus proposed for analyzing late Qing utopianism.

Chapter 3 shows how science and technology satisfy the multi-level needs of the late Qing Chinese in their utopic visions. Discussed first are the narratives that present how China, through learning and developing scientific research and technological innovation, successfully maintains national security, establishes global hegemony, and provides the Chinese as well as the whole world with better living condition and increasing living space. Aside from safety and well-being, utopian writers expressed greater ambition in creating impressive scientist-protagonists who are the reincarnations of the traditional Chinese *shi* in modern times. In addition to political and social undertakings, these scientific heroes in some cases demonstrate a strong desire for individual transcendence resulting from the late Qing orientation towards freedom and liberation, which was inspired metaphysically by newly revived non-Confucian metaphysics such as Buddhism. Science, then, for its supposed function of promoting collective and individual self-actualization, aroused a sense of sublimity in the Chinese mind that continually nurtured hopes for a utopian future.

Chapter 4 offers a critical review of the exploration of a new morality in late Qing utopianism. It was common among Chinese thinkers at the turn of the twentieth

century to argue that a new morality was indispensable for national salvation. In the meantime, many of them had pointed critiques of Western imperialism and colonialism and strong expectations of a new morality for the whole human community. Whether refashioning the moral teaching of Confucianism or practicing the utterly new morality proposed by anarchism, in utopian dreams China is almost always the model of new social morality that assumes the task of leading all countries into a future of peace and prosperity. On the one hand, such imaginations reflect a meaningful effort to transcend Western modernity through moral critique and reconstruction. On the other hand, due to the utopians' China-centric stance, their projects imply moral conundrums a revived China has to face. Therefore, for today's thinkers concerned with the world order and the role of future China, the utopian works scrutinized in this dissertation may provide important historical and theoretical perspectives and alternatives.

CHAPTER I TIANXIA: ORIGIN, TRANSFORMATION, AND REVIVAL

Even if the Manchu Empire is favored by Heaven as much as the Han and the Ming, in no way is it justified to maintain discriminatory policies against the Han people for hundreds of years and fix them as norms, to the extent of ignoring all the talents over *tianxia* for the sake of a kingly corner.

Zou Rong, *The Revolutionary Army*

If the largest nation (*minzu*) on earth can build a state (*guojia*) that fits natural evolution, then who can usurp its title of honor, the supreme empire over *tianxia*?

Liang Qichao, “On the Trends of National Competition”

In late Qing China, it was common for pro-revolution intellectuals to doubt the Manchu rule of *tianxia* (All-under-Heaven). In their anti-Manchu discourse, *tianxia*, often equated with *zhongguo*, *zhonghua*, *shenzhou*, is deemed the area where the ethnic Han reside and should dominate. In order to topple the Manchu government, whom they abhorred for having unjustly grabbed their land and harshly treated their ancestors and themselves, these scholars, students, and activists braided a considerable number of historical figures into a genealogy of Han heroes who devoted themselves to the defense of *tianxia* since antiquity while mostly from the Song onwards.¹ The Han people, they argued, ought to emulate these great pioneers by

¹ See Shen Sung-chiao, “Zhen da Han zhi tiansheng: minzu yingxiong xipu yu wanqing de guozu xiangxiang,” *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan* 33 (2000): 77-158.

taking part in a racial revolution to restore the power, dignity, and glory of their own race. Meanwhile, though, *tianxia* was also employed in considerations of political order in a broader context. For example, Chen Tianhua states in “Meng huitou” (A sudden look back, 1903) that there are five races over *tianxia*, in which the whites rule, the yellows come second, and the other three races are dying out.² For thinkers pondering the complexities of this larger *tianxia* that means the whole world, the history of China has also provided cognitive references and theoretical inspirations. As a case in point, Liang Qichao, either praising the Chinese tradition of cosmopolitanism that explores the way to human solidarity and happiness throughout *tianxia*, or faulting this tradition for containing national consciousness, harks back to pre-Qin times.³ Evidently, *tianxia* is a key word that bridges classical Chinese thought and practices relevant to different levels of political order with their late Qing counterparts. What is the conceptual origin of *tianxia*? How did this term become central to political discourse? What functions has it performed? What changes has it undergone? To base the discussions of specific themes, works, and figures in later chapters on a solid ground of intellectual history, this chapter offers an overview of *tianxia*’s conceptual evolution along with the vicissitudes of historical China.

² Chen Tianhua, “Meng huitou,” *Meng huitou: Chen Tianhua Zou Rong ji*, ed. Zhi Zhi, Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 1994, 4-5.

³ Liang Qichao, “Shuoqun’ xu” (1896), *Liang Qichao quanji*, vol.1, ed. Zhang Pinxing et al., Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1999, 93; “Aiguo lun” (1899), *Liang Qichao quanji*, vol.1, 270; “Lun Zhongguo xueshu sixiang bianqian zhi dashi” (1902), *Liang Qichao quanji*, vol.2, 579; “Xinmin shuo” (1902), *Liang Qichao quanji*, vol.2, 657.

Early China and the Rise of *tianxia*: An Etymological Survey

Political cosmology has long been central to Chinese society. It is the stress upon the communication between Heaven and human, Chang Kwang-chih argues, that promoted the emergence of political power in early China.⁴ In the Shang dynasty, there was an enriched nomenclature of space entangled with nature worship. Up, down, east, West, north, and south are all found in oracle and bone inscriptions, each denoting in the meantime different gods and direction.⁵ Moreover, words created by the Shang people such as *situ* (Four Lands 四土), *sifang* (Four Quarters 四方), and *zhongshang* (Central Shang 中商) indicate a better developed worldview.⁶ We may say that the earliest concepts of world order in the history of China were derived from there.⁷

From the Shang to the Western Zhou, Four Quarters remained the hallmark of worldview, and even played a foundational role in the regime's ideological

⁴ Chang Kwang-chih, *Gudai Zhongguo kaoguxue*, trans. Yinqun, Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 2002, 445-49. See also Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth, and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, Harvard University Press, 1988. In addition, He Nu believes that Taoshi culture, arguably in the period of Yao, a legendary sage-king, had already developed a simple but gigantic self-centric worldview. Later in the Xia dynasty, an embryonic inner-outer conceptual distinction began to take shape as a result of Xia's expansion. Conversation with Dr. He Nu, May 20th, 2011.

⁵ Yao Xiaosui et al., *Yinxu jiagu keci leizuan*, 3 vols, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989. In relation to Shang people's cosmic view, see Sarah Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China*, State University of New York Press, 1991, 74-111; David N. Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape: Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China (ca. 1200-1045 B.C.)*, Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 2000, 55-96; Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China*, 23-74.

⁶ Hu Houxuan, "Lun wufang guannian ji 'Zhongguo' chengwei zhi qiyuan," *Jiaguxue shangshi luncong chujì*, Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1989; Hsing I-tien, "Tianxia yijia—chuantong Zhongguo tianxiaguan de xingcheng", 6-14. Li Xueqin has called attention to a much earlier example of incipient cosmology dating from the third millennium B.C.E. "Gudai Zhongguo wenming zhong de yuzhou lun yu kexue fazhan," *Li Xueqin wenji*, Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2005, 23.

⁷ Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape: Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China (ca. 1200-1045 B.C.)*, 72.

construction.⁸ In the meantime, new words of cosmological, geographical, and political significance—*tianxia* 天下 and *zhongguo* 中國 emerged.⁹ Concurrent with the Shang-Zhou transition is the replacement of *di* 帝, which in the late Shang was merely the royal clan’s ancestral god, with *tian* (Heaven 天) as the highest universal god, who selects virtuous people to endow with his *tianming* (Heavenly Mandate 天命).¹⁰ It can be inferred that, *xiashang* 下上 and *shangxia* 上下, which in oracle and bone inscriptions bring together the gods who inhabit the whole world, developed accordingly into *tianxia*, a word associated with the natural worship of Heaven which retained a strong cosmological sense.¹¹ Before long, however, *tianxia* took on an earthly orientation. An early, if not the earliest, use of *tianxia* in *Shang shu* 尚書 comes from “Shao gao” 召誥: “(This way) applied to *tianxia*, Kingship manifests.” (*yong yu tianxia yue wang xian* 用於天下, 越王顯) In this and some later Western Zhou examples, *tianxia* means the Four Quarters paying tributes to the king.¹² In contrast, “Beishan,” a poem probably produced close to the end of the Western Zhou and collected in *Shijing* 詩經, *tianxia*, in a variant form, indicates an

⁸ You Yi-fei, “Sifang, tianxia, junguo—Zhou Qin Han tianxia guan de biange yu fazhan,” 33-40.

⁹ Hu Houxuan argues that *zhongguo* derived from *zhongshangfang* 中商方 (central Shang state) and *zhongfang* 中方 (central state), of which the existence is inferred from the use of *shangfang* 商方 (Shang state) in divination. Hu Houxuan, “Lun wufang guannian ji ‘Zhongguo’ chengwei zhi qiyuan.” As to the Romanization of 中國, I have adopted Peter Bol’s method to highlight the variation of its meaning over time: 1) *zhongguo* means “central terrain” or “central states.” This form is for discussions about earlier times when the cultural connotation of 中國 had not yet been firmly anchored in any specific area. 2) *Zhong guo* (Central Country). This form refers to later views of 中國 that see it as a spatiocultural continuum. 3) *Zhongguo*. This form is for the modern notion of “China,” a continuous historical entity from antiquity to the present, which has ultimately become a nation-state. See Peter Bol, “Geography and Culture: The Middle-Period Discourse on the *Zhong guo*—the Central Country,” *Kongjian yu wenhua changyu: kongjian zhi yixiang, shijian, yu shehui de shengchan*, ed. Huang Ying-kuei, Taipei: Hanxue yanjiu zhongxin, 2009, 64-67.

¹⁰ Hsu, Cho-yun, *Xizhou shi*, Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1995, 98-109.

¹¹ As regards *xiashang*’s transformation to *shangxia* in the Shang dynasty, see Guo Jingyun, “Jiaguwen ‘xiashangruo’ qidao zhanci yu tiandi xiangjiao guannian,” *Zhouyi yanjiu* 81 (2007.1): 7-13.

¹² You Yi-fei, “Sifang, tianxia, junguo—Zhou Qin Han tianxia guan de biange yu fazhan,” 41-46.

all-inclusive sense: “All under Heaven is nothing but the King’s realm.” (*putian zhi xia mofei wangtu* 溥天之下, 莫非王土) Thereafter *tianxia* has had two major meanings. The broader *tianxia* covers everywhere the sun shines, while the narrower *tianxia* is equal to the territory within Four Quarters.¹³ Its political potential was to be realized in the Zhou-Qin-Han transition.

The early Western Zhou emergence of *zhongguo* has both archeological and documentary evidences.¹⁴ The inscription on the *he* vessel excavated in 1963 reads:

...Having conquered Dayishang, King Wu reported to Heaven at court: “We will reside this *zhongguo*, and henceforth rule the people.” (武王既克大邑商, 則廷告於天曰, 餘其宅茲中或[國], 自之治民)¹⁵

And the “Zi cai” 梓材 chapter of *Shang shu* offers the first documentary example of *zhongguo*: “The Great Heaven granted the people and terrain of *zhongguo* to the late King.” (*huangtian jifu zhongguo min yue jue jiangtu yu xianwang* 皇天既付中國民越厥疆土于先王) Above cases show that *zhongguo*, then signifying the Central Terrain, was first used in King Wu’s reign (cir. 1046-1043 B.C.E).¹⁶ In other early Zhou documents, however, *zhongguo* refers to the capital or, occasionally, the terrain within the country. Later in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, *zhongguo* gradually evolved into a notion of the vast territory where the Xia 夏 ethnic and

¹³ Hsing I-tien, “Tianxia yijia—chuantong Zhongguo tianxiaguan de xingcheng,” 14-15. For modern scholars’ debate on the dichotomy of *tianxia*, see Watanabe Shinichiro, *Zhongguo gudai de wangquan yu tianxia zhixu*, 9-16.

¹⁴ For an etymological exploration of *zhong* and *guo*, see Yu Xingwu, “Shi Zhongguo”, ed. The editorial department of Zhonghua Book Company, *Zhonghua xueshu lunwenji*, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981, 1-10.

¹⁵ Dayishang is the word by which Shang people referred to their own country. See Hu Houxuan, “Lun wufang guannian ji ‘zhongguo’ chengwei zhi qiyuan.”

¹⁶ Yu Xingwu, “Shi zhongguo”, 1-2. The Zhou people established their eastern capital at Luoyi (today’s Luoyang) after they had overthrown the Shang dynasty. See Hsu Cho-yun, *Xizhou shi*, 122-25.

cultural community formed and lived in different countries.¹⁷

Akin to the widening of *tianxia* and *zhongguo* over time, the worldview of *zhongguo*'s residents expanded in the Zhou dynasty, notably in the “Yu gong” 禹貢 chapter of *Shang shu* and *Zhou li* 周禮. “Yu gong” depicts a world consisting of *jiuzhou* (Nine Districts 九州) with different geography, soil, and natural resources. These districts are connected by the land and river routes set up by Yu, the legendary sage king who has tamed the deluge. Noteworthy is that the routes in “Yu gong” are serving a tributary system converging on somewhere close to the Yellow River, presumably the political center in Yu's time. Parallel to *jiuzhou*, there is another system of political and economic geography, normally referred to as *wufu* (Five Areas 五服) in “Yu gong.” The *wufu* system divides the world into five *fu*, each forming a square frame five hundred *li* (about 130 miles) wide and taking specific responsibilities:

The area five hundred *li* outside the king's capital is *dianfu* 甸服. Within one hundred *li* of the capital whole bunches of grain with spikes are to be paid, within two hundred *li* spikes, within three hundred *li* spikes with awns removed, within four hundred *li* grains, and within five hundred *li* rices.

The area five hundred *li* outside *dianfu* is *houfu* 侯服. Within one hundred *li* from *dianfu* are the fiefs, within two hundred *li* the barons' fiefs, and within the other three hundred *li* the feudal lords' fiefs.

The area five hundred *li* outside *houfu* is *suifu* 綏服. Within the inner three hundred *li* spreads culture and education, while within the outer two hundred *li* set up strongly national defense.

The area five hundred *li* outside *suifu* is *yaofu* 要服. Within the inner three hundred *li* live the *yi* people, while within the outer two hundred *li* settle the criminals sentenced to the *cai* penalty.

The area five hundred *li* outside *yaofu* is *huangfu* 荒服. Within the inner three hundred *li* live the *man* people, while within the outer two hundred *li* settle the

¹⁷ Wang Ermin, “Zhongguo mingcheng suyuan jiqi jindai quanshi”, *Zhongguo jindai sixiangshi lun*, 2nd ed., Taipei: Huashi chubanshe, 1978, 441-45.

criminals sentenced to exile.

Our land extends into the sea in the east, hides under the vast desert in the West, reaches as far as possible in the north and south, and our prestige and culture spread up to the four seas.¹⁸

The innermost *dianfu* pays most tributes, while the outer *houfu* and *sui fu*, comprised of feudal states, surround and protect the center. The King has no firm control over the tribes in *yaofu* and *huangfu*, who submit to him and obey his order only in a nominal way. The populated world ends at *sihai* (Four Seas 四海) where the enterprise of enlightenment also reaches its furthest limit.

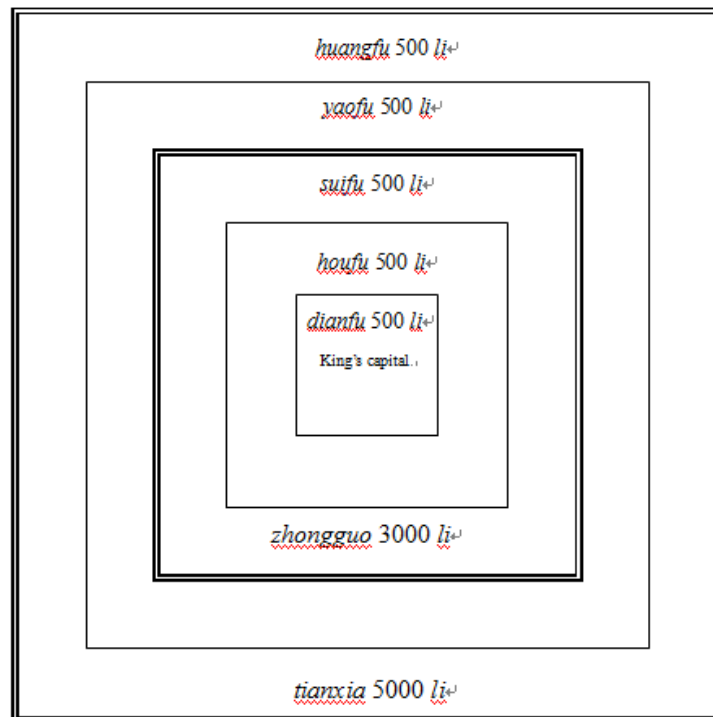


Figure 1.1 The wufu System in “Yu gong”¹⁹

¹⁸ Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu, ed., *Shang shu jiao shi yi lun*. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005, 815, 821.

¹⁹ Gu Jiegang, “Jifu,” *Shilin zashi (chubian)*, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963, 6.

Zhou li presents a similar, but more complicated nine-*fu* worldview, marking out the one-thousand-*li* wide royal district (*wangji* 王畿)²⁰ in the center. Neither delineation, in the eyes of Gu Jiegang, fits well into the political reality in Zhou times.²¹ Given their geometric perfection, “Yu gong” and *Zhou li* indeed demonstrate a conception of ideal world order in accordance with the tendency towards unification. As Wang Shumin has stated, the *jiuzhou* division stresses the natural environment, while the *jifu* theory centers upon political relations.²² Both were to be integrated into the theory about *tianxia* in the Han era.

Analogous to many chaotic ages, the Warring States period brought forth utopian hopes for political order and social stableness, as expounded in *Zhou li*. It is worth noting that ethnocentrism also came forth in the nascent ideal of world order. In both “Yu gong” and *Zhou li*, although no absolute distinction is drawn between the central states and the peripheral tribes, difference and even hostility are hinted, such as *suifu*’s supposed duty to guard against invasion. Therefore, the specific domain for the central residents is a three-thousand-*li* square, which matches the account in *Lishi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋.²³ A more clear expression of ethnic identity is the Zhou

²⁰ Li Xueqin et al., ed., *Zhouli zhushu*, vol. 2, Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999, 869-880.

²¹ Based on more reliable sources, Gu argued that there had been only three *fu* with irregular borders: *dianfu*, the royal district; *houfu*, the feudal states; *yifu* 夷服 or *yaofu*, the unsubmitive tribes. Gu Jiegang, “Jifu,” 1-19.

²² Wang Shumin, “Jifushuo kaolue”, *Wenshi*, Ser. 44., Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998, 59-60. “Yu gong” was composed no later than the Spring and Autumn period, but its last part about the *wufu* system is a later addition. This explains why the *wufu* section contrasts sharply with the preceding parts for its manifest geopolitical orientation. See Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu, ed., *Shang shu jiao shi yi lun*, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005, 521-22, 815-21.

²³ Chen Qiyu, ed., *Lishi chunqiu xin jiao shi*, vol.2, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002, 1129. In *Mencius*, the territory within the Four Seas is seen as composed by nine divisions, each a one-thousand-*li* square. (*hainei zhi di fang qianli zhe jiu* 海內之地方千里者九) The whole realm, though also three thousand *li* long on each side, includes *zhongguo* as well as the peripheral areas within Four Seas. Yang Bojun, ed., *Mengzi yizhu*, vol.1, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960, 17. On the three patterns of *tianxia* concept canonized in the Han dynasty, i.e. three-thousand-*li* square, five-thousand-*li* square, and ten-thousand-*li* square, see Watanabe Shinichiro, *Zhongguo gudai de wangquan yu tianxia zhixu*, 43-76.

neologism such as *zhuxia* 諸夏 and *huaxia* 華夏.²⁴ In its early years, the Zhou people appealed strategically to the legendary Xia dynasty's heritage to claim cultural legitimacy. As time went on, the Zhou dynasty's flourishing agricultural production endowed *huaxia* with a new sense of superiority. Literally signifying "brilliant Xia" or "florescent Xia," *huaxia* grew into the common name for the people united by ethnic ties, cultural similarities, and economic resemblances. Their residence, *zhongguo*, became henceforth the geographical and cultural centre of *tianxia*.²⁵

***Tianxia* in the Formation of Empire**

It is through developing a political philosophy about *tianxia* that pre-Qin universal humanism attained political weight and became an ideal of practical significance. In the Spring and Autumn period, the lament for the loss of life in the brutal warfare for power and annexation resulted in the rise of humanism. Gradually, the concern with human developed into the fundamental value for contemporary thinkers such as Confucius. These thinkers, whose disciples transmitted and spread their influence by teaching and writing, had made great efforts to integrate the pursuit of universal human welfare into the concept of Heavenly Mandate, the core of Zhou political thought, in the hope of establishing a moral authority over the king and pressuring him into a commitment to benevolent rule. In contrast, for later schools, especially the Legalists and the Political Strategists who prevailed in the warring

²⁴ For the origin of *xia* and *huaxia*, see Tian Qianjun, "'Zhongguo' yu 'huaxia' chengwei zhi xunyuan," *Xianqinshi yanjiu lunji*, Taipei: Dalu zazhishe, 1970, 45-52.

²⁵ Hsing I-tien, "Tianxia yijia—chuantong Zhongguo tianxiaguan de xingcheng," 9-26.

states, *tianxia* meant less a humanistic value than an ambition for hegemony and unification. Ultimately, it was the Qin-Han empires that accomplished the institutionalization of the idea of *tianxia*. Having inspired a whole array of political superstructure, conceptual *tianxia* became henceforth the ideological foundation of the Han and later empires.

The shift of Heavenly Mandate, proclaimed by the founders of the Zhou dynasty to explain and legitimize their victory, was a crucial event in Chinese history. Not powerful enough to control the vast land of Shang, the Zhou people appealed to the authority of Heaven, the universal god.²⁶ They argued that the Shang rulers lost Heaven's preference due to their immoral and unjust deeds, and hence the right to rule, thus the Zhou clan accepted the Heavenly Mandate and took over *zhongguo*. Parallel to this creative vindication of political legitimacy, the Zhou kingdom adopted a renovated ruling pattern. Unlike its Shang precedent, whose entire clan inhabited the central terrain and enjoyed the tributes from subjugated small states, the Zhou dynasty enfeoffed almost the whole known world to clan members and affiliated tribes, including the border areas where no firm control had ever been established. These enfeoffed princes and nobles founded states, guarded the kingdom's central area, and paid tributes to the king. By so doing, the Zhou dynasty expanded its territory as well as sphere of influence, substantiating the Heavenly Mandate by occupying *tianxia*. Political unity was henceforward maintained through blood tie and belief that crystallized in the ritual system.²⁷ In this way, the Zhou dynasty started the practice of

²⁶ Hsu Cho-Yun, *Xizhou shi*, 101. Hou Wailu et al., *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi*, vol. 1, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1957, 71-72, 80-87.

²⁷ Hou Wailu, *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi*, 78-80.

the mutual constitution of cosmology and polity in early China.²⁸

Two key elements in the Zhou theory of Heavenly Mandate were to become enduringly influential throughout the history of China. First, Heaven, the paramount protector, is the universal god rather than ancestral god as is *di* in the Shang belief. Therefore, it becomes equally possible for all the people under Heaven to be favored by the god. Second, the Heavenly Mandate, given to the morally good, may be shifted away from the degraded. A ruler's moral performance depends on his people's support. Once he loses their support, he loses Heaven's approval as well. Morality, determined by public will and determining Heaven's patronage, has ever after been central to political legitimacy.²⁹

Associated with the Heavenly Mandate, *tianxia* was increasingly deployed in pre-Qin political discourse. A notion scarcely appearing in reliable Western Zhou sources, *tianxia* was more and more frequently invoked in *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, *Lun yu* 論語, and works attributed to later masters.³⁰ Attendant to this term's rising use was its stronger cultural-political sense: *tianxia*, now referring more to the realm on earth, was likely to include all places where people share an advanced common culture, which in Eastern Zhou context meant the Zhou ritual system, which distinguished them from the barbarians and prefigured eventual unification.

Hereupon the Janus trait of *tianxia* became more remarkable: *zhongguo* and the world. On the one hand, *tianxia* may be equated with *zhongguo* and confined to

²⁸ Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China*, 1-2.

²⁹ Hsu Cho-Yun, *Xizhou shi*, 107-08. On the dualistic structure of Zhou religion, as well as the political and ethical traits thus entailed, see Hou Wailu, *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi*, 80-95.

³⁰ Yuri Pines, "Changing Views of *tianxia* in Pre-imperial discourse," 101-06.

the culturally homogenous Xia states. Many political elites in the Spring and Autumn period, as recorded in *Zuo zhuan* and *Guo yu* 國語, had bitter hostilities against the tribes surrounding the Xia states. The kings and officials often described, with stark abhorrence and disgust, the non-Xia tribes' inhuman nature, identifying them as brutes,³¹ while *zhongguo* was extolled for its fine culture.³² This is evidently a consequence of longtime conflicts and wars between the Xia states and their *yi* opponents, which produced immense casualties and damage. Out of the notion of the Xia states' territory, as well as the war trauma and sheer enmity, emerged the narrower definition of *tianxia*. On the other hand, the concept of *tianxia* may also be expected to unify all the people under Heaven. The scholars, though sharing their countrymen's contempt and alertness for the *yi*, tended to consider them as equals. Their open attitude is embodied in three aspects. First, the *yi* people have their own rites. One famous *Zuo zhuan* passage indicates that the *yi* may take the Yi-Xia difference as a mere cultural divergence, and they would argue that the Xia was not necessarily superior.³³ Such a dispute over Xia cultural chauvinism was echoed in *Mozi*, and to a lesser extent by Confucius. Disappointed by the decline of Xia culture and his own political frustration, Confucius, according to *Lunyu*, at one point showed his appreciation of the ritual practice of tribesmen and imagined going to live with the *yi*.

³¹ Li Xueqin et al., ed., *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi*, vol. 1, Beijing: Beijing University Press, 1999, 303. Xu Yuangao, ed., *Guoyu jijie*, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002, 57, 462. Although many scholars view these attacks as indication of primeval Chinese nationalism or racism, in light of Pines' perusal of pre-Qin materials, it is better to define them as politicized proclamation of cultural superiority. Yuri Pines, "Beasts or Humans: Pre-Imperial Origins of Sino-Barbarian Dichotomy," 63-69.

³² Liu Xiang, ed., *Zhanguo ce*, vol. 2, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985, 656.

³³ Li Xueqin et al., ed., *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi*, vol. 2, 907.

For him, the *yi* also have sage kings.³⁴ Second, the Xia and *yi* are mutually convertible. If the *yi* tribesmen adopt the way of Xia/*zhongguo*, they are *zhongguo*, and vice versa.³⁵ It is based upon such understanding of the permeability between the Xia and *yi* that the pre-Qin philosophers set forth their ideal, either calling for *jian'ai* (Universal Love 兼愛) as Mo Di, or regarding all the people in the world as brothers or family members as Zixia and Xun Kuang.³⁶ Furthermore, that the Xia is culturally better than the *yi* people, a firm belief in many philosophical writings, does not encourage expansion. Instead, as stated in *Lunyu*, if the “distant people”—the surrounding tribes—are not submissive, what the rulers should do is to cultivate their own morality to attract them.³⁷ The *yi* would take the initiative to study the Xia, if the latter was indeed morally superior.

Universal humanism prompted the pre-Qin philosophers' wish for breaking the horizontal obstacle dividing the people on earth and consolidating all the Xia as well as the *yi* people. Meanwhile, through repeatedly arguing for the necessity of promoting the virtuous, in conjunction with their practice of private education, the philosophers challenged the vertical hierarchy suppressing lower social strata's pursuit for betterment and justice. Their fame, though not ensuring their political success, demonstrated that they were in line with or themselves the interpreters of *Zeitgeist*. As a pivotal concept in their thought, *tianxia* had been increasingly used, more and more

³⁴ Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, vol.1, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001, 187-190. Liu Baonan, *Lunyu zhengyi*, vol. 1, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990, 84, 170. Luo Zhitian, “Yi Xia zhibian de kaifang yu fengbi,” *Minzu zhuyi yu jindai Zhongguo sixiang*, Taipei: Dongda tushu, 1998, 41-42.

³⁵ Luo Zhitian, “Yi Xia zhibian de kaifang yu fengbi,” 46-49.

³⁶ Liu Baonan, *Lunyu zhengyi*, vol. 2, 488. Wang Xianqian, *Xunzi jijie*, vol. 1, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988, 161.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, *Lunyu zhengyi*, vol. 2, 649.

signaling the emergence of not only a civilized world, but also a political realm subject to potential unification.³⁸ According to Lewis, the idea of *tianxia* set up the basis for efforts to establish universal authority through either unifying the real world or, as represented by a variety of encyclopedic writings from late Warring States to the Western Han, creating and dominating an all-encompassing textual world by writing.³⁹

Classical universalism eventually became the ideological foundation of the Qin and Han, and all the unified dynasties that followed. The First Emperor of Qin, in his stone inscriptions, evidently took on the *tianxia* concept of Warring State thinkers by proclaiming that his mandate reached “wherever the sun and moon shine, and wherever boats and carriages carry their loads,” and “wherever human traces reach is subject to his rule.”⁴⁰ Having taken over the Zhou *tianxia*, accomplished unprecedented unification—not only territory, but also script, measurement, administration, among others—and established an effective administrative system characterized by prefecture-county institution, the First Emperor desired, for the first time in Chinese history, to make his empire truly universal. His ambition for vastness, however, was not well matched by his alleged benevolence, and the imperial framework inaugurated by him was only to be refurbished in the middle Western Han. Contrary to the Han dynasty’s inception, the heyday of theories attributed to the Yellow Emperor and Laozi, in the middle period of the Western Han when

³⁸ Yuri Pines, “Changing Views of *tianxia* in Pre-imperial discourse,” 104-07.

³⁹ Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, 287-336.

⁴⁰ Sima, Qian, *Shiji*, vol. 1, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959, 245-47. See also Hsing I-tien, “Tianxia yijia—chuantong Zhongguo tianxiaguan de xingcheng”, 30-32; You Yi-fei, “Sifang, tianxia, junguo—Zhou Qin Han tianxia guan de biange yu fazhan,” 82-86.

landlordism's rise to predominance over social economy was coupled by the marginalization of military command, there was a strong need for a ruling thought to provide a new rationale for the state, renovated principles of governmental organization and operation, and opportunities for emergent social elites to find their niche. Through generations of court conflicts, intellectual debates, and educational practices in the Western Han, Confucianism eventually triumphed in the campaign for orthodoxy, and became thereafter central to the Han and almost all subsequent Chinese dynasties.⁴¹ Along with Confucian texts' ascent to state canon, *tianxia* worldview also transformed into official doctrine. Watanabe Shinichiro has clearly depicted the expansion of conceptual *tianxia*, each side of which changing from three thousand *li* in the Warring States period to five thousand *li* in New Text school's theory, and finally to ten thousand *li* argued by Old Text school.⁴² The re-imagined *tianxia* reflected *zhongguo*'s unification and extension, and justified and reinforced the unitary empire by its all-encompassing rhetoric. Having suppressed internal rebellions of enfeoffed kings and confirmed the central court's control of the whole country, the Han state took an aggressive attitude on its borders and subjugated many tribesmen. More importantly, the Han emperors and their strategists developed the policy of "Loose Rein" (*Jimi* 羈縻), which proved crucial in making the Han a true empire.⁴³ Watanabe has convincingly argued that New Text scholars' creation of ten thousand *li* *tianxia*, which consists of both *zhongguo* (*jiuzhou*) and barbarian areas,

⁴¹ See Lewis' elaborate account of Confucianism's triumph in the Han dynasty. *Writing and Authority in Early China*, 337-62.

⁴² Watanabe Shinichiro, *Zhongguo gudai de wangquan yu tianxia zhixu*, 45-66.

⁴³ Yang Lien-sheng, "Historical Notes on the Chinese World Order," John K. Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order*, Harvard University Press, 1968, 28-33.

was only possible when Emperor Wu of Han's military success had created new imperial subjects.⁴⁴

It is worth noting that, in working *tianxia* into imperial ideology, non-Confucian thought played an important role. First, *Lishi chunqiu* and *Huainan zi* 淮南子 inspired Confucian scholars to incorporate concepts like *siji* (Four Extremes 四極) and *bahuang* (Eight Wilds 八荒) that transcend *tianxia* into their theory, thus making the Confucian worldview, characterized by a multi-level hierarchy concentrated upon Chinese kingship, not only politically powerful but also metaphysically complete.⁴⁵ Second, *tianxia* remained significant through a political ideal that has syncretized a variety of values and found its most forceful and appealing expression in the “Liyun” 禮運 chapter of *Liji* 禮記:

When the Great Way ruled, *tianxia* ran for public good. The virtuous and capable were elected to office, and trust and harmony pervaded the society. Then, filial piety redounded to all the aged, and parents' love went to all the young. The old had their days well ended, the able-bodied were meetly employed, the juvenile were properly reared and the widowed, the orphaned, the solitary, the disabled and the sickly all had their sustenance. Men had their suitable occupations and women were fitly married. People were loath to see things left on the ground as naught, while for them it was unnecessary to hoard these as private properties; and they were loath to have not made their efforts for the society, while these should not be only for themselves. Therefore, all plots were given up and dissolved; robberies, thefts, disorders and heinous crimes did not arise; outer doors were left open day and night. That is called Great Unity (*datong* 大同).⁴⁶

Although *Liji* is a Confucian canon, we can discern a mixed intellectual influence

⁴⁴ Watanabe Shinichiro, *Zhongguo gudai de wangquan yu tianxia zhixu*, 60-63.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 66-67.

⁴⁶ Li Xueqin et al., ed., *Liji zhengyi*, vol. 2, Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999, 658-59.

within this passage. The Confucian emphasis of family ethics figures in the society of Great Unity, while the prominent concern with public welfare suggests the author(s)'s possible Mohist background. Just like Dong Zhongshu, who appropriated the thought of the Daoists and the school of Yin and Yang to complete his theory of Grand Unification, the author(s) of the "Liyun" passage also combined the utopian elements of different schools to bring forth the most influential account of social and political ideal in Chinese history. Moreover, this ideal of Great Unity, describing in vivid detail the universal benevolence for people all over *tianxia*, again highlighted the political tradition of "rule by morality." Few emperors devoted themselves to make Great Unity real for his subjects who inhabited *tianxia*, but this ideal for *tianxia* strikingly remained central to the discourse of legitimacy of dynastic succession until the Tang, and never exhausted its political potential.⁴⁷ *Tianxia*, a concept of geographical, political, and ethical significance, has henceforth become fundamental to classical Chinese view of the state and world, and therefore to China's classical state institution.⁴⁸

Becoming *tianxia*: The Dynamics of East Asia

From the Qin-Han empires onwards, the significance of *tianxia* has to be

⁴⁷ Watanabe Shinichiro, "Zixu," *Zhongguo gudai de wangquan yu tianxia zhixu*, 3-4.

⁴⁸ Watanabe Shinichiro, *Zhongguo gudai de wangquan yu tianxia zhixu*, 77-78. Classical State Institution (*kotenteki kokusei* 古典的国制) is a term coined by Yoshida Takashi, who defines "classics" as "state institution and culture that were to become the foundation of later state institutions and cultures, and to be reviewed by later generations as a kind of standard consciousness" and echoes Karl Jaspers' interpretation of Axial civilization. According to Watanabe, the classical state institution of China is established around the political superstructure based upon the concept of *tianxia*. The latter is a particular Chinese concept of unification, and the former comprises of various materialized ideological devices.

understood in the East Asian or even broader context.⁴⁹ Nishijima Sadao has a famous argument that beginning in the Han, Chinese dynasties' practice of conferring titles of nobility to the chieftains of surrounding tribes gave rise to an organic East Asian world, which took shape in the Sui-Tang period.⁵⁰ Despite some critiques of Nishijima's assertion, it has been generally agreed that the period from the third century B.C.E to the tenth century C.E. is critical for the formation of the East Asian inter-state system.⁵¹ This world includes historical China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, as well as the eastern part of the Hexi corridor between Mongolian plateau and Tibetan plateau.⁵² The core elements that have made East Asia consist of Sinitic characters, Confucianism, law system, Buddhism, education, and technology.⁵³ From a traditional Chinese perspective, the Han empire's collapse led up to a few centuries' wars and chaos until the reunification by the Sui and Tang dynasties. For the adjacent polities, however, this period was a great age for state-building. In the Korean Peninsula, indigenous people expelled the Han force and established their own states. In Japan, the Yamato regime also attained unification to a certain extent. Both Korean and Japanese polities, through official communication and immigrant transmission, made great effort to learn Chinese culture and institutions and gradually completed

⁴⁹ It has to be noted that "East Asia," similar to "China," is a retrospective notion employed for heuristic purposes.

⁵⁰ Nishijima Sadao, "Dongya shijie de xingcheng," 88-103.

⁵¹ For a thoughtful review and critique of Nishijima's view of China's investiture system, see Wang Zhenping, *Han Tang zhongri guanxi lun*, Taipei: Wenjing chubanshe, 1997, 16-31.

⁵² Nishijima Sadao, "Dongya shijie de xingcheng," 89. Han Sheng contends that, in pre-modern times, Vietnam had no close relationship with Korea and Japan, and only communicated with them via China till very late. Therefore, when relating to the formation of the East Asian world, it is appropriate to consider this region as constituted by China, Korea, and Japan. *Dongya shijie xingcheng shi lun*, 53. On account of Vietnam's important illustrative role in demonstrating the spread of *tianxia* worldview, I will still include it in my discussion.

⁵³ Han Sheng, *Dongya shijie xingcheng shi lun*, 54-70. Nishijima originally proposed four factors: Chinese characters, Confucianism, law system, and Buddhism.

respective state construction.⁵⁴ In a large sense, they transplanted China's classical state institution, regarding and even terming themselves as *tianxia*. The East Asia therefore emerged as an interconnected whole comprising multiple *tianxia*.

Han China's expansion demonstrated *tianxia*'s flexibility as well as its limit. In both Qin and Han dynasties, the effort to conquer the southern tribesmen and impose—sometimes nominally—administrative control upon modern-day south China, although confronted with strong resistance and geographical and climate challenges, was generally successful. In the north frontier, however, the Han empire encountered insurmountable difficulties due to unfriendly environment. Han troops had a hard time when fighting with the dominators of vast steppe. Any victory against these horseback opponents with high skills and mobility was costly. Even if the steppe tribes were defeated, it was difficult, if not impossible, to subject them to stable administration because of the particular form of nomad economy. Therefore, it was also difficult to culturally assimilate them. By the same token, migration of Chinese peasants to the occupied region failed to ensure the success of imperial expansion. Many a time, ironically, these migrants and local residents, acculturated by the northern nomads, even became defectors or rioters who greatly endangered the empire.⁵⁵ Consequently, despite a few large campaigns to eliminate the threat of Xiongnu and other unruly neighbors, and the foundation of several new prefectures in frontier areas, the Han government came to the conclusion that it might not be the best

⁵⁴ Ibid., 107-74, 263-342.

⁵⁵ Yu Ying-shih, "Han Foreign Relations," *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1, eds., Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, Cambridge University Press, 1986, 402-03, 430-35. For the Chinese states' expansion up north and the consequent rise of the Xiongnu nomadic empire, see Nicola Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, 127-205.

option to transform all the barbarians into imperial subjects.

Therefore, Loose Rein, the aforementioned policy for frontier pacification, was put forward and practiced in the Han period. A famous statement of Loose Rein is from *Han Shu* 漢書:

Therefore the sage king raises them as birds and beasts, while neither allies with nor assails them. Making a league on oath with them costs a lot and risks being deceived; attacking them fatigues the army and provokes intrusion. Their land is non-arable and incapable of sustaining (settled) residents, and their people cannot be subjugated and cultivated. Hence (the sage king) excludes rather than including these people, and alienates rather than associating with them. His governance and cultivation stay away from these people, and his calendar ignores their state. When they come, he punishes and defends them; after they leave, he stays prepared and alerted. If they admire his benevolence and pay tribute, then he receives them with courtesy. Maintaining a loose rein on them and making faults on their side, is the common way by which the sage king manages the barbarians.⁵⁶

Loose Rein is a result of experience accumulation and careful calculation, calling for giving up either alliance or conquest. Having proved practical, Loose Rein was adopted by later Chinese dynasties, and was rather successful in the Tang period.⁵⁷ However, Loose Rein is conditioned by China's military power. As long as Chinese guard force could not ward off the steppe enemies' incursion, Loose Rein was empty talk. And worse yet, when a major steppe enemy fell into decline, before long other steppe tribes would fill the power vacuum and develop into historical China's new nightmare. Hence, in the name of Loose Rein, the Han empire and its successors

⁵⁶ Ban Gu, *Han shu*, vol. 11, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962, 3834.

⁵⁷ Kao Ming-shih, *Tianxia zhixu yu wenhua quan de tansuo: yi dongya gudai de zhengzhi yu jiaoyu wei zhongxin*, 1-61; Tan Qixiang, "Tangdai jimi zhou shulun," *Jinian Gu Jiegang xueshu lunwenji*, vol. 2, eds. Yin Da et al., Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1990, 555-69.

combined many political, economic, and cultural means to strive for a stable and favorable world order. The Chinese emperors conferred titles to the rulers of neighboring or remote tribes on a selective basis and nominally integrated them into the Chinese monarch-subject hierarchy. Usually, Chinese dynasties' recognition strengthened these rulers' legitimacy and their regional influence, and enabled them to benefit from communicating with China, often in the form of tributary trade and cultural transmission.⁵⁸ Furthermore, marrying princesses to foreign rulers, although initially a disgrace representing the Han dynasty's failure against Xiongnu, became an effective diplomatic means to cement relations with the neighbors of Han and later Chinese dynasties.⁵⁹ Last but not least, military intervention remained significant for efforts to maintain security—security of China itself and its protectorates. In general, from the Han to the Tang, China had played a vital role in the formation of East Asian world order through its variegated practices in foreign affairs, although other countries' active participation and interaction in this process were no less important. According to Han Sheng, this inter-state system served to establish China's leadership and confirm other countries' position in the China-centered hierarchy as well as fundamental principles and ritual regulations of inter-state relations.⁶⁰

Tang China's notion of *tianxia* reflected such situation. Clearly aware of many countries and tribes far beyond imperial control, the Tang dynasty only saw the territory under its household-register-based administration as *tianxia*. There were

⁵⁸ Hori Toshikazu, *Sui-Tang diguo yu dongya*, trans. Han Sheng and Liu Jianying, ed. Han Sheng, Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 2002, 4-9.

⁵⁹ See Cui Mingde, *Zhongguo gudai heqin shi*, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2005.

⁶⁰ Han Sheng, *Dongya shijie xingcheng shi lun*, 26.

some exceptions during the reign of Emperor Taizong that *tianxia* included the residents of *zhongguo* as well as the *yi* people. However, it seems that this broader understanding of *tianxia* was only a result of the northern tribes' submission and migration to Central Plain in the Zhenguan years, and another evidence of the border flexibility that characterized China as a *tianxia* style state.⁶¹ The continuation of stressing upon the emperor's responsibility to all the common people under Heaven, as recorded in historical documents from Warring States to the Tang, should at least in part contribute to Taizong's generous offer to take care of the *yi* people.⁶² In general, however, *tianxia* had been understood as a limited space, consisting of the imperial prefectures and counties and at most supplemented by the loosely reined prefectures and counties.

In contrast to the stable, if not stagnant understanding of *tianxia* in medieval China, what really demonstrated the vigor and vibrancy of this epoch is the spread of the concept and institutions of *tianxia* to other East Asian countries. In this regard, Japan stood out as a major example. Early in the Yamato period, the Japanese rulers already claimed—evidently under Chinese influence—authority over All-under-Heaven.⁶³ As time went by, they also learned other notions such as *zhongguo* (Central Terrain), *tianzi* (Son of Heaven 天子), *huangdi* (emperor 皇帝), as

⁶¹ Watanabe Shinichiro, *Zhongguo gudai de wangquan yu tianxia zhixu*, 26-27, 70-72. Watanabe has rightfully pointed out that barbarians are not an integral element of *tianxia*.

⁶² For a brief account of the emperor's obligation to common people regulated by the *tianxia* ideology, see Watanabe Shinichiro, *Tenku no gyokuza: Chugoku kodai teikoku no chosei to girei*, Tokyo: Kashiwa shobo, 1996, 150-60.

⁶³ Anazawa Wakou and Manome Jun'ichi, "Two Inscribed Swords from Japanese Tumuli: Discoveries and Research on Finds from the Sakitama-Inariyama and Eta-Funayama Tumuli," *Windows on the Japanese Past: Studies in Archaeology and Prehistory*, eds. Richard J. Pearson, Gina Lee Barnes and Karl L. Hutterer, Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1986, 375-95. See also Kochi Haruhito, "Nihon kodai ni okeru 'tenshi'," *Rekishi gaku kenkyu* 745 (Jan. 2001), 1-16.

well as the Hua/Yi dichotomy, and embarked on redefining political order and seeking more equality when dealing with China.⁶⁴ “The more some early Japanese people came to think ‘like the Chinese,’ ironically enough, the more they would naturally want to envision Japan as a Middle Kingdom at the center of its own All-under-Heaven, and the more intolerable Chinese imperial pretensions would come to seem...if the Chinese empire was *tianxia*, or ‘All-under-Heaven,’ then a rival Japanese All-under-Heaven (J: *tenka*) would be reproduced on the islands.”⁶⁵ It has to be noted, however, that Japan adapted the loan concepts to its own specific context. One crucial difference, as Watanabe has pointed out, is the lack of the idea of Heavenly Mandate—the emperor receives the mandate from Heaven and rules the people—and the stress on the emperor’s responsibility to common people.⁶⁶ Hence there is little critique and restriction on the emperor’s autocracy, and the Japanese classical state institution is more *tenno*-oriented than *tianxia*-oriented. In addition, Kan Huai-chen has reminded us that, albeit written in the same characters, notions like *tianzi* and *huangdi* have rather different implications and usages in the Japanese setting.⁶⁷ More often than not, Japan coupled a key signifier, which had been well-received in East Asian politics, with a specific Japanese signified to suit its own needs; or, in Nishijima’s words, “state characteristics attained commonalities through

⁶⁴ See Hori Toshikazu’s analysis of the epistolary exchanges between Japan and the Sui-Tang dynasties. *Sui-Tang diguo yu dongya*, 63-84. As Watanabe Shinichiro has put it, the Japanese credentials styling Japan as *tianxia* was no more than ideological proclamation. *Zhongguo gudai de wangquan yu tianxia zhixu*, 35.

⁶⁵ Charles Holcombe, *The Genesis of East Asia, 221 B.C.-A.D. 907*, 211.

⁶⁶ Watanabe Shinichiro, *Zhongguo gudai de wangquan yu tianxia zhixu*, 35-36, 143.

⁶⁷ Kan Huai-chen, “Zhongguo gudai huangdi hao yu Riben tianhuang hao: dongya zhengzhi zhixu yu rujia jingdian quanshi zhi yanjiu,” *Dongya wenhuaquan de xingcheng yu fazhan: rujia sixiang pian*, ed. Kao Ming-shih, Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2008, 157-62.

Chinese civilization.”⁶⁸ In comparison with Japan, Korean historical sources contain fewer examples of *tianxia*. However, the unified Silla’s effort to divide its territory into nine prefectures and establish a tributary system implies that the Koreans had in their mind the notion of *tianxia*, which was only avoided because of their close tie with the Tang.⁶⁹ Vietnam, as seen in *Yueshi Lue* 越史略, the earliest extant historical account (about cir. the second century B.C.E-1225 C.E.), also became a self-styled *tianxia* not long after it had achieved independence.⁷⁰ The Vietnamese tributary system—understandably, much smaller vis-à-vis its Chinese exemplar—and pertinent rhetoric, resulting from Vietnam’s expansion to further south, again testify to the influence of China’s *tianxia* institution.⁷¹ For these East Asian countries, China was the model for state-building, and therefore establishing their own subvassals and acquiring tributes became indispensable in confirming kingly authority.⁷²

The Dawn of Modern Nationalism

According to Yao Dali, the state identity of pre-modern China contains three levels. The first level is the loyalty to the emperor on the throne. The second level, also the core of state identity, is the devotion to the dynasty. The third level transcends

⁶⁸ Nishijima Sadao, “Dongya shijie de xingcheng,” 92.

⁶⁹ Watanabe Shinichiro, *Zhongguo gudai de wangquan yu tianxia zhixu*, 31, 40-41 n. 19.

⁷⁰ *Tianxia* first appears in the biography of the emperor of the Lǚ dynasty. Anonymous, *Yueshi lue, Qinding siku quanshu*, vol. 466, eds. Ji Yun et al., Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1986, 577. Of course, this might be a projection of the author’s idea, who allegedly lived at a time more than two centuries after the period he recorded.

⁷¹ *Yueshi lue* has recorded 55 times of Champa and Chenla’s “coming to pay tribute,” in which Champa accounts for 38.

⁷² See Hori Toshikazu’s analysis of the case of Japan. *Chugoku to kodai ajia sekai: chukateki sekai to moro minzoku*, 158-61.

any single dynasty and lies in the diachronic political community called *Zhong guo*.⁷³ Starting from the late Tang, the rise of surrounding polities—many underwent an awakening of proto-nationalism and state construction—imposed enormous pressure upon the Chinese regimes and provoked a similar proto-nationalism among the Han people. The third level, therefore, was greatly strengthened. *Tianxia* and *Zhong guo*, a pair of once identical notions for a bounded territory, developed into two closely related while divergent concepts of community over time. The former stresses on the universalistic nature of Chinese civilization, whereas the latter implies the strategic situation of East Asia, “China among equals.”⁷⁴ They formed the conceptual background to the rise of modern Chinese nationalism.

In Chinese history, it has taken a long time to develop a national identity in the modern sense. Despite the rise of Hua/Yi dichotomy in the pre-Qin era, as well as the geo-cultural concept of *zhongguo*, little evidence indicates that any firm Chinese identity had then taken root. According to *Zuo zhuan* and other pre-Qin materials, any so-called Xia state, or even all of them, could be easily reproached as *yi* and *di* for breaking certain cultural principles or allying with non-Xia tribes, and therefore the line between the Xia and non-Xia was rather vague and unstable.⁷⁵ In the unified Qin-Han empires, the common ethnic identity gradually took shape through imperial administration and education.⁷⁶ However, after the Jin court fled south due to the

⁷³ Yao Dali, “Zhongguo lishi shang de minzu guanxi yu guojia rentong,” *Zhongguo xueshu* 12 (2002), 200-201.

⁷⁴ See Morris Rossabi, ed., *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983.

⁷⁵ Luo Zhitian, “Yixia zhi bian de kaifang yu fengbi,” 36-49. Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies*, 120-27. It is necessary to take into account the ethnic diversity of Zhou states and avoid over-estimating the consistency of their shared ritual system. See Hsu Cho-yun, *Xizhou shi*, 110-141.

⁷⁶ Wang Jianwen, “Diguo zhixu yu zuqun xiangxiang: dizhi Zhongguo chuqi de huaxia yishi,” *Dongya lishi shang*

invasion of northern tribesmen in the early fourth century, the migrant dynasties were confronted with an identity crisis. All the four elements of modern nationalistic sentiment identified by Rupert Emerson—an established state, a cherished territorial homeland, a shared historical tradition, and a common mother tongue, were problematic in the south. Besides, ordinary refugees from the north displayed little dedication to the state. The rulers of southern dynasties had to confirm their political legitimacy through redefining *zhongguo*. Furthermore, the politically and culturally re-established *Zhong guo* (Central Country) identity, if at all, was almost confined to the upper class.⁷⁷ One decisive factor behind the social elites' monopoly over the Central Country identity should be the ruling structure. Having vast land and numerous subordinates, noble families manipulated imperial politics and often made the emperor a figurehead.⁷⁸ A universal state identity might prove harmful to their rule, since it would encourage equality and loyalty to the incarnation of Heavenly Mandate—the emperor. The nobles were only in need of a consensus among themselves, i.e. Central Country identity based upon culture.⁷⁹

Remarkable for exogenous ingredients in the ruling class and, understandably, its ability to pacify the northern tribesmen and integrate them into the imperial cause, the Tang dynasty exemplified the ethnic fusion in the north, and yet left a burdensome

de tianxia yu zhongguo gainian, ed. Kan Huai-chen, Taipei: National Taipei University Press, 2007, 159-168.

⁷⁷ Charles Holcombe, "Re-Imagining China: The Chinese Identity Crisis at the Start of the Southern Dynasties Period," *Journal of American Oriental Society*, 115.1 (Jan.-Mar. 1995), 1-3, 13-14.

⁷⁸ For an overview of Eastern Jin aristocratic politics, see Tian Yuqing, *Dongjin menfa zhengzhi*, 3rd ed., Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1996.

⁷⁹ Interestingly, the southern dynasties' Chinese identity and political orthodoxy based upon culture were to some degree recognized by the rulers of north China, the core area of original *zhongguo*. Luo Zhitian, "Yixia zhi bian yu dao-zhi zhi fen," *Minzu zhuyi yu jindai zhongguo sixiang*, Taipei: Dongda tushu, 1998, 72.

“barbarian legacy” for its successors.⁸⁰ Thanks to centuries’ of interregional communication, particularly that in Tang times, coupled with chaos in the late Tang and Five Dynasties, there was a new wave of state-building in the adjacent areas of China, along with great progress in politics, economy and culture. A notable development is that many northern peoples, one after another, created their own characters, through which they were able to achieve unprecedented successes in fostering their group identities.⁸¹ Having established states that rivaled their Chinese counterparts in strength and length (Khitan Liao: 916-1125; Tangut Xixia: 1038-1227; Jurchen Jin: 1115-1234; Northern Song: 960-1127; Southern Song: 1127-1279), northern peoples exerted immense pressure upon their Chinese neighbor. A direct consequence is the shrinking of Chinese territory: in comparison with the Tang, the Song was much smaller in size. Many regions, traditionally parts of Chinese domain, such as the sixteen prefectures of Yan and Yun, the Hexi corridor, and Jiaozhou (today’s north Vietnam), were now lost to newly founded states, let alone the broad sphere of influence under loose reign in the Tang period. Not only was the Chinese territory much smaller, its borderline, having been vague for many centuries, also became clear as a result of constant demarcation between the Song dynasty and its rivals. Not only was the territorial boundary delimited, the intellectual boundary, as a control of practical knowledge and technology for the sake of security, also came to the fore.⁸² In the end, the military setbacks and their catastrophic consequences—the

⁸⁰ For the change of Tang’s barbarian policy, see Fu Yue-cheng, “Tangdai yi-xia guannian zhi yanbian,” *Han Tang shi lunji*, Taipei: Lianjing, 1977, 209-226.

⁸¹ Miyazaki Ichisada, “Dongyang de jinshi,” 202-210.

⁸² Ge Zhaoguang, *Zhai zi Zhongguo*, 49-54.

fall of Bianjing into Jurchen hands in 1127, commemorated as the Shame of Jinkang⁸³ and the end of the Northern Song, followed by unsuccessful attempts to reclaim the Central Terrain and, eventually, the Mongolian conquest of the Southern Song in 1279, the first takeover of the whole China by ethnically different invaders, as well as discrimination and oppression—tremendously fueled the Han people’s national consciousness.

The Song intelligentsia, who account for the majority of middle and upper social strata, had a keen reaction to the changed inter-state situation. In the Northern Song, the scholar-officials, ashamed and anxious for the failure in securing the northern frontier, shared a great concern with the Central Country identity. A most relevant discussion is about political orthodoxy. Inspired by the concept of Great Unification first raised in the *Gongyang Commentary of Chunqiu*, from the Han on scholars generally took the possession of *tianxia* as the cornerstone of orthodoxy.⁸⁴ For the Northern Song scholars, however, it was a matter of fact that *tianxia*, although claimed to be all in the imperial realm, remained divided due to northern rivals’ expansion. While this embarrassing fact was understandably circumvented in defining orthodoxy, it plagued the whole intelligentsia. One representative in this regard is Shi Jie (1005-1045), who in his essay “On *Zhong guo*”—presumably the first political thesis taking *Zhong guo* as its focus—argued for a pure *Zhong guo*-ness or Chinese-ness limited within the specific area of the Nine Districts and based upon particular racial, ethnic, intellectual, religious, ritual, and custom features, and asked

⁸³ Jinkang is the reign title of the Qin emperor of Song when Bianjing was occupied.

⁸⁴ Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue shang zhi zhengtong lun*, 1-43.

for isolating *Zhong guo* from barbarian influences. As a radical in the pro-Confucian Ancient Prose Movement, he was so worried for the pollution of the culture of *Zhong guo* that Buddhism and even Daoism were rejected as non-*Zhong guo* in his statement.⁸⁵ Shi Jie had no mention of orthodoxy; however, his cultural xenophobia is reminiscent of another vein of orthodoxy theory also originated in the *Gongyang Commentary*, i.e. the Xia/Yi dichotomy. In this political canon, the ideal of the sage king's Grand Unification is associated with a territory-based Xia/Yi distinction: "His state inside, while other Xia states outside; the Xia states inside, while the Yi and Di outside."⁸⁶ In later times, the loss of Central Terrain to northern tribes raised the significance of ethnicity for orthodoxy. A remarkable case is Huangfu Shi (777-835), who contended that the *yi* rulers of the state of Northern Wei, their occupation of Central Terrain notwithstanding, had had no orthodoxy due to the lack of propriety and righteousness that make up the essence of *Zhong guo*.⁸⁷ However, Huangfu Shi still conceded the possibility to convert *yi* and *di* to Chinese proprieties. It was Shi Jie, joined by his like-minded admirers, who defined *Zhong guo* as an exclusively territorial, racial, and cultural community and started among literati the intellectual effort towards the creation of a modern ethno-national state.

An indication of Shi Jie's influence in the Southern Song is the emphasis upon Principle (*dao* 道) in claiming orthodoxy.⁸⁸ Following Zhu Xi and other scholars

⁸⁵ Shi Jie, "Zhongguo lun," *Culai Shi xiansheng wenji*, ed. Chen Zhi'e, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984, 116-17.

⁸⁶ Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue shang zhi zhengtong lun*, 7. For the association between ethnicity and orthodoxy, see Luo Zhitian, "Yixia zhi bian yu dao-zhi zhi fen," 69-78.

⁸⁷ Huangfu Shi, "Dongjin yuanwei zhengrun lun," *Zhongguo shixue shang zhi zhengtong lun*, 86.

⁸⁸ Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue shang zhi zhengtong lun*, 47-49.

who valued the Orthodoxy of Principle and contrasted it to the Orthodoxy of Rule, Zheng Sixiao (1241-1318), with sheer pain for the Southern Song's fall, echoed Shi Jie by denying the legitimacy of the northern invaders' takeover of China:⁸⁹

Among all the ominous occurrences under Heaven from past to present, nothing is worse than a subject assuming the monarch's duty and the barbarians practicing the way of *Zhong guo*. For the barbarians, practicing the way of *Zhong guo* is not their luck, but indeed their misfortune... The barbarians should rather practice the barbarian way and therefore worship their own Heaven. The monarch/subject and Hua/Yi divisions are the paramount norms under Heaven from past to present. How can they be disrupted?⁹⁰

In Zheng Sixiao's eyes, both deeds violate the fundamental political ethics and fall into the category of the most severe usurpation. His extreme opposition to such arrogations continued Shi Jie's warning of geographical and ethic confusion in consequence of barbarian intrusion. On the other hand, Zheng Sixiao locates orthodoxy at the top of political legitimacy.

Sage, orthodoxy, and *Zhong guo* are originally a unified whole. It is actually (due to certain circumstances) that I divide them for analysis. Therefore, those who have achieved *tianxia* cannot yet boast *Zhong guo*, those who have achieved *Zhong guo* cannot yet boast orthodoxy, and those who have achieved orthodoxy cannot yet boast sageness. Only the sage can integrate *tianxia*, *Zhong guo*, and orthodoxy into a unified whole.⁹¹

Occupation of *tianxia*, from Zheng Sixiao's perspective, only satisfies a minor,

⁸⁹ For a discussion of Chen Liang, another Southern Song intellectual who was also a spiritual offspring of Shi Jie, see Hoyt C. Tillman, "Proto-Nationalism in Twelfth-Century China? The Case of Ch'en Liang," 403-28.

⁹⁰ Zheng Sixiao, *Zheng Sixiao ji*, ed. Chen Fukang, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991, 132-33.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 135.

if not unnecessary, condition for orthodoxy. To become *Zhong guo*, a regime should be the inheritor and preserver of the tradition of *Zhong guo*. Except for the Tang, ranking among the regimes of *Zhong guo* for its unprecedentedly benevolent rule, other barbarian dynasties are denied *Zhong guo*-ness. To go further to become orthodox, a regime should unify *tianxia*, conform to the aforementioned ethics, and practice benevolent rule. Only the sage accomplishes such a unique feat. In contrast to the idea that orthodoxy comes with the occupation of *tianxia*, as opined by many Northern Song scholars, Zheng Sixiao regarded ethnicity and ethics as more important prerequisites than territory. By so doing, he articulated the defeated people's resistance when, for the first time in history, the whole territory of *Zhong guo* was lost to the northern peoples. It is noteworthy that his ethnic division, while continuing the traditional cultural criterion, displays a racial consciousness stronger than Shi Jie by arguing that a certain evil being gave rise to essentially and unchangeably non-*Zhong guo* barbarians.

Zheng Sixiao's radical proto-nationalism is by no means a sudden emergence. Rather, his thought manifested crucial intellectual shifts in the Song period, and epitomized in large the economic, political, and cultural alterations from the middle Tang onward. From the eighth to the thirteenth century, continuous warfare in present-day north China caused the shift of demographic center to the south. Constant population increase in the once underdeveloped regions such as Lower Yangtze and Lingnan, in combination with advanced technologies spread by immigrants, transportation progress (i.e. The Grand Canal), excellent geographical and climate conditions, and favorable policies, eventually made present-day southern China the

center of Chinese economy. Prosperity in the south re-structured politics as well. Through civil service exams, scholar-officials affiliated with local elite families, notably those from southern counties, while not taking civil service as the only career option, gradually occupied the political scene.⁹² Economic boom and civil bureaucracy brought forth a heyday of culture, as reflected in the steady enlargement of reading public and consequently prospering printing industry.⁹³ Increasing literacy facilitated the spread of thought. When the Khitan and Tangut invasion and the decisive Jurchen conquest of north China provoked resentment and anger, the loyalty-oriented patriotism, initially an official value, underwent a diffusion to the whole society, particularly through the literati in the south, although many of them were not office-holders and even from lower social strata.⁹⁴ A commoner throughout his life, Zheng Sixiao exemplified the nationalistic tension pervasive in the Southern Song intellectual mind.

The miraculous discovery of Zheng Sixiao's *Xin shi* (History of mind 心史) in the late Ming linked up Chinese nationalism in the wake of two historical conquests of China by northern peoples and inspired its new development.⁹⁵ Amongst those who echoed Zheng Sixiao in the Ming-Qing transition, the most noteworthy are Wang Fuzhi (1619-1692) and Gu Yanwu (1613-1682). Wang Fuzhi continued the emphasis

⁹² Robert M. Hartwell, "Demographic, Political, and Social Transformations of China, 750-1550," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 42.2 (Dec. 1982), 365-442.

⁹³ For an illustrative case, see Lucille Chia, "*Mashaben*: Commercial Publishing in Jianyang from the Song to the Ming," *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, eds., Paul Jakov Smith and Richard von Glahn, Harvard University Press, 2003, 284-328.

⁹⁴ Rolf Trauzettel, "Sung Patriotism as a First Step toward Chinese Nationalism," 202-12.

⁹⁵ For controversies about *Xin shi*'s authenticity, see Chen Fukang, *Jingzhong qishu kao*, Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2001, 266-324.

upon Hua/Yi antithesis. For him, 1) The Hua have their exclusive territory, and so have the *yi*. The two kinds of territory cannot be intermingled; 2) Once intermingled with the *yi* (culture), the Hua (culture) is no longer Hua. Rather, it will become barbarian, followed by the ruin of both the Orthodoxy of Principle and of Rule; 3) The Hua way belongs exclusively to the people of *Zhong guo*. The barbarian practice of the way of *Zhong guo* is nothing but usurpation. However, the Confucians, even not serving in office and unable to realize the way of *Zhong guo* over *tianxia*, can preserve the Orthodoxy of Principle. He therefore distinguished the fall of dynasty from the fall of *tianxia*. For him, *tianxia* meant a spatiotemporal continuum extending with the Orthodoxy of Principle. Gu Yanwu likewise contrasted *guo* (state 國) with *tianxia* in a widespread passage:

There is destruction of *guo* and destruction of *tianxia*. Between destruction of *guo* and destruction of *tianxia*, what distinction should be made? Change the name, alter the reign title—this is called destruction of *guo*; benevolence and righteousness are blocked, to the extent that beasts eat men or even men eat each other—this is called destruction of *tianxia*... Therefore knowing how to guard *tianxia* precedes knowing how to guard *guo*. It is the prince and the ministers, joined by the meat eaters, who guard *guo*. To guard *tianxia*, even an ordinary man shares the responsibility.⁹⁶

Zheng Sixiao, although lamenting the loss of *tianxia* and valuing his own insistence of principle, detached individual integrity from the political enterprise concerning *tianxia*:

A commoner who has integrity protects his life, his family, and his offspring,

⁹⁶ Gu Yanwu, *Rizhi lu*, annot., Huang Rucheng, ed. Qin Kecheng, Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1994, 471.

and becomes eulogized in his native land for benevolence. A minister who has no integrity loses his life, his family, *guo*, and *tianxia*, and becomes derided by later generations for depravity.⁹⁷

His discussion is evidently set in the context of Confucianism. First raised in the “Daxue” chapter of *Liji*, “cultivate his personality, then regulate his family, then order well his *guo*, and ultimately make *tianxia* tranquil and happy” is an everlasting Confucian ideal. Since such formulation dated back to pre-Qin times when states vied for hegemony over *tianxia*, the *Liji* passage is the perfect crescendo of Confucian life and career. Whereas *tianxia* is little more than a synonym of territory in *Xin shi*, it has become in the writings of Wang and Gu a community with distinctive territory, people, and culture. Whereas Zheng Sixiao exempted the commoners from the obligation to maintain *guo* and *tianxia*, Wang Fuzhi and Gu Yanwu held that even a commoner is responsible for *tianxia*’s rise and fall, and hence asked the common people—especially the Confucians, so to speak—to take a more active part in politics, although in a cultural manner. Thus, these two seventeenth-century scholars put forward a further step towards modern nationalism.⁹⁸

Over the course of the second millennium C.E., however, the development of proto-nationalistic thought in China is only one side of the coin and often like the invisible far side of the moon. Take the Yuan dynasty as an example, for many

⁹⁷ Zheng Sixiao, *Zheng Sixiao ji*, 121.

⁹⁸ For Levenson, Huang Zongxi and Gu Yanwu were but representatives of traditional Chinese culturalism. “*T’ien-hsia* and *kuo*, and the ‘Transvaluation of values,’” *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 11.4 (Aug. 1952), 447-51. However, Huang and Gu’s emphasis on common people’s value and responsibility foreshadowed public-oriented political thoughts. See Hou Wailu, *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi*, vol. 5, 155-65, 234-52. Their discussion heralded more democracy in domestic politics and, when foreign invasion became the central concern, favored nationalistic articulation. In fact, there is more connection than disjunction between Huang and Gu’s arguments and Liang Qichao’s nationalistic discourse. See also Dan Xingwu, “‘*Tianxia* xingwang, pifu you ze’ de zai quanshi yu Zhongguo jindai minzu guojia yishi de shengcheng,” *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* No.10 (2006), 14-20.

Confucian intellectuals, that the barbarians can practice the way of *Zhong guo* is a belief and/or the justification for serving in the new regime. They insisted that it was justified and even necessary to win over the support of barbarian rulers, make the Orthodoxy of Principle—for some this is also the Orthodoxy of Rule—officially recognized and thus ensure its preservation and development. For the non-Han policymakers, it was also necessary to unite the Confucian elites and consolidate their control over the traditionally agrarian regions. They encouraged collaboration and suppressed resistance, practically and intellectually.⁹⁹ In addition, the Yuan dynasty brought an end to the proto-international competition in East Asia since the 10th century and set up a vast imperial landscape that accorded well with modern Chinese territory.¹⁰⁰ Ethnic discriminations notwithstanding, the re-unified and unprecedentedly large *tianxia* was conducive to the resurgence of universalism that stalled nationalism's fermentation. It was not until the turn of the twentieth century, in response to the threat of Western imperialism and colonialism, that nationalism became the dominant intellectual trend.

From *tianxia* to *shijie*: Nation-State and its Discontents

The full-fledged tributary economy in the Ming-Qing era, in conjunction with China's territorial expansion in the early and high Qing, gave new impetus to

⁹⁹ Luo Zhitian, "Yixia zhi bian yu dao-zhi zhi fen," 78, 80-82. For a detailed while questionable and inadequate analysis of how the Yuan scholar-officials developed the theory of Orthodoxy, see Li Zhi'an, "Yuanchu Hua-Yi zhengtong guannian de yanjin yu hanzu wenren shi meng," *Xueshu yuekan* 39.4 (Apr. 2007), 134-39.

¹⁰⁰ John W. Dardess, "Did the Mongols Matter? Territory, Power, and the Intelligentsia in China from the Northern Song to the Early Ming," *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, 112-22.

universalistic thinking.¹⁰¹ At the same time, new challenges to Chinese universalism, or to be exact China-centric universalism, although mostly ignored by the Chinese, also came to the fore. In East Asia, Japan was again a remarkable example. Having identified Japan or the *tenno*'s territory as *tianxia* and *Zhong guo* since the eighth century, Japanese Confucians in the Edo Period (1603-1868), whose thought owed a great deal to the new boom of continental Confucianism then known as *sogaku* (Song-period Learning 宋學), found it necessary to contend for Japan's superiority to China through a new rhetoric of *tianxia*, and found the China-centric Hua/Yi hierarchy to be problematic.¹⁰² Some Japanese scholars, valuing the universalistic connotation of *tianxia*, argued that all peoples are equal under Heaven.¹⁰³ For scholars like Yamaga Soko (1622-1685), however, this is far from enough. In a homogenous Confucian world, Soko argued, Japan and China, each having its own Orthodoxy of Rule and occupying its own *tianxia*, share the Orthodoxy of Principle. Nevertheless, only Japan boasts favorable geography, outstanding people, and sacred orthodoxy, and is therefore the unique *chugoku* 中國.¹⁰⁴ As a response to northern peoples' intrusion, the orthodoxy theory established by Song scholars especially Zhu

¹⁰¹ For two rather different, even contrasting overviews of the tributary system, see J. K. Fairbank, "Tributary Trade and China's Relations with the West," *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 1.2 (1942), 129-149; Takeshi Hamashita, "The Tributary Trade System and Modern Asia," *Japanese Industrialization and the Asian Economy*, eds. A. J. H. Latham and Heita Kawakatsu, London: Routledge, 1994, 91-107. See also James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 29-55.

¹⁰² For the conceptual evolution of *tianxia* in pre-seventeenth-century Japan, see Kan Huai-chen, "Ribei jianghu shidai ruzhe de tianxia guannian: yi Huize An Xinlun weili," *Riben hanxue yanjiu xubian: sixiang wenhua pian*, eds. Zhang Baosan and Yang Rubin, Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2008, 167-78.

¹⁰³ Huang Chun-chieh, "Lun Zhongguo jingdian zhong de 'Zhongguo' gainian de hanyi ji qi zai jinshi Ribei yu xiandai Taiwan de zhuanhua," *Dongya lishi shang de tianxia yu zhongguo gainian*, ed. Kan Huai-chen, Taipei: National Taipei University Press, 2007, 332.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 329-330. Kan Huai-chen, "Shanlu Suxing Zhongchao shishi zhong de tianxia yu zhongguo gainian," *Jianghu shidai ribei hanxue yanjiu zhu mianxiang: sixiang wenhua pian*, eds. Yeh Kuo-Liang and Hsu Hsing-ching, Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2009, 130-42.

Xi inspired Japan's nationalistic articulation. Such travel of nationalistic consciousness in East Asia in a sense resembles while antedates the flow of nationalistic thinking from New World to European countries, and then to the African and Asian colonies and semi-colonies in the nineteenth century, as described in Benedict Anderson's classical account of the origin and spread of nationalism.¹⁰⁵

Much more profound shattering strikes came from the West. Beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, a considerable amount of Western knowledge, especially that of early modern astronomy and geography, spread to China mostly through missionaries. Western Learning, vindicated in practice, slowly but steadily unsettled the traditional Chinese understanding of Heaven and Earth. Given the fundamental significance of cosmology to Chinese epistemology and ethics, consequent changes in the Chinese view of world order were no surprise.¹⁰⁶ Yet, it was not until the nineteenth century, after a succession of humiliating failures, that China's illusion of "Heavenly Dynasty" ultimately dissipated. The British Empire, followed by other Western imperial powers, forced open the door of China through Opium Wars and subsequent assaults. China suffered from territorial losses, economic erosion, and social turmoils as invaders expanded their colonial interests through unequal treaties and other means. In this decades-long process, the impact upon traditional Chinese world order is twofold. On the one hand, China's superior status to "barbarians" came to its end. This gigantic empire had to give up its discriminatory rhetoric against *yi*, recognize international equality, and realize its peripheral place in the Euro-centric

¹⁰⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed, London: Verso, 2006, 47-140.

¹⁰⁶ Ge Zhaoguang, *Zhongguo sixiang shi*, vol. 2, Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2001, 336-79.

world system.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, the Chinese tributary system also disintegrated as all its protectorates fell into the hands of Western powers and Japan.¹⁰⁸ And it was nothing but the historic defeat in the war with Japan—a country whose ambition for continental expansion had thitherto been thwarted once and again by China in the past—and the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895 leading up to Japan’s annexation of Taiwan and later Korea that gave a fatal blow to the Chinese world order, both in reality and in people’s mind.

In response to imperial decline, Chinese scholars and scholar-officials played an important role in the late Qing intellectual and political evolution. On the intellectual level, the effectiveness of Western technology was widely recognized among literati. As Wei Yuan suggests, China should “learn advanced barbarian skills to overcome the barbarians.”¹⁰⁹ Another famous suggestion in relation to Western technology is “Chinese *ti* (principle) plus Western *yong* (application).” Such an eclectic proposal implies the intention to employ Western technology for seeking wealth and power while avoid doing harm to the core of Chinese cultural and political values.¹¹⁰ Such reconciliatory effort was doomed to fail: “There were thinkers who came to hold that if there was any *ti* involved in combination with the *yong* of Western applied science, it was Western pure science, and Western philosophy, literature, and

¹⁰⁷ Colonial discipline contributed a lot to the change of Chinese mindset, especially among the literati-officials. See James Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

¹⁰⁸ Li Yunquan, *Chaogong zhidu shi lun*, 272-84.

¹⁰⁹ See Xiong Yuezhi, *Xixue dongjian yu wanqing shehui*, Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1994, 254-66.

¹¹⁰ See Theodore Hutters, *Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China*, Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005, 23-42; Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian and Its Modern Fate*, vol. 1, 49-78.

art, not their Chinese counterpart.”¹¹¹ Once the existence of a parallel center of civilization was asserted, the taken-for-granted Chinese monopoly of civilization, along with China’s presumed role as the unique world hegemon, was shaken, if not shattered. In the practical level, confronted with Western powers’ encroachment along imperial borders and integrated into the system of international law, the Qing Empire was increasingly self-conscious—one among “numerous states” (*wanguo* 萬國) under a much larger Heaven.¹¹² So far, the majority of elites, in and out of office, still identified with the empire and devoted themselves to its redemption. The watershed was the aforementioned encounter with Japan in 1895 that ignited China’s passion for change. The intellectuals, whose awareness of the impending catastrophe is evident in roaring “save our state, save our race, and save our religion (Confucianism)” during the Hundred Days Reform in 1898, strove for national revival through state-sponsored political reform, in the hope that China can replicate Japan’s success of Meiji Restoration. Brutally suppressed by Empress Dowager Cixi and conservative officials, and disillusioned by the Qing government’s performance in the Boxer Uprising, Chinese intellectuals became divided in the ways for national salvation. The revolutionary-minded group, often characterized by radical Han racial nationalism and advocacy for democracy and republicanism, in the end won enough support to overthrow the Qing Empire and ushered China into the republican era.

The founding of the Republic of China, though, was only the first step to escape the predicament. It is reasonable to say that the transition from the empire to

¹¹¹ Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian and Its Modern Fate*, vol. 1, 69.

¹¹² For Chinese worldview’s change from the 1840s to 1895, see Jin Guantao and Liu Qingfeng, “Cong ‘tianxia,’ ‘wanguo’ dao ‘shijie’—jiantan Zhongguo minzuzhuyi de qi yuan,” *Guannian shi yanjiu: Zhongguo xiandai zhongyao zhengzhi shuyi de xingcheng*, Hong Kong: Xianggang zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 2008, 229-233.

nation was fairly successful in China since this country, unlike other empires, avoided disintegration and retained most of its imperial territory after revolution. The pain of the Republic's birth, however, was still inevitable, physical as well as mental: Physical for the disorder and turmoil resulting from political reconfiguration; mental, so to speak, for the entanglement of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. As an ambiguous term, *tianxia* could neither define China's status in the era of nation-states, nor provide a stable macro-framework for strategic consideration. It therefore gave way to more clearly defined notions that fit in with the fundamentally changed circumstances. In fact, *Zhongguo* undertook most of its function to mean "the Chinese nation," and *wanguo*, *guoji* (國際 international), and later *shijie* became the major designator for "world."¹¹³ The reincarnations of *tianxia* facilitated and encouraged considerations of world order as *tianxia* did in pre-Qin times. Luo Zhitian has insightfully pointed out that, while making *tianxia* a nation, as Levenson argues, is the theme of the intellectual history of modern China, the shift from *tianxia* to *shijie* (世界 world) is also central to the discussion of late Qing and early Republican thinkers.¹¹⁴

To fully understand Chinese intellectuals' dilemma between the nation (nationalism) and world (cosmopolitanism), we need to reflect upon the issue of universalism. Late imperial China had a strong tradition of Confucian universality, by which the elites overcame provincialism and maintained imperial unity.¹¹⁵ Hence, it

¹¹³ Ibid., 233-44.

¹¹⁴ Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian and Its Modern Fate*, vol. 1, 103. Luo Zhitian, "Tianxia yu shijie: qingmo shiren guanyu renlei shehui renzhi de zhuanbian—cezhong Liang Qichao de guannian," *Jindai dushuren de sixiang shijie yu zhixue quxiang*, Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2009, 32 et passim.

¹¹⁵ Joseph R. Levenson, "The Province, the Nation, and the World: The Problem of Chinese Identity," *Approaches*

was not very difficult for open-minded Chinese intellectuals to find universal discourse in traditional sources to justify their appreciation of Western knowledge and thought.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, when Western value was established as the authentic universal value through conquest, Chinese intellectuals suffered a true spiritual crisis. Their value orientation, spiritual orientation, and cultural identity were all greatly unsettled.¹¹⁷ Some, remaining confident in Chinese civilization, insisted that China's contribution to the making of a genuinely universal value is indispensable.¹¹⁸ For almost every Chinese intellectual, even those iconoclasts who argued for total Westernization, the sheer fact of the atrocities of imperialism and colonialism made Western universal value morally questionable. Sensed in great agony is the conflict between Western *ti* and Western *yong*:

(Western hegemony) was not a mere external existence. It already infiltrated the consciousness and mentality of the Chinese, and was internalized as an intense complex. On the one hand, they abhorred Western imperialism. On the other hand, they knew well that, to survive in the modern world, it was necessary (to rely on) Western learning that shares the same origin as imperialism. It is required by "modernization" and driven by practical reason to embrace Western learning. This certainly gave rise to the intellectual plight and mental distortion among the Chinese, forming a complex entwining love

to *Modern Chinese History*, eds. Albert Feuerwerker, Rhoads Murphey, and Mary C. Wright, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967, 269-71.

¹¹⁶ The most famous statement of universalism is from Lu Jiuyuan (1139-1193): "The cosmos is but my mind, and my mind is but the cosmos. For sages who emerge from the East Sea, their mind and principle are the same (to me). For sages who emerge from the West Sea, their mind and principle are the same (to me). For sages who emerge from the South Sea and North Sea, their mind and principle are the same (to me). For sages who emerge during thousands of ages before and after present, their mind and principle are, as well, nothing but the same (to me)." See Ge Zhaoguang, *Zhongguo sixiang shi*, vol. 2, 333, 377-79. For the emergence of "universal history," see Ge Zhaoguang, *Zhongguo sixiang shi*, vol. 2, 454-58; Zhang Qing, "Wanqing 'tianxiawanguo' yu 'pubian lishi' linian de fuxian ji qi yiyi," *Ershiyi shiji* 94 (Apr. 2006), 58-60.

¹¹⁷ Chang Hao, "Zhongguo jindai sixiang shi de zhuanxing shidai," *Ershiyi shiji* 52 (Apr. 1999), 33-36. From my perspective, there are three sequential levels of crisis: cognition, value orientation, and cultural identity.

¹¹⁸ Theodore Huters, *Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China*, 203-228.

and hatred, envy and anger.¹¹⁹

Therefore, late Qing and early Republican cosmopolitanism was infused with such a paradox. “Generally speaking, when modern Chinese intelligentsia talked about nationalism, they never forgot the transcendental Great Unity (as China’s universal ideal); when talking about cosmopolitanism (*shijie zhuyi*) or similar ideas, more often than not, they were also expressing their nationalistic concern.”¹²⁰ Even the adherents of total Westernization were hardly Western imperialism’s collaborators. Rather, they were intended to wholeheartedly learn Western knowledge, institution, and value in order to counter the West with the West. Levenson has a thoughtful comment on these radicals’ venture:

Chinese nationalists’ rejection of provincialism—in which they included, or to which they reduced, Confucian cosmopolitanism—was a fateful modern gesture; it launched China into modern cosmopolitanism, and into all the doubts, the search for roots, which the highly technological modern world is heir to.¹²¹

By “modern cosmopolitanism,” Levenson probably means what were then celebrated in the New Culture Movement: democracy and science, to which we may add aspirations for a modern nation-state and industrial capitalism to make the nationalists’ blueprint concrete and complete. He has pointed out the unpleasing consequences of “modern cosmopolitanism,” and appreciated the Chinese

¹¹⁹ Chang Hao, “Zhongguo jindai sixiang shi de zhuanxing shidai,” 36.

¹²⁰ Luo Zhitian, “Lixiang yu xianshi: qingji minchu shijiezhuyi yu minzuzhuyi de guanlian hudong,” 72.

¹²¹ Joseph R. Levenson, “The Province, the Nation, and the World: The Problem of Chinese Identity,” 273.

communists' cosmopolitanism and their sophisticated construction of a cosmopolitan-minded nationalism.¹²² In the first three decades of the twentieth century, anarchism, socialism, communism, and their amalgams, all of which emerged in the West from the discontents with nation-state-sponsored capitalism, were all in the arsenal of Chinese intellectuals who sought to critique and transcend the West. Only against such background can we understand Levenson's pithy comment on the Chinese communists' effort to collect provincial drama, shed a new light on them by their universal theory of class struggle, and make these plays national: "The anti-provincial provincialists are cosmopolitan anti-cosmopolites."¹²³

It was within such an intellectual dynamic that the dialectic between *guo* and *tianxia* entered into its modern phase: nation and world. Of central concern is no longer the difference between political entity and cultural value, but the fate of a distinct nation, China, in a world characterized by Western dominance, and the opposition between Chinese (provincial) tradition and Western (universal) value. In the meantime, however, Chinese thinkers also began to contemplate "all the doubts" of modern world and the future of humankind. In this regard, Kang Youwei (1858-1927) is of particular significance. As a nationalist, he risked his life promoting political reform in China; as a cosmopolite, he was the author of *Book of Great Unity*, a magnum opus of humanism and cosmopolitanism. The date of this book is uncertain, but it is evident that *Book of Great Unity* was written over a long period of time (cir.

¹²² Ibid., 275-87.

¹²³ Ibid., 284.

1884-1902), with constant revisions made to the initial draft.¹²⁴ Kang Youwei developed his dream for saving the world through observations of human misery, in which one can easily identify the humanistic concern of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity. In his daring plan for the future ideal world, the influence of modern socialism and Darwinism is evident. As one of the last masters of Confucianism, Kang Youwei has revisited and renewed the universal political principle formulated in the *Gongyang Commentary of Chunqiu*, associated and negotiated Chinese universalism with other universalistic thinking, and arrived at a new universalism.¹²⁵ He was a great synthesizer of civilizations, who spent his whole life seeking critique and transcendence of the Western universalism that ruled his world. For the Chinese, “the only way to keep from being patronized for one’s ‘ancient wisdom’ or ‘local color’—the only way to avoid feeding the cosmopolitan appetites of others—was,” Levenson argues, “to patronize one’s own, on one’s own, in a spirit as modern and non-provincial as that of the West which would make China provincial.”¹²⁶ Kang Youwei, in a strong will to transcend modern, made both China and West provincial.

Kang Youwei’s thought is typical at the turn of the twentieth century. In late Qing China, he and his student, Liang Qichao (1873-1929) inspired and provoked hot debates about reform and revolution. In the meantime, he was among the great utopians—Edward Bellamy, William Morris, H. G. Wells, to name but a few—who

¹²⁴ Wang Hui, *Xiandai Zhongguo sixiang de xingqi*, vol. 2, 753-59.

¹²⁵ On the early stage of New Text Confucianism’s revival in the Qing dynasty, see Benjamin A. Elman, *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship: The Ch’ang-chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990. On Kang Youwei’s contribution to late Qing New Text Confucianism, see Tang Zhijun, *Jindai jingxue yu zhengzhi*, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989, 152-215.

¹²⁶ Joseph R. Levenson, “The Province, the Nation, and the World: The Problem of Chinese Identity,” 277-78.

envisioned ideal societies at the age of rampant industrial capitalism. Kang thus exemplified an unprecedented rise of idealism and utopianism in Chinese intellectual history. In his time, late Qing and early Republican Chinese intelligentsia combined their political passion for traditional *tianxia* with modern views of history and world, and developed new ideals that were usually to be realized at the end of a progressive history.¹²⁷ Apart from a plethora of newspaper and magazine articles that expressed their hope for a splendid future, peculiarly noteworthy was the booming utopian literature. Liang Qichao's unfinished novel, *A Story of Future New China* (1902), introduced the idea of utopia, a new style for literary creation and political discussion, to Chinese intellectuals. An important part of the late Qing "Revolution of Fiction," the utopian works that emerged in the wake of Liang Qichao's pioneering novel displayed a strong orientation towards enlightenment as well as a stronger desire for a new China enlightenment will bring forth.¹²⁸ More important for this study, late Qing utopian writers shared a great concern with world order, although not necessarily Kang Youwei's cosmopolitanism. One can find among them a variety of cosmopolites as well as proponents of Chinese nationalism. In the chapters that follow, we are to witness, through the lens of literature, how late Qing Chinese understood their world, now no longer a *tianxia* but a *shijie*, and explored a better one.

¹²⁷ See also Chang Hao, "Zhongguo jindai sixiang shi de zhuanxing shidai," 39.

¹²⁸ For a sketch of late Qing literature, see Leo Ou-Fan Lee, "Literary trends I: the quest for modernity, 1895-1927," *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 12, ed. John K. Fairbank, Cambridge University Press, 1983, 452-504.

CHAPTER II BLESSING IN PERIL: THE UTOPIAN IMAGINATIONS OF THE YELLOW RACE

Narrative utopias, the “imaginary communities,” have been known to play a vital role in the formation of nation-states, the “imagined communities,” since the former “provided one of the first spaces for working out the particular shapes and boundaries of the latter.”¹ This was indeed the case in late Qing China, where utopian writing, notably in the form of novels, created a conceptual space in which the “cycle of historical reciprocity of nationalism and racism” can be seen in full view.² However, the “imaginary communities” were not necessarily confined to nation-states. Rather, there was an increasing trend at the turn of the twentieth century—an era of nation-state formation, and also of world integration—to reflect upon world order and envision a global utopia.³ Cherishing the ideal of *tianxia*, Chinese utopians embarked on exploring how to ensure the humankind’s universal welfare.

It is therefore inviting to view the conflicting and competing views of ethnicity, race, and nation—human categories that constitute the world—in late Qing thought through a specific lens: utopianism. As change was the theme of the day, portraying a new China and/or a new world became necessary and popular in political and social

¹ Phillip E. Wegner, *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002, xvi.

² “From this accumulation of entirely individual but historically linked cases there results what might be called the cycle of historical reciprocity of nationalism and racism. . . Racism is constantly emerging out of nationalism, not only towards the exterior but towards the interior. . . And nationalism emerges out of racism, in the sense that it would not constitute itself as the ideology of a ‘new’ nation if the official nationalism against which it were reacting were not profoundly racist.” Etienne Balibar, “Racism and Nationalism,” Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, N.Y.: Verso, 1991, 53.

³ Jens Bartleson, *Visions of World Community*, Cambridge University Press, 2009, 1-19.

movements. In the thus mushrooming utopian visions, people discussed passionately about how to construct an ideal world order and what role China should play in this process. Their discussion helped the formation of modern China and foreshadowed China's international participation that has been unfolding since then to the present. In this chapter, I will first trace the developmental trajectory of the "yellow race" concept, as it initiated the thought and debates about race in late Qing China and figured prominently in utopianism. This section is to be followed up by an analysis of an intriguing topic in utopian writing, the Yellow Peril, for it aroused fervent discussions and gave rise to diverse imaginations of world order. In the third part, Kang Youwei's scheme of racial assimilation, because of its impressive singularities illustrative of utopian universalism, will be carefully examined.

The "Yellow Race": Western Origin and East Asian Reception

Although racialized thinking can be dated back to the very early stages of human civilization, the concept of the yellow race is a European invention that only became well-known in China in the nineteenth century. In the sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries, early missionaries and travelers often regarded the Chinese and Japanese as whites.⁴ However, such a "white" tag for East Asians was less descriptive than evaluative. For Europeans in the early modern age, "white," in combination with "Christianity" and "civilized," constituted European identity. East Asians were white because, according to some legends, they were Christians, or their minds were open to

⁴ Michael Keevak, *Becoming Yellow: A Short History of Racial Thinking*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011, 23-42.

Christianity. Therefore, when close encounters frustrated missionary enthusiasm, the illusion of “white Asians” dissipated. Despite the diversity of skin color observed and recorded in many documents, Asians in European accounts became invariably “yellow.”⁵ The reason why Carl Linnaeus, the father of modern taxonomy, chose *luridus* (pale yellow, deathly, ghastly, etc.) as his derogatory label for Asians remain unclear, but his denomination influenced a variety of scientific researches in the field of taxonomy, anatomy, and anthropology that eventually established the yellow race as an “objective” category.⁶

From mid-nineteenth century onwards, the yellow race became increasingly unwelcome in the West. Disdain for them developed into hostilities and fear that brought forth the phantom of the “Yellow Peril” and other delusions of threat.⁷ At this time, colonial conquest—military, economic, and to a lesser extent cultural—of China and its vassal states, in spite of their continuing resistance, were in general successful. For the Westerners at home, indeed striking were the Chinese laborers abroad, whose persistence and diligence under miserable conditions caused great anxieties among local communities (especially in Australia and North America) for escalating competition. Moreover, cultural difference, low education, and family concern prevented Chinese migrants from becoming integrated into Western society.

⁵ David E. Mungello, *Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500-1800*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009, 130-134; Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 23-42.

⁶ Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 43-123.

⁷ For a helpful literature review of the studies of Yellow Peril, see Luo Fuhui, *Huanghuo lun: dongxi wenming de duili yu duihua*, Hsin-tien: Lihsu wenhua, 2007, 47-53. Apart from Luo’s book and the works he has introduced, other important references include: Gregory Blue, “Gobineau on China: Race Theory, the ‘Yellow Peril,’ and the Critique of Modernity,” *Journal of World History* 10.1 (Spring 1999): 93-139; Akira Iikura, *Yellow Peril no shinwa: teikoku nihon to “kōka” no gyakusetsu*, Tokyo: Sairyusha, 2004; Yang Jui-sung, *Bingfu, huanghuo yu shuishi: “xifang” shiye de Zhongguo xingxiang yu jindai Zhongguo guozu lunshu xiangxiang*, Taipei: Zhengda chubanshe, 2010.

Resentment and grievance against the Chinese evolved into explicit racial discrimination, persecution, and rejection, as exemplified by the Chinese Exclusion Act enacted in 1882 by the United States.⁸ Japanese emigrants in the United States were confronted with similar problems. At the turn of century, for Westerners who worried about the threat of the yellow race, a number of historical events sounded new alarm: The Sino-Japanese War in 1895 aroused attention to Japan's ambition and elicited Kaiser Wilhelm II's notorious drawing, *The Yellow Peril*; The Boxer Rebellion of 1901 demonstrated the populous China's staggering potential for resistance and revolution; Japan's Pyrrhic victory in 1905 against Russia was even celebrated by people in China as well as other colonies and semicolonies as the yellows' monumental triumph over the whites.⁹

⁸ For an overview of the Chinese migration from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, see Philip A. Kuhn, *Chinese among Others: Emigration in Modern Times*, Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2008, 107-238. Donna Gabaccia has made a careful and inspiring comparison of the Chinese and Italian oversea workers and analyzed how racial animosities were developed against them. See Donna Gabaccia, "The 'Yellow Peril' and the 'Chinese of Europe': Global Perspectives on Race and Labor, 1815-1930," *Migration, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*, eds. Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, Bern: Peter Lang, 1997, 177-196.

⁹ Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 122-28. For an overview of non-Western world's reaction of the outcome of Russo-Japanese War, see Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought*, Columbia University Press, 2007, 71-92.



Figure 2.1 *Yellow Peril* / painting by Hermann Knackfuss (1848-1915), designed by Kaiser Wilhelm II, the German emperor who gifted the Russian Tsar Nicholas with this picture and requested him to keep the influences from the East under control (“the threat of a Chinese onslaught mobilized by Japan”).

Interestingly, the two major alleged origins of the “Yellow Peril,” China and Japan, had readily accepted Western racial classifications, even though they differed considerably in how they responded to their respective position in such a scheme.¹⁰ In Meiji Japan, especially after the 1894-95 Sino-Japanese War, opposition to being classified as the yellow race was remarkable, the major reason being the unwillingness to be lumped together with the Chinese, whom many Japanese intellectuals strove to distance themselves from. Aside from the victor’s contempt for the defeated, the expectation to “depart from Asia” and become identified the same as

¹⁰ For Japan’s adoption of Western social Darwinism and racial theory, see Michael Weiner, “The Invention of Identity: Race and Nation in Pre-war Japan,” *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*, ed. Frank Dikötter, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1997, 96-117.

the powerful and civilized Westerners also accounts for the Japanese dismissal of being yellow. Noteworthy arguments in this regard include Takekoshi Yosaburo's denigration of Chinese history and race, Oyabe Zen'ichiro and Kimura Takataro's theories about Japanese race's occidental origin, and Taguchi Ukichi's contention that Japanese, specifically the upper class, for their fair skin, fine appearance, and linguistic affinities with ancient Europeans, are in fact Aryans.¹¹ The reluctance to be yellow pertained as well to Japan's increasing awareness of the discourse of the Yellow Peril in the West. During the Russo-Japanese War, Japan made a well-concerted effort to diminish the fear for the yellow race's rise by maintaining a domestic "golden silence" on irritating ideas about the "yellow threat" on the one hand, and by launching a diplomatic campaign to clarify Japan's intentions and pacify uneasy Westerners on the other hand.¹² The refutation of the Yellow Peril and any hint of pan-yellow coalition lasted into the Taisho period.

However, the afteryears of Japan's historic victory also witnessed the rise of Japanese identity as the yellow race. In fact, ever since the early Meiji years, a lot of Japanese, notably those well-versed in Confucianism, viewed China as a country with the "same language" and "same race" which Japan could ally in resisting Western invasion. Despite the decline of China's reputation, a significant portion of intellectuals and politicians, including Takayama Chogyū, and Ōkuma Shigenobu, still

¹¹ Luo Fuhui, *Huanghuo lun*, 348-51, 360-64, 377-79. See also Michael Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 134-35. Oyabe and Kimura's theories were inspired by Western scholars who introduced anthropology and archaeology into Japan. See David Askew, "Debating the 'Japanese' Race in Meiji Japan: Towards a History of Early Japanese Anthropology," *The Making of Anthropology in East and Southeast Asia*, eds. Shinji Yamashita, Joseph Bosco, and J. S. Eades, New York: Berghahn Books, 2004, 66-67, 72-74.

¹² See Akira Iikura, "The Japanese Response to the Cry of the Yellow Peril during the Russo-Japanese War," *Josai International Review* 11 (2006): 29-47.

proposed Sino-Japanese alliance.¹³ They chose not to challenge Western racial theories, but rather internalize such Western gaze and develop accordingly a yellow and Asian identity, often expressed in the form of pan-Asianism. Nevertheless, their central concern was still nationalistic, for almost every Japanese pan-Asianist proudly identified Japanese as the most superior among Asians. Straddling between the Western colonizer and the Chinese colonized, Japan adopted a distinct strategy, distancing itself from other Asian peoples in a hierarchical racial order within its emerging colonial empire, while claiming to take on the “civilizing mission” to educate, enlighten, and embrace the yellow race so as to lead them in the fight with the whites for an “Asia for the Asiatics.”¹⁴ For Japan, how to establish itself and achieve recognition in the shadow of an overwhelming Other (first China, then the West) remained its predominant concern.

In contrast, the Chinese basked in their yellow identity ever since they were exposed to Western racial taxonomy. In China, the Yellow River was considered the cradle of Chinese civilization, yellow earth was the mythical material Goddess Nüwa used to create the human race, and the yellow color had been a monopoly of royal house since the Tang dynasty. For late Qing Chinese, yellow as an ethnonym was

¹³ Luo Fuhui, *Huanghuo lun*, 352-54, 368-70. In an article published in *Nippon*, Japan was expected to ally with China to lead the Asian yellows in stemming the white race’s ambition: “Our Japan is equal to the European powers. The Japanese national spirit and its thriving imperial nationalism have fully embodied our characteristics as the superior yellow race of Asia. If we one day assume the leadership of yellow race, we will command the 800, 000, 000 Asian people together with China and sharpen our common will to fight, then the competition on the Pacific, (because of our active participation,) is yet to be determined. How can this world be exclusively owned by the whites? I know that the world is created for the humans, and the beasts in the wild, the fish in the sea, and the birds in the sky are for human’s consumption, while I never know that the yellow race, as descendants of sacred nobles, are to suffice the white race’s need of dog-and-horse-like slaves. China, China, I hope to hold sway over the Pacific with you!” “Lun Taipingyang zhi jingzheng,” *Youxue yibian* 1 (Oct 1902): 88.

¹⁴ Kazuki Sato, “‘Same Language, Same Race’: The Dilemma of Kanbun in Modern Japan,” *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*, ed. Frank Dikötter, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1997, 130-35. For a meaningful comparison between Okakura Tenshin and Taguchi Ukichi, see Leo Ching, “Yellow Skin, White Masks: Race, Class, and Identification in Japanese Colonial Discourse,” *Trajectories: Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, eds. Kuan-hsing Chen et al., Routledge: London, 1998, 65-86.

nothing but appropriate.¹⁵ Without any difficulty, they adopted the four- or five-part racial scheme to classify people on earth, albeit arguing that the yellow race was as civilized and noble as, if not better than, the whites. Meanwhile, many Chinese intellectuals of the day displayed blatant bias against the black, brown, and red races. For them, these dark races looked terribly ugly and stupid, and their enslavement and eventual extinction only attested to their racial inferiority. The yellow race, they warned, would suffer the same fate if necessary effort were not made to ward off the white invaders.¹⁶ Such discrimination against other races was clearly inspired by Western racism;¹⁷ however, it can also be traced back to the Chinese tradition—regional stereotypes, Sino-centric worldviews characterized by superiority over exotic barbarians, notions of social hierarchy that link white complexion with nobility and blackness with the lower classes, if not slaves.¹⁸ Racism was substantially challenged only when Chinese intellectuals began to appreciate other

¹⁵ Huang Xingtao and Chen Peng, “Jindai Zhongguo ‘Huangse’ ciyi bianyi kaoxi,” *Lishi yanjiu* (2010.5): 83-85.

¹⁶ Frank Dik ötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 68-69, 75-76.

¹⁷ The Chinese translation of Okamoto Kensuke’s *Mankoku shiki* had evidently spread Western racial bias. See Sakamoto Hiroko, *Chugoku minzoku shugi no shinwa: jinshu,shintai, gender*, Tokyo: Iwanami, 2004; James Reeve Pusey, *China and Darwin*, Harvard University Asia Center, 1983, 131-32. In addition, Gregory Blue has criticized Dik ötter for failing to “consider whether Liang might have somehow got hold of Gobineau’s distinctive racialist reading of *Genesis*.” Gregory Blue, “Gobineau on China: Race Theory, the ‘Yellow Peril,’ and the Critique of Modernity,” 130.

¹⁸ Frank Dik ötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 10-12, 79-80, 82; James Reeve Pusey, *China and Darwin*, 132. Dik ötter’s overemphasis of late Qing Chinese racism’s indigenous origin incurred Sun Lung-kee’s pointed critique. See Sung Lung-kee’s review of *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 52.3 (1993): 707-08; “Lun Zhongguo shi zhi fuke hua: ping Frank Dik ötter,” *Zhongyang yanjiu yuan jindai shi yanjiusuo jikan* 44 (2004): 160-62. While making sense, Sun’s critique sometimes also simplified the case. For example, Sun argued that Kang Youwei’s suggestion to sterilize the blacks was just a reflection of “white race’s worldview” because there were no blacks within China at that time. In fact, *Book of Great Unity*, where Kang raised his striking suggestion, contains Kang’s close observation of the blacks when traveling abroad. White people’s racist bias might probably have influenced him, but his own impression about the blacks was also fairly negative.

In Japan, diplomats also played the role of introducing Western racial bias and social Darwinism. See Michael Weiner, “The Invention of Identity: Race and Nation in Pre-war Japan,” 105-08.

oppressed people's unrelenting struggle and seek alliance in anti-imperialism.¹⁹

For the rise of racial consciousness in China, social Darwinism was a critical impetus. Through Yan Fu's translation of Thomas Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*, Chinese intellectuals were exposed to Darwinism. Remarkable in their understanding of the principles of evolution was their strong belief in these rules' universal efficiency. "Living things compete, nature selects, and the fittest survives" was commonly believed to be the fundamental rule that governs nature and human society alike. As an intellectual vogue, social Darwinism provided a systematic interpretative framework for worldwide colonial conquests, portraying interracial competition, however inhuman it was, as inevitable and to a large extent justifiable.²⁰ The spread of social Darwinism fueled the aforementioned bias against the vanquished races, which was a mixture of contempt and compassion, and to a far greater degree a panic about the yellow race and China's imminent doom. Chinese intellectuals therefore devoted themselves to saving their wretched race, as manifested in the 1898 tenet of Baoguo Hui (Society for Protecting the Country), "save our country, save our race, save our religion."²¹

The looming menace to "our race" provided a rationale for social reform, and the concept of the yellow race, more importantly, offered an opportunity to work China into a nation-state. As the label for a simplified and distorted oriental Other, the

¹⁹ See Rebecca E. Karl, *Staging the World*, 83-116.

²⁰ Bai Yuntao, "Shehui daerwen zhuyi de shuru ji qi dui jindai Zhongguo shehui de yingxiang," *Beijing shifan xueyuan xuebao* (1990.4): 93-101. For a critique of social Darwinism in late Qing and early Republican China, see Xu Jilin, "Xiandaixing de qilu: qingmo minchu de shehui daerwen zhuyi sichao," *Xiandai Zhongguo sixiang de hexin guannian*, eds. Xu Jilin and Song Hong, Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2010, 175-94.

²¹ Kang Youwei, "Baoguo hui zhangcheng," *Kang Youwei zhenglun ji*, ed. Tang Zhijun, vol.1, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981, 233.

“yellow race,” to its creator’s surprise, endowed this Other with certain homogeneity necessary for the formation of a nation. What the Chinese had to do is to re-conceptualize themselves by discovering, imagining, and recounting their own racial origin and development, in a manner conducive to raise their national consciousness and excite their will to unite and fight. But what on earth was “our race”? Crucial divergences emerged: the revolutionaries, represented by Sun Yat-sen, Zhang Taiyan, and their Tongmenghui (United League) comrades, called for a revolution featuring an anti-Manchu racism that would restore the Han race’s exclusive governance and even occupation of China Proper; the moderate reformers, including Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Yang Du, and their followers, along with Manchu sympathizers, strove to maintain a multi-ethnic China and revive this country through practicing constitutional monarchy. For the former, it was rather easy to clearly define the Han race as a nation by revealing their origin, memorizing their ancestor Huang Di (the Yellow Emperor), celebrating their glorious history, extolling the Han heroes, and condemning the *hanjian* (traitors to the Han race).²² It is worth noting that Terrien de Lacouperie’s theory about Chinese race’s Western origin lent allegedly scientific and thus powerful support to their assertion about the racial distinctiveness and superiority of the Han.²³ The latter found an exclusively Han

²² Wang Chunxia, “Paiman” *yu minzuzhuyi*, 52-100; Shen Sung-chiao, “Zhen da Han zhi tiansheng: minzu yingxiong xipu yu wanqing de guozu xiangxiang,” *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan* 33 (2000): 77-158.

²³ See Li Fan, “Xifang jindai minzu guannian he ‘hua yi zhi bian’ de jiaohui: zai lun Liu Shipai dui Lakeboli ‘Zhongguo renzhong wenming xilai shuo’ de jieshou he chanfa,” *Beijing shifan daxue xuebao* (zhexue shehui kexue ban) (2008.2): 66-72; Hon Tze-ki, “From a hierarchy in Time to a Hierarchy in Space: The Meanings of Sino-Babylonianism in Early Twentieth-Century China,” *Modern China* 36.2 (2010): 139-69. For the debate about Chinese people’s origin in Republican years, see James Leibold, “Searching for Han: Early Twentieth-Century Narratives of Chinese Origins and Development,” *Critical Han Studies: The History, Representation, and Identity of China’s Majority*, eds. Thomas S. Mullaney et al., Stanford University Press, 2012, 220-25.

republic unacceptable. To oppose Han racism and nationalism, some reformers contended that the Han and the Manchu shared the same origin and ancestor, and were therefore racially homogenous. The two ethnic groups should unite against Western invasion.²⁴ But in such arguments the common racial identity of the Han and the Manchu was either ambiguous or insufficient, if defined as the “yellow race,” for building a nation. As was well known, the people pigeonholed as “yellow” included ethnic groups that spread across so many geographical and political boundaries that making them a single nation was impossible.²⁵ “Yellow nationalism” failed also because the revolutionaries employed the “yellow race” and the “Han race” indistinguishably in their speech and writing, or resorted to an intraracial hierarchy, claiming that the Han race, as the most superior among yellow people, deserved their own nation. In fact, most reformers turned to different strategies. They made a painstaking attempt to downplay the racial and ethnic (and sometimes cultural) differences within the Qing imperial territory and, based on the emergent *Zhongguo* identity, sought to construct a *Zhongguo* nation through constitutional politics.²⁶

Though of lesser importance for nation building, the concept of the yellow race still haunted the mind of late Qing intellectuals. Recurrent uproar of the “Yellow

²⁴ Shen Sung-chiao, “Wo yi wo xue jian xuanyuan: Huangdi shenhua yu wanqing de guozu jiangou,” *Taiwan shehui yanjiu jikan* 28 (1997): 50-60.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 61; Sun Lung-kee, “Qingji minzuzhuyi yu Huangdi chongbai zhi faming,” *Lishi yanjiu* (2000.3): 75-76; Frank Dik öter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 84-85.

²⁶ Shen Sung-chiao, “Wo yi wo xue jian xuanyuan: Huangdi shenhua yu wanqing de guozu jiangou,” 61-72; Huang Xingtao, “Minzu zijue yu fuhao rentong: ‘zhonghua minzu’ guannian mengsheng yu queli de lishi kaocha,” in *Zhongguo jindaishi duben*, vol.2, eds. Guo Shuanglin and Wang Xutian, Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2006, 671-730. For the *Zhongguo* identity that has been taking shape since the early Qing dynasty, see Gang Zhao, “Reinventing China: Imperial Qing Ideology and the Rise of Modern Chinese National Identity in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Modern China* 32.3 (2006): 3-30; Guo Chengkang, “Qingdai huangdi de Zhongguo guan,” *Qingshi yanjiu* (2005.4):1-18; Huang Xingtao, “Qingdai manren de Zhongguo rentong,” *Qingshi yanjiu* (2011.1): 1-12.

Peril” in the West provoked various reactions. While direct responses to the warnings of the yellow threat were little more than defenses for the peaceful nature of the yellow race and countercharges of the “white peril,” some thinkers saw in such Western anxieties the possibility of a new world.²⁷ Liang Qichao, for example, took pride in Western powers’ fear for the Chinese. He believed that the advanced racial character of the Chinese would ensure their brilliant future:

(Thanks to the influence of Western thought arguing for freedom and equality, as well as Chinese people’s own adventurous spirit, excellent scholarship, and commercial competitiveness,) that we Chinese will be the most powerful race in the world in the upcoming century is by no means my exaggeration.²⁸

We the Chinese race is certainly the most expansive and powerful race in the world. The people in Britain and France are surprised either by our invincibility or expansion, to the extent that some worry that one day the East will overwhelm the West and invade Europe.²⁹

Will the revived Chinese and yellow race, as Robert Hart foretold in 1903, inflict revenges on the past invaders?³⁰ Such a prospect appealed to many late Qing Chinese,

²⁷ For an overview of the Chinese discussions about “Yellow Peril” theories in the late Qing and early Republican period, see Luo Fuhui, *Huanghuo lun*, 292-346.

²⁸ Liang Qichao, “Lun Zhongguo renzhong zhi jianglai” (1899), *Liang Qichao quanji*, vol.1, 260-62. Through her perusal, Jing Tzu has clarified Liang’s thoughts about the Chinese and yellow race. *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature: The Making of Modern Chinese Identity, 1895-1937*, Stanford University Press, 2005, 51-55.

²⁹ Liang Qichao, “Lun Zhongguo guomin zhi pingge” (1903), *Liang Qichao quanji*, vol.2, 1079.

³⁰ “This episode of today is not meaningless—it is the prelude to a century of change and the keynote of the future history of the Far East...But what is this ‘Yellow Peril’?...It has slept long, as we count sleep, but it is awake at last, and its every member is tingling with Chinese feeling—‘China for the Chinese and down with the foreigners!’...Twenty millions or more of Boxers armed, drilled, disciplined, and animated by patriotic—if mistaken—motives, will make residence in China impossible for foreigners, will take back from foreigners everything foreigners have taken from China, will pay off old grudges with interest, and will carry the Chinese flag and Chinese arms into many a place that even fancy will not suggest today, thus preparing for the future upheavals and disasters never dreamt of.” Robert Hart, “*These from the Land of Sinim*”: *Essays on the Chinese Question*, 2nd ed., London: Chapman & Hall, LD., 1903, 49, 51-52, 54-55.

including Huang Zunxian, and was evidently echoed in Japan.³¹ In contrast, Lu Xun, in a most thoughtful and balanced way, proposed a different fulfillment of the “Yellow Peril”:

Poland and India are countries suffering the same lot as China...But our “men of aspiration” today overlook this and simply assert that all such countries have fallen into their present state because of their own inferiority, and toss in various other defamations to boot. That so blind and absurd an attitude can exist in China is probably due to the fact that we have repeatedly been made to taste fire and the blade, and have cowered beneath the heel of power and despotism for so long. As a result, we have lost our original character and our ability to feel sympathy for others has been worn away; all that remains in our hearts is the urge to fawn on the powerful and show contempt for the weak! Thus, generally speaking, those who sing the praises of militarism have, through their prolonged submission to power and despotism, gradually nurtured a sense of servility in themselves. They have forgotten their origins, joined the cult of aggression, and are truly the lowest of the low. Those who merely echo others and have no ideas of their own may be considered somewhat better.

There are also people who fall into neither of these categories, who occasionally exhibit the characteristics of our pre-human ancestors. I have seen a few instances of this sort of thinking reflected in the poetry of this group, where they take especial pride in Kaiser Wilhelm II’s warning of “Yellow Peril.” They growl hideous clamourings for the destruction of London and the leveling of Rome. Paris alone, they announce, may stand to serve as a setting for their libertine indulgence. Although the original proponents of the “Yellow Peril” notion compared the yellow race to beasts, not even they could have endowed the notion with such fierceness.

Through the present writing I beg to submit to the able-bodied men of China that though bravery, strength and resolve in struggle are certainly attributes most appropriate to human life, they are best applied to self-improvement and

³¹ Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 112. In his memoirs, Timothy Richard recalled what he had seen during his 1903 visit to Japan: “The most interesting man I met was Prince Konoye, then President of the House of Peers. He might be described as the Bismarck of Japan. Educated at Bonn, where Kaiser Wilhelm II as a student must have left a forecast of his future policy carefully preserved by the traditions of the University, Konoye conceived the idea of the domination of Asia over the world by the Japanese leading the yellow race. When the Japanese government sent him to China, he suggested that an alliance be formed between the two nations, whose aim should be to dictate the policy of Asia and check Western aggression.” Timothy Richard, *Forty-five Years in China*, New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1916, 319. “Prince Konoye” is Konoe Atsumaro (1863-1904), father of Konoe Fumiraro (1891-1945), who became Japanese prime minister in WWII.

should not be employed to attack and swallow up innocent countries. If our own foundation is stable and we have surplus strength, let us then act as the Polish general Bem did in supporting Hungary, or as the English poet Byron in aiding Greece, that is, to promote the vital cause of freedom and to topple oppression, so that the world will finally be rid of tyranny. We should offer aid and support to all countries in peril or distress, starting with those which have been our friends and extending our aid throughout the world. By spreading freedom everywhere, we can deprive the ever-vigilant white race of its vassals and servants; *this* will make the beginning of a real “Yellow Peril.”³²

It is worth quoting this long passage for it provides a critical assessment of the ideas of race that prevailed in late Qing intellectual milieu, and reflects Lu Xun’s effort to promote the struggles of China from mere conflicts among different kinds of racism to the “cause of freedom.” Throughout his life, Lu Xun was critical of the Manchu maltreatment of the Hans. What he lamented more, however, was people’s servility—a central part of the national character he fustigated for decades—cultivated and reinforced by the Manchu rulers.³³ Likewise, more hateful than the injustice Western powers committed to the colonized people, was the servility of those Chinese snobs who “fawn on the powerful and show contempt for the weak.” However, to get rid of servility is only the first step to freedom. Those who cheered at the idea of the “Yellow Peril” and desired to be “the master of Europe” were still trapped in the master-slave dialectic, of which Lu Xun called for abolition.³⁴ Expecting China’s revival, he creatively transformed the aggressive tone of the “Yellow Peril” into a

³² Lu Xun, “Toward a Refutation of the Voices of Evil,” trans. J. E. Kowallis, *Renditions* 26 (Autumn 1986): 108-119. I have made a few revisions to the original translation.

³³ Abe Kenya and Wu Jun, “Luelun Lu Xun de ‘paiman’ sixiang,” *Wenyi lilun yanjiu* (1996.1): 27, 29-30.

³⁴ “Yellow Peril, at that time, was interpreted to be the trend that the yellow race would sweep Europe. Hearing this, some heroes, just like hearing some whites’ compliment that China was a sleeping lion, had been complacent for a few years, preparing to be the master of Europe.” “Huang huo,” *Lu Xun quanji*, vol.5, Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 2005, 354. See also Wang Hui, “The Voices of Good and Evil: What Is Enlightenment? Rereading Lu Xun’s ‘Toward a Refutation of Malevolent Voices,’” trans. Ted Hutters and Yangyang Zong, *Boundary 2* (summer 2011): 118-22.

resolution to free China as well as the whole world, displaying an outstanding world consciousness and ulterior utopian passion.

Yang Jui-sung has carefully analyzed late Qing intellectuals' strategy of "self-orientalization" in the process of forging a new collective identity of the Chinese. Chen Tianhua and Zou Rong, focusing on the Western conspiracy to partition China by deploying the discourse of the Yellow Peril, were mainly *defensive* in their discussion. In the meantime, however, they implicitly took the concern with the Yellow Peril as Western recognition of China's potential, and hence found confidence in their own narrative of crisis. For Liang Qichao and Huang Zunxian, who shared such confidence while concerned themselves more with Sino-Western rather than Manchu-Han antagonism, the Yellow Peril transformed into a more *offensive* form of self-imagination.³⁵ Lu Xun's reflection implies a third dimension in this conception, i.e. the *constructive* role China plays in the remaking of world order. This dimension derived more from a distinct Chinese self-expectation than the illusion of the Yellow Peril, and, arguably, it was this self-expectation—as a practitioner of universal justice and liberation—that rescued China from mere nationalism, even if it was unable to free this country from yokes of power.

Yellow Peril Utopianism

In comparison with political essays, literature provides more room for envisioning and depicting future scenarios in terms of race and nation. On the eve of

³⁵ Yang Jui-sung, "Er you huanghuo zhi xianzhao, er you zhongzu zhi shili: 'huanghuo' yu jindai Zhongguo guozu gongtongti xiangxiang," *Bingfu, huanghuo yu shuishu*, 93-99.

WWI, fictions of future war became a worldwide phenomenon. In Western and Japanese works, future was often nightmarish because of the Yellow Peril and the White Peril, respectively.³⁶ These dystopian fantasies contrasted remarkably with the utopian revival of the yellow race some Chinese writers exulted. Interestingly, most late Qing utopians were reformers who adhered to the ideal of constitutional monarchy while opposed to revolution. Conservative as commonly labeled, these *gailiangpai* (lit. “the school that espouses gradual improvement”) created the most daring and striking blueprints for a world populated by different races.

Anti-revolutionary as they were in terms of how to modernize China, their utopian writing revealed their passion for a different kind of revolution, a world revolution intended to overthrow the ruling hierarchy, a revolution that most nationalistic revolutionaries, committed to a domestic racial revolution they viewed as the primary task, had addressed far less. Sometimes, “conservative” and “revolutionary” are but the two sides of a same coin.³⁷

Late Qing utopian novels contained interesting considerations by the intellectuals beyond Han-Manchu vendetta for the prospect of China and the whole yellow race. The Yellow Peril, unsurprisingly, became a favorite play on the rebuilt world stage. In this section, I will first discuss questions of utopian taxonomy, in order to shed light on the peculiar nature of late Qing Chinese utopias. Following this part is my analysis of a few key texts showcasing the complexities of the race-based world

³⁶ Luo Fuhui, *Huanghuo lun*, 213-19, 372; Sun Lung-kee, “1908: Huanghuo lun de yinian,” *Nanfang renwu zhoukan* (2008.18): 92.

³⁷ Among late Qing revolutionaries, anarchists are a major exception, who, because of their radical critique of all kinds of oppression, usually expected and called for a world revolution. That said, the anarchist utopias in 1900s and 1910s, except Cai Yuanpei’s “Xinnian meng” (1904), are all depictions of isolated communities.

order late Qing Chinese desired.

In his seminal article, “The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited,” Lyman Tower Sargent has proposed definitions of utopia, eutopia (or positive utopia), dystopia (or negative utopia), utopian satire, anti-utopia, and critical utopia for our study of the utopian genre. His essential criterion is how the author of a certain utopia intends his contemporaneous readers to view the utopian society.³⁸ Knowing that a utopia at a certain time may well seem dystopian in another time, Sargent employed “contemporaneous” to confine the intended readers to a specific group. However, to ensure the reader’s homogeneity necessary for arriving at a minimum consensus on whether a work is utopian or not, it is no less crucial to take the ethnic, political, and spatical boundaries into consideration. For instance, Thomas More’s work was not intended to appeal to a sixteenth-century Chinese mandarin, who would probably find the Morean society interesting but bizarre. Judging from the interrelations between an intended utopia and co-existent communities, states, and other social and political entities, we may re-arrange the utopias (or, to be exact, the eutopias) as follows:

Isolated utopia—a non-existent society having little or no contact with other people in the world and living basically on its own, intended by the author to seem to its readers to be considerably better than their real society, and described in considerable detail. As is so often the case, such utopias are located in geographically secluded, hardly visited places, as in Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis* and Tommaso Campanella’s *The City of the Sun*, as well as Tao Yuanming’s Peach Blossom Spring.

Reciprocal utopia—a non-existent society living peacefully with and, in most

³⁸ Lyman Tower Sargent, “The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited,” *Utopian Studies* 5.1 (1994): 9. He defines utopia as “a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space.”

cases, benefitting considerably from all kinds of reciprocal communications with other utopian or non-utopian societies, intended by the author to seem to its readers to be considerably better than their real society, and described in considerable detail. For instance, the residents of Walden Two obtain important supplies from outside and keep sending out its members to establish similar communities that are expected to form a larger, mutually beneficial, and hence more persistent utopian community together with Walden Two.

Dominant utopia—a non-existent society subjugating and/or ruling one or more societies, intended by the author to seem to its readers to be considerably better than their real society, and described in considerable detail. Given the slaves acquired through war and their downplayed while pivotal role, the ideal polis Plato desired in *Republic* is an early example of dominant utopia. The ideal of empire, especially in the era of national imperialism, may also fall into this category, for it often envisions a splendid imperial center and subservient peripheries in the name of vassal states, colonies, and barbarian tribes.

In the “transitional stage” of China, divergent utopias displayed the confluence and conflicts between old and new.³⁹ The local utopian tradition of “Peach Blossom

³⁹ In an 1902 advertisement of *Xin xiaoshuo*, Liang Qichao listed following summaries of two utopias and a dystopia under the title *zhengzhi xiaoshuo* (political fiction):

Xin Zhongguo weilai ji (A story of future new China) “This book begins with Boxer Incident and narrates the happenings in the next fifty years. The whole story is a flashback of visionary future, while it narrates like a historical account, as if there are indeed such people and such events, making the readers feel like personally on the scene and no longer realize that it is only a fable. As regards the structure, a southern province first achieves independence, and with assistance by heroes all over the country establishes a government practicing complete republicanism and constitutionalism, which sign equal treaties, build up trade, and develop friendly relationship with other countries on the Earth. A few years later, other provinces echo the pioneer province and become independent one after another, and form four or five republican governments. Again through the strenuous effort of the heroes, (all the provinces) are integrated into a great federal republic. The three northeastern provinces also transform into a state practicing constitutional monarchy that before long joins the federation. Citizens of the entire country make concerted efforts to engage in commerce and industry. (This new country’s) cultural prosperity and national affluence thus leads the whole world. Soon, a war breaks out between China and Russia because of disputes about the sovereignty of Tibet and Mongolia. Allying with Britian, the United States, and Japan, China

Spring,” dreaming of an escape from sorry realities, found its renewed expression in late Qing utopias. An unknown, faraway, while pleasing island or land became the site for utopia in *Chiren shuo meng ji* (A tale of a fool’s dream, 1904), *Shizi xue* (The lion blood, 1905), *Wutuobang zhi haojie* (The heroes of utopia, 1909). Such isolated utopia was also favored by anarchists in the 1910s. In contrast, *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* (A story of future new China, 1902) and *Xin shitou ji* (A new story of the stone, 1905) suggested peaceful and reciprocal co-existence among states. A great more authors composed dominant utopias with remarkable focus on life-or-death battle between the Chinese/yellow race and their Western/white foe. Despite their dissimilar imaginations, late Qing utopian authors shared an obsession with China that

routs Russia. There are folk heroes who offer personal help to Russian annihilists to overthrow their autocratic government. At last, due to the abuses yellows suffer in the colonies of Britain, the United States, and the Netherlands, a racial war almost breaks out. The European and American countries ally against us, while the yellow countries form a corresponding alliance, in which China plays the role of leader and coordinate the military preparation of other countries including Japan and the Philippines. Right before the war breaks out, Hungarians volunteer to mediate and succeed. Finally, a world peace conference, presided over by Chinese prime minister, is held at the capital of China. Reached in this conference are clauses prescribing yellows and whites’ equal rights and friendly coexistence. So is this book’s conclusion.”

***Jiu Zhongguo weilai ji* (A story of future old China)** “This book’s format is the same as the former one. It just narrates an unchanged China, describing its miserable future. The powers at first make use of Beijing government and the provincial governors as their puppets and deprive the rights of people all over the country by every means. Chinese people all become slaves of foreign countries, servile to foreigners while unable to make their living. Finally riots frequently arise. Employing insurgency suppression as a pretext, the foreigners carries out China’s partition. Then these foreign countries, driving Chinese people to serve in their respective armies, fight among themselves and cause great damages to China. Eventually, only after fifty years is the rise of great revolutionary army, who secure one or two provinces for the foundation of recovery. Such is the content of this book.”

***Xin taoyuan* (New peach blossom spring), also entitled *Haiwai xin zhongguo* (Oversea new China)** “This books is just to elaborate the institutions of regional autonomy so as to supplement what *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* does not address. Its structure was set that, before two hundred years, people of a large Chinese ethnic group, unable to endure tyranny, sailed into the ocean and retired to a wild island. Having developed into a large community, only today are these people in communication with inland again. Their political system is similar to that of the first-class civilized countries in Europe and America, sharing their merits while without their flaws. Having never forgotten their motherland, these people eventually help the inland heroes to fulfill the great task of reform, and transplant all their laws and institutions to their ancestral land. Such is this book’s content.”

“Zhongguo wei yi zhi wenxuebao *Xin xiaoshuo*”, in *Ershi shiji zhongguo xiaoshuo lilun ziliao*, vol.1, eds. Chen Pingyuan and Xia Xiaohong, Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1989, 43-45. While Liang himself, as we know, later only wrote the beginning part of *A Story of Future New China*, his call for a revolution of fiction and his utopian models successfully excited many writers’ utopian passion and prefigured the diverse forms of late Qing utopia. Noteworthy as well is that, Bihe guan zhuren took up Liang’s utopian designs, infused them with his own ideas, and developed these utopian sketches into *Huangjin shijie* (1907) and *Xin jiyuan* (1908), which I will analyze below.

permeates and bridges all the three types of utopia.⁴⁰ For instance, isolated utopias were not necessarily a mere evasion of despotism or turmoil. Rather, in a few cases, the discovered islands were intended as overseas colonies that not only manifest the adventurous spirit of Chinese, but also serve as exemplars of modernization that inspire the colonizers' compatriots in China.

More interesting still, in the case of *Bihe guan zhuren* (The Master of Green Lotus House, hereafter abbreviated as *Bihe*), the author constructed two different while interrelated utopias that call for a comparative reading.⁴¹ In *Huangjin shijie* (Golden world, 1907), a group of Ming loyalists fled Manchu-ruled China and arrived at a beautiful and tranquil island on the South Pacific. Their descendents' reclusive life in this *luodao* (Snail Island) underwent fundamental changes since they accidentally obtained an opportunity to travel to the modern world. Their leaders received modern education in Britain and rescued thousands of Chinese workers from "Golden World" slavery in the Americas. Later, with the help of other progressive Chinese, the Snail Islanders established modern industry, agriculture, as well as political institutions that secured social order and gender equality. "A corner of the world as it is, (this island) is really like Paradise (*jile shijie*)."⁴² Furthermore, it is foretold at the end of the story that a magnificent utopia, hopefully the paradise for all the Chinese, is to be founded in a newly discovered land:

⁴⁰ C. T. Hsia has an influential analysis of modern Chinese literature's "obsession with China," i.e. "its obsessive concern with China as a nation afflicted with a spiritual disease and therefore unable to strengthen itself of change its set ways of inhumanity." *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 3rd ed., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999, 533-34. While Hsia is addressing the "new literature" from the literary revolution in 1917 to the founding of the PRC in 1949, his analysis evidently applies to late Qing writers.

⁴¹ "Bi heguan zhuren" is the pen name of late Qing educator and writer Yang Ziyuan (1871-1919).

⁴² *Bihe guan zhuren*, *Huangjin shijie*, Nanchang: Baihuazhou wenyi chubanshe, 1993, 644.

Yinhong, also present at the time, said to Mrs. Zhang: “My sisiter, I’m about to tell you that, in the recent days, (I have) discovered a land mass no human has ever lived.” Her words lead to a splendid and glorious world as the colony of our compatriots, fathers and sons, brothers, husbands and wives, friends, and offspring. Its flawless politics and morality are ten times better than today’s civilized countries. Isn’t this our compatriots’ sheer bliss?⁴³

This “sheer bliss” is Heaven’s distinctive bestowal on the Chinese not to be shared with other races. For Bihe, *datong* or human unification, given the brute racism plaguing the world, was impossible:

Tunan said: “...Other people have drawn very clear racial boundaries, while some among our compatriots remain adherents of the old idea of *datong*, hoping to integrate all the countries on earth into a large society and thus accomplish a great community. Isn’t it flapdoodle?” Jianwei replied: “The idea of *datong* is no more than nonsense. While their blindness invites derision, their intention behind this argument is pitiable.”⁴⁴

Such was Bihe’s own contempt for *datong*, the Confucian ideal cherished long in China. Yet, in a modern world, an entire nation’s migration to a promising land, as he proposed in *Golden World*, seemed little more viable. Probably for this reason, one year after *Golden World*’s publication, he presented entirely different utopian imaginations in *Xin jiyuan* (New era, 1908).

By the year of 1999, China has obtained wealth and power through its successful practice of constitutional monarchism. This country is proud of its annual

⁴³ Ibid., 652-53.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 629. For an elaborate late Qing critique of *datong* and pacifism, see Baishui (Lin Xie), “Shijie heping shuo,” *Xinhai geming qian shinian jian shilun xuanji*, vol.3, eds. Zhang Zhan and Wang Renzhi, Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1977, 707-11.

income of more than 2, 000 trillion taels of silver, spider-web like railway network, as well as highly advanced technological inventions. China's military might, built upon its defense budget of one-third of its national expenditure, is also awe-inspiring. All the foreign concessions have been reclaimed, and all the treaties prescribing extraterritorial jurisdiction abolished. This powerful China sends its troops to protect Hungary (*Xiongyeli*), a country purportedly controlled by the yellow race determined to adopt the Yellow Emperor's calendrical notation—a reform China dictates to “the countries of the same race on earth, as well as the tributary countries subordinate to China”—and thus besieged by the whites in Europe.⁴⁵ The conflict between China and the white nations, which make a joint effort to prevent the former from becoming a full-fledged Yellow Peril, soon develops into a racial world war. The yellow race all over the world, encompassing Japan and the republics founded by the descendents of Chinese overseas laborers in Australia and America (perhaps the colonies of Snail Islanders?), come to China's aid. Eventually, the yellow race led by China overpowers the united whites and forces the defeated enemies to sign a treaty reminiscent of the humiliating analogues with which *New Era's* late Qing readers were familiar. Peculiarly remarkable among the twelve clauses are those pertinent to racial order, stipulating 1) all countries are to recognize Hungary as China's protectorate; 2) all countries of the yellow race are to use the Yellow Emperor's calendrical system. The countries of other races who voluntarily adopt this system are not to be interfered by other parties; 3) the overseas places where Chinese immigrants reside are to become Chinese extra-territories for commercial purposes featuring China's full legal

⁴⁵ Bihe guan zhuren, *Xin jiyuan*, Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1989, 439.

jurisdiction. In this fashion, China has actually recovered its traditional tributary system, expanding, nevertheless, its sphere of influence to the entire world. The story concludes with an ambiguous ending: the unequal treaty arouses objections and protests among the whites who worry about becoming the slaves of yellows. “Perpetual peace,” as yellow heroes have expected, is yet to come.

Having been reprinted for at least seven times till 1936, *New Era* manifests the mentality of a great portion of late Qing intellectuals who had in mind a scenario of “oppressed—resistance—independence—oppressor.”⁴⁶ Indeed, the intense concern with racial order in Chinese intelligentsia encouraged the emergence of dominant utopia.⁴⁷ However, is racial conflict necessarily a zero-sum game? For the oppressed race, is it the only choice to seek tit-for-tat retaliation? Is it inevitable to reproduce as one’s own Western Manichean worldview characterized by a variety of dichotomies such as white and non-white, good and evil, the Occident and the Orient? The open ending of *New Era* betrays the author’s quandary: another bloodshed racial war is needed for making the old masters into submissive slaves—is it desirable? If Bihe were to write his forecasted sequel to *New Era*, would he try to transcend the master-slave cycle in pursuing racial reconciliation?

Yet another year later, a more complex novel, *Dian shijie* (Electrical World, 1909), authored by Gaoyangshi bucaizi (The Untalented from Gaoyang, hereafter abbreviated as Gaoyang), came out in *Xiaoshuo shibao* (Fiction Times) and explored

⁴⁶ Liu Delong, “Wanqing zhishi fenzi xintai de xiezha: *Xin jiyuan pingyi*,” *Ming-Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu* (1994.2): 96.

⁴⁷ “Race not only is a claim about one’s cultural or ethnic legitimacy but also promises the investment of power in the conception of who one is in relation to others. As a structurally hierarchical category, its discursive invention is premised on the question of domination and hegemony.” Jing Tzu, *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature*, 86.

how a Pax Sinican racial harmony was (not) possible.⁴⁸ There is also a racial war between yellows and whites in *Electrical World*, no less brutal than in *New Era*. At war, though, are not the entire yellow race and their white counterparts, but China and its most formidable white enemy, the country tellingly called Xiwei (lit. “Western Might”).

Western Might, at the European central plain, invented a kind of flying fleet in 1999, and in no more than five years ruined all the strong countries in Europe. Two years ago, this country came into conflict with the country North Harmony and successfully wiped it out. Henceforth Western Might has developed greater ambition, taking East Asia as its first target in unifying the world.⁴⁹

That Western Might singles out East Asia for its first strike and presses forward its invasion with no mercy has much to do with its obsession with the menace of the yellow race: “The country Western Might, dwelling upon the rumor of the ‘Yellow Peril,’ can only relieve itself by destroying the whole Asia with its flying fleet.”⁵⁰ The country Eastern Shadow, having tried desperately to ingratiate itself with the invader, ends up being devastated with nothing left. Then in no time is Western Might’s fleet ready to launch a fatal attack on China, the supposed origin of the Yellow Peril, who, just like in *New Era*, has become an independent and strong country implementing constitutional monarchy. The legendary scientist and entrepreneur Huang Zhenqiu (lit. “Yellow shocks the globe”), relying upon his

⁴⁸ Gaoyangshi bucaizi is the pen name of late Qing writer and journalist Xu Zhiyan (1875-1923). For a comprehensive study of Xu’s life and career, see Kang Le, “Xu Zhiyan jiqi zuopin yanjiu,” M.A. thesis, East China Normal University, 2009. In his analysis, however, *Dian shijie* is barely mentioned.

⁴⁹ Gaoyangshi bucaizi, *Dian shijie*, *Xiaoshuo shibao* 1 (1909): 9.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

exceedingly advanced electrical devices, single-handedly annihilates the approaching enemy fleet over the Pacific. To Huang's surprise, the king of Western Might, Napoleon X, orders a massacre of Chinese sojourners in his country for revenge. Such atrocity provokes pain as well as fury in the mind of Huang, who then unleashes the utmost power of his electrical gun to the capital of Western Might. In an explosion shaking heaven and earth, the king, the troops, and hundreds of thousands of people seeing off their truculent invasion force, vanishes into the void.

Upon first sight, the racial wars in *New Era* and *Electrical World* are essentially similar: the persecutory delusion of "Yellow Peril" is fulfilled. Close reading, however, reveals crucial difference between the two novels. China's opponent in *Electrical World* is not only the representative of white racism, but also the beastly winner of the internecine struggles within white nations, in some sense a demon to which radical social Darwinism has given birth.⁵¹ Defending against this demon's expansion thus deserves approval. In contrast to Western Might's ruthlessness, Huang, the war hero of China, has been compassionate throughout his battle:

Unexpectedly, the fleet's tentative attack killed a thousand people. Unable to repress his own outrage, Huang said to himself: "They are so brutal! I cannot help but treat them brutally. In the hope to wait and see, I was unwilling to

⁵¹ In *Chiren shuomeng ji*, the author also made a critique of social Darwinism by pushing its logic to the extreme:

Menghe said: "It is absolutely true that the superior win and the inferior lose. I'm afraid that, in the future world, only the intelligent people can survive and avoid extinction. The foolish races are probably to die out." Xixian said: "Isn't it the case? I'm afraid that, not only the foolish will die out due to their incapability to compete with the intelligent, but the intelligent will also compete among themselves to decide the winning superior and the losing inferior. Today's whites who order about blacks and self-claim mightiness may not necessarily evade being ordered about in the future."

Lü Sheng, *Chiren shuomeng ji*, Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1989, 186.

inflict the disaster on them in haste—but now, how can I speak in this way?”

(Witnessing the fleet’s spectacular destruction,) at first, Factory Owner Huang is very satisfied, but later he feels much compassion for his enemy, shouting “Too brutal! Too brutal!” but to no avail.

(The Western Might’s capital burnt to the ground,) Mr. Huang, who cannot bear to see this, hurriedly flies back to his own country and mourns for a few days.⁵²

All these descriptions serve to show the leniency indispensable for an ideal ruler whom Huang has expected China to become at the beginning of *Electrical*

World:

Our past competition with European countries resulted from so-called childish thought. How can my compatriots be so deficient in progressive ideas!...My humble self is determined to wipe out this disgrace...and accomplish an entirely new electrical world...(by virtue of electricity,) One person or two are enough to subjugate the whole Earth. The world will enjoy great unity and great equality when neither victory nor failure is attainable (due to the disappearance of warfare).⁵³

Hence, China, already a utopia in 2010, is supposed to create a global utopia premised on China’s overwhelming force, which Huang manages to demonstrate in the war that ends the war. Entitled “King of Electricity” and enjoying great power and prestige, Huang starts his new adventure at the moment where *New Era* concludes. Applying his scientific wonders to social reform, King of Electricity has considerably uplifted people’s level of life and education. To satisfy China’s financial need, he

⁵² Gaoyangshi bucaizi, *Dian shijie*, 17-19.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 2.

recruits one hundred and twenty thousand European workers to mine gold in Antarctica. These laborers enjoy superb working conditions under his management:

The European workers are so happy, because King of Electricity is a generous person, who treats them extremely well. They work for only four hours every day, earning extraordinarily high salaries. They are also allowed to bring their family members with them. Now, because of stocktaking, everyone receives a largess of fifty pounds. How can European workers not be grateful? King of Electricity often says: “In the nineteenth century, Westerners treated Chinese laborers extremely bad, while in our time, why should I follow their bad example?” Thus he is always considerate, winning everyone’s admiration.⁵⁴

For Bihe, the abuses Chinese laborers suffered overseas demand merciless revenge. On the contrary, in Gaoyang’s imaginary future, King of Electricity asks to forgive Westerners’ wrongdoings and, to turn over a new page of human society, return good for evil. His effort pays off. Before long, a “world of great unity” (*datong shijie*) has materialized.

Nevertheless, in this novel, the brave new world is variably called *datong shijie*, *datong guo* (state of great unity), or *datong diguo* (empire of great unity). The ambiguity in designation calls our attention to the relationship of domination/dominance, as indicated by the gold coin in circulation: on the one side, it features the figurines of Chinese emperor and King of Electricity; on the other side, four characters, *datong jinbi* (gold coin of great unity) encircles the earth. The dominator’s benevolence and generosity notwithstanding, the dominated’s resentment erupts once and again. After a failed assassination of King of Electricity, a criminal confesses:

⁵⁴ Ibid., 20.

Our race always claimed supremacy on earth. Nowadays, however, we surrender our territory to others. How can we not seek revenges for such shame! Besides, due to the order of building the Arctic Park, we again suffered from fatigue among the workers, only to provide entertainment for you yellow people. How can we not be angry!⁵⁵

The rebel of white race casts a shadow upon the so-called *datong*. A dominant utopia, however good it intends to be, still entails the master-slave framework Lu Xun endeavored to avoid. Aside from this fatal flaw, the imperfectible morality of ordinary people, as the author described, also opens the *datong shijie* to question. Gaoyang's novel ends up being a critical utopia that encourages us to reflect upon the viability of dominant utopia.⁵⁶

Toward a Great Racial Assimilation

As a late Qing intellectual leader and the earliest utopian, Kang Youwei had a distinctive design of historical progress and social reform in his *magnum opus*, *Book of Great Unity*. Long before utopian ardor permeated late Qing intelligentsia through *A Story of Future New China* and other enchanting words of Liang Qichao, whose enthusiasm for a brilliant future was first ignited in Kang's classroom, his teacher Kang already engaged himself in futuristic imaginations.⁵⁷ His initial drive, never

⁵⁵ Ibid., 46.

⁵⁶ According to Sargent, a critical utopia is "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporary reader to view as better than contemporary society but with difficult problems that the described society may or may not be able to solve and which takes a critical view of the utopian genre." "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited," 9.

⁵⁷ Liang was first exposed to Kang's *datong* theory when studying at Wanmu School. Ding Wenjiang and Zhao

fully eclipsed by his concern with China's salvation, was human race's universal redemption after a mystical meditation gave rise to his messianic belief. This idiosyncratic point of departure led ultimately to political visions very unlike those discussed previously. Hence, a fourth utopian type is necessary to appropriately define the *Book of Great Unity*:

Universal utopia—a non-existent society featuring human integration and universal equality, intended by the author to seem to its readers to be considerably better than their real society, and described in considerable detail.

The road to a racially universal world is the most controversial part of *Book of Great Unity*, and therefore worthy of scrutiny. Under the subtitle “To abolish the racial boundaries and unify the humankind,” Kang proposed to make the different races into a single one. All humans are equal in the *datong* world; however, equality is not unconditional. “It is the natural situation that things are unequal. Equality can only be practiced when things have comparable aptitude, knowledge, appearance, and physique.”⁵⁸ For Kang Youwei, the whites and yellows were almost the same in terms of talent and appearance, while the blacks, “with their iron faces, silver teeth, pig-like slanting chin, front view like a bull, long hair all over the breast, dark black hands and feet, are stupid like sheep or swine and look terrifying.”⁵⁹ It was thus impossible to treat the blacks and lighter-skinned races equally. The solution, Kang Youwei argued, was to assimilate all other races into the whites.

Fengtian, eds., *Liang Qichao nianpu changbian*, Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1983, 23.

⁵⁸ Kang Youwei, *Datong shu*, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2005, 114.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

The expected unity of originally white race and those transformed into whites manifests Kang's recognition of white race's superiority. The yellow race, he insisted, is the second best because the yellows are clever and easily transformable to whites. As long as they can emulate the whites who eat beef underdone, walk outdoors to enjoy sunshine and fresh air, and get exercises, after a hundred years they will be as healthy and ruddy as the white people.⁶⁰ The browns, living close to the tropical areas, are dull and sluggish, while still redeemable. Extremely difficult is the transformation of the black race, since vis-à-vis the whites and yellows, the blacks are like "the demons from Hell."⁶¹ There is to be no room for them in the *datong* world. Within China, Kang argued, there was a parallel hierarchy. "We the sacred descendents of the Yellow Emperor" had conquered south China, the land of Miao, who with other aboriginals fled to remote mountains and almost died out. The triumph of the Han race in China is but another illustration of "the theory of natural evolution that the fittest survives."⁶² For Kang Youwei, existent racial inequality, albeit being the origin of miseries, demonstrated the essentially unequal nature of human race.

In his long years of exile, Kang traveled to many countries and realized that human appearance and physique had been overdetermined by "race, location, weather, food, daily life, living condition, and exercises."⁶³ Accordingly, the dark races are to be transformed by various means. 1) migration. All the blacks are to be immigrated to Canada, South America, and Europe, while their home—India, Central Africa, and

⁶⁰ Ibid., 110-11, 115-16.

⁶¹ Ibid., 111.

⁶² Ibid., 111.

⁶³ Ibid., 115.

Southeast Asia, and other equatorial areas—are to satisfy the need of agriculture, industry, stockbreeding, and trade. 2) intermarriage. Interracial marriages are to be encouraged. Whites and yellows who marry browns and blacks are to be honored and awarded a medal with the inscription “Race Improver.” 3) dietary change. The “barbarians” usually eat uncooked and unhealthy food, which caused their feebleness and foul odors. If they live on the same fragrant and delicious food as the yellows and whites eat, their body stink will disappear. 4) sterilization. “For the browns and blacks whose nature is too bad, whose appearance is too hideous, or who carry diseases, doctors are to have them drink a sterilizing medicine and extinguish their race.” By so doing, “the trivial remnant of bad black race will not pollute our good race and give rise to degeneration.”⁶⁴

Through a three-stage evolution, Kang Youwei said, the human race would ultimately become equal. In the first stage, the races of various colors differ greatly in their talent, appearance, physique, strength, and stature. It is therefore inappropriate for these unequal races to intermarry. The second stage is marked by the transformation of browns and blacks into yellows, who are slightly different from the whites. Eventually, the yellows and whites will merge into a single race who have similar physical and mental characteristics and live in a society of universal equality.

Kang’s amazing imagination was no doubt unprecedented and had, so far as I know, no comparable analog thereafter. While today’s people may find his proposal problematic for undisguised racial discrimination, Kang, completely unaware of his own prejudice, drew up the plan of racial fusion with full sincerity. Why a utopia

⁶⁴ Ibid., 117-19.

aimed at universal humanity, equality, progress, and solidarity yielded such a biased plan? In what sense is racial sterilization humane? Is it just to realize a humane utopia through inhumane means? Why should equality be based on human beings equally white instead of, say, diverse races, equally healthy, wise, good-looking and good-smelling after well-planned cultivation and medical treatment, living together in harmony?

A discussion around environmental determinism's influence on the *Book of Great Unity* may help answer these questions. In his journey, Kang had carefully observed the connection between geographical location and skin color:

If the Cantonese come to live in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, they will become ruddier and chubbier. Back in Canton, they are sallow and skinny again. (In contrast,) arriving in Singapore, even the rosy and chubby Cantonese become sallow and skinny. Moreover, the British who had resided long in the South Sea region turned black, and who had lived in India for one or two generations became sallow and indigotic, while the Chinese children born in Europe and America are all rosy and white. We therefore know that it was tropical climate's influence upon several generations that made the races of India, Malaysia, and Africa black. In the beginning, it was not the case.⁶⁵

He also took the situation of Turks, Mongols, Siberians, American Indians, Italians, Spanish, and Portuguese into his consideration, arriving at a nuanced understanding of the geographical distribution of complexions:

Among the humans whose living place has both land and sea, those in the frigid zone are whites, those in the temperate zone are yellows, and those in the torrid zone are blacks. The closer to the equator, the darker. In the frigid zone, those living in the land look yellow, while those in the desert look also

⁶⁵ Kang Youwei, *Datong shu*, 116.

black. In the temperate zone, those living in the area of more sea are pale yellows, while those in the area of more land are dark yellows. In the torrid zone, those living close to sea are brownish yellows, while those living in the inland deserts are pure blacks. This is the general situation.⁶⁶

Kang was not the only late Qing writer who had in mind a variegated world where skin color hinges on the geographical location. Early compilers of books introducing world geography provided a location-based ethnographical account, which provided a (pseudo-) knowledge background for Kang's thinking.⁶⁷ The idea that environment decides racial characteristics certainly have its Chinese origin.⁶⁸ Late Qing intellectuals, however, learned this idea more from Western geography, especially those propagating environmental determinism. Since Montesquieu's famous argument in *The Spirit of Law* (1748) that natural environment has decisive influence upon human physiology and mentality, as well as social organization, environmental determinism had been widespread in geography, sociology, and philosophy. In the last decade of Qing dynasty—a period significant to the completion of *Book of Great Unity*—environmental determinism was translated into China and, before long, embraced by Chinese intellectuals.⁶⁹ The rise and fall of races were commonly believed to have been determined by geographical environment. Liang Qichao, as the most prominent introducer and advocate of environmental determinism,

⁶⁶ Ibid., 116-17.

⁶⁷ Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 49-50.

⁶⁸ *Book of Rites* contains such a statement: "The people of those five regions—*Zhongguo*, *rong*, *yi*, (and other wild tribes)—all have their distinctive natures, which are unchangeable." In his authoritative annotation to this sentence, Zheng Xuan explained the fixity of human nature: "This is made so by regional climate." *Liji zhengyi*, vol.2, 398. In addition, as I have discussed in chapter I, Shi Jie regarded *Zhong guo* as the exclusive living space for Chinese civilization, and Zheng Sixiao went even further to argue that the barbarians are outgrowth of vile environment.

⁶⁹ *Book of Great Unity*, although accomplished in 1902, contains many later revisions. The part arguing for racial assimilation is a case in point, because Kang included many personal observations obtained in his travel to Europe and North America after 1902.

might well have reinforced his teacher Kang Youwei's understanding of the role geography performed in shaping racial hierarchy.⁷⁰

Neither Liang nor Kang was a mere recipient of environmental determinism, though. Implying eurocentrism or white racism, environmental determinism looked problematic in their eyes. In "Dili yu wenming zhi guanxi" (The relation between geography and civilization), Liang wrote:

Is that our Asia cannot catch up with Europe? Not the case. *If humans make the best effort (renli), they can subjugate nature (tianran)*. Considering that civilization developed in Europe, a place unfavorable to civilization, how can progress in Asia, a place unfavorable to the progress of civilization, be impossible? Nowadays academic studies become more and more prosperous, human knowledge more and more advanced. Hence railways have spread all over Asia, and electrical wires woven into a mass network. Even the lofty mountains of Himalaya cannot hinder the transportation between China and India, even the Deccan Plateau cannot thwart the communication between inland India and the eastern and Western oceans. Asia will also become a stage for competition amid civilizations.⁷¹

This passage, albeit in fact a complete, unattributed quotation from Japanese historian Ukita Kazutami, has manifested Liang's wish for Asia's rejuvenation.⁷² It is easy to sense in his words a utopian passion for future that echoed Kang's splendid imaginations in *Book of Great Unity*. More important is his strong will to challenge the rule of nature that he expounded in this article. In other words, for Liang, the environmentally determined fact is not irreversible, as long as people are determined

⁷⁰ For a thoughtful discussion of the influence of environmental determinism and its critique in late Qing China, see Guo Shuanglin, *Xichao jidang xia de wanqing dilixue*, Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000, 49-70.

⁷¹ Liang Qichao, "Dili yu wenming zhi guanxi" (1902), *Liang Qichao quanji*, vol.2, 948. Italics added.

⁷² Guo Shuanglin, *Xichao jidang xia de wanqing dilixue*, 52-54, 69-70.

to change it.

His teacher, Kang, was also determined to challenge the outcome of geography-based evolution. Kang's inspiration for racial assimilation was perhaps relevant to *Yinghuan zhilue* (A short account of the maritime circuit, 1849), in which the author Xu Jiyu said that foreigners would look like Chinese after having spent a long time in China.⁷³ And, as Confucians, both Xu and Kang were familiar with the idea that Yi (foreigner/barbarian), through cultivation, is able to become Xia (Chinese/civilized). In the context of late Qing, Kang, by suggesting to transform backward races and unite all humans through worldwide migration and social remaking, defied the European environmental determinists who sought to justify and perpetuate the superiority of Europeans and the white race in a scientific or philosophical way.⁷⁴

But Kang Youwei failed to remain critical of white racism throughout the *Book of Great Unity*. As Jing Tsu has pointed out, Kang Youwei's plan is characterized by a remarkable ambivalence relating to his yellow racial identity. His imaginary racial union slips from exclusively "white" to ambiguous "white and yellow." He seemed to have attempted to argue for certain equality between white and yellow races: "Even though the white race commands strength and occupies a position of superiority, the yellow race is large in number and possess wisdom. Thus, it is only reasonable for the two to combine and integrate." Then why should the yellow race, as he suggested,

⁷³ In 1874, at the age of seventeen, Kang Youwei was for the first time exposed to *A Short Account of the Maritime Circuit* and the map of Earth, hence "learned the past of different countries and the rules of Earth." Kang Youwei, *Kang Nanhai zhibian nianpu*, 6.

⁷⁴ For instance, Henry Thomas Buckle stated in his renowned work *History of Civilization in England* that, other than Europeans, who are able to harness nature to a certain extent, humans are completely subordinate to nature. Guo Shuanglin, *Xichao jidang xia de wanqing dilixue*, 69.

take a hundred years to turn into whites, instead of shaping a new race that looks yellowish white? Another embarrassing question Kang would find difficult to answer is why white women, unlike in the case of dark races, would like to marry yellow men.⁷⁵ Reluctant to admit that the yellow race, also threatened of racial enslavement or demise, were little better than other colored races, Kang contended for the yellow race's distinctive merits and their affiliation with the white race, and envisioned that interbreeding would raise the yellows to the same level as the whites. Interestingly, at an earlier time, Japanese scholars such as Takahashi Yoshio and Kato Hiroyuki also sought to improve the Japanese race through intermarriage with Westerners. This proposal, when presented to Herbert Spencer for advice, was turned down for fear that interbreeding between different races "would, as in Latin America, produce disastrous consequences for both."⁷⁶ Had Kang Youwei asked Spencer for a similar purpose, the latter's answer would have been no different. Ironically, the past "Heavenly Dynasty," which the "barbarians" strove to associate through intermarriage, sought in the modern time to elevate its status by the same strategy, while Spencer, a leading European elite, sounded like a white Shi Jie.

Kang's ambivalence towards the white race in some sense decided his unambivalent scorn against other oppressed races. His attitude reflects a mentality rather common in late Qing Chinese intellectuals that the Chinese, though probably less advanced than the Europeans (in the material level), are indisputably far more

⁷⁵ Jing Tzu, *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature*, 43-45.

⁷⁶ Michael Weiner, "The Invention of Identity: Race and Nation in Pre-war Japan," 108.

civilized than other races in the world.⁷⁷ To defend themselves, Kang and his compatriots tried their best to dispel the myths and fallacies about the yellow race, while as regards the red, brown, and black races, they accepted all kinds of rumors, stereotypes, and defamations without hesitation. This mindset had to do with knowledge deficiency, as Kang was unable to learn the theory of Mitochondrial Eva that reveals humankind's African origin, or make a nuanced assessment of the relation between geographical circumstances and human capability as Jared Diamond has undertaken in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*.⁷⁸ It had more to do with the framework within which late Qing Chinese intellectuals perceived and considered the world. From their point of view, the West, featuring economic prosperity, military strength, and scientific advantage, was another centre of civilization as respectable as China. Yet, only the Western "barbarians" succeeded in convincing the proud Chinese literati that they were actually as civilized as, if not better than, the Chinese.⁷⁹ Other "barbarians," in the Chinese mind, remained barbarous. For these people, the fact determined by the rules of nature is unquestionably irreversible. Kang claimed to challenge the racial hierarchy, but mainly on behalf of the yellow race. What the

⁷⁷ An illustrative event was recorded in *Youxue yibian*. In 1903, the Fifth National Industrial Exhibition in Osaka planned to exhibit Chinese in its House of Human. Because of Chinese students' protest, the sponsor then claimed to exhibit Taiwanese instead. However, rumors said that actually exhibited was a woman from the province of Hunan. Irritated, the Hunan Students Society sent Zhou Hongye to investigate this matter. Zhou said to the staff of Expo: "I have no idea of what you actually mean by 'Hall of Human.' That said, the word 'human' should disregard the differences between the civilized and the barbarous and include Koreans, Chinese, Aryans, other foreigners, as well as you Japanese, the so-called Yamato race. According to what we have seen in the newspaper, the people your hall intends to exhibit, besides Chinese, are no more than Indians, Koreans, Ainus, and other aborigines. From our point of view, although the national power of China is in such a (poor) situation, in terms of race, our level of living and civilization are still closely comparable to that of Japanese and Aryans. Now, exhibiting some inferior races, you want to rank us among them as their equals—this is what makes us disappointed." "Hunan tongxianghui diaocha Daban bolanhui renlei guan Taiwan n tizi shijian," *Youxue yibian* 6 (March 1903): 532-33.

⁷⁸ Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*, N. Y.: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005.

⁷⁹ James Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

inferior races deserve is no more than assimilation. Even so, some are deemed too inferior to be assimilated. Given their hopeless future, sterilization of these unremediable creatures, for Kang, is none other than a racial euthanasia, and therefore humane.

It seems we can now conclude that Kang derived his racism from a variety of flawed knowledge—geography, biology, eugenics—for which (flawed) science and his own bias are both to blame. Yet, Kang’s racialized thinking, as an integral part of *Book of Great Unity*, has also to be understood within his larger cause of refashioning universalism.

As Wang Hui has revealed, Kang Youwei designed a grand transformation for China as well as the world: the Chinese Empire, through re-interpreting, re-constructing, and re-practicing Confucian universalism, would transform into a modern sovereign state, and in the remote future melt into the great unity—the ultimate global political and social structure. In traditional Confucianism, the foundation of political order is Heaven’s Mandate. Kang, in the name of Heaven, negotiated Western views of cosmos and nature and their Confucian counterparts, thus providing a set of “authentic principles” (*shili*) upon which he developed “public law” (*gongfa*) for universal social organization. On the historical level, through his “Three Ages” theory, Kang located human society within a universal linear progress. Regarding China as in the age of chaos and the West in lesser peace, he recognized the necessity for China to learn from the advanced West. However, the advantage of the West was relativized in his universal compassion for human sufferings and pursuit

of universal transcendence towards great unity and peace.⁸⁰

In such an intellectual effort, according to Wang, Kang “attempted to create a universal ethics based on global relations. In light of this ethics, the Euro-centric universalism is reduced to European particularism.”⁸¹ But the question remains whether Kang’s was a complete reduction. Kang’s elaboration of miseries in Western society disenchanted his readers with the nation-state form and industrial capitalism and cast a shadow upon their alleged universal value. However, Kang did little to reduce scientific racism, the justification for racial hierarchy in the name of universally valid science. Rather, as I have analyzed, he only sought to amend it by leveling between the whites and the yellows, thus securing a niche for the Chinese/yellow/Asian race. In addition to the complicity between European scientists’ and Kang’s discriminatory attitudes against the dark races, Kang’s utmost confidence in science, as well as the crucial role science or “Western learning” (*xixue*) played in shaping Kang’s new Confucian universalism, also prevented him from being critical of the scientific classification and assessment of the human race.⁸² More importantly, what science provided for Kang’s equality theory, which is central to his universalism, is the ontological basis and technical means rather than socio-political analysis of its practice. Therefore, equality, as Kang understood, was first and foremost an all-encompassing sameness instead of a set of common basic right and/or welfare. His daring universal utopia thus coincided with the fundamental logic of modernity—in

⁸⁰ Wang Hui, *Xiandai Zhongguo sixiang de xingqi*, vol.2, 737-829.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 746.

⁸² For an analysis of the relation between modern science and the concept of equality in Kang Youwei’s thought, see Wei Yixia, “Pingdeng yu ziran kexue: yi Kang Youwei, Tan Sitong de sixiang wei zhongxin,” *Zhexue yanjiu* (2010.7): 55-60.

Alexandre Kojève's words, the "politics of recognition"—to struggle for universal equality and freedom and realize the "universal and homogeneous state."⁸³ With a strong sense of morality, justice, and liberation, theories and practices for the sake of universal utopia may consolidate the oppressed people and their sympathizers by coordinating and integrating their struggles into a common cause. However, due to relations of dominance utopians are either unaware of, unable to address, or even unwilling to recognize, as exemplified by Kang's thought, those who sow the dragon's teeth of universal utopia are likely to harvest fleas of domination and oppression. Kang's scheme foreshadowed what were to unfold in the twentieth-century history of China as well as the whole world.

⁸³ Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr., ed. Allan Bloom, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980, 69 et passim.

CHAPTER III THE LORD OF ELECTRICITY FROM CHINA: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE VISIONS OF WORLD ORDER

People have different preferences, some enjoy literary studies, while others enjoy fine art appreciation—in general, an individual can cultivate his own lofty spirit. There is also a kind of vigorous people, who travel everywhere. Some travel in the sky by lighter-than-air balloons, while others go to the seabed to investigate various animals and plants, complaining that the earth is too small for fun. Now trying desperately to invent new ways (to play), they wish they could cut the earth into two halves like a watermelon so that a journey to the centre of the earth would be possible!...In the second half of the day, sir, you will see the balloons flying all over the sky and going back and forth, like the black pieces on the chessboard. Like sailing on the sea, they have routes, as well as their alliance of air travel, employing lighter-than-air balloons and a variety of flying ships. According to their discussion within the alliance, in the future, they plan to establish an aerial town and create a small world in the sky!

Bao Tianxiao, “Mengxiang shijie”

In 1906, Bao Tianxiao, a fervent late Qing science fiction translator and writer, serialized “Mengxiang shijie” (Dreamworld) in *Shibao*, the newspaper where he was serving as an editor. Even though he had concerns about the political implications of the new science, Bao immersed himself in the great joy of technological progress. The sky, once believed to be the gods’ monopoly, would now be open to common people. Hardly anyone can refrain himself from celebrating the coming of such a miraculous age.

The second industrial revolution ringed the morning bell of this new age. Railways spread across the landmass, steam ships cruised on the ocean, hot-air

balloons, airships, and eventually planes vanquished the sky—the concept of time and space was undergoing permanent and fundamental transformation.¹ In the meantime, the invention of new weapons—Maxim guns, Dreadnaughts, Zeppelins, and so forth—opened the Pandora’s box of modern war. The interaction between technology and the international system was accelerating, provoking imaginations of a new world, a world characterized by unprecedented changes in life style, social structure, and political order.² Advances in science and technology stirred up even more surprises, panics, as well as aspirations in China.

In what follows, I take three steps to analyze the roles science played in the world ideals of the late Qing Chinese. First, my discussion of three major utopian novels *New Era* (1908), *Electrical World* (1909), and *A Rustic’s Idle Talk: New Tales* (1909), demonstrates what contemporary intellectuals, from different points of departure, intended to achieve with new technologies. Works examined in this section share an impressive characteristic: their protagonists are all heroic scientists. The second part of this chapter therefore tries to analyze this characteristic in the context of the changing social thought and culture at the time. In the last portion, I turn to a more overarching trait of Chinese science fiction and utopian writings at the turn of the twentieth century: the sublime. The reading of Tan Sitong’s *A Study of Humanity* (1897) and Xu Nianci’s “New Tales of Mr. Braggadocio” (1905), in conjunction with previously explored works and other materials, reveals the origin of the scientific sublime in China.

¹ See Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*, 2nd ed., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

² See Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier, eds., *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s-1930s*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.

Technological Wonders: War and Welfare

Modern scientific education was systematically practiced in China only in the first years of 1900s.³ Most late Qing Chinese intellectuals had limited exposure to science through missionaries' introduction, diplomats' travel notes, newspaper reports, and magazine articles. Needless to say, their scientific knowledge was in general fragmentary and inaccurate. However, such knowledge insufficiency was a fundamentally important reason for their passion for science. As Arthur C. Clarke said, "any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic," and it was also the case in late Qing China.⁴ For the Chinese intellectuals who were unable to interpret the world with scientific theorems and formulae, Western technology aroused a mixed sense of mystery, marvelousness, and magnificence, which can only be paralleled in the Chinese tradition of exotic fantasy, as was exemplified by a picture published in the famous illustrated magazine, *Dianshizhai huabao*:⁵

³ See Wang Lunxin et al., *Zhongguo jindai zhongxiaoxue kexue jiaoyushi*, Beijing: Kexue puji chubanshe, 2007, 16-47.

⁴ On the Russian society's enthusiasm for utopias marked by electrical technologies, Anindita Banerjee comments: "The unique 'Russian' formula for utopia through electrification arose from the absence of both first-hand knowledge and technological infrastructure." Despite the application of electricity in Shanghai as early as 1882, this conclusion to a large extent applies to late Qing China as well, suggesting the common background for technological utopianism in less developed countries. "Electricity: Science Fiction and Modernity in Early Twentieth-Century Russia," *Science Fiction Studies* (30.1): 68.

⁵ For an overview of *Dianshizhai huabao*, see Ye Xiaoqing, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial: Shanghai Urban Life, 1894-1898*, Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, the University of Michigan, 2003.



Figure 3.1 *Feizhou qiongbai* (A flying ship's sail to the extreme north, cir. 1890)

The intriguing note attached to this picture reveals the origin of the artist's inspiration. It cited a piece of news:

In Chicago, the United States, a famous artisan made a flying ship. Its many sails are like the feathers of a bird. Capable of carrying two hundred people in the air, this ship is going to the Arctic to broaden our vision. On the day of its trial flight, even the spectators on the mountain top had to raise their heads thus we know how high it flew.⁶

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a great epoch for aircraft inventions, which culminated with the Wright brothers' historic flight of their plane in

⁶ Chen Pingyuan and Xia Xiaohong, *Tuxiang wanqing*, Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe, 2006, 175. According to Bao Tianxiao, "When first introduced to China, plane (*feiji*) was translated as flying ship (*feitong*). Having never seen planes before, the painter took it for granted that a "ship" has sail and rudder." *Chuanyinglou huiyilu*, Hong Kong: Dahua chubanshe, 1971, 113.

1903. However, a flight to the Arctic with two hundred passengers was nothing but fantasy in the early 1900s. Interestingly, such fantasies abounded in late Qing newspapers and magazines. Having limited scientific knowledge and access to the latest technological progress in Western society, Chinese authors, even the missionaries sojourning in China, tended to exaggerate what they learned from foreign publications.⁷ At the same time, Chinese sources were also invoked to authenticate the hearsay. As mentioned in the picture's note, "according to Zhang Hua's *Bowu zhi*, the Single Arm people are able to make flying cars. If a car can leave the land, how cannot a ship fly in the sky?"⁸ The combination of Chinese anecdotes and foreign reports gave rise to a steampunk-style drawing reminiscent of Miyazaki Hayao's movies. As the earliest science fiction picture in China, *Feizhou qiongbai* and similar images that exhibited the power of modern technology in such an impressive way caused a sense of wonder among their viewers, of whom the most talented and creative, including Bao Tianxiao, would become the passionate architects of technological utopias.

Exclamation of delight was soon to be followed by consideration of these technical inventions' practical uses, among which, not surprisingly, military application stood out. Early in 1890, Xue Fucheng, appreciating the swiftness of

⁷ Wu Xianya, "Kexue huanxiang yu kexue qimeng: wanqing 'kexue xiaoshuo' yanjiu," M.A. thesis, Beijing University, 2002, 10-12. In Wolfgang Bauer's words, even far into the twentieth century, "some Chinese scholars do not seem to always have made clear distinctions between genuine technical achievements in the West and science fiction stories." *China and the Search for Happiness*, 453, n. 189.

⁸ *Bowu zhi* (Notes on a broad array of things), compiled by Zhang Hua (232-300), is a third-century collection of myths and legends, history, geography, plants and animals, and miscellaneous things. Zhang appropriated the legend of the Single Arm country first recorded in *Shan hai jing* (Collection of the Mountains and Seas, cir. the 4th century B.C.E.) and enriched it with accounts about their technology of making and traveling by flying cars.

balloons, previsionsed the advent of air battle.⁹ Evidently, war was inevitable to save and revive the declining, if not disintegrating, China. For most late Qing utopians, the future war is little more than a contest of advanced technologies.

The best example for such tech-determinism is *New Era*. In the yellow-white duel I have examined in chapter 2, the application of new technologies has greatly transformed the form of war. Battlefields become three-dimensional as balloons and submarines play critical roles. Moreover, in the airsea battle that dominates the war, artillery fight, the basic pattern of early twentieth-century naval engagement, is utterly eclipsed by the surprise raids by means of new weapons. The author remarks:

Bright with many colors as reflecting the sunshine, the balloons all over the sky look gorgeous. How could people born in the nineteenth century know that there would be such a marvelous war after a hundred years? Isn't such a war like what is described in *Xi you ji* and *Fengshen zhuan*? Had it been known that one day the world would be like this, the city walls and batteries would have been spared.¹⁰

It was indeed difficult for a common person in the nineteenth century to imagine the spectacle of future war, but Bihe foresaw upcoming age's splendidness. His distinct inspiration came not only from late Qing press, but also, as his words interestingly reveal, from classical novels. While *Xi you ji* (Journey to the West) is much better known than *Fengshen zhuan* (The investiture of the gods), the latter has evidently had more influence upon *New Era*. Published around the 1550s, *The Investiture* narrates the epic war between the declining Shang Dynasty (cir. 1600 –

⁹ Chen Pingyuan, "Cong kepu duwu dao kexue xiaoshuo: yi 'feiche' wei zhongxin de kaocha," *Zhongguo wenhua* 13 (1996): 117-19.

¹⁰ Biheguan zhuren, *Xin jiyuan*, 532.

1046 B.C.E.) and the state of Zhou. Rising up against the despotic Shang ruler with other resentful states, the Zhou eventually overthrew the Shang and established its own dynasty (1046 – 256 B.C.E.). Rather than historical accounts, the war in *Investiture* involves all kinds of mythological figures—deities, spirits, monsters, half-god humans—and the sharp conflict between two religions, Chan (Daoism) and Jie (Confucianism). Redolent of the Olympian gods in the Trojan War, the deities divide into two camps and provide support for their respective protégés. Their participation has rendered the war a competition of *fabao* (magic tools). In the eyes of Bihe, the future war in *New Era* is but an updated rivalry of magic tools. In the voice of a military officer, he says:

In my opinion, the war implements today's scientists have made are just like the magic tools mentioned in the classical novels. Those who have magic tools win, while those who do not lose. If both sides have magic tools, then those employing superior tools win, while those employing inferior ones lose.¹¹

The war in *New Era* is fought precisely by this principle. Though Bihe has specified almost every advanced weapon's technical origin, depicting these weapons as the legacy of talented scientists and engineers, their application still evokes—perhaps this is precisely the author's intention—the readers' memory of magic tools. First, systematic integration of these weapons into battles is all too easy. Each new equipment, even the radar-like and sonar-like devices, can be easily installed or dismantled during the war, with little worry about compatibility and time consumption. Moreover, little training is needed for soldiers to operate the advanced

¹¹ Ibid., 486.

equipments. Therefore, throughout the story, both sides continually obtain new inventions and put them into use with no delay. Second, the whole war is like a chess game between scientists. One side gains advantage through successful application of a certain high-tech device until it is overcome by the opponent's corresponding device. As the war continues, senior scientists join the war one after another, bringing forth more and more advanced weapons. To defend against the whites' chemical weapons, Chinese admiral Huang Zhishen, has to leave behind his fleet and pay an urgent visit to his hermit teacher who possesses the technology to turn water into fire (Greek fire?). Likewise, the white scientists who volunteer to fight for their race also manage to single-handedly reverse the situation by their research achievements. Showcasing the war's extreme reliance on technology, when Western whites finally decide to sue for peace with the China-led yellow alliance, the rationale is articulated this way: "there are so many talents in Huang's army, who can produce fuel and food by their own and are therefore exceedingly hard to resist."¹²

In *The Investiture*, the Shang dynasty falls as it is defeated in a war of magic power and tools. Similarly, *New Era* ends with a dynastic substitution, only on a world scale. Better weaponry has proved China and the yellow race's greater strength, and rulership hence changed hands, followed by, as David Der-wei Wang has summarized, a racial and national revanchism that calls for inflicting the humiliations China suffered on the past evildoers.¹³

Bihe's narrative about the tech-based revival of China and the consequent

¹² Ibid., 559.

¹³ David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-si ècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849-1911*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1997, 311-12.

remaking of world order was echoed, or in some sense continued by Lu Shi'e (1878-1944). As a prolific writer, Lu authored a number of utopian novels, among which *Xin Zhongguo* (New China, 1910) centers on future China's prosperity, while *Xin yesou puyan* (A rustic's idle talk: new tales, 1909) intriguingly explores China's relationship with the world.¹⁴ The story starts at a post-rise moment: Europe is already conquered, and Confucianism has become the universal religion. Unrestrained population increase, as the primary threat upon human beings, is impressively raised in the very beginning of *Idle Talk*, and turns out to be the driving force throughout the story. The hero, Wen Reng, has established with his friends an association to tackle the issue of overpopulation. As its name "Society for Saving the Common People" (*zhengshu hui*) implies, national crisis gives way to human predicament. This is made clear in a later chapter:

Wen Reng said: "...Therefore, the greatest crisis of our world at this moment is overpopulation. No matter in or outside our country, Europe or China, everywhere is suffering from this."

Rijing replied: "Good point! In my opinion, only when talents around the world and outstanding people in China and Europe abandon racial bias and cooperate wholeheartedly, can this problem be resolved."

Wen Reng said: "The Society for Saving the Common People has never had any rule forbidding Europeans from joining us. Likeminded Europeans are welcome to come to China and join our society. People are my brothers, all things are of my kind, (*minbao wuyu*) so we treat everyone alike and are not burdened with racial concepts."¹⁵

Lu was apparently seeking to transcend racial nationalism, the idea that had

¹⁴ For a full-length study of Lu Shi'e's novel writing, see Tian Ruohong, *Lu Shi'e xiaoshuo kaolun*, Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 2005.

¹⁵ Lu Shi'e, *Xin yesou puyan*, vol.1, Shanghai: Yahua shuju, 1928, 69-70. The first edition of this novel was published in 1909 by Gailiang xiaoshuoshe.

enchanted most of his fellow utopians in late Qing China. By quoting Zhang Zai (1020-1078), he appealed to Confucianism for an ethnical universalism. In this light, the way he narrates the rebellion in Europe is meaningful. Though almost half of the book (chaps. 6 to 14) is devoted to this event, the bulk of these chapters ends up being about a few Chinese scholar-officials' narrow escape from a hostile Europe. In contrast to their cinematic homeward journey, the crack-down on the European rebellion proves incredibly smooth. For fear of China's air fleet and its super-powerful weapons, European countries surrender with no resistance after an ultimatum is delivered. Not a single campaign is launched, let alone the tit-for-tat battle invitingly portrayed in *New Era*. How so? Is it because Lu had an even stronger nationalistic passion than previous writers, or the other way round, because he was weaker in technological imagination?

The answer the novel provides is unexpected. Lu spent a whole chapter showing his readers around the flying ship, cheerfully depicting its color, size, internal structure, food reserve, life support equipment, control system, reconnaissance devices, and shipboard weaponry, with all kinds of fascinating details. That the course of war is entirely overshadowed by the shipbuilding process and the fleet's awe-inspiring take-off fulfills Sun Tzu's highest expectation of the art of war: "Supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's fight without fighting."¹⁶ However, this overwhelming reconquest of Europe is only a byproduct of China's high-tech undertaking. The flying ship, as Wen explained to the Chinese emperor, is intended to

¹⁶ Sun Wu, *Sunzi bingfa xinzhu*, annot. Sunzi annotation group of the War Theory Research Department of the Academy of Military Science, CPLA, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977, 21.

set up extraterrestrial colonies on other planets such as Venus and Jupiter, thus arriving at an ultimate solution for overpopulation.¹⁷ His humanitarian purpose is made clearer in a conversation after the restoration of China's rule over Europe:

King of Bordoire Yangdan said: "When Prince Jing declared that Europe be converted to Confucianism, all of us followed his order. Though later we had him overthrown, we did not mean to rebel. Rather, it was the impoverishment and turbulence as a result of overpopulation that forced us to do so. Pacified as we are today, if the issue of population remains unresolved, peace is definitely evanescent. What do you think, Admiral Wen?"

Wen Reng said: "Overpopulation is our common predicament. My intention in making flying ships is not to conquer Europe. Instead, I hope to connect the earth and another planet and create a new world beyond ours. If your country suffers from overcrowdedness, you're welcome to reside in my new world."¹⁸

Therefore, the anti-insurgency operation is at most a catalyst for China's ambitious project, the sublime of which, as the chapters about the postwar period manifest, dwarfs the flying ship's technological splendor. European nationalism, vis-à-vis China's efforts on behalf of humanity's common good, is also overshadowed. Lu admires the Europeans' love for freedom and equality, praises their faith in their own race, while nevertheless concluding with Wen's derision of their shortsightedness: "For my part, it is funny that the foreigners stick to their useless nationalism, as if their land remains secure provided that the Chinese make no incursion to Europe and Christianity is to be spread continuously with Confucianism rooted out. –All this is narrow-minded thinking."¹⁹ The debacle of European nationalism, at first glance, is a

¹⁷ Lu Shi'e, *Xin yesou puyan*, vol.1, 71-72.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, vol.2, 34.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, vol.1, 67.

failure in technological competition. In light of Wen's words, however, the fundamental reason for their easy collapse is their lack of devotion to human welfare. No wonder the countries who fail to concentrate their resources and build a powerful space fleet for the sake of humanity's future are crushed by such a fleet in its pre-Odyssey warming-up exercise.

Interestingly, Lu's confidence is not always so strong throughout his imagination. Having landed on the moon, the intended transit commercial port for the Earth-Jupiter trade, Wen and his friends emulate Christopher Columbus' arrival in the New World:

Jin Yan said: "The moon is found by *us*! We should raise our national flag so that later comers can't take the moon away!" People then took out a yellow dragon national flag and asked the artisans to raise it on a mountain top. As the flag rose, all the crew members cheered "Long live China!" three times.²⁰

By so doing, Wen's expedition team celebrated one small step for themselves, and one giant leap for China. At this moment, there was an ironic confluence between nationalism and internationalism.

In *Electrical World*, the tension between racial nationalism and scientific internationalism is more remarkable. While racial contradiction, as I have discussed in the last chapter, hovers around the story, no less appealing to the author is the creation via electricity of a fascinating world that all the races enjoy. He conjures a world transportation system, consisting of three levels. The vehicle for the first level is the "local electrical bus" (*difang dianche*). It is designed to fly at low altitudes and carry

²⁰ Ibid., vol.2, 55.

people who travel within 1, 000 *li* (cir. 310 miles). This kind of bus loads passengers where they wave and unloads them where they request a stop. As the means for local public transportation, it is completely free. In contrast, a passenger of the larger type of vehicle, the “public electrical bus” (*gonggong dianche*), which shuttles between places with a distance more than 1, 000 *li*, is charged a small silver coin for every 100 *li*. All the main cities around the world are connected by this air bus. The largest vehicle, the “natural electrical bus” (*ziran dianche*), is a tremendous aircraft that carries at least 30, 000 people and flies five to six thousand *li* per hour. This amazingly powerful invention makes mass inter-continental migration a piece of cake.

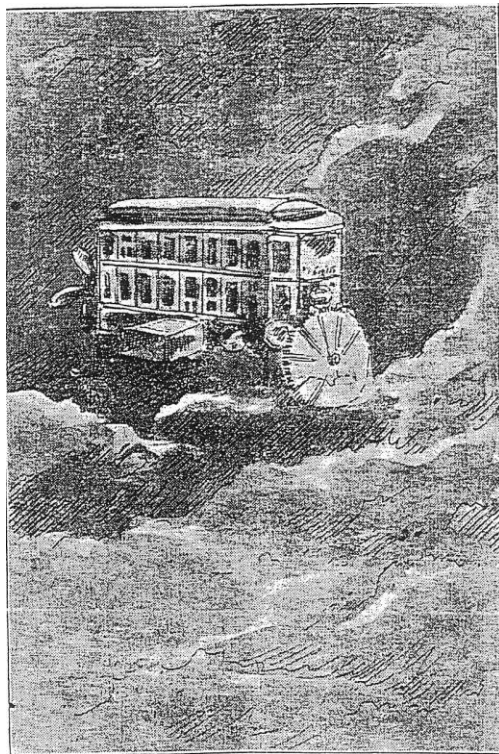


Figure 3.2 *Electrical Bus*²¹

²¹ Gaoyangshi bucaizi, *Dian shijie*, 19

In the nineteenth century, Chinese miners flocked to North America as gold rushers; in the imaginary twenty-first century, great quantities of European miners swarm into the King of Electricity's goldmines in Antarctica. Electrically excavated and refined radioactive substances provide heat and light for the miners in the long polar night, transforming Antarctica into a paradise where "night never falls, winter never comes, and plants and animals grow as big as those in the Southeast Asian islands."²² The great power of electricity also gives rise to an agricultural revolution. The extreme climates, whether Siberian blizzard or Saharan aridity, submit to electricity. Everywhere, peasants use electrical plows and electrical fertilizers to plant crops. The herbaceous plants in their field evolve into gigantic woody plants yielding at least four crops a year, and the pigs feeding on them look like Indian elephants! Following the conquest of land, humans expand to the ocean. Living in submarines, their mobile settlements, the colonizers enjoy the rich resources of deep sea. In no more than ten years, seabed population has increased to some ten million, who live a life far more wonderful than "the undersea travel twentieth-century novelists depicted."²³

Everyday life is also improved significantly. By wirelessly supplied electricity, people cook at home with much greater convenience. Since coal is no longer used in cooking and heating, the air has become much fresher. The weather is electrically controlled, patients electrically healed, and education electrically practiced. Literally, electrical technologies are central to every aspect of human society, making the story

²² Ibid., 22.

²³ Ibid., 52.

fascinating even to today's readers. As moral deficiencies remain insurmountable and population explosion approaches, the world featuring electrical greatness turns out to be far from perfect. Perfection, however, is to be pursued by the King of Electricity, who at the end of the story sails to outer space to usher humanity into new realms.

Heroic Scientists

It is significant that all the three utopian novels discussed above, while putting technology to different uses, feature heroic scientists. Unlike typical utopian writings about an outsider's voyage in a delightful but stationary wonderland, these novels narrate the protagonist-scientists' heroic endeavors central to the emergence, perfection, and preservation of an ideal world. Dynamic and dramatic, such scientific creation myths in some ways show what the late Qing Chinese expected of scientists.

In *New Era*, Marshall Huang Zhisheng is well-trained in natural sciences. His wife is an optician, his brother an electrician, and his hermit teacher, from whom Huang seek guidance during the war, a resigned professor of chemistry. Their capability for scientific research and invention ensures their political and military success.²⁴ The versatility of scientists is also remarkable in *Idle Talk*. Wen Reng is, on different occasions, an inventor who solves disturbing social issues with his scientific creations, an activist who promotes social reform with his comrades, a writer who has outstanding literary talents, a general who commands a mighty fleet, and an adventurer who undertakes an intrepid space expedition. The most brilliant image of

²⁴ Cf. David Der-wei Wang, *Repressed Modernities*, 309-11.

the scientist in late Qing Chinese literature, to my mind, is Huang Zhenqiu, the King of Electricity in *Electrical World*. This figure's unforgettable debut foreshadows his legendary enterprise to come:

In Central Asia where the Kunlun Mountains tower, there is a place called Utopia. Not long ago, a scientist of Utopian origin won fame for his mastery of electrical science. Back from a journey around the world, he proposed to transform the world into a great electrical empire by means of electricity. According to him, the twentieth-century electrical machines, uncoordinated in application, are way too disappointing! He is now financing to establish an electrical factory that produces his electrical empire, as well as an adjunct imperial school of electricity. Having already offered 98, 197, 653, 281 shares at 50, 000 Chinese golden dollars a share, he will soon set off the trial operations of the factory and offer more shares to the public. Should this factory be successful, all the twentieth-century electricity tycoons would be swept over and gobbled up by him, all together falling into oblivion!²⁵

From the very outset, the King of Electricity is more an entrepreneur ambitious for a commercial empire than a mere scientist dedicated to the explorations of nature. To be exact, he is an ideal industrial capitalist. He gives a rousing speech and holds an engrossing industrial exhibition to enlist people's support for his cause. He conducts groundbreaking research and develops astounding technologies for national defense and, more importantly, the worldwide super projects that profoundly change human society. Rather than a profit-driven maniac, he is always concerned with the public good. Eventually, a sacred sense of mission for academic and social progress restores his scientist identity—he embarks on a one-way journey to the infinite universe by his electrical balloon, in the hope that he can find suitable planets to rescue Earth from

²⁵ Gaoyangshi bucaizi, *Dian shijie*, 1.

population explosion. In his farewell speech, he says, in a soulful tone, to his earthly compatriots: “I will die as if I am forever alive.”²⁶ In other words, King of Electricity, through the sacrifice of himself on the altar of science, is to achieve immortality in people’s minds.

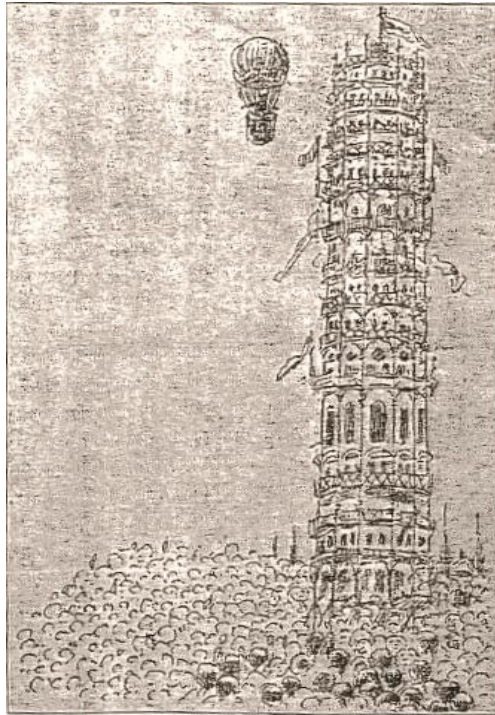


Figure 3.3 *Flight to Infinity*²⁷

The scientific heroism extolled as such reflects how scientists, who putatively hold the keys to wealth and power necessary for national salvation, were valued in late Qing China. From a global perspective, the idealization of scientists is not a specific Chinese phenomenon. Rather, most roles scientists play in Chinese literary portrayals—researcher, inventor, engineer, adventurer, entrepreneur, general,

²⁶ Gaoyangshi bucaizi, *Dian shijie*, 56.

²⁷ Ibid.

politician—have their counterparts in late nineteenth and early twentieth Western literature and culture.²⁸ In a time when science and technology were commonly hailed as equivalent to progress and prosperity, and seen as the decisive factors in national competition, rising expectations for scientists as world saviors and utopian rulers seemed no surprise. However, from a long-term perspective, Sino-Western comparison reveals meaningful, even striking differences. Among the six Western stereotypes about scientists, “heroic adventurer” and “idealist” only gained currency in Jules Verne’s age, and waned soon after WWII. The prejudices taking scientists as “alchemist,” “stupid virtuoso,” “unfeeling,” and “helpless” have far deeper roots and more profound influence in Western culture.²⁹ Even in the less-than-a-century heyday of scientists’ reputations, scathing critiques and annoying controversies still rang through literature and public media. Even the most enthusiastic admirers of science and scientists, such as Verne and Wells, also wrote works characterized by mad or regretful scientists and their abuses of science.³⁰ In contrast, the canticle to scientists marked the beginning of modern Chinese scientism. The admirable, if not always heroic, images of scientists have henceforth persisted in the minds of the Chinese intelligentsia and the common people.³¹

A look at Chinese cultural history regarding science and scientists is necessary for interpreting this critical divergence concerning the social prestige of scientists. In

²⁸ Roslynn D. Haynes, *From Faust to Strangelove: Representations of the Scientist in Western Literature*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994, 128-42, 162-86.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1-8.

³⁰ See Anne Stiles, “Literature in *Mind*: H. G. Wells and the Evolution of the Mad Scientists,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70.2 (2009): 317-39.

³¹ For the rise of scientism in modern Chinese thought, see D. W. Y. Kwok, *Scientism in Chinese Thought, 1900-1950*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965.

terms of the late Qing period, a notable first is *Chouren zhuan* (Biographies of astronomers and mathematicians).³² As Benjamin A. Elman has commented, this voluminous collection of scholarly biographies, compiled by Ruan Yuan and other leading evidential scholars from 1797 to 1799, “climaxed the celebration of natural studies within the Yangzi delta literati world.”³³ Thanks to the boom of evidential studies and the spread of Western scholarship since the late Ming, Chinese scholars developed a strong interest in mathematics and computational astronomy, which *Chouren zhuan* served to justify within the framework of classical learning as a proper concern of the scholar-officials. The connection between natural and classical studies, evidenced by earlier writings and reaffirmed in *Chouren zhuan*, favored a positive view of people who explore nature. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, physics, chemistry, biology, and other scientific subjects also received full recognition for their potential to strengthen China. Hence, “the scientists...now coexisted with the orthodox classical scholar in the bureaucratic apparatus but at lower levels of political rank, cultural distinction, and social esteem.”³⁴ Before long, as we can find in late utopian writing and other political discourses, people would appreciate scientists and classical scholars on equal terms, if not the superiority of the former.³⁵

Researchers of nature therefore attained the status of social and cultural elites.

From a traditional perspective, they became part of the *shi*, the top class in Chinese

³² For a detailed introduction of *Chouren zhuan*, see Zeng Xuewen, “Zhongguo gudai kejishi juzhu: Chouren zhuan,” *Wenshi zhishi* (2007.12): 77-84.

³³ Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Modern Science in China*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006, 64.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 195.

³⁵ For the arguments for the equal importance of humanities and science, see “Lun wenxue yu kexue buke pianfei,” *Xinhai geming qian shinian shilun xuanji*, vol.1, 413-15.

social categories. Their expertise, paralleled in traditional Chinese scholarship, was insisted by some as integral to and rooted in classical Chinese learning. For instance, Ruan Yuan contended that Western learning, however subtle it seemed, was derived from China.³⁶ This intellectual China-centrism is complacently echoed in *Idle Talk*. Wen Reng, although playing the role of an omnipotent engineer, attributed all his accomplishments to classical studies:

Wen Yu said: “Where did you learn this knowledge, my nephew?”

Wen Reng said: “By studying ‘Da xue.’”

Hong Wei said: “You’re kidding! Every one of us has read ‘Da xue.’ Why do all of us, except you, have no idea of this?”

Wen Reng said: “There is a passage about *gewu* and *zhizhi* in ‘Da xue.’ You are blind to its importance, while I didn’t let it go.”³⁷

“Da xue” (Great learning) is a chapter in the *Liji* that specifies how a gentleman should cultivate himself morally and intellectually for social and political purposes. It had become a key text of neo-Confucianism since Zhu Xi’s creative annotation. In “Da xue,” the original passage about *gewu* (to investigate things) and *zhizhi* (to perfect one’s knowledge) is missing, and Zhu Xi provided an influential substitution based on his own understanding, arguing that knowledge acquisition calls for exhaustive surveys of things.³⁸ His emphasis upon empirical studies, despite some notable dissimilarities from contemporary experimental science, seems to later

³⁶ Ruan Yuan, “*Chouren zhuan xu*,” *Chouren zhuan*, vol.1, 1; “*Chouren zhuan fanli*,” *Chouren zhuan*, vol.1, 15. The original edition of *Chouren zhuan* was included in *Wenxuanlou Series*, which Ruan Yuan compiled and published in 1809.

³⁷ Lu Shi’e, *Xin yeshou puyan*, vol.1, 79.

³⁸ Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982, 6-7.

scholars close to modern scientific methodology.³⁹ In the Ming-Qing period, *gezhi*, as the combination of *gewu* and *zhizhi*, attained new significance as scholars exposed to Western learning began to interpret this word with more concern with experimental ways and use it to translate “science.” The coupling of *gezhi* and science, because of the former’s obvious neo-Confucian background, remained faithful to the idea about Western science’s Chinese origin. It also implies that Chinese intellectuals, especially those conversant with traditional scholarship, were inclined to absorb Western learning through a neo-Confucian filter, regarding science as the fundamental and all-encompassing source of knowledge and value. Even when *kexue* replaced *gezhi* as the standard translation of “science,” some anti-traditionalists who attacked Confucianism in the name of *kexue*, such as Chen Duxiu, still thought in an intrinsically neo-Confucian mode.⁴⁰

The neo-Confucian understanding of science was meaningful to the representation of scientists in late Qing China. Those who saw science as their new belief over a neo-Confucian horizon of expectation would readily transfer the honor and responsibility of past scholar-officials to their counterparts in a science-dominated society, the technocrats who master both science and politics. As the presumed new sages, they were anticipated to endow Confucian political ideals, be it *datong*, *zhiguo* (to govern the state), or *pingtianxia* (to pacify the world), with new significance.

³⁹ As Wang Hui has pointed out, what Zhu Xi intended to acquire through reading and practice are moral principles rather than the knowledge of nature. Besides, for Zhu Xi, experience accumulation (induction) is only to evidence a priori heavenly truth. All these differ from modern scientific epistemology. “Kexue de guannian yu Zhongguo de xiandai rentong,” *Wang Hui zixuan ji*, Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 1997, 214-15, 217.

⁴⁰ See Wang Hui’s discussion of Yan Fu and Chen Duxiu. “The Fate of ‘Mr. Science’ in China: The Concept of Science and Its Application in Modern Chinese Thought,” 37-56.

Science: Road to the Sublime

Late Qing utopian visions, while usually featuring scientist-politicians' exploits achieved through their discoveries and inventions, are not merely the sagas of scientists. Rather, no less remarkable is the increasing worship of science. A case in point is the protagonist's hymn of electricity in *Electrical World*:

My compatriots, you should never forget that the motive force is nothing but electricity. The nature of electricity is progressive rather than regressive, positive rather than negative, newborn rather than perished, expansive rather than constrictive, agile rather than stagnant, engaging rather than rebounding, attractive rather than resistive, bright rather than dark, sonorous rather than noiseless, permanent rather than occasional, deliberate rather than careless, beautiful rather than ugly, solemn rather than flippant, methodical rather than whimsical, liberating rather than binding, communicative rather than obstructive, and infinite rather than finite. Therefore, we should not only make use of electricity, but also learn the nature of electricity, thus making our world the perfect world and ourselves the perfect human beings in the perfect world.⁴¹

Part of the King of Electricity's farewell speech, this passage implies that he is respectfully giving his crown over to electricity. Once revealed by scientists as an occult force capable of strikingly changing the world, electricity, as well as the learnings about it, attained sacredness. Neo-Confucian tradition evidently mattered in such zeal for electricity and electrical science: Heaven, and the heavenly principles entailed by its nature, are superior to the earthly sages who clarify, spread, and guard

⁴¹ Gaoyangshi bucaizi, *Dian shijie*, 55-56.

them.

Matteo Tarantino has employed the term “the technological sublime” to define what he has found as new in late Qing science fiction such as *Electrical World*. In the West, there are in general three lasting attitudes towards technology. Some see technology as able to redeem humankind. Some others, on the contrary, believe that technology is the gravedigger of the human race, while the third way to approach technology is characterized by instrumentalism and pragmatism. The former two groups of people share “intense collective emotional participation in the experience of technology,” whether in awe or in terror, and therefore form a profound sense of the technological sublime. In Tarantino’s eyes, the Chinese have neither reverence nor fear for technology before modern times. In the long history of China, the emblem of technology, machines, seldom became the theme of fantasy.⁴² Substantial changes only happened as a consequence of this country’s late Qing encounter with Western powers. Now the Chinese have a desperate need for machines for their national salvation. In the meantime, Chinese intellectuals appreciated the role technology played in reforming society and began to envision, as many utopian works demonstrate, a machine-made, ideal world. Therefore, history and reality made the horror of destructive machines and diabolical scientists absent in the Chinese technological sublime.⁴³

Tarantino provides a very inspiring perspective for our appraisal of late Qing

⁴² It has to be noted that machine-related Chinese fantasy stories are not as rare as he asserts. See Yang Peng, “Zhongguo gudai youmeiyou kehuan xiaoshuo?” *Zhongguo gudai kehuan gushi ji*, ed. Yang Peng, Zhang Runfang and Feng Ying, Beijing: Zhongguo shaonian ertong chubanshe, 1997, 1-7.

⁴³ Matteo Tarantino, “Toward a New ‘Electrical World’: Is There a Chinese Technological Sublime?”, *New Connectivities in China: Virtual, Actual and Local Interactions*, ed. Pui-lam Law, London: Springer, 2012, 185-95.

utopianism. Indeed, technological optimism overwhelmed its adversaries in the late Qing and early Republican era, and remains popular up to recent times. The sublime is therefore a perfect key word that captures the pervasive sentiment in late Qing tech-oriented utopianism. However, Tarantino's working hypothesis is problematic. The sublimation of machines, he argues, "was never to make a king of the *individual* by allowing him to transcend his earthbound limitations, like in the West; the promise of this sublime technology was to allow China *as a nation* to recover its status as a hero, to shield itself from external aggression, and eventually regain its status as a superpower."⁴⁴ His statement evokes Frederic Jameson's controversial proposal that all third world texts be read as "national allegories."⁴⁵ The crux of the problem, however, is Tarantino's narrow focus on technology. He discusses the late Qing call for "science and technology" with hindsight, while contemporary Chinese intellectuals, whether their term choice was *gezhi* or *kexue*, more often than not deemed science the most valuable part of Western learning, and technology the product of, if not part of, science. The sense of the sublime in the science-inspired imaginations ranges across a spectrum far broader than machine- or tech-based national salvation.

An illustrative example is Tan Sitong, whose martyrdom in the Hundred Days' Reform has much to do with his desire for spiritual transcendence. In his major philosophical and political work, *Ren xue* (A study of humanity), he values the use of machines, while in a very pragmatic tone, seeing modern industry as the source of

⁴⁴ Ibid., 192.

⁴⁵ For a critique of Jameson's oversimplification of third-world literature, see Shu-mei Shih, "Global Literature and the Technologies of Recognition," *PMLA* 119.1 (2004): 16-30.

social wealth and national strength.⁴⁶ Loftiness comes from his metaphysical meditation. *Humanity* begins with a definitive description of the essence of the world:

All through the realms of space, life, and dharmadhatu, is a thing that is infinitely big and infinitely subtle, penetrating, connecting, adhering to and filling up everything. It is colorless, soundless, odorless, and tasteless, and thus unnamed or barely named as ether. In terms of its expression in practice, Confucius calls it *ren*, *yuan*, and *xing*; Mozi calls it *jian'ai*; Buddhism calls it *xinghai* and *cibei*; Christianity calls it soul, “love your neighbor as yourself,” and “see your enemy as your friend”; scientists call it attraction and gravitation. They are referring to the same thing.⁴⁷

The essence, Tan argues, although variably labeled, is the unique omnipresent existence that constructs humans and nature. In the human body, it displays itself by brain operation and nerve transmission. In the air, the clear demonstration of essence is electricity. Brain and electricity are virtually the same thing:

In the human body, ether functions as an extremely subtle way as the brain... In space, it functions as electricity, while electricity is not confined within space. At one end of its demonstration, there is the brain, electricity with substance. The brain is electricity with substance, while electricity is the brain without substance. Knowing that nerves connect one's facial features and all the body parts and make them a whole, one can accordingly infer that electricity combines heaven, earth, oneself, other people, and everything else into a whole.⁴⁸

If electricity runs through everything, the study of electricity, rather than scrutiny of human behavior or ruminations of the human mind, is to pave the way for

⁴⁶ *Ren xue* was written in 1896-97. In 1899, one year after his death, this treatise was serialized in *Qingyi bao* (Tokyo) and *Yadong shibao* (Shanghai), respectively.

⁴⁷ Tan Sitong, *Tan Sitong quanji*, vol.2, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981, 293-94.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 295.

self-accomplishment and social progress. For Tan, science, aside from shaping his monistic ontology, reveals an exciting prospect of transcendence.⁴⁹ He predicts, with all exultation, the evolution of the human race:

Once the earth is extremely overcrowded...the space will be insufficient even if people stand heel by heel, a new way must be discovered (to ameliorate human beings). Today's electrical science...in the long run will manage to remove the heavy matters in the human body, while keeping its light parts, and thereafter reduce the flesh, while improving the soul, and, with additional efforts devoted to eugenics, make each new generation of the human race better than the previous one. Ultimately, there will certainly be a new race who gives up body and strength and becomes intelligent spirit... (New humans) will be able to reside in water, fire, wind, air, and fly back and forth between suns and planets. They will suffer no harm even if the earth is destroyed. Is there anywhere they cannot stay?⁵⁰

In fact, modern physics and biology aroused worldwide imaginations of human liberation from the shackles of the flesh, and Tan was not the only Chinese writer who aspired to transcendence. In "Xin faluo xiansheng tan" (New tales of Mr. Braggadocio, 1905), Donghai juewo (Xu Nianci) wove a dream of transcendence of his own. Probably inspired by Tan, the author centers on individual experience in this literary piece. Mr. Braggadocio, determined to break through the limitation of science, while frustrated in his deep thought about how to attain his goal, ran to a mountain top where he was caught in gravity vortex that tore his soul and body apart. Realizing that "in the future I could make good use of these two selves to study all the world's phenomena, and invent all manner of things," Mr. Braggadocio laughed out loud,

⁴⁹ For an insightful analysis of Tan's neo-Confucian background and his creative ideas informed by Buddhism, see Hao Chang, *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis: Search for Order and Meaning*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987, 77-89.

⁵⁰ Tan Sitong, *Tan Sitong quanji*, vol.2, 366-67.

betraying a scientist's mind.⁵¹ His research soon yielded a first product that made his soul-self "a wondrous source of light."⁵² His body-self stood on the summit of Mount Everest, holding high his soul-self that illuminated all the world in a god-like manner. He expected to awaken the Chinese from lethargy to create an alternative true world civilization that would shame the Euro-Americans and enthrone the yellow race. Unfortunately, the Chinese paid no attention to his brilliance. Outraged, Mr. Braggadocio's body-self dropped his soul-self to the ground. It bounced back into the air, and the soul flew to outer space. The body, on the contrary, fell straight down into the center of the Earth due to volcanic eruption.

The two halves of Mr. Braggadocio thereafter underwent very different events. His soul, after bumping into the moon, traveled to the planets. The technology of rejuvenation on Mercury, as well as the bizarre plants and animals on Venus, amazed him. He later went into the circumsolar orbit for the purpose of man's first landing on the sun, while ended up being hurled out centrifugally. Meanwhile, Mr. Braggadocio's body met an aged man, Huang Zhongzu (lit. the ancestor of the yellow race), who was 9,000 years old. Interestingly, Huang seems to be another scientist—in the author's words, "very well versed in the science and practice of chemistry"—who observed and examined the human nature of his descendants.⁵³ As Mr. Braggadocio witnesses, the majority of the Chinese feature harbor addiction, avarice, superstition, arrogance, ignorance, inconstancy, irresolution, fame-thirstiness, and morbidity. Feeling

⁵¹ Xu Nianci (Donghai juewo), "Xin faluo xiansheng tan," *Qingmo minchu xiaoshuo shuxi (kexue juan)*, ed. Yu Runqi, Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chuban gongsi, 1997, 3. Quotations are based on Nathaniel Isaacson's translation, "New Tales of Mr. Braggadocio," *Renditions* 77 & 78 (2012): 15-38.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 9.

ashamed for the sorry situation of the Chinese, he rushes out and falls into water.

When he recovers consciousness, his body and his soul, back from respective travels, have already rejoined, floating in the Mediterranean.

The reunion of body and soul gives rise to an “incredible change” in his brain. Now Mr. Braggadocio is able to control his “brain electricity” (*naodian*) to produce light, sound, heat, and communicate with others in a telepathic way. He sets up a large school in Shanghai to teach the techniques for how to use brain electricity, enrolling students from all over the world. Before long, he has to open eight branch campuses in China, and many graduates of his school become the teachers of the globally mushrooming primary schools of brain electricity. Ushering the human race into a new age, Mr. Braggadocio calls himself “the greatest teacher of all time.”⁵⁴ Yet, the story does not end with a utopia. Due to the spread of the technologies of brain electricity, a variety of companies in such areas as illumination, telecommunication, energy, and transportation, among others, suffer bankruptcy, which means more than one third of the human population are to lose their jobs. Mr. Braggadocio, whose groundbreaking invention in the end aroused complaints and anger, has to escape to the countryside.

The story of Mr. Braggadocio, at first sight, reads like a metaphor that confirms the centrality of national salvation: individual transcendence gives way to anxiety about social corruption, as if the soaring soul brings with it a kite string that at last draws it back to the earth. However, the nationalistic concern, common in late Qing literature, hardly obscures the joy of liberation, discovery, and creation that

⁵⁴ Ibid., 19.

continues from Mr. Braggadocio's space journey to his earthly enterprise. In addition, although he expressed his wish to revive China and the yellow race, Mr. Braggadocio, rather than striving to cure the Chinese of their spiritual diseases, as May Fourth intellectuals would do to the "national character," generously provided his technological innovation for universal education, which he believed would benefit everyone on earth. As an initial step of human evolution through electrical science, the use of brain electricity implicitly echoed Tan Sitong's anticipation. It can be inferred that the author Xu Nianci also shared Tan's supreme political ideal:

Peace on earth lies in the *tianxia* set free when states are abolished... Without states, boundaries disappear, wars cease, jealousy dies out, conspiracy falls into disfavor, the distinction between self and other fades away, and equality emerges. *Tianxia* exists as if there is no *tianxia*. Monarchy abolished, the noble and the humble become equal. Principles clarified, the poor and the wealthy end up even. Across hundreds of thousands of miles, people live as if in a single family, and the whole society operates as a single person. Home is seen as a place where anyone might put up for the night, and family members are regarded as compatriots. Fatherly love, as well as filial piety, goes out of use. Brotherly respect, as well as conjugal harmony, falls into oblivion.⁵⁵

Hence, individual transcendence, national salvation, and perpetual peace under Heaven, jointly haunted the mind of Tan and Xu, as well as some other late Qing utopians. Their reveries, while bearing the imprints of Buddhist and Daoist thought, are inherently Neo-Confucian.⁵⁶ In their utopian writing, the frequent mention of "Great Learning," as well as the eight themes of self-cultivation and self-realization

⁵⁵ Tan Sitong, *Tan Sitong quanji*, vol.2, 367.

⁵⁶ For a brief discussion about the Buddhist and Daoist influence on Tan Sitong and Xu Nianci, see David Der-wei Wang, *Repressed Modernities*, 299.

specified in this classical text—*gewu*, *zhizhi*, *chengyi* (to remain sincere), *zhengxin* (to rectify one's mind), *xiushen* (to cultivate one's sense of justice), *qijia* (to regulate one's family), *zhiguo*, *pingtianxia*—indicate the authors' orientation.

Noteworthy is that these themes acquired new significance as science spread among Chinese literati. In this regard, an exemplar is again Tan Sitong. For him, Western *gezhi* reveals the essence of the world, ether, and gives new impetus to traditional Buddhist skepticism and relativism. In a world universally constituted, penetrated, and communicated through ether, all divisions and categories are secondary, formal, and ephemeral, dependent upon the everlasting motion of ether. As history is just the eternal flow of ether, the difference between birth, death, past, present, and future are also illusory. All the limits binding people, be it gender, class, nation, self/other, mind/object, therefore have to be repudiated.⁵⁷ Such ether-reductionism accounts for Tan's radical enthusiasm for equality and unity. Constantly coming from and returning to the never-beginning and never-ending ether, everyone, even everything, is equal. Thus, among the five fundamental Confucian ethical bonds (*wulun*), he only values the one for friends (*youlun*), because friendship means equality, freedom, and autonomy. Correspondingly, he suggests that the social groups in the other four bonds—ruler/subordinate, parents/children, elder/younger, husband/wife—should all become friends.⁵⁸ *Tianxia*, the largest political category for human beings, should also embrace and practice friendly equality, the paramount heavenly principle.

⁵⁷ Tan Sitong, *Tan Sitong quanji*, vol.2, 302-16.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 349-51.

According to the works examined so far, we can reasonably conclude that the sublime style of late Qing science fiction and utopian writings is much more than a mere reflection of the awe and terror aroused by technology. Rather, it approximates what “New Tales of Mr. Braggadocio” has fulfilled according to David D. Wang: “[The] presentation of a figure or scene that is larger than life and that is able to break through the narrowly sensual human limitations to take on an epic and superhuman proportion.”⁵⁹ For the “epic and superhuman” sublimity, though, more important than majestic words and spectacular tropes is the grandeur of thought.⁶⁰ Either individual transcendence, national salvation, or world transformation impacts the readers’ mind, leading them into the sublime. Many a time, these themes coexist in late Qing utopianism, whether as Tan Sitong’s radical proposal for an immediate renovation of *tianxia* that rid everyone, every family, and every country of their pain once and for all, or, just as *Book of Great Unity* and Cai Yuanpei’s “New Year’s Dream” (1904) portray, a phased gradual reform toward ultimate perfection. In either case, these utopian ideals manifest the ambition for a multi-level perfection through science. It was science that reinvigorated the neo-Confucian moral-political ideal; it was also science, seen variably as the revelation of authentic laws of both nature and society, the spring of enormous force, and the means for moral and social progress, that shared the sublimity of the ideal per se. As Ban Wang’s scrutiny of modern Chinese literature and culture shows, the sublime epitomizes the aesthetic-political complex and often

⁵⁹ David Der-wei Wang, *Repressed Modernities*, 383-84, n. 99. For a comprehensive discussion of science-fictional sublime, see Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008, 146-181.

⁶⁰ Longinus, the earliest interpreter of sublime, prioritized the “Boldness and Grandeur in the Thoughts” as “[t]he first and most excellent” source of sublime. *On the Sublime*, trans. Nicolas Boileau-Despreaux and William Smith, New York: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1975, 17.

maximizes the political implication of figures, scenes, and events.⁶¹ What late Qing utopians sounded is the prelude to the grand, enthusiastic composition their intellectual successors would soon perform for science in the political tides that swept China in the 1910s and 1920s.

⁶¹ Ban Wang, *The Sublime Figure of History: Aesthetics and Politics in Twentieth-Century China*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1997.

CHAPTER IV SALVATION AND BEYOND: THE PURSUIT OF NEW MORALITY

It was precisely in the period of its greatest weakness and isolation, i.e. toward the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, that China actually produced the most fantastic utopian plans not only for the salvation of the empire, but even of the entire world. And a certain, almost arrogant belief that it had the “real,” the “more spiritual” culture and wisdom in spite of all the political and intellectual humiliations it suffered luxuriated at that time.

Wolfgang Bauer, *China and the Search for Happiness*

In the future, this village is to become through my effort an embroidery work shining over the earth, and people will know that my village, although a tiny one in the world, is by no means trivial. Hereafter, people will come from everywhere to learn my pattern of embroidery, and I will give them all my patterns in the hope of an embroidered earth.

Yishuo, *Huang Xiuqiu*

Throughout Chinese history, morality has remained central to political and social ideals. The late Qing period is no exception, or, to be exact, morality took on still more importance at this moment, as “changes unprecedented in three thousand years” entailed. In this regard, Liang Qichao’s call for a new morality in his famous “Xinmin shuo” (On new citizens, 1902-03) is pivotally representative, for in this enormously influential treatise he carefully examines the moral status of the Chinese, exposes their moral deficiencies, and explores the ways for moral reform. His point of

departure is the need for “new citizens” in the face of foreign invasion: “To ward off the great powers’ national imperialism and save lives from catastrophe, the only way is to practice nationalism ourselves; to practice nationalism in China, an indispensable prerequisite is new citizens.”¹ To create new citizens, moral reform is a fundamental necessity. The invariable principle of morality for Liang is public interest. In an age of crisis, public morality (*gongde*), which demands individual members’ devotion to the collective, is even more important. What the Chinese people lack, however, is none other than public morality. The absence of public morality accounts for the divergence between “old Chinese ethics” and “new Western ethics”:

The categories of old ethics include ruler/subject, father/son, elder/ younger, husband/wife, and friends, while the categories of new ethics include family ethics, social ethics, and national ethics. The focus of old ethics is the relationship between an individual and another individual, while the focus of the new ethics is the relationship between an individual and a group...The five fundamental human relationships of China only fulfill the needs of family ethics. The social and national ethics are severely insufficient.²

Therefore, the Chinese had to develop public morality and cultivate their national consciousness. “Once there is public morality, new morality will ensue, and eventually there will emerge new citizens.”³ For this reason, China has to resort to “new Western morality” that features public spirit. Yet, old morality should not be deserted as worthless, either. “Becoming ‘new citizens’ does not mean that our people

¹ Liang Qichao, “Xinmin shuo” (1902), *Liang Qichao quanji*, vol.2, 657.

² Ibid., 661. In “Xinmin shuo,” Liang differs morality from ethics, seeing the latter as the demonstration of the constant former under specific circumstances. Ibid., 720.

³ Ibid., 662.

have to give up all their own old qualities to follow other people. The meaning of ‘new’ is twofold: On the one hand, to renew by honing what they originally have; on the other hand, to renovate by what they originally do not have. Lack of either results in failure.”⁴ China needed a great synthesis of the old and the new, the Chinese and the Western.⁵

In hindsight, Liang’s proposal for moral synthesis implies more questions than it explicitly addresses. If morality, as he argued, derives from collective interest, and this principle applies to all times and places, shouldn’t there be a morality that benefits the largest collective, the human race? In a time that humans no longer live in small connected groups, but communicate and compete intensively and constantly, there arose the need for global public morality or international ethics. In this regard, is the West—“when a European state meets another European state, right is might; when a European state meets a non-European state, might is right”⁶—morally exemplary? Can China, a state in most of its history situated in an international system very dissimilar to that of the West, find inspirations in its own experience? Does a Sino-Western moral synthesis only serve to save China from Western imperial expansion? Or will it set up the foundation for a better world?

These questions were to haunt the minds of Liang and his contemporaries. This chapter examines their inquiries into morality in a challenging world that continually shook their country, their people, and themselves.

⁴ Ibid., 657.

⁵ See Gao Like, “Liang Qichao de daode jixu lun,” *Tianjin shehui kexue* (2005.6): 135-39.

⁶ Liang Qichao, “Mieguo xinfu lun” (1901), *Liang Qichao quanji*, vol.1, 470.

Transformations began during the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894-95. On the eve of China's disastrous failure, Yan Fu, in deep anxiety and sorrow, lamented the sheer Darwinian landscape of nature:

In this world, humans and other creatures live together in various forms, enjoying the resources of nature. Entangled with each other, they compete for survival. Competition first arose among species, then among groups and states in the wake of their emergence. The weak fall prey to the strong, and the stupid become the slaves of the wise.⁷

In the years that followed, more and more Chinese—literati, officials, young students—based their thought and discussions on Yan's delineation of a dangerous world characterized by life-and-death competition. It was hardly surprising for Liang Qichao to take a further step, extending "Darwin's theory" to intraethnic relationship.⁸ Colonial conquest and annexation, in his eyes, accorded with the "common rule of natural evolution":

Humans living in this world have but to compete for survival. The competition for survival decides the superior and the inferior, and thereafter winners and losers. Those superior winners, necessarily, are to gobble up the rights of the inferior losers—this is the rationale of conquest and annexation (*mieguo*). Ever since the emergence of humankind, people have followed this natural rule (*tianze*) to fight, swallow, and replace each other, leaving globally only some one hundred states to this day.⁹

⁷ Yan Fu, "Yuan qiang" (1895), *Yan Fu ji*, vol.1, ed. Wang Shi, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986, 5.

⁸ Liang Qichao, "Lun Qiangquan" (1899), *Liang Qichao quanji*, vol.1, 352.

⁹ Liang Qichao, "Mieguo xinfalun," 467.

As competition dominates natural and social evolution alike, nature or heaven is not to blame for China's miserable situation. As Yang Du argued, "there is nothing that is without ownership under heaven. One who is unable to possess something is to submit it inevitably to someone else. This is also the axiom that things compete and nature selects... Is there a government not seeking to benefit its own citizens by depriving the citizens of other countries of their interests?"¹⁰ In Liang and Yang's new interpretation of history, China had never been under the auspices of Heaven. Rather, its glorious past was built upon constant overwhelming and plundering of the inferior people. It is better for Chinese to "strive for independence" than "complain to others."¹¹

If history had demonstrated the general principle of competition, China could, as some believed, restore its power under the guidance of such a principle. This mentality is captured in the praise for adventure and colonization. In one of his early articles, Liang celebrated the Chinese race's adventurous and independent nature (*maoxian duli zhi xingzhi*). Without governmental support, Chinese settlers still "defeated the indigenous barbarians, took their lands, and made a living" in Southeast Asia (*nanyang*). If the Chinese state cultivates and protects the adventurous spirit of its people, Liang avers, the West will no longer be the unique ruler of the world.¹² Hence, in *New Fiction*, the landmark journal of the late Qing literary revolution, he listed adventure fiction in the ten types of new fiction to "arouse the citizens' spirit of

¹⁰ Yang Du, "Youxue yibian xu" (1902), *Yan Du ji*, ed. Liu Qingbo, Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1986, 80, 82.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹² Liang Qichao, "Lun Zhongguo renzhong zhi jianglai" (1899), 260. See also Jing Tsu, *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature: The Making of Modern Chinese Identity, 1895-1937*, 53.

expedition and adventure.”¹³ In late Qing literature, adventures often carry colonial belief and passion. Examples include the yellow and white explorers’ vindictive killing of “savage” islanders in *Yueqiu zhimindi xiaoshuo* (A novel about colonizing the moon, 1904) and the enslavement of Jupiter apes in *A Rustic’s Idle Talk: New Tales*.¹⁴ In *Shizi xue* (Lion blood, 1905; also entitled *Zhina gelunbo* [The Columbus of China]), the heroes have even assumed the civilizing mission, proposing to enlighten the indigenous people for their benefit:

Erlang said: “As Chinese, how can we seriously consider staying here as chieftains for the whole life? Yet, the ignorant indigenous barbarians (*tuman*) are by no means able to govern themselves. For my part, we have to make a way to enable them to receive some education and get some basic knowledge, so as to, in the future, return their land to them for self-governance.”¹⁵

Chinese adventurers then set up schools and factories and build up model colonies where “the evil deeds of plunder and slaughter were replaced by moral practices for justice and common good.” The “nearby barbarian countries came in streams to submit to the authority” of the Chinese colonies, of which the two leaders end up “president and vice-president of the united states (*hezongguo*).” “Though in a remote corner,” the author joyfully writes, “their country gives the Chinese a sense of pride and elation.”¹⁶

The colonial enterprise in *Lion Blood*, interestingly, typifies the late Qing

¹³ Liang Qichao, “Zhongguo weiyi zhi wenxue bao *Xin xiaoshuo*” (1902), 45.

¹⁴ Huangjiang diaosou, *Yueqiu zhimindi xiaoshuo*, Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1989, 353-56. Lu Shi’e, *Xin yesou puyan*, 80.

¹⁵ He Jiong, *Shizi xue*, Nanchang: Baihuazhou wenyi chubanshe, 1996, 243.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

utopian expectation for China. On the one hand, China is encouraged to conquer, colonize, and contend for power. On the other hand, a lenient and generous “Heavenly Dynasty,” many envision, will steer the world into peace. Liang Qichao, while sometimes seemingly siding with the jungle law, has articulated his dislike for it on other occasions. Freedom and equality, for him, are the consequences of power struggle rather than the natural rights with which heaven endows all the people. “To be free, there is no way other than become strong first through one’s own efforts.”¹⁷ Yet, this idea is attributed to Darwin, through whose theory the “evil trend” (*efeng*) that the strong rules over the weak (*ruorou qiangshi*) had become the “taken-for-granted common morality” (*tianjingdiyi zhi gongde*) that paved the way for imperialism.¹⁸ Evidently, Liang’s stress on the necessity of might, based on what he believed the world was, hardly means that he justified such a “common morality” rampant in his day. He admires nationalism as “the most just, righteous, and fair thought in the world” that seeks individual independence domestically and national independence globally. Unfortunately, this “righteous principle” (*zhengli*) often goes against “the trend of the times” (*shishi*), as nature is incessantly promoting competition, “and then the rule of power, itself not a general principle, has to become the general principle. When nationalism has developed to its extreme, it has to, with its increased might, seek to satisfy the insatiable appetite for national happiness outside.”¹⁹ Notwithstanding such a lament of nationalism’s tendency to deviate from

¹⁷ Liang Qichao, “Lun Qiangquan” (1899), 353-54.

¹⁸ Liang Qichao, “Lun minzu jingzheng zhi dashi” (1902), *Liang Qichao quanji*, vol.2, 888.

¹⁹ Liang Qichao, “Guojia sixiang bianqian yitong lun” (1901), *Liang Qichao quanji*, vol.1, 459.

justice, Liang holds to his ideal of civilization:

There are three classes of states. The first-class state enjoys respect. Its culture and politics have unparalleled preeminence over the globe. Its rituals and institutions are dazzlingly brilliant. Its conduct, conforming meticulously with common principles (*gongli*) rather than making a show of force, inspires reverence among neighbor states. The second-class state arouses fear. Its culture and politics having no preeminence, its rituals and institutions being hardly brilliant, such a state, with unrivaled force, even if committing outrages upon morality, is still able to overwhelm other powers and dominate the world. Neighbor states, while holding grudges, can only yield to its hegemony, trembling at its every facial expression. The even more inferior states are unable to be independent. Trampled and manipulated, driven by others rather than their own will, they linger at the edge of doom. These are the states that suffer insult.²⁰

From Liang's perspective, the United States represents the first category, Russia stands for the second, and China, disgracefully, has fallen from the first or second to the third class. In view of his critique of American expansion elsewhere, notably the indignation with which he recounts how this state annexed the Philippines through conspiracy, Liang's commendation of the United States is unconvincing.²¹ A real instance of the "first-class state" is available in his utopian fiction, *A Story of Future New China* (1902). In this novel's brief while highly indicative prologue, Liang satisfies himself with China's "unparalleled preeminence." The novel describes how, in 1962, the fiftieth anniversary of China's reform is held right after the world peace conference at Nanjing. That heads of state and envoys come from all over the world to attend the commemoration suggests China's leading position.²² In the

²⁰ Liang Qichao, "Lun Zhongguo guomin zhi ping" (1903), 1077.

²¹ Liang Qichao, "Mieguo xinfa lun" (1901), 469-70; "Lun minzu jingzheng zhi dashi" (1902), 887, 892-93.

²² China's supremacy is clearer in Liang's outline of *A Story of Future New China*. See n.39 of chapter 2.

meantime, Shanghai holds a special World Expo. In addition to the exhibition of products, this Expo includes a great quantity of international academic and religious lectures and symposiums that celebrate China's cultural prosperity and influence. Moreover, in contrast to the situation of Liang's time, hundreds of thousands of foreign students fill up Chinese classrooms. As *Future New China* shows, Liang believes that the winner of national competition can opt for peace under its leadership rather than silence under its might.

Liang's attempt in utopian writing was followed by many emulations, among which Cai Yuanpei's "Xinnian meng" (New Year's dream, 1904), strikingly, infused the moral ideal of China with much more vigor and initiative.²³ Cai also faults the Chinese for their parochial concern with family and nonchalance about national predicament, and hence calls for public morality. As an anarchist, he has, however, a radical interpretation of public morality. In the protagonist's dream, everyone is required to contribute his life and property to the nationalistic cause. The resistant tycoons are sentenced to be guilty and executed. Their properties are then confiscated for public purposes. Through effective state-owned economy and electoral democracy, China not only obtains wealth and power, but also provides excellent welfare to its people. The success of thus soaring patriotism is to be demonstrated in the war. Concessions in China reclaimed and unequal treaties abolished, imperial powers launch a concerted attack on China in order to topple the new republic. Nevertheless, "at this time, the Chinese see China as their soul."²⁴ No one commits treason.

²³ For an elaboration of "Xinnian meng," see Guangyi Li, "'New Year's Dream': A Chinese Anarcho-cosmopolitan Utopia," *Utopian Studies* 24.1 (2013): 89-104.

²⁴ Cai Yuanpei, "Xinnian meng," *Cai Yuanpei quanji*, vol.1, ed. Cai Yuanpei Research Society of China, Hangzhou:

Moreover, China manages to manufacture *New Era*-style superweapons such as submarines and airships. High morale and advanced weaponry bring a historic victory to the Chinese who seek peace rather than retaliation: “Despite our triumph, we do not take advantage of this situation for extra benefit. Instead, we make a proposal for world peace conference when other countries’ military force is in a sorry state.”

Eternal peace thereafter comes true:

We suggest that all the countries collaborate to establish a world public law court, and train several legions of a single world army. The number of judges and the constituency of the army are to be decided based upon the population of the countries. Except for internal police forces, no one country is allowed to establish its own army. Any conflict between two countries is to be brought before the court for settlement. Those who refuse to obey the judgment will come under the attack of the world army. In addition, if a citizen of a certain country cannot settle a dispute between the state and himself, he can also turn to the world court. At that time, China’s words are like heavenly speech (*tianyu*) for other countries. Since Russia and the United States also come to its aid, no country dares to disobey, and the peace treaty is soon put into effect. Henceforth, without warfare, all the countries enjoy more and more happiness, and the happiness of Chinese even greater.²⁵

In Cai’s vision, the evolution of public morality extends beyond a new international order. The illustration of “the undertaking of civilization that has reached its summit” is a genuine moral and ethical revolution:

At that time, people no longer use names and surnames, but rather are referred to by number; there are no designations of ruler and subject...no designations of father and son; all the young are educated, all the old taken care of, and all the sick cured; there are no designations of husband and wife; once man and

Zhejiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 1991, 433.

²⁵ Ibid., 434.

woman are pleased with each other, they hold a ceremony frankly in a park, and go to their assigned couple room in proper time, and adultery has hence disappeared... The laws (against rape and laziness), since no one commits the crimes, are abrogated. So are the courts. Railways extend in all directions. Words divide “yours” and “mine,” in conjunction with adjectives such as good, evil, benevolent, resentful, are all saved, let alone the lexicon for invective and diatribe. Transportational convenience and linguistic simplification give rise to a unified language.²⁶

As China proceeds morally, “heavenly speech” becomes true to its name. Language amelioration advances from the disappearance of curse words to the invention of a new system of written characters (*xinzi*). Indicating sound and meaning simultaneously and thus easy to learn, these characters are employed to report the cutting-edge research achievements and refined culture of China. Before long, the Romanized Chinese becomes the cosmopolitan lingua franca, continually influencing everyone’s writing, thinking, and practice. Through a universal language, public morality, at first the bedrock of nationalism, is to fulfill the denial of nation-states in less than sixty years:

People then hold a conference to abolish the states, the world court, and the world army, for they are no longer of any use. Instead, they propose to establish a Society for Overcoming Nature (*shengziran hui*). As there are no more disputes among the people, they work jointly to fight with nature, in the hopes of placing the climate under their rule and harnessing the air to (fly to and) colonize the planets. This is the true end of the competitive mind of the people of the Earth!²⁷

Cai’s dream of anarcho-communism, aspiring to transcend nationalism by

²⁶ Ibid., 435.

²⁷ Ibid.

developing global consciousness and the concern with individuals nationalism implies, derives arguably from a specific Chinese imperial tradition. On the one hand, he has a Confucian confidence that assumes China's moral centrality: "If such a state of affairs exists, yet the people of far-off lands still do not submit, then the ruler must attract them by enhancing the prestige of his culture; and when they have been duly attracted, he contents them. And where there is contentment there will be no upheavals."²⁸ On the other hand, he implicitly shares the First Emperor of Qin's ambition to universalize the world: "Now all over *tianxia*, carriages run by wheels of the same size, scholars write the same characters, and people behave according to the same ethic."²⁹

If Liang Qichao were to remark on Cai's different story of a future new China, his comment would feature sympathetic ambivalence. Cai was not among the "religious activists" whom Liang dismissed for their all too idealistic talk of "Heavenly Kingdom," "datong," "fraternity," and "cosmopolitanism."³⁰ Rather, he accorded with Liang in underlining the primary necessity of building a nation.³¹ Moreover, similarly well-versed in New Text Confucianism and inspired by Darwinism, both Cai and Liang's teacher Kang Youwei sought to resolve the contradiction between the urgent need of nationalism and the ultimate dream of great unity by proposing a three-phase scheme of linear progress.³² In their delineation of

²⁸ *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. and annot. Arthur Waley, 1938, London: Routledge, 2005, 203.

²⁹ "Zhongyong," *Liji zhengyi*, vol.3, 1457. This sentence is generally seen as a classic description of what the Qin dynasty's unification of China brought about.

³⁰ For Liang's critique of impractical ideals, see Liang Qichao, "Xinmin shuo" (1902), 663-64.

³¹ Cai Yuanpei, "Xinnian meng," 423.

³² Cai once appropriated the "Three Ages" theory in the *Gongyang Comments of Annals of Spring and Autumn* to

history, states, for the sake of the common benefit and welfare of human race, are to willingly end themselves through combination. What Liang would frown upon is presumably Cai's impetuosity. For Liang, an adherent of constitutional monarchy who strove to graft new morality onto the old morality descended from ancestors, a Rousseauian revolution of "total destruction" is less likely to attain the political and social goals it claims to achieve in the first place.³³

And this is where Wu Jianren engages with his opponents in *A New Story of the Stone*. He serialized the first 20 chapters of this novel in *Nanfang bao* (The South), a Shanghai-based newspaper from September 19, 1905 to February 18, 1906, and published all 40 chapters in book form in 1908.³⁴ Unique in late Qing fiction, *New Stone* has a narrative structure similar to that of More's *Utopia*, contrasting the dark contemporary Chinese society with an ideal "Civilized Realm" (*wenming jingjie*). The hero, Baoyu, like in the eighteenth-century masterpiece *Story of the Stone* from which Wu Jianren borrows his major characters—young nobleman Baoyu, his servant Beiming, and his thoughtless cousin Xue Pan—for the first half of his "renovated fiction" (*fanxin xiaoshuo*), remains an innocent Candide.³⁵ The difference is that, in the original, Baoyu is a candid juvenile who painstakingly resists the society that disciplines and distorts his personality, while in *New Stone*, he proves to be a candid

interpret Darwinian evolution. Yang Yang ed., *Zishu yu yinxiang: Cai Yuanpei*, Shanghai: Sandian shudian, 1997, 4.

³³ Liang Qichao, "Xinmin shuo" (1902), 719-20.

³⁴ The date is based on Tian Ruohong's textual survey of *Nanfang bao*. According to Tian, Wu had already finished the whole novel by the time its serialization stopped. That being said, Wu might have made revisions to his work before its final publication. See Tian Ruohong, *Lu Shi 'e xiaoshuo kaolun*, 276-83.

³⁵ David Der-wei Wang, *Repressed Modernities*, 272. For an inspiring discussion of late Qing "renovation" of classical fictions, see Ouyang Jian, "Wanqing 'fanxin' xiaoshuo zonglun," *Shehui kexue yanjiu* (1997.5): 131-36.

“new citizen,” acutely aware of anything that prevents China from becoming a modern nation. He is thus angered at the compradors’ worship of the West in Shanghai, disdainful of the ignorant Boxer mobs in Beijing, and sarcastic about a conservative official’s cliché that China can cope with any difficulty by traditional Confucian teaching during his visit to Wuhan. Disappointed with the miserable late Qing China, Baoyu accidentally enters into the Civilized Realm near Qufu, the hometown of Confucius. As its locality suggests, Civilized Realm is a Confucian ideal state where all the issues that beset late Qing China are resolved. Old Juvenile, Wu’s incarnation in this Confucian utopia, plays the role of Baoyu’s guide throughout the curious visitor’s travel. Baoyu has seen all kinds of advanced technologies, equipments, and facilities with surprise and joy. More impressive to him and to the readers of *New Stone*, is his hunting of the legendary roc (*peng*) by flying car in Central Africa and his round-the-world trip under the sea.³⁶

The name of Wu Jianren’s utopia is worthy of special attention. “Civilized Realm” reflects Chinese literati’s anxiety at the degradation of China in the civilizational hierarchy. It cannot be more humiliating for a country enjoying cultural superiority and institutional confidence for thousands of years to be labeled, overnight, as “half-civilized.”³⁷ The Chinese norms that differentiate the civilized from the barbarian, in a time new giants dwarfed the “Heavenly Dynasty,” gave way to the European standard of civilization. Yet, as Chinese intellectuals knew more and more

³⁶ For more detailed overviews of *New Stone*, see Theodore Hutters, *Bringing the World Home*, 151-172; Huang Jingzhu, “Lun Wu Jianren de *Xin shitou ji*,” *Jia Baoyu zuo qianshuiting: Zhongguo zaoqi kehua yanjiu jingxuan*, ed. Wu Yan, Fuzhou: Fujian shaonian ertong chubanshe, 2006, 196-214.

³⁷ Guo Songtao, *Lundun yu Bali riji*, eds. Zhong Shuhe and Yang Jian, Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1984, 490-91.

Western history and reality, they became able to challenge the Eurocentric civilizational discourse. In Yang Du's words,

Today there are civilized states but no civilized world. Nowadays every state is civilized domestically while barbarous towards other states. Internally, it sticks to right; externally, it sticks to might. Thus, in terms of the country itself, it is a civilized state, whereas in terms of the world, (the civilized states form) a barbarian world.³⁸

Through revelation of interstate Hobbesian anarchy, Yang Du brings to light the barbarian aspect of the "civilized states" that level them with the "half-civilized" and "barbarian" states. In the meantime, as all states established and maintained social order on their own terms, respectively, each of them has already passed the threshold of civilization. In comparison with Yang, Wu is more critical of the states crowned with civilization. From his perspective, even domestically they are far from civilized. In *New Stone*, Baoyu, during his sojourn in Shanghai, keenly discovers the imperfections of Western inventions, especially the impracticality of some well-made products.³⁹ Later, Baoyu realizes that all the machines and devices Western powers take pride in are "barbarian," as their inconvenience, lack of safety, and environmental consequences came to light in comparison with more advanced creations. Dietary customs harm health, whorehouses remain widespread, drunkards abound in the country... In everyday life, Western society also displays its barbarian quality. Detestable still, the so-called civilized countries are responsible for the barbarian world. Unlike Yang Du, who regards the global jungle status as the result of the

³⁸ Yang Du, "Jintie zhuyi shuo" (1907), *Yang Du ji*, 218.

³⁹ Wu Jianren, *Xin shitou ji*, Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1988, 202-03.

contest for survival in which every state has taken part, Wu, with utter indignation, targets the bullies for tirade:

Old Juvenile laughed: "...The 'civilization' claimed outside recently is none other than the opposite of civilization, although they praise each other as 'civilized states.' They presume that no one hears their talk, while we already split our sides. May I ask your opinion on this: suppose there're two people walking on the way. One is a tough guy, the other is a feeble tubercular. The tough guy threatens the tubercular by all means, and even beats him to half dead. Do you think the tough guy is justified? Are his deeds what a civilized person should do? I'm afraid that the legal departments will arrest him for criminal behavior. Yet he still insists that 'I behave in a completely civilized manner.' Are you convinced (by his defense)? Today among the states talking about civilization at every turn, which one is not like this? They tyrannize the weak states, and even annex their territories and encroach upon their sovereignty, maintaining however that they are protecting them. One can be neither angry nor mocking at (their words). According to their logic, the robbers should be the most civilized. Why then do these states still have laws to punish robbers? If the states all under Heaven establish an international court to settle the lawsuits between states, I'm afraid that the civilized states would be convicted of robbery!"

Baoyu said: "It is just because of the absence of such a court that these states play the tyrant without any scruple."

Old Juvenile said: "So the tiger is the most civilized under Heaven. It eats beasts and humans at its will, while law is not to be enforced upon it. Isn't it the most civilized?"

Baoyu laughed: "One day the hunter kills the tiger, then the hunter becomes the civilized."

Old Juvenile said: "Isn't it.—This is actually barbarian. How can it be civilized?"⁴⁰

Hence, the lifetime aspiration of Dongfang Wenming (lit. "Eastern civilization"), the uncrowned philosopher king of Civilized Realm, is to build a "true civilized state" to shame and convert those "false civilized states" and eventually

⁴⁰ Ibid., 324.

make a civilized world.⁴¹ But what is true civilization? For Wu, the cause of civilization starts from constitutional monarchy, while both constitutional monarchy and republicanism are fundamentally flawed:

Old Juvenile said: "...The three regimes of our time are autocracy, constitutional monarchy, and republicanism. Now some advocate constitutional monarchy, some others stand for republicanism, leaving autocracy with no support. Our country has adopted autocracy, though. In our opinion, republicanism is the most barbaric. People divide into numerous contradicting parties. The government is a like an ownerless ghost who simply follows the order of the powerful party. Once that party declines, the governmental policy changes accordingly... Under constitutional monarchy there are also parties. Despite the foundation of the House of Lords and the House of Commons, the limitation of the right to vote and the right to be voted implicitly makes the regime more moneyocratic than aristocratic. Among the people, the rich become richer, while the poor become poorer. Hence arises a party demanding property equalization or socialism—in the long run, therefore, (constitutional monarchy) is unable to maintain social stability. If you don't believe, just wait and see, one day they're sure to collapse."⁴²

Wu contends that the key is not the regime per se. Rather, moral standard in a large part decides political practice. Any regime will fail in a country featuring moral depravity. Morally degenerate autocracy produces tyrants and corrupt officials, and constitutional monarchy, if no better morally, is nothing but a regime in the hands of evil gentry, who unscrupulously manipulate the administration of justice and victimize the common people. That said, constitutional monarchy is the sine qua non for the moral education that leads to civilization, as it provides necessary political freedom and space for gradual reform. In *Civilized Realm*, moral education means Confucian

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 392.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 307-08.

cultivation and permeates the whole society. In politics, education is of primary significance; in education, moral education is the prime focus. It is through more than fifty years' endeavor that Civilized Realm achieved moral excellence. No matter noble or humble, old or young, everyone is just and honest. When constitutional monarchy had completed its historical task of moral reform, *New Stone* implies, its inherent contradiction also rose to an insurmountable extent:

In less than a few years, there were hearsays about the unrest of property equalization in foreign countries. The citizens of Civilized Realm held two conferences to discuss the situation and concluded that it was all because of the defects of moneyocracy. The congressmen therefore returned the regime to the emperor and restored autocracy.⁴³

Autocracy redux is no longer “barbarian autocracy.” Instead, it is “civilized autocracy” on the basis of virtues. Common people live a decent life, men and women getting along with each other in a measured while unaffected manner. The morally well-educated officials carry out effective administration. The reinstated emperor, as his refusal of luxury tributes in chapter 35 of *New Stone* indicates, plays the role of moral paradigm. This is the “true civilization” prerequisite to the civilized world Dongfang Wenming undertakes to realize.

However, “true civilization” is not as appealing as in “New Year’s Dream.” The sources invested upon border defense, the military preparations to repel potential intruders, and especially the articulated prospect of fighting abroad, suggest the

⁴³ Ibid., 308.

impracticability of the Confucian ideal of cherishing men from afar.⁴⁴ Further illustrating the difference between ideal and reality is Dongfang Wenming's ambivalence about whether the means of war is allowed for his great cause for universal civilization. According to a general, the government has the intention to unify the world, while Dongfang Wenming opposes it, for he intends Civilized Realm to be the model of civilization that influences and reforms the world in a peaceful way. In a conversation with Baoyu, however, Dongfang Wenming seems inclined to use military force to liberate the black slaves. In his words, it is those currently in office who worry about the ensuing war that get in the way.⁴⁵ Hence, Civilized Realm, already a dream of civilization, needs a dream within a dream to transcend or forget the hindrances on the way to a better world. Having learned Dongfang Wenming's hope, Baoyu has a dream, in which he finds that Dongfang Wenming, already the real Chinese emperor, is fulfilling his scheme for peace and civilization:

Standing at the podium, Dongfang Wenming makes his speech: "Today is the first day of the world peace conference. I'm honored to be elected by all states as the president. Honoring me as well is the presence of the princes and governmental representatives from all over the world. As the president, I should pronounce our aim first, and wait for the princes and officials to discuss the ways for practice. This conference being a peace conference, we should set peace as our aim. But what peace do we seek through such a conference? It has to be clarified. The peace conference is not only for international peace. International peace only resolves the problems among states and has therefore too many limitations. At best it only avoids war. This peace conference should seek peace for global humans, and governments of all the countries must shoulder the responsibility to protect peace. All the races, including the red, black, and brown races, should be treated equally, and their governments and

⁴⁴ Ibid., 373, 380, 383.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 391-92, 396.

people should not be insulted. This is to protect humans' freedom from maltreatment. Should there be any less developed race, we civilized countries, no matter individual or society, have the responsibility to guide and educate such ignorant people."...The audience burst into applause. Baoyu applauds and applauds, and wants to stamp his feet. When he stamps, Baoyu unexpectedly misses his foot and falls straight down thousands of yards. Blind with terror, he breaks into a cold sweat. When he manages to open his eyes with effort, he finds himself still lying in the guest room at Dongfang Wenming's home. —It is all a dream.⁴⁶

It is easy to identify the influence of *Future New China* on this peace proposal.

Another detail demonstrating Liang's milestone work's imprint on Wu is the similar Shanghai World Expo in Baoyu's dream. However, through a tiny textual difference, Wu hints at his disagreement with Liang. In *Future New China*, the peace conference and the anniversary of China's reform are both held at Nanjing, a site to which Liang's cut-in notes calls "attention."⁴⁷ We cannot help relating this capital (literally!) change to Liang's hesitation between reform and revolution, as Huang Keqiang and Li Qubing's debate in *Future New China* reflects, and further to the actual choice of Nanjing for capital as a result of the Xinhai revolution ten years later. In *New Stone*, on the contrary, the capital is still set in Beijing, the imperial center where Wu was born. In terms of futuristic imagination, Wu undoubtedly owed a great deal to Liang, while he was probably lukewarm about Kang Youwei's philosophy for great unity that Liang ardently introduced.⁴⁸ My speculation is on the grounds of his drastic assault on "barbarian freedom" (*yeman ziyou*). Previous researchers have either neglected

⁴⁶ Ibid., 406.

⁴⁷ Liang Qichao, *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* (1902), *Liang Qichao quanji*, vol.10, 5609.

⁴⁸ Liang Qichao, "Nanhai Kang xiansheng zhuan" (1901), *Liang Qichao quanji*, vol.1, 488-95.

this hidden regime or ambiguously defined it as improper Westernization.⁴⁹ In truth, “barbarian freedom” in the late Qing context refers to an alternative utopia, a utopia Wu deemed dystopia. Let us see how Wu depicts the rumored “Village of Freedom” that rivals its counterpart in Civilized Realm. Having fled the Boxers’ Uprising, which Wu saw as the most barbarian, Xue Pan hears that there is close to Beijing a place called “snug nest” (*anle wo*), “a very good place for refuge, never panicked by floods, fire disasters, and robberies.”⁵⁰ Later he is led into this village by Liu Xuesheng (lit. “students studying abroad”) and happily settles down there. According to Old Juvenile, however, Liu Xuesheng was denied entry thrice by Civilized Realm for his ever-deteriorating barbarian nature, and the freedom he and Xue Pan enjoy was evil:

Baoyu said: “Is freedom also divided into civilized and barbarian?”
Old Juvenile said: “What a big difference there is! Generally speaking, the more civilly free, the more orderly; the more barbarously free, the more disorderly. Those between civilized and barbarian suppose that freedom brings them to Heaven. They don’t know that the citizens who are indeed qualified for freedom only talk about freedom after everyone can govern himself, observe social rules, and know well the limits of law. Those who embrace barbarian freedom talk about family revolution at every turn, not only wholly abandoning the ethical norms, but also rebuking the teachings of past sages and worthies as barbarian. For them, people of our realm have no respect. How can you set foot in the so-called Village of Freedom in which he resides?”⁵¹

Who are the “students studying abroad” and advocating “barbarian freedom”?

A vital clue is “family revolution.” The earliest proposal of major changes of family is

⁴⁹ For the latter view, see Geng Chuanming, “Qingmo minchu ‘wutuobang’ wenxue zonglun,” *Zhongguo shehui kexue* (2008.4): 183.

⁵⁰ Wu Jianren, *Xin shitou ji*, 241.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 286.

“Jiating geming shuo” (On family revolution), a 1904 article in *Jiangsu*, followed by Ding Chuwo’s “N ǐzi jiating geming shuo” (On women’s family revolution) in the same year. In these discussions, “family revolution” is intended to break the restraints of family that prevented men and women from taking part in national salvation: “To revolutionize politics, it is necessary to revolutionize family first.”⁵² Put another way, what was demanded is that family ethics give way to nationalism rather than subverting family ethic. Their requests are little different from Liang Qichao’s call for public morality, for which Wu gave his approval by admiring independent personality, gender equality, public spirit, and patriotic mind in *New Stone*.⁵³ What shocked Wu and many of his peers are the anarchists’ stormy oppositions to family and tradition. Early in 1903, Yan Ke already asked for “killing all the married to make free love as the common basis of everything” and “all the disciples of Confucius and Mencius to eliminate false morality and enable everyone to show his true nature” in his preface to *Wuzhengfu zhuyi* (Anarchism), a fairly influential pamphlet calling for revolutionary devastation and translated by Ziran sheng (Zhang Ji), a student who returned from Japan.⁵⁴ For Wu, the noise of anarchism developed into deafening cacophony with the emergence of *Xin shiji* (New Century) and *Tianyi bao* (Natural Justice) in 1907. The two anarchist magazines in Paris and Tokyo, especially the former, founded by “students studying abroad” such as Wu Zhihui and Li Shizeng, continued to bombard the institution of the family. They took family as an abyss of sin, insisting that

⁵² Jiating lixianzhe, “Jiating geming shuo,” *Xinhai geming qian shinianjian shilun xuanji*, vol.1, 835.

⁵³ Wu Jianren, *Xin shitou ji*, 360, 370-71, 377-78.

⁵⁴ Yan Ke, “Xu,” *Wuzhengfu zhuyi sixiang ziliao xuan*, vol.1, eds. Ge Maochun, Jiang Jun, and Li Xingzhi, Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1984, 23. For *Wuzhengfu zhuyi*, see Jiang Jun and Li Xingzhi, *Zhongguo jindai de wuzhengfu zhuyi sichao*, Jinan: Shandong renmin chubanshe, 1990, 26-27.

marriage and family should be abolished. Moreover, they condemned ancient sages as “savage,” reprehended Confucianism for its assistance to autocracy, and launched bitter attacks upon the *guocui* (national essence) school with which Wu associated. Wu Zhihui even sentenced traditional wisdom to death. It was against these overseas radicals that Wu mounted his counterattacks on “barbarian freedom” in and outside *New Stone*.⁵⁵

It is worth noting that the radical stance of “Liu Xueshengs” sprang from their belief that they were spearheading history. The *New Century* anarchists had even greater confidence that anarchism, according with the progress of science, would form new morality universally in the future of human and social evolution. Akin to Cai Yuanpei, their proposal for a new world order was also based on a general critique of the current situation, be it Eastern or Western. Hence, the tensions within *New Stone* actually come from the dynamics of four realms:

⁵⁵ Ren Baiqiang, *Wofoshanren pingzhuan*, Hong Kong: Zhongguo pinglun xueshu chubanshe, 2010, chap. 17.

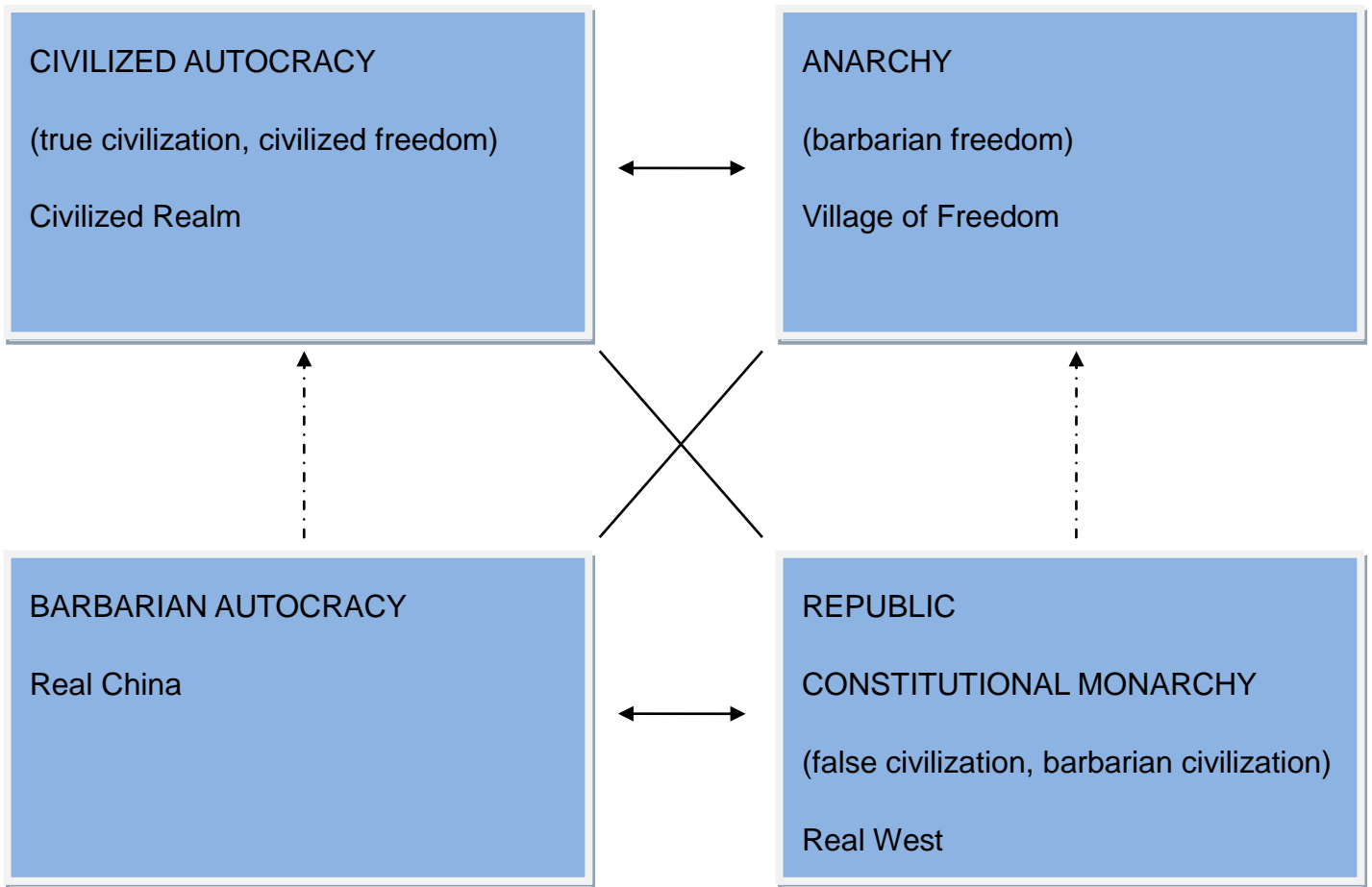


Figure 4.1 The Political Matrix in *New Stone*⁵⁶

In Wu’s scheme of history, barbarian autocracy, under Chinese circumstances, is to develop into civilized autocracy. Constitutional monarchy, however, is a necessary intermediary stage in the political and social evolution from barbarian to civilized. The journey to and back from the West is less linear than dialectical, for the intrinsic deficiencies and contradictions of constitutional monarchy, realized before its practice in China, are to eventually toll the death knell for this regime. In the

⁵⁶ Here I have referred to Fredric Jameson’s Greimasian mapping of the ideological mediations in More’s *Utopia*. *Archeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, London and New York: Verso, 2005, 30.

meantime, constitutional monarchy and republic are to give rise to their self-denial in the name of socialism and property equalization. For Wu, this endogenous challenge to Western regimes, for its impudent attempt to root out fundamental ethics and traditional values, was just a wrong path from false civilization to true barbarity. Contrarily, the recast China is to provide the world with the morality of true civilization. The people of Civilized Realm live a moral life, to the extent that their scientific inventions are also morally charged.⁵⁷ For the world, it takes the lead to maintain peace, and, more importantly, strive for universal equality and progress.

Meaningfully, *New Stone* contains many more doubts and perplexities than “New Year’s Dream.” Wu has evaded the rupture in his future history by a dream, while the fearful collapse of the dream at its height only further exposes his uncertainties about his own ideal.⁵⁸ We can hardly neglect the connection between Baoyu’s unfulfilled ambition to “mend Heaven” and the frustrations Wu underwent in real life. But the broken dream of Baoyu also leaves the civilized world Dongfang Wenming anticipates illusory. At crux is the dilemma of the revived “Eastern civilization”: on the one hand, violent output of institution and ideology will undermine the legitimacy and authenticity of the “true civilization” it claims; on the other hand, to substantially fight injustice and change the extant world order “false civilized states” dominate (i.e. colonial oppression of “red, black, and brown races”), morality is impotent. The barely resisted lure of subduing opponents by violence is partially compensated for by Baoyu and his companions’ jubilant conquest of

⁵⁷ For the relationship between science and morality in *New Stone*, see David Der-wei Wang, *Repressed Modernities*, 276-79.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 282-83; Theodore Hutters, *Bringing the World Home*, 170-71.

nature.⁵⁹ In this light, Wu's ambiguity, in conjunction with Cai and other anarchists' confident optimism, reveals the discursive hierarchy of their time. What "students studying abroad" embrace is one of the interrelated Western blueprints (anarchism, socialism, communism, and so forth) of a new society that claims to be the necessary outcome of historical development. Their significance, appeal, and feasibility come from their blood-and-flesh ties with the capitalist nation-state, the hegemonic object they aim to ruin or refashion. Prevailing concepts at the turn of century, such as social evolution and progressive history, lent further support to these challengers. In contrast, Wu's "Civilized Realm," if not a mere return to "Chinese principle, Western application," at best represents an indigenous tradition's struggle to re-universalize itself by constructing a viable alternative modernity. His way is destined to be thorny.

A relevant perspective to observe *New Stone*, and also an overarching issue for the late Qing thought exploring a morally better world, is the China-centric world order. Despite the divergence between great unification into a single state or great harmony among states, the dream of the future is always characterized by China's leadership. The revived China is commonly expected to have a clean and effective government, developed economy, harmonious society, powerful army, advanced culture, and, most importantly, to shoulder the responsibility to maintain world peace and promote civilizational progress. This is a return to China's unique imperial tradition, and a resurgence of the ideal of the historical China that dominated the East

⁵⁹ Andrew F. Jones has made a pointed critique of Baoyu's Victorian adventure, arguing that Baoyu's practice of colonial violence to nature has rendered *New Stone*'s colonial critique unsustainable. *Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011, 59-60. From my perspective, this critique gives nature more ethical weight than it deserves.

Asian world. The influence of such a tradition is twofold. To be the leader, China has to not only outdo its rivals in force, but also convince the world of its values. For this reason, not only domestic political stability and social happiness are necessary, international peace, justice, and prosperity are also high on China's agenda. The strong drive to transcend the West fueled late Qing utopians' critical analysis of Western modernity—electoral democracy in the plight of money politics, economic vigor accompanied by social differentiation, individual freedom as well as its abuse, scientific progress facilitating colonialism, to name but a few—and their designs for improvement. However, the China-centric vision involves the distinction and hierarchy of center-periphery, advanced-backward, leader-follower, and therefore has the following consequences: 1) Racial, cultural, and regional biases are likely to be tolerated, if not encouraged; 2) An undisguised unipolar world order is anachronistic in the era of nation-states—A lenient hegemon that assures peace, affluence, and happiness? For a modern world disinclined to anchor its hope on an enlightened emperor as subjects of past kingdoms did, such a self-expectation is suspicious, if not perilous.

As regards the paradox of a China-centric order, a 1903 article, “Ershi shiji zhi Zhongguo” (China in the Twentieth Century), is particularly noteworthy for its inspiring statement. The author contends that civil rights are of critical importance in national competition and China should embrace freedom and equality for self-renewal. As “the pivot of civil rights” in the twentieth century, China is to give justice a new momentum:

The common principle of the world hides without comparison and stagnates without competition. The principle of freedom and justice, despite its rise in Europe and America, is now coming to its end due to the lack of comparison and competition. For what reason do I make such an assertion? Amongst the states practicing freedom and equality, Britain and America are the most outstanding, while their internal politics are still flawed for failing to exercise perfect freedom and equality in many aspects. Externally, see what Britain has done to Transvaal and America to the Philippines.—Is that what a state claiming freedom and equality should do? Without comparison, without competition, common principle is deserted, and before long tyranny returns. If our China can rely on the power (of freedom and equality), we should not take merely equalizing Europe and America with China as fully performing our duty. Rather, we should make Chinese civilization reach the perfect realm and spread it to Europe and America, enabling the Europeans and Americans to enjoy freedom and equality by virtue of us. Our China will hence become the exemplar of the world. This is our compatriot citizens' responsibility in the twentieth century.⁶⁰

At first glance, the author of “Twentieth Century” has much in common with the previously discussed utopians. All of them acknowledge contemporary China's weakness and backwardness. In the meantime, all of them take a critical attitude towards the West as well. Moreover, they all believe that through necessary reforms China will again become an awe-inspiring paragon of civilization. Yet, “Twentieth Century” has actually contributed some extraordinarily valuable ideas. 1) Common principle must progress through comparison and competition. Common principle is not something immutable. Even though its names such as “freedom” and “equality” remain, its meaning and means of practice vary. International competition, rather than eliminating the inferior as in Darwinian evolution, selects the better interpretation and practice of freedom and equality that will eventually reward all the participants. Comparison, the supplemental prerequisite to progress, is to further mitigate such a

⁶⁰ “Ershi shiji zhi Zhongguo” (1901), *Xinhai geming qian shinianjian shilun xuanji*, vol.1, 71.

competition. 2) Common principle must to fall into decay without comparison and competition. The unchallenged state will abandon the common principle that once brought it strength and respect, because the principle of freedom and equality prevents those in power from encroaching public interest and the whole nation from bullying other people. Hence, if China manages to practice freedom and equality, it should seek a way better than that of Europe and America, the triumph of which, apart from making China the model state, will secure and even enhance the happiness of Europeans and Americans through “comparison and competition.” From my perspective, “Twentieth Century,” ahead of its time, has provided a worthwhile proposal for China’s national strategy. For China’s foreign policy, it takes a middle way arguing for neither arrogant “cherishing men from afar” nor aggressively spreading the values China cherishes. Its significance, though, is likely to be appreciated only in a time when military conquest and colonization have already been excluded from the legitimate options of the powers in pursuing their interest.

Another way to address the paradox is to get rid of it in the first place. In 1912, the birth year of the Republic of China, Zhuchen (Wang Zichen) published “Xincun” (New village) in *Xin shijie* (New world), the anarchist magazine of which he was the chief editor.⁶¹ The new village in *Huang Xiuqiu* proves a metaphor for ideal China, while the new village in Zhuchen’s story is literally a village-level utopian community. This difference distinguishes Zhuchen and his comrades from the state-centered

⁶¹ For an introduction of Zhuchen and his propagation of Marxism, see Wang Jionghua, “Zhuchen yu minguo chunian makesizhuyi de jieshao,” *Zhejiang xuekan* (1987.6): 11-15.

utopians. For the latter, the turmoil and disorder in the wake of ROC's foundation was unbearably disappointing. When their utopian passion dissipated in the chaos of the Republic's early years, some anarchists made up their minds to complete through social revolution the tasks political revolution left unfulfilled.⁶² The social revolution to be carried out, they maintained, is inspired by and part of the global socialist revolution:

World trends varied momentarily. In European and American states, the practice of nationalism and civil rights had already passed. Now was the time when capitalists engaged with laborers. Socialism, was just like the sun and moon across the sky, shining upon the world, and the rivers through the land, surging over the globe. The Chinese pioneers of ideal and foresight thought over the situation, weighed different theories, and realized that nothing other than socialism could save the poor and the weak from death and achieve great peace and unity.⁶³

The history in "New Village" extends on the grounds of such an exciting ascent of socialism. The New Village is built as a "model society" to raise people's intellectual and moral level. This utopian community has finally become a pattern for the whole world, displaying the superiority of socialism. Because of its great influence, the rich, rather than fighting with the poor, identify with socialism, and the whole world thus comes into the age of socialism in a peaceful manner. In the story, the builders of New Village are members of the Chinese Socialist Party. Another group of this party argues for the need of nation building. In their opinion, due to foreign threats, China has to first practice national socialism to defend and develop

⁶² Arif Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991, 116-147.

⁶³ Zhuchen, "Xin cun," *Xin shijie* 2 (1912): 14-15.

itself, and abolish the state when necessary conditions are satisfied. In spite of their different ideas about the urgency, both groups of anarcho-socialists believe that, socialism is the common cause of human beings, and its success neither depends on the revival or reform of any specific Chinese morality nor establishes China's leadership. As the CSP president Yuan Tongtian says,

Social revolution is a world issue, and in no way can a single country or place carry it out. In the future, we will surely ally with the socialist parties in other countries to launch and complete the revolution at the same time. Then we will be able to make a new world characterized by great peace and unity.⁶⁴

From Cai Yuanpei's "New Year's Dream," to *Bingshan xuehai* (Ice mountain and snow sea, 1906), a utopia envisaging that anarchists from all the states, nations and races join together in Antarctica to build their ideal society, and again to "New Village," Chinese anarchists have developed three routes to stateless peace and unity. As time went by, the ascending awareness of world revolution and the great concern with society freed them from the exclusive obsession with China's fate, while they continued to encourage the struggles for a new world through moral idealism.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 30.

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