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Pride and Loathing in History

Shu, C.

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Author: Shu, Chunyan
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Chapter 2. *Chinese Characteristics* and the National Character Discourse

Because of its long-lasting influence, American missionary Arthur Smith's 1894 book *Chinese Characteristics*[116] deserves particular attention in the analysis of the discourse of national character. Among numerous English-language publications on China, it was seen as the most systematic monograph ever written on the Chinese national character. Until the 1920s, it was still one of the five most read books among foreigners in China, [117] enjoying a wide circulation in China-related communities in the U.S and other countries.

More importantly, its influence has extended beyond the English-speaking world. After the initial publication in 1894, it was soon translated into many other languages. The Japanese translation appeared as early as in 1896,[118] which coincided with Japanese discussions on Chinese national character around the 1895 Sino-Japanese war. In the two decades after the war, Japan had become the principal source of inspiration for new Chinese ideas,[119] with a large number of overseas Chinese students and political exiles there who later became leading intellectuals in cultural and political movements. Among them were the two most prominent advocates of national character reforms, Liang Qichao (1873-1929) and Lu Xun (1881-1936).

Lu Xun's critiques of the Chinese national character and national defects (*liegen xing*), first appearing in his *A Madman's Diary* (1918), were most notably represented in his fiction *The True Story of Ah Q* (1921-22),[120] in which he, "with unprecedented harshness",[121] depicted the Chinese national character through the image of a peasant

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[116] Arthur Smith, *Chinese Characteristics* (New York: Revell, 1894).

[117] See Huang Xingtao 黄兴涛, "Meiguo chuanjiaoshi Ming'Enpu jiqi zhongguoren de qizhi" 美国传教士明恩溥及其中国人的气质 in *Zhongguoren de qizhi* 中国人的气质 (Beijing: zhonghua shuju, 2006), p. 23. Original citation: *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal*, 1925, Vol.56, pp. 299-305.

[118] See footnote 24.

[119] Philip C. Huang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1972), p. 44.

[120] For the most recent version of these two stories, see Lu Xun, translated by Julia Lovell, *The Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Tales of China: The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun* (London: Penguin, 2009).

[121] Gloria Davies, "The Problematic Modernity of Ah Q", *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*, Vol.13 (1991), pp.57-76: 58.

protagonist. Many studies have analyzed his thought on, and critiques of, the national character,[122] and most recently a collection of his works was published on this specific subject.[123]

Research shows that Lu read the Japanese translation of *Chinese Characteristics* in 1903,[124] and suggests a rather considerable influence of Smith's book on Lu's critiques.[125] As Lu Xun believed that a nation indulging in complacency was bound to be caught in crisis, he had taken Smith's criticism as a mirror to reflect on the pitfalls in traditional culture. It was with this belief that he wrote in 1936:

> *Until today I have been hoping that someone would translate Shi Misi (Smith)'s* Chinese Characteristics. *To read these (criticism), and to do introspection, to analyze, to know which points where right, to reform, to struggle, to do our own homework..., then to prove what on earth are Chinese.*[126]

Lu Xun has played many important roles in modern Chinese cultural and intellectual history, and being a representative critic of the national character is unmistakenably one of them. In comparison, whereas Lu Xun has been recognized as a leading figure in promoting national character reforms, Liang Qichao has not been studied as much of

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[122] See Bao Jing 鲍晶 (ed.) *Lu Xun guominxing sixiang taolunji* 鲁迅国民性思想讨论集 (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1982). Zheng Xinmiao 郑欣淼, *Wenhua pipan yu guominxing gaizao* 文化批判与国民性改造 (Xi'an: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1988). Zhang Mengyang 张梦阳, *Wuxing yu nuxing: Lu Xun yu zhongguo zhishifenzi de guominxing* 悟性与奴性:鲁迅与中国知识分子的"国民性" (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1997). Lydia Liu, "Translating National Character: Lu Xun and Arthur Smith," in idem. *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China 1900-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995). pp. 45-76. Leo Ou-Fan Lee, "Literature on the Eve of Revolution: Reflections on Lu Xun's Leftist Years, 1927-1936," *Modern China* (1976), pp. 277-326.

[123] Lu Xun 鲁迅, edited by Mo Luo 摩罗 and Yang Fan 杨帆, *Yueliang de hanguang—Lu Xun guominxing pipan wenxuan* 月亮的寒光——鲁迅国民性批判文选 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2011).

[124] Zhang Mengyang 张梦阳, "Zaiban houji" 再版后记, in Smith, Zhongguoren dexing 中国人德行 (Beijing: xin shijie chubanshe, 2005), p. 247.

[125] See Lydia Liu, "Translating National Character". Also see articles on this subject: Tang Tao 唐鋤, "Jiujing zenyang de shi Zhongguoren?" 究竟怎样的是中国人 in Smith, *Zhongguoren dexing*, pp. 1-4. Huang Xingtao, "Meiguo chuanjiaoshi", pp. 24-26. Mo Luo, *Zhongguo de tengtong*, pp. 145-212.

[126] Lu Xun 鲁迅, "Qiejieting zawen mobian lici cunzhao 3" 且介亭杂文末编"立此存照"(三), in *Lu Xun quanji* 鲁迅全集 (Beijing: renmin wenxue cubanshe, 1981), p. 426.

a critic of national character but as a prominent historican, journalist and political reformer in Chinese intellectual history. In fact, except for a recent collection of Liang's work on the matter, there is no academic research available on his ideas of the national character.[127]

This chapter will examine Liang's conception of Chinese national character as revealed in his thesis of "new people" (*xin min*), and explore the relations between what he imagined as the ideal personality for a new nation and Smith's understanding of the Chinese national character. As Liang's "new people" thesis later became one of the sources of inspiration for the May Fourth cultural critics and their contemporary followers, it has its unique significance in the study of Chinese self-perceptions.

Departing from *Chinese Characteristics* as a part of 19th century missionary view of China, the following questions will be answered: what made Smith's account of the Chinese national character so popular among foreigners in China at the time, and how did Chinese intellectuals, such as Liang Qichao, perceive and act upon such foreign perceptions?

This discussion provides the context of an interesting phenomenon a century later, when, despite the obviously politically incorrect racial and religious antagonism when viewed from today, *Chinese Characteristics* once again drew wide attention in and outside of China. It was reprinted in the U.S. in 2003[128] and in U.K. in 2011.[129] More intriguingly, as mentioned in the introduction, fourteen different editions were published in China in the years between 1991 and 2010. What are the implications of its return—why has it re-appeared in the 21st century China? By introducing the historical dimension, this chapter is in a way also probing into the question as to why the discourse of national character and the issues around cultural reforms, having evolved since the time of Smith, Liang and Lu, remain relevant to contemporary Chinese self-perceptions and the search for a cultural identity.

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[127] Liang Qichao 梁启超, edited by Mo Luo 摩罗 and Yang Fan 杨帆, *Taiyang de langzhao—Liang Qichao guominxing yanjiu wenxuan* 太阳的朗照——梁启超国民性研究文选 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2011).

[128] Published by White Plains, New York: East Bridge, 2003.

[129] Published by British Library, Historical Print Editions, 2011.

2.1. *Chinese Characteristics* and Its Critique on Chinese National Character

Arthur Smith arrived in China in 1872 and spent over five decades in a village in Shandong Province. Among his many publications on Chinese language and culture, *Chinese Characteristics* was the most influential book that made him one of the most well-known China missionaries of his time. This book described 26 characteristics of the Chinese people, including their obsession with "face", the "absence of nerves", the lack of public spirit, conservatism, and so on.[130] Full of interesting observations, witty comments, and exotic anecdotes of the author's experience of Chinese village life, the book is an enjoyable literary read.

With respect to Chinese social life, Smith noticed a number of pleasant characteristics of the people around him, such as their "content and cheerfulness", "benevolence", and "mutual responsibility"; at the same time, he also described many other less appealing traits, including their "disregard of time" or "accuracy", their "talent for indirection", and "indifference to comfort and convenience". Some of these characteristics appeared rather contradictory to Smith. For instance, he discovered that the Chinese share a feature of "flexible inflexibility", and many of them demonstrated a curious combination of benevolence and the "absence of sympathy".[131]

Thus, many of those puzzling traits, seen by Smith as traits of the Chinese nation and as clearly distinct from those of the Anglo-Saxon people, made the Chinese people "a bundle of contradictions who cannot be understood at all".[132] As a 19th century missionary stationed in the East, Smith could not help but conclude that, despite all the "content and cheerfulness", eventually "Chinese happiness is all on the outside" and "there are no homes in Asia".[133]

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[130] A complete list of all 26 characteristics contains: (1) Face, (2) Economy, (3) Industry, (4) Politeness, (5) Disregard of Time, (6) Disregard of Accuracy, (7) Talent for Misunderstanding, (8) Talent for Indirection, (9) Flexible Inflexibility, (10) Intellectual Turbidity, (11) Absence of Nerves, (12) Contempt for Foreigners, (13) Absence of Public Spirit, (14) Conservatism, (15) Indifference to Comfort and Convenience, (16) Physical Vitality, (17) Patience and Perseverance, (18) Content and Cheerfulness, (19) Filial Piety, (20) Benevolence, (21) Absence of Sympathy, (22) Social Typhoons, (23) Mutual Responsibility and Respect for Law, (24) Mutual Suspicion, (25) Absence of Sincerity, (26) Polytheism, Pantheism, Atheism.

[131] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, chapter 9, 20, and 21.

[132] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, pp. 10-11.

[133] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 318.

Aside from the Chinese life he witnessed and experienced, when it came to the more sophisticated socio-psychological mindset behind it, Smith drew a few conclusions from his almost anthropoligical observations. In a chapter called "Conservatism", he described a lack of motivation for progress in Chinese society. As he wrote, "the unquestioned superiority of the ancients rests upon the firm basis of the recognised inferiority of those who come after them".[134] It is believed that a "conservative instinct" had led the Chinese to "attach undue importance to precedent" and to "depreciate the present time".[135]

It was such a conservative nature, this unwillingness to change, even for what is apparently to Smith the better, that caused the impossibility to improve the way of governance:

> *The Chinese government is by no means incapable of being blown over, but it is a cube, and when it capsizes, it simply falls upon some other face, and to external appearance, as well as to interior substance, is the same that it has always been...To suggest improvements would be the rankest heresy.*[136]

As such, Chinese conservatism did not only hinder the country from progressing, it had also negatively affected the Chinese interactions with the outside world. As Smith noted, "the present attitude of China towards the lands of the West is an attitude of procrastination".[137] While making diligent efforts to understand the nation, Smith noted a total lack of interest in Western culture from Chinese people. Though being sure of the superiority of his own civilization, he was often frustrated when such a sense of superiority was met with Chinese indifference, or even disrespect. In the chapter "Contempt for foreigners", Smith commented on the Chinese unwillingness to acknowledge the superiority of Western Christian civilization:

> *The normal attitude of the Chinese mind...towards foreigners, is not one of respect...The particulars in which we consider ourselves to be unquestionably superior to the Chinese do not make upon them the impression which we should expect, and which we could desire* [...]. *The Chinese do not wish (though they be forced to take) foreign*

[134] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 117.
[135] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 123.
[136] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 117.
[137] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 122.

> *models for anything whatever. They care nothing for sanitation, for ventilation, nor for physiology* [...]. *Western nations, taken as a whole, do not impress educated Chinese with a sense of the superiority of such nations to China* [...].[138]

While Smith agreed with the English scholar James Legge that "the moral condition of England is higher than that of China", he discovered that the Chinese were utterly surprised by such an opinion. Thus, he concluded, the typical Chinese scholarly feeling towards foreigners, especially Westerners, was "jealous contempt" and "condescension".[139]

The Chinese indifference to things new and foreign, together with their inscrutability, made it very difficult for any form of foreign interaction. This situation, as Smith believed, was further worsened by the Chinese "talent for misunderstanding":

> *All Chinese are gifted with an instinct for taking advantage of misunderstanding ...Foreign intercourse with China...was one long illustration of the Chinese talent...The history of foreign diplomacy with China is largely a history of attempted explanations of matters which have been deliberately misunderstood*.[140]

Bearing in mind the religious and socio-cultural background of Smith's account, which I will discuss in detail below, it is not surprising that *Chinese Characteristics* was comprised of comparisons between the Chinese and the Anglo-Saxons, the Orientals and the Occidentals, Confucianism and Christianity, which without exception concluded with the superiority of "us"—not just the Anglo-Saxons, but also the Europeans, the West, which are, despite all their differences, gathered together at the side of Christendom. On the other side, the murky image of Chinese people was comprised of physical and mental torpidity, indifference and disinterest, an almost lifeless nation that was trapped in its own past:

> *The face of every Western land is towards the dawning morning of the future, while the face of China is always and everywhere towards the darkness of the remote past*.[141]

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[138] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, pp. 99 &103-105.
[139] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, pp. 105-106.
[140] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 61.
[141] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 320.

Smith's image of Chinese people was confirmed and rationalized by his thesis on human character. He believed that the real character of any human being could be discovered by looking at his three relations: to himself, to his fellow-men, and to the object of his worship. In the case of China, Smith's answers to these three questions were, respectively: an absence of sincerity, an absence of altruism, and a polytheist, a pantheist, and an agnostic.[142] Thus came the logical conclusion of his thesis:

> *What the Chinese lack is not intellectual ability. It is not patience, practicality, nor cheerfulness, for in all these qualities they greatly excel. What they do lack is Character and Conscience...The needs of China...are few. They are only Character and Conscience. Nay, they are but one, for Conscience is Character.*[143]

To answer the question as to why Chinese people lack character and conscience, Smith then looked to Confucianism for explanation:

> *The forces of Confucianism have had an abundant time in which to work out their ultimate results. And after a patient survey of all that China has to offer, the most friendly critic is compelled, reluctantly and sadly, to coincide in the verdict, "The answer to Confucianism is China."*[144]

And that answer—the state of being of the Chinese nation as a result of the working of Confucianism—was apparently not satisfactory to Smith. Therefore, as indigenous Confucianism had failed to produce a better nation, and the conservative forces were so strong, it seemed to be necessary to have "some force from without" to reform China.[145] He went on to argue, "If China is to be reformed, it will not be done by diplomacy".[146] Instead, the answer to China's problems is apparently also Christianity, for "character and conscience in the Anglo-Saxon race came with Christianity, grew with Christianity"[147]:

> *The fairest fruit of Christian civilisation is in the beautiful lives which it produces. They are not rare* […].*We have no wish to be unduly*

[142] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 316.
[143] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 320.
[144] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 321.
[145] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 324.
[146] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 325.
[147] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 329.

> *sceptical, but after repeated and prolonged consideration of the subject, it is our deliberate conviction that if the forces which make the lives of the Chinese what they are were to produce one such character* [...]*, that would be a moral miracle greater than any or all that are recorded in the books of Taoist fables* […].[148]

With the "weak points in the national character"[149] being identified, the Chinese nation, if were to develop character and conscience, had to learn her morals from Christianity, as Smith concluded. Therefore, on the one hand, he urged the Chinese to take lessons of those "who are more concerned in exploiting China than teaching her morals";[150] on the other hand, he warned his fellow Christian Anglo-Saxons: "In the rivalry which will then ensue, Christian civilization will have to win its way among a sceptical and ingenious people, by making it manifest that a faith which reaches to heaven furnishes better guarantees for public and private morality than one which does not rise above the earth."[151]

Smith's observation of Chinese society and culture, though with a considerable anthropological twist, should be read as a typical account from a 19th century missionary. Although he claimed that his book was "of purpose not intended to represent the point of view of a missionary, but that of an observer not consciously prejudiced"[152], he was not able to perceive China beyond the missionary perspective but saw it as a subject of Christian enlightenment. For instance, while Smith contended that "it is not assumed that the Chinese need Christianity at all", he nevertheless stated that "if it appears that there are grave defects in their character, it is a fair question how those defects may be remedied."[153]

Contrary to his own disclaimer, his narratives of China were not of an observer without prejudice, but of a superior Anglo-Saxon, Westerner, Christian, curiously facing a people in need of Christian enlightenment. As he admitted, "anyone who wishes well to mankind" would be of interest to know "how so vast a part of the human race may be improved".[154] Such missionary approach towards a foreign culture reveals a

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[148] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, pp. 320-321.
[149] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 317.
[150] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 325.
[151] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, pp. 14-15.
[152] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 14.
[153] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 14-15.
[154] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 15.

tendency to ignore "what they are" or "what they want to be", and to place an overwhelming emphasis on "what we want them to be". Within a racial, moral and religious antagonistic framework, once such an endeavor as to "improve them" was proven to be difficult, Smith's sense of superiority became substituted by a sense of fear. His fear of the "yellow race" was quite visible in the book, when he asked the following rhetorical question:

> *Which is the best adapted to survive in the struggles of the twentieth century, the "nervous" European, or the tireless, all-pervading, and phlegmatic Chinese?*[155]

Though Smith's book was later viewed as the "most distorted description of Chinese life and culture ever to appear in the United States",[156] the racial and religious superiority demonstrated in it was not a novelty in his time, nor was his contempt for the local culture, or his paternalistic feeling towards the people. His "missionary mind"—a combination of arrogance and fear, contempt and paternalism—had in its bearings in the long history of European and American Christian missions in China, and it kept playing an important role in American dealings with China in the century that followed, which will be discussed later. But before we turn to that subject, we shall place Smith's narratives in their historical and global context, in the light of Orientalism and Western perceptions of China.

2.2. Context of *Chinese Characteristics*: Western Perceptions of China

Smith's perception of the Chinese national character was only one example of the many layers of Western perceptions accumulated up to his time. Dating back to Marco Polo's time, missionaries and a few travelers were the main source of information when it came to knowledge of foreign lands. In the case of China, their publications and correspondence with intellectuals back in Europe greatly influenced European perceptions of the vast and unknown empire.

The intellectual concepts, having formed through such channels, then founded the theoretical framework for scholarly knowledge of the nation in the following centuries, until later when diplomats and intellectuals joined missionaries in setting feet in the

[155] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, pp. 96-97.

[156] Robert McClellan, *The Heathen Chinee: A Study of American Attitudes toward China, 1890-1905* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971), p. 7.

East and becoming key opinion- makers of related matters. Following that, with the increasing influence of print media on popular culture, literature and news reports became the major producers of perceptions of China and the Chinese people in the 19th century.

Studies have shown many aspects of European and American perceptions of China around Smith's time.[157] This research does not aim to provide yet another comprehensive analysis of perceptions of China, nor does it assume that such analysis is to be conducted without considerable generalization and simplification. Yet for the purpose of presenting the historical and cultural context of Smith's text as part of the discourse of Chinese national character, a few distinguishable features of Western perceptions of China are to be identified.

By looking into the writings of important opinion-makers, in particular intellectuals, this research will first highlight some phases in Western perceptions. They are in no way the only conceptions in a certain period, but instead represent the prevailing attitudes towards China and Chinese people of the time. None of these notions and images can replace another; they might have prevailed at one time, and at other times, faded into the background for a new dominant image.

1) From the Mighty Kingdom to a Stagnant Empire

European Jesuits and merchants painted the first strokes of the image of China for their readers back home. They traveled to the unknown empire to propagate Christian ideas, or to discover a new world with exotic products. Through constant correspondences with intellectuals back in Europe, they greatly contributed to increasing knowledge about China. The Jesuits, in an effort to justify missionary causes in the East,

[157] See, for example, Mary Gertrude Mason, *Western Concepts of China and the Chinese, 1840-1876* (New York: Seeman Printery, 1939). Raymond Dawson, *The Chinese Chameleon: An Analysis of European Conceptions of Chinese Civilization* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967). Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Hong Kong [etc.]: Oxford University Press, 1989). Jonathan Goldstein, Jerry Israel, and Hilary Conroy (eds.), *America Views China: American Images of China Then and Now* (Lehigh University Press, 1991). Zhou Ning 周宁, *Long de huanxiang—Zhongguo xingxiang: xifang de xueshuo yu chuanshuo* 龙的幻象——中国形象：西方的学说与传说 (Beijing: xueyuan chubanshe, 2004). Yang Ruisong 杨瑞松, *Bingfu, huanghuo yu shuishi: xifang shiye de Zhongguo xingxiang yu jindai zhongguo guozu lunshu xiangxiang* 病夫、黄祸与睡狮：“西方”视野的中国形象与近代中国国族论述想象 (Taibei: zhengda chubanshe, 2010).

"popularized the Orient to such an extent in the West that in 1769 it was somewhat extravagantly stated that 'China is better known than some provinces of Europe itself'".[158] It is justified to say that their narratives influenced the prevailing intellectual temper, and represented authoritative European perceptions for centuries.

The stories of Marco Polo's travels to Yuan Dynasty China (1271-1368) marked the first recorded European discovery of China. Although many historical facts of his stories remain questioned,[159] the tales of his travels are widely known. Marco Polo's description of a prosperous and orderly empire was proven by his followers in the 14th and 15th centuries, and his legendary journey inspired European expansion towards the East in the centuries that followed.

In 1585, based on the journals of a traveler to Ming China (1368-1644), Juan Gonzalez de Mendoza compiled a book on China in which he described a kingdom as "the most biggest and populous that is mentioned in all the world (*sic*)".[160] With admiration, Mendoza compared it with European countries: "They without all doubt seeme to exceede the Greekes, Carthagenians, and Romanes, of whom the old ancient histories haue signified to vs, and also of those later times *(sic)*[…]".[161]

After Mendoza, Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) was a milestone figure in presenting China to Europe. In order to establish Jesuit missions in China, he studied Chinese language and culture, and eventually became a learned Chinese scholar recognized by Ming literati. The image of China in Ricci's writings was considerably favorable.[162] He complimented the Chinese people on their progress in "moral philosophy" and sciences such as astronomy and mathematics.[163] While noting the Chinese sense of superiority and its consequent isolation from and ignorance of the outside world, he was impressed by the peaceful national character, which he

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158 Mason, *Western Concepts of China and the Chinese*, p. 3. Original citation: Reichwein, op. cit., p. 78; *Oeuvres completes de Voltaire* (Paris, 1829), XXIX, 344.

159 See for example, Frances Wood, *Did Marco Polo Go to China?* (Westview Press, 1998).

160 Juan Gonzalez de Mendoza, translated from the 1585 Spanish publication by Robert Parke, Sir George T. Staunton (ed.), *The History of the Great and Mighty Kingdom of China and the Situation Thereof* (London, 1853), p. 20.

161 Mendoza, *The History of the Kingdom of China*, p. 93.

162 In 1615, his manuscript was completed, translated and published in Latin as *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas* [On the propagation of Christianity among the Chinese]. Excerpts and an early English translation appeared in 1625. For later example, see: Matthew Ricci & Nicolas Trigault, translated from Latin by Louis J. Gallagher, *China in the Sixteenth Century: the Journals of Matthew Ricci: 1583-1610* (New York: Random House, 1953).

163 Ricci & Trigault, *The Journals of Matthew Ricci*, p. 30.

considered as the reason for benign relations between the Ming Empire and its neighbors.[164]

Ricci's well-documented activities added to the authenticity of his account, which "probably had more effect on the literary and scientific, the philosophical and the religious, phases of life in Europe than any other historical volume of the seventeenth century".[165] For example, it was Ricci who "enthroned Confucius for Europe".[166] He saw Confucian moral discipline as proper preparation for Chinese acceptance of Christian principles, and he associated Confucius—a symbol of Chinese civilization in his eyes—with peaceful and stable government as well as superior morality. Furthermore, Ricci's positive attitude towards Chinese ancient teachings and cultural practices and his efforts to incorporate the Chinese into the Christian faith, known as the "accommodationist" approach, had great impact on later European thinking of China.

German philosopher Leibniz was one of the intellectuals who admired, defended and advanced his views on China.[167] Though possibly for very different reasons, he spoke highly of Chinese practical philosophy:

> [...] *if we are their equals in the industrial arts, and ahead of them in contemplative sciences, certainly they surpass us (though it is almost shameful to confess this) in practical philosophy, that is, in the precepts of ethics and politics adapted to the present life and use of mortals...Indeed, it is difficult to describe how beautifully all the laws of the Chinese, in contrast to those of other peoples, are directed to the achievement of public tranquility and the establishment of social order, so that men shall be disrupted in their relations as little as possible.*[168]

Furthering Ricci's view, Leibniz considered Chinese and Christian civilization to be

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164 Ricci & Trigault, *The Journals of Matthew Ricci*, pp. 21-23 & 160-166.

165 Ricci & Trigault, *The Journals of Matthew Ricci*, translator's preface, p. xix.

166 Dawson, *The Chinese Chameleon*, p. 45.

167 For more information on this subject, see: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 1716 book translated by Henry Rosemont, Jr. and Daniel J. Cook, *Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese* (University Press of Hawaii, 1977), p. 8. Ricci was listed as one of the "five men most responsible for Leibniz's views on China".

168 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Preface to Novissima Sinica* or *Writings on China* (1697/1699), available at: http://east_west_dialogue.tripod.com/id12.html

different yet compatible, even mutually helpful: "We need missionaries from the Chinese who might teach us the use and practice of natural religion, just as we have sent them teachers of revealed theology".[169] Ricci's accomodationist approach might not have prevailed in Rome, but he, Leibniz, and the like represented an important school of early European attitudes towards China: an attitude of admiration, an approach of adaptation and the will to learn.

After them, Jean-Baptiste Du Halde summed up popular knowledge of China.[170] His book became an authoritative work in the 19th century, to such an extent that there was "scarcely a work of any significance [...] whose author did not use this work either directly or indirectly".[171] The popularity of Du Halde's book was another example of the Jesuits' influence on the European perception of China, despite their strong missionary motives and the consequent distortion of descriptions often being criticized today.

In the mid-18th century, however, the bright images presented by the Jesuits began to fade, and many in Europe began to view China as stagnant and backward. Even French thinker Voltaire, an admirer of Chinese culture who used it to criticize European society and Christian culture, started to talk about its lack of progress:

> *It seems as if nature had given to this species of men... organs formed for discovering all at once whatever was necessary for them, and incapable of going any further. We on the contrary have made our discoveries very late; but we have been quick in bringing things to perfection* […].[172]

In his famous *The Spirit of the Laws*, another French thinker Montesquieu called China "a despotic state, whose principle is fear". He described the Chinese way of governing as "a settled plan of tyranny", with "barbarities committed…in cold blood".[173] German philosopher Herder, in a similar vein, claimed that Chinese political and cultural

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[169] Leibniz, *Preface to Novissima Sinica.*

[170] English version see: Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *The General History of China* (London: printed for J. Watts: and sold by B. Dod, 1736).

[171] Mason, *Western Concepts of China and the Chinese*, pp. 9-11.

[172] M. de Voltaire, translated by Mr. Nugent, *An Essay on Universal History, the manners, and spirit of nations, from the reign of Charlemagne to the age of Lewis XIV* (London: printed for J. Nourse, 1759), pp. 19-20.

[173] Charles de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book VII, "21. Of the Empire of China" (1750). Online resource see link: http://www.constitution.org/cm/sol_08.htm#021

institutions were childish duplications of ancient systems; and "the empire is an embalmed mummy, wrapped in silk, and painted with hieroglyphics: its internal circulation is that of a dormouse in its winter's sleep."[174] Another French philosopher, Condorcet, took China as an example of stagnation: "[...] even the invention of printing has remained an instrument totally useless in advancing the progress of the human kind".[175]

From these examples we can glimpse changes in the prevailing attitude of European intellectuals. At the time of Ricci and Leibniz, China was seen in a favourable light, and Christian superiority was expressed in a moderate fashion. When Montesquieu argued for his principles of the three governments in 1748, he had to question the established notion of an admirable autocracy. By the end of the 18th century, Herder and Condorcet already argued against undesirable Chinese institutions as a matter of fact. While Voltaire compared China to European nations, he was surprised by its stagnation; decades later, Herder and Condorcet criticized the empire's religion, politics, and culture with unquestioning contempt.

The emergence of a gloomy picture of China served as a foil to the rise of Europe in Enlightenment and progress: history might have started in the East, but the future of the human race lies in the West. It was in this spirit that Hegel articulated the challenge to Confucian culture by Christianity. In *The Philosophy of History*,[176] he contended that the absence of true religious spirit, added by the incapability of Confucianism, had led to a dangerous situation in China.

Hegel regarded Christian religion superior to what he deemed as Chinese pseudo-religion. As he argued, what "we" call religion is an individual connection to an inner spirit; and what "they" practiced—Chinese religion—had no connection with the Highest being, and was basically a state religion subject to the emperor's will. Without the guidance of "true" religion—Christian belief—to free them from secular power, these people became immoral, deceiving, extremely sensitive to injuries, and of a vindictive nature:

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[174] Johann Gottfried von Herder, translated by T. Churchill, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (London: printed for J. Johnson, by Luke Hansard, 1800), p. 296.

[175] Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat Condorcet, *Outlines of A Historical View of the Progress of the Human Mind* (London: printed for J. Johnson, 1795), pp. 65-66.

[176] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956).

> *The character of the Chinese people.. its distinguishing feature is, that everything which belongs to Spirit—unconstrained morality, in practice and theory, Heart, inward Religion, Science and Art properly so-called—is alien.*[177]

According to Hegel, such a character eventually made the Chinese "a people in a condition of nonage", only to be ruled by "the patriarchal principle".[178] When Ricci introduced Confucius to the Europeans as the "great and learned" man, he was "forced to admit" that Confucius was "the equal of the pagan philosophers and superior to most of them".[179] In the eyes of Hegel, Confucianism was not able to rise above mediocrity. As Hegel argued, paternal authority deprived people from their individual freedom, and consequently suffocated Reason and Imagination. Therefore, Chinese society was not able to advance:

> *The Chinese regard themselves as belonging to their family, and at the same time as children of the State. In the Family itself they are not personalities, for the consolidated unity in which they exist as members of it is consanguinity and natural obligation. In the State they have as little independent personality; for there the patriarchal relation is predominant, and the government is based on the paternal management of the Emperor, who keeps all departments of the State in order.*[180]

> [...] *they hold little respect in themselves individually and humanity in general... though there is no distinction conferred by birth, and everyone can attain the highest dignity, this very equality testifies to no triumphant assertion of the worth of the inner man, but a servile consciousness—one which has not yet matured itself so far as to recognize distinctions.*[181]

Hegel's understanding of Chinese culture, thus, is characterized by the Chinese inability to liberate themselves from paternal authority and state power, which resulted in the lack of personality or independence. This "servile consciousness" was exactly

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[177] Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, pp. 129 & 131-138.
[178] Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 139.
[179] Ricci & Trigault, *The Journals of Matthew Ricci*, p. 30.
[180] Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 121.
[181] Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 138.

what the Englightenment movement stood against. As Immanuel Kant once famously defined, "Englightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it..."[182] To this point, with European minds immersed in Enlightenment, paternal authority and its embodiment—Confucianism—seemed to Hegel nothing but shackles of Chinese thinking, and from which one should be liberated.

2) Perceptions of China and Orientalism

The changing Western perceptions of China towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, among which Smith's book was but one example, have to be understood in the context of global colonial history, more specifically, as a part of Western imperial expansion and the consequent development of Western worldviews. It has to be noted that perceptions of China developed in the relationship between China and the West—they are cultural constructions rather than accounts of Chinese reality; they reflect as much the European and American Self as the Chinese Other in Western perceptions of the world order.

For a long time since the late 16th century, the peace and prosperity of the Chinese empire had deeply impressed the Europeans embroiled in wars. As we have seen earlier, favorable descriptions of Chinese governance and culture found reception among mid-17th century philosophers, who had a very critical attitude towards European institutions. In the transition from the mighty kingdom to a stagnant empire, China had also been playing an important part as inspiration for the Enlightenment.[183] Its role in the development of a European identity—as the Oriental Other against European Self—was by no means only negative. Up till the 18th century, China had been associated with an elegant way of life and raised European fantasies in the

[182] Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: "What is Enlightenment?"*(1784). see online resource http://www.public.asu.edu/~jacquies/kant.pdf

[183] See, for example, Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe* (Chicago [etc.]: University of Chicago Press, Vol. I: The Century of Discovery, 1965, Vol. II: A Century of Wonder, 1970-1977, Vol. III: A century of Advance, 1993). Zhaoming Qian, *Orientalism and modernism: the Legacy of China in Pound and Williams* (Durham [etc.]: Duke University Press, 1995). J. J. Clark, *Oriental Enlightenment: the Encounter between Asian and Western Thought* (London [etc.]: Routledge, 1997).

"chinoserie".[184] However, at the end of 18th century, by the time of Lord McCartney's embassy (1793-94) to the Qing Empire, China had become the embodiment of what European Enlightenment stood against: retrogression and stagnation.

The purpose of McCartney's embassy was to negotiate a British consulate in Beijing to deal with the increasing demand in trade, as well as to demonstrate British might and advanced technology to the Chinese Court. The Qianlong emperor (r. 1736-1795) sent them back with an edict to the English King George III (r. 1760-1801) explaining why the request was rejected: "we have never valued ingenious articles, nor do we have the slightest need of your country's manufactures".[185]

In many aspects, the embassy was a failure for the British. McCartney was not able to persuade the Emperor to grant permission for a consulate in Beijing; neither did the embassy impress the Chinese with their advanced technology. Yet his embassy provides us with important signals of a different direction in viewing China. Although McCartney admitted that "nothing could be more fallacious than to judge of China by any European standard", in his eyes, "a nation that does not advance must retrograde, and finally fall back to barbarism and misery"[186]—and such was China as compared with Europe. What once had been Chinese prosperity and stability versus European lack of it, now became Christianity versus Chinese lack of religion, progress versus stagnation, and good governance versus tyranny.

To judge China by European standards is to judge Europe's place in the world through its relations with many others including China. Changing perceptions of China reflected changing perceptions of Europe itself: along with the shift of the balance of power, passing through Ricci's accomodationist approach, Leibniz's mutual beneficial relations, it was, at the time of McCartney and later Hegel, finally the moment for European victory in contrast to Chinese stagnation and retrogression.

The perceptions of Europe that were used respectively by Lord McCartney and by Hegel to compare China with had been very different from each other; yet there is no doubt that a sense of continental identity had been gradually formed among the minds

[184] For a more detailed analysis, see: William W. Appleton, *A Cycle of Cathay: the Chinese Vogue in England During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), pp. 37-52.

[185] Granmer-Byng, selected by Patrick Tuck, *An Embassy to China: Lord Macartney's Journal, 1793-1794* (London [etc.]: Routledge, 2000). Appendix C, *An Edict from the Emperor Ch'ien-Lung to King George the Third of England*, p. 340.

[186] Cranmer-Byng, *Lord Macartney's Journal,* p. 226.

in Europe, when great economic and social-political changes were brought about by the Enlightenment movement and the Industrial Revolution. Centered on Christendom and what is called "rational restlessness", the psychological make-up of Europe[187] formed the idea of "the West"—the concept essential to the Enlightenment. At the same time, the very concept of "the West" was established in the global context along with the imperialist expansions. That is to say, the sense of European Self and its uniqueness lies in the perceptions of many Others— cultures and societies that are non-Christian.

It is exactly the shared identity of Christendom and "psychological make-up" of "the West" that connected American missionary Smith's view of China with those of earlier Europeans. When it came to China, McCartney used a European standard instead of an English one; Hegel saw the future of human race lay in the West, not in Prussia or the German Empire; Smith had not just perceived himself as an "American" but more as an "Anglo-Saxon", a Westerner, and a Christian. By the time of the publication of *Chinese Characteristics*, the notion of the West as the Christian civilization was so dominant that even English scholar James Legge, who studied and translated Chinese classics, saw Christian victory over Confucianism and Chinese religion:

> […] *China was sure to go to pieces when it came into collision with a Christianly-civilized power. Its sage had left it no preservative or restorative elements against such a case….and yet there is hope for the people…if they will look away from all their ancient sages, and turn to Him, who sends them, along with the dissolution of their ancient state, the knowledge of Himself, the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent* (sic).[188]

Smith's view, based on the prevailing intellectual temper in the West, was widely shared by his contemporaries, which we can find in English language writings from intellectuals, diplomats, merchants, travellers, and the like. In fact, even decades before the first Opium War, "American traders, diplomats, and Protestant missionaries had developed and spread conceptions of Chinese deceit, cunning, idolatry, despotism, xenophobia, cruelty, infanticide, and intellectual and sexual perversity".[189] Most books

[187] Hall, "The West and the Rest", pp. 198-199.
[188] James Legge, *The Chinese Classics* (Oxford, 1893), Vol. I. pp. 106-108.
[189] Stuart Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 201.

in Smith's time did not offer narratives of China that deviated much from observations of Smith's, but in many aspects supplemented his view. For instance, in *China, the long-lived Empire*, American writer and photographer Eliza Scidmore wrote:

> *No Occidental ever saw within or understood the working of the yellow brain, which starts from and arrives at a different point by reverse and inverse processes we can neither follow nor comprehend. No one knows or ever will know the Chinese—the heart and soul and springs of thought of the most incomprehensible, unfathomable, inscrutable, contradictory, logical, and illogical people on earth.*
>
> *Of all Orientals, no race is so alien. Not a memory nor a custom, not a tradition nor an idea, not a root-word nor a symbol of any kind associates our past with their past. There is little sympathy, no kinship nor common feeling, and never affection possible between the Anglo-Saxon and the Chinese. Nothing in Chinese character or traits appeals warmly to our hearts or imagination, nothing touches; and of all the people of earth they most entirely lack "soul", charm, magnetism, attractiveness. We may yield them an intellectual admiration on some grounds, but no warmer pulse beats for them. There are chiefly points of contradiction between them and ourselves...It is a land of contradictions, puzzles, mysteries, enigmas. Chinese character is only the more complex, intricate, baffling, inscrutable, and exasperating each time and the longer it confronts one.*[190]

While Smith observed that many Chinese characteristics are merely "Oriental traits",[191] here the Chinese were described, even among all Orientals, as ultimately alien to the Anglo-Saxon, and no common feeling or affection seemed possible between "them" and "us". Although exaggerated in this book, the frustration of not being able to understand the Chinese was shared in many English language writings at the time, which often concluded with contempt towards the Chinese: "then nothing Chinese seems worth seeing; one has only a frantic, irrational desire to get away from it, to escape it, to return to civilization, decency, cleanliness, quiet, and order".[192]

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[190] Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, *China, the Long-Lived Empire* (New York: Century, 1900), pp. 4-6 & 9.
[191] Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 14.
[192] Scidmore, *The Long-Lived Empire*, p. 9.

In short, there is no question that *Chinese Characteristics* represented the dominant intellectual conceptions and popular sentiments of its time. Having been informed by Said's concept of Orientalism as well as the critiques of this concept, the examination of Smith's text and those of his contemporaries has led to the conclusion that, if *Chinese Characteristics* is a typical example of "manifest Orientalism", then the religious and racial superiority as demonstrated in such texts can be called "latent Orientalism". It is also justified to say that these texts represent the dominant Orientalist perceptions at the turn of 20th century—polemic and reductionist, with a will not just to understand but more to enlighten.

Using the yardstick of Western political and cultural values, such Orientalist perceptions often associated the Chinese empire with despotism and stagnation, Confucianism with servility and conservatism, and Chinese life with a lack of faith and happiness. In the same vein, the inscrutable Chinese were conceived as the opposite of the aspired human character, with their lack of conscience, independence, or even soul. These features, identified through anthropological and sociological observations as essentially not like "us" and not conforming to "our values", were established in Western minds as the innate characteristics of the entire race, which, as we will analyze later, were to be personified in popular culture in the West.

Having said that, Orientalist perceptions of China and the Chinese people, however dominant at the end of the 19th century, were also to various degrees challenged even within the West itself. American diplomat Chester Holcombe, for one, criticized the narrow-mindedness in dominant Western judgments of Chinese people:

> […] *we are inclined to measure all people by a yardstick of our own construction, the model for which is found in ourselves. Others are right or wrong, wise or unwise, according as they copy or depart from the fashion which we have arbitrarily set up, the ideal formed within the essentially narrow limits of our personal surroundings...It is far easier to criticise the Chinese than to understand them.*
>
> *This habit of repression and misrepresentation of feeling has given the outside world the idea that, as a nation, the Chinese are stolid, indifferent, and lacking in nerves. Such is not the case. They are keenly sensitive, proud, and passionate. As might be expected, when, under a provocation too great for endurance, they give way to their feelings,*

> *the result, whether it be grief or anger, is as extreme and unreasonable, from our standpoint, as their ordinary suppression of emotion is absurd and unnecessary. It is difficult, perhaps unfair, to judge them in this regard, since their standard is absolutely different from ours*.[193]

Holcombe's understanding of "the real Chinaman", published one year after Smith's *Chinese Characteristics*, was clearly an attempt to point out the constraints of Western cultural constructions based on a sense of self-righteousness and the often misleading imagination of the Other, though not articulated as an account against the intellectual tradition of Orientalism. Echoing Holcombe's viewpoint, American sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross also argued against racial antagonism in dominant Western perceptions of China, and called to "allow for differences":

> *The fact is, to the traveller who appreciates how different is the mental horizon that goes with another stage of culture or another type of social organization than his own, the Chinese do not seem very puzzling...The theory, dear to literary interpreters of the Orient, that owing to diversity in mental constitution the yellow man and white man can never comprehend or sympathize with one another, will apeal little to those who from their comprarative study of societies have gleaned some notion of what naturally follows from isolation, the acute struggle for existence, ancestor worship, patriarchal authority, the subjection of women, the decline of militancy, and the ascendancy of scholars.*[194]

By placing the Chinese way of life and mode of thinking in their socio-cultural context, Ross offered a perspective that was considerably different from that of Smith's. He proposed to understand Chinese people on their own terms, rather than judging from the one and only standard that belongs to the observer. Such reflections were best summarized in Russel's analysis of Chinese-Western communications of their time:

> *It is interesting to contrast what the Chinese have sought in the West with what the West has sought in China. The Chinese in the West seek*

[193] Chester Holcombe, *The Real Chinaman* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1895), pp. vii-viii & 277.

[194] Edward Alsworth Ross, *The Changing Chinese: the Conflict of Oriental and Western Cultures in China* (London, 1911), Preface.

> *knowledge, in the hope—which I fear is usually vain—that knowledge may prove a gateway to wisdom. White men have gone to China with three motives: to fight, to make money, and to convert the Chinese to our religion…We are firmly persuaded that our civilization and our way of life are immeasurably better than any other, so that when we come across a nation like the Chinese, we are convinced that the kindest thing we can do to them is to make them like ourselves. I believe this to be a profound mistake.*[195]

The reflections of Holcombe, Ross and Russel and the like were, in a striking manner, reminiscent of Said's critique of Orientalism. In a way, the discrepancies between the Orientalist texts analyzed so far and their critiques reveal the discrepancies not just in perceptions of China, but more in perceptions of the world. Orientalist worldviews entail a monistic view of culture, whereas its critiques stand for cultural pluralism that argues to view the world outside of a Western universalist framework. Yet such cultural pluralist arguments as quoted above, voiced respectively in 1895, 1911 and 1922, even against the background of European reflections on Western civilization after WWI, did not prevent Orientalist images of China and the Chinese people from being consolidated and personified in the West.

3) Orientalism personified: the "Heathen Chinee" and the "Yellow Peril"

Western perceptions as analyzed so far, with their differents phases, twists and limitations, are to be understood by taking into account the new developments in foreign interaction with China since the two Opium Wars. First of all, European expansions in the country were followed by increasing American missionary, cultural, and political presence, altogether making for a larger number of foreign soldiers, traders, missionaries, and diplomats in the country—Arthur Smith was but one of the many missionaries stationed in China at the time. Secondly, with the Qing Empire caught in deep political and social crisis, a sizable group of Chinese laborers first set foot in America, and the number of Chinese immigrants to California and other coastal areas grew sharply.

These developments consequently influenced the scale and forms of the construction of

[195] Bertrand Russell, *The Problem of China* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1922), pp.196-198.

China's image in the West. Increasing interaction with the Chinese people, both at home and abroad, turned the vague image of a vast empire into a somewhat more explicit picture of the individual Chinese. These changes coincided with the large-scale development in print media; the literary world and mass media joined missionaries, merchants, and diplomats in raising Western awareness of the presence of China and its people.

In the case of the U.S., China had become a part of national politics and culture. Antagonism towards the Chinese had existed long before the tide of immigration. An unfavorable image had landed in America before the Chinese immigrants, and the negativity ascribed to the Chinese was reflected in popular culture. American poet Bret Harte published a narrative poem in 1870 to satirize anti-Chinese sentiments. Despite his intentions, the term "the heathen Chinee" from the poem became widely used to indicate Chinese people by those who were against Chinese immigration. Beside "the heathen Chinee", the word "Chinaman" carried the meaning of "one of them," or someone from "that place", and indicated inferiority, foreign origin, and a kind of subservient anonymity—a "Chinaman's chance" meant no chance at all.[196] The racial slur "Chink" for Asians was also originally used for people of Chinese ethnicity.

The increasing presence of Chinese immigrants stimulated growing concern among non-Chinese workers who felt threatened by the influx of cheaper laborers. Soon the development of anti-Chinese sentiments in California became a nation-wide issue. In 1882, the U.S. Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, specifically prohibiting the entrance of Chinese laborers on the premise that free immigration from China led to the creation of a racial problem. It was followed by subsequent legislation during the next several decades.[197] Studies showed that the anti-Chinese attitude around that time had multiple rationales and dimensions, such as the labor force[198], national political

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[196] McClellan, *The Heathen Chinee*, p. 43.

[197] Isaacs, *Images of Asia*, p. 113. Rose Hum Lee, *The Chinese in the United States of America* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp.12-13. For a detailed anlysis, see: Adam M. McKeown, "Ritualization of Regulation: Enforcing Chinese Exclusion, 1898-1924." *American Historical Review* 108 (2003): pp. 377-403.

[198] Discussion on the influence of labor force see: Mary Roberts Coolidge, *Chinese Immigration* (Taipei: Cheng-Wen Publishing Co, 1968), pp. 488-489. Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 7-10 & 258. Gunther Barth, *Bitter Strength*: *A History of the Chinese in the United States 1850-1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 212-213.

situation[199], newspaper reportage, cultural differences, and racial prejudice.[200]

The Chinese Exclusion Act deserves special attention here not because of its particularity as "organized racism"[201] in American international relations, but because it reflected a well-established American perception of China, which was later captured in the term of the "yellow peril" (*huang huo*). It was only a small step to picture "the heathen Chinee" into "the yellow peril", to add fear to contempt. The fear of the yellow race, already visible in Smith's book, was captured by the German Kaiser Wilhelm II (r. 1918-1941) who first introduced the phrase *Die Gelbe Gefahr* in 1895 by titling a portrait that depicts the dangers arising from the nations of the East against the West. As one book described in 1911:

> *Since that time the phrase has become a very common one, and well understood as applying to the yellow races of the East. The nations thus spoken of are termed, in the Bible, the "kings of the East", which would be China, India, Japan and Korea. The yellow peril is becoming more apparent every year. It needs no argument to the ordinary reader, to convince him that this is a question to be settled in the near future.*[202]

Later, the term became widely used to indicate Chinese people as well as people from other Asian countries.[203] This term was later embodied in the evil genius of Dr. Fu Manchu, the protagonist in a series of novels and films.[204] Fu Manchu was originally created in Sax Rohmer's 1913 fiction *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu,* followed soon by *The Return of Dr. Fu Manchu* (1916) and *The Hand of Fu Manchu* (1917). The success of this supervillain led to a dozen or so novels from the 1930s to 1950s, and movies

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199 Politics see: McClellan, *The Heathen Chinee*, p. 17. Elmer Clarence Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 111.

200 Race see: Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant*, p. 6. Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California*, pp.109-110; Jules Becker, *The Course of Exclusion, 1882-1924: San Francisco Newspaper Coverage of the Chinese and Japanese in the United States* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1991), pp.197 & 199.

201 Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California*, p. 3.

202 Greenberry G. Rupert, *The Yellow Peril, or, the Orient vs. The Occident As Viewed by Modern Statesmen and Ancient Prophets* (Union Publishing Co., 1911), p. 9.

203 See, for example, Chas. N. Robinson (ed.), *China of Today or the Yellow Peril* (London: Navy & Army Illustrated, 1900).

204 For more research on this topic see, for example, William F. Wu, *The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction, 1850-1940* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1982). Jenny Clegg, *Fu Manchu and the Yellow Peril: The Making of a Racist Myth* (Staffordshire: Tentham books, 1994).

featuring the devilish figure could be seen from the 1920s up till the 1980s. Although Fu Manchu was an invented fictional figure, the success of the evil character proved the wide acceptance of this invention—the ultimate villain from the East. A description of this character appeared in the first novel:

> *Invest him with all the cruel cunning of an entire Eastern race...Imagine that awful being, and you have a mental picture of Dr. Fu-Manchu, the yellow peril incarnate in one man.*[205]

Rohmer later explained the success of his novels: "I made my name on Fu Manchu because I know nothing about the Chinese".[206] However, this imaginary association between the evil and his race was accepted by the audience, and even became a shared notion in popular culture. In a way, Fu Manchu was indeed "the embodiment of a white racist's nightmare",[207] although the nightmare was as imaginary as Fu Manchu himself. Such imagination seemed to be verified by the Boxer Uprising and mysterious stories from Chinatowns in London and San Francisco. As Rohmer admitted, in 1912, the timing was perfect for creating a Chinese villain.

In this light, the appearance and popularity of *Chinese Characteristic* was the result of a well established perception of China as the temporal and spatial Other. It witnessed, at the turn of the 20th century, the consolidation of an Orientalist cultural construction, both intellectual and popular; and at the same time it reflected the transition within such construction—from an abstract and murky image to a personified character with detailed descriptions, from the inscrutable heathen to the awful being of Dr. Fu Manchu.

Having arrived at such a conclusion, I will now turn to the question as to how, along with intensified intellectual exchanges between China and the West, such perceptions took their own course in China and became a distinctive part of Chinese discourse of national character.

2.3. Chinese Discourse of National Character: the Case of Liang Qichao

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[205] Sax Rohmer, *The Return of Fu Manchu* (London: Methuen, 1913), p. 17.

[206] Cay Van Ash & Elizabeth Sax Rohmer, *Master of Villainy: A Biography of Sax Rohmer* (London: Tom Stacey, 1972), p. 72.

[207] Sandra M. Hawley, "The Importance of Being Charlie Chan," in Jonathan Goldstein, Jerry Israel, and Hilary Conroy (eds.), *America Views China: American Images of China Then and Now* (Lehigh University Press, 1991), p. 135.

As discussed earlier, *Chinese Characteristics* reached the Chinese audience through its Japanese translation. After the Hundred Day Reforms failed in 1898, Liang Qichao was one of the Chinese intellectuals in exile in Japan. In the following years, he became the most vocal and popular writer of his time, notably through publications such as the two he established in his exile: *Journal of Disinterested Criticism* (*Qingyi Bao*) and *New People Periodical* (*Xinmin Congbao*).[208] The popularity of these journals made him the leading voice among Chinese intelligentsia during the early 1900's.[209]

There is a large body of literature on Liang's role in political movements during the late Qing and early Republican periods, and of his ideas on nationalism, Chinese historiography, and intellectual thought.[210] This study focuses on his evolving ideas on the national character from 1898 on, and until the early 1900s, not only because the question of national character is a less examined aspect of his thoughts, but also because his ideas and writings related to this issue have, in the century that followed, exerted significant influence on critics of the national character and advocates of national character reforms who have been continuously drawing from his theory. As one scholar argued, "Liang's writings from 1898 to 1903 defined some of the fundamental assumptions of much of twentieth-century Chinese thought".[211] This is the case for his thoughts on historiography, journalism and nationalism, and as this research will demonstrate, it is also the case for his thoughts on the national character.

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[208] Here I translate the term *xinmin* 新民 as "new people", hence *Xinmin Congbao* as *New People Periodical* and *Xinmin Shuo* as *Discourse on the New People.* The term *xinmin* is translated elsewhere as "new citizen", for example, by Hao Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971); Xiaobing Tang, *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: the Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1996).

[209] Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition*, p. 133.

[210] See, for example, Joseph Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953); Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition*; Huang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism*; and Tang, *Global Space*.

[211] Huang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism*, p. 8.

1) Liang Qichao's Ideal of "New People"

Though a scholar with an academic training in Confucian tradition, by the time of Liang's exile, he was already in contact with Western knowledge. As early as 1890, during his stay in Shanghai, he became acquainted with the world outside China through Chinese translations of foreign publications.[212] In 1896, through Yan Fu and his translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*, Liang was introduced to Social Darwinism which later played a role in his own thinking.[213] Liang's *Bibliography on Western Learning* showed that much of his knowledge about the West was gained through missionary publications.[214]

Liang's reflections on the Chinese national character began with what he regarded as Western (and Japanese) perceptions of China. Also in 1896, the newspaper *Chinese Progress* (*Shiwu Bao*), with Liang as the chief editor, translated the term "the sick man of the East" from an English newspaper into Chinese (*dongya Bingfu*), with deeply rooted national defects.[215] In 1900, Liang's article "On Young China" began with an introduction of Japanese perceptions of China as "the old empire", and pointed out that such a view originated from Western conceptions.[216] Later, in his "On the Characteristics of Chinese People" (1903), he again noted that "white people" spoke of China as "the old empire", and perceived the Chinese people as "barbaric and half-civilized", "sick man of the East",[217] and the "yellow peril" (*huang huo*).[218]

Because of Liang's work at the *New People Periodical*, he had become aware of Smith's criticism through articles published about *Chinese Characteristics*. A recent

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212 Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition*, p. 59.

213 Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition*, p. 64.

214 Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition*, p. 72. For more detailed research see: Chen Qi-yun, "Liang Chí-Cháo's 'Missionary Education': A Case Study of Missionary Influence on the Reformers", *Papers on China*, 16 (1962), pp. 111-113.

215 Original English text see *North China Daily News*, October 17, 1896. Translation see "Zhongguo Shiqing" 中国实情 in *Shiwu Bao* 时务报 November 5, 1896 (光绪 22 年 10 月 1 日).

216 Liang Qichao 梁启超, "Shaonian Zhongguo shuo," 少年中国说 (1900) in Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi wenji* No. 5 饮冰室文集之五 (Shanghai: zhonghua shuju, 1941), p. 7. Originally published on *Qingyi Bao* 清议报 Volume 35, February 10th, 1900.

217 For a study of this topic, see Yang Ruisong, *Bingfu, huanghuo yu shuishi*.

218 Liang Qichao 梁启超, "Lun Zhongguo guomin zhi pingge" 论中国国民之品格 in *Xinmin* 新民, No. 27, March 12, 1903.

Chinese study suggests that Liang's thoughts on the national character were inspired by ideas in Smith's book, if not direct responses to it.[219]

Liang Qichao dealt with what he regarded as Western perceptions of China in many of his articles during this period. For example, in *Journey to the New Continent*, he admitted that "it is not really an insult to call the people who show symptoms of an ill nature 'sick man of the East'".[220] And in his "On the Characteristics of Chinese People", he acknowledged that there was a lack of "patriotism, independence, public spirit, and the skills to efficient governance" in Chinese characteristics.[221]

However, whereas he acknowledged many of the negative aspects in Chinese culture as depicted in the West, his responses towards Western critiques were multifold. Among the many texts he wrote on the matter, *Discourse on the New People* (*Xinmin Shuo*) is probably the best example to analyze his responses.[222] First appearing as a series of articles in *New People Periodical*, later compiled as a book, it is an articulation of Liang's thought of the ideal Chinese personality as well as his aspirations for a new and stronger nation.

Using a Social-Darwinist yardstick, he compared various nations in the world and concluded that the most powerful nations are from the white race; and among them, the Anglo-Saxon people is the best nation, stronger than other Western nations.[223] He attributed the power of Western countries to their racial characteristics—being energetic, competitive, and aggressive (progressive) as compared to the quiet, amicable, conservative characters of other races.[224] And it is exactly the "superior national character" of the Anglo-Saxons that has made their nation the most powerful of all white nations in the 19th century, as Liang went on to analyze, for they are

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219 Huang Xingtao 黄兴涛, "Ming enpu yu qingmo minguo shiqi de minzuxing gaizao huayu" 明恩溥与清末民国时期的"民族性改造"话语 in Smith, *Zhongguoren de qizhi* 中国人的气质 (Beijing: zhonghua shuju, 2006), pp. 24-45.

220 Liang Qichao 梁启超, "Xin dalu youji" 新大陆游记 (1903), in Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi wenji zhuanji No. 22* 饮冰室文集专集之二十二 (Shanghai: zhonghua shuju, 1941).

221 Liang Qichao 梁启超, "Lun Zhongguo guomin zhi pingge" 论中国国民之品格 (1903).

222 Liang Qichao 梁启超, *Xinmin shuo* 新民说, originaly a series of articles published at *Xinmin congbao* 新民丛报 between 1902 and 1906 (Shanghai: zhonghua shuju, 1936). This research uses the 1994 version: Liang Qichao, *Xinmin Shuo* (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 1994).

223 Liang, *Xinmin Shuo*, pp. 10-12.

224 Liang, *Xinmin Shuo*, p. 13.

independent, disciplined, and fully aware of their own rights.[225]

Liang compared the Chinese character with that of the Anglo-Saxon people, as Smith did in his book. Then he proposed a national remaking project, based on the Anglo-Saxon model, by outlining what he considered the most important 16 characteristics of a strong nation, among which many were described by Smith as being absent in China, such as public morality, national consciousness, individual liberty, progress, self-respect, and so on.[226]

In terms of the question of public morality, Liang discovered a striking contrast between Chinese and Western moral values.[227] Though very much aware of the development of moral thought in Chinese cultural tradition, he realized that this development was confined to the field of private morality and family ethics, and found little development of public morality in social and state ethics in Chinese tradition. This discovery inspired him to conceive the idea of developing a new moral system, and in doing so, to point out civic virtues and to formulate a new personality ideal for Chinese people to follow.[228]

When it came to the value of progress, Liang believed that the persevering effort to conquer and accomplish, something he described as everywhere to be seen in Western cultures, was lacking in the Chinese national character.[229] Inspired by the idea of social progress from the Social-Darwinist thinker Benjamin Kidd[230], he proposed to cultivate such a courageous and adventurous spirit in Chinese culture, as it is "particularly wanting in the Chinese national character",[231] if the dream of establishing a strong nation is to be realized.

Yet the most fatal defect in the Chinese national character, as Liang had observed from

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[225] Liang, *Xinmin Shuo*, p. 15.

[226] The 16 characteristics include: public morality (*gongde*), national consciousness (*guojia sixiang*), progressive and adventurous spirit (*jinqu maoxian*), idea of rights (*quanli sixiang*), liberty (*ziyou*), autonomy (*zizhi*), progress (*jinbu*), self-respect (*zizun*), gregariousness (*hequn*), benifit-sharing (*shengli fenli*), perserverance (*yili*), sense of obligation (*yiwu sixiang*), valiance (*shangwu*), private morality (*side*), popular morale (*minqi*), political capability (*zhengzhi nengli*).

[227] Liang, *Xinmin Shuo*, pp. 16-22.

[228] Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition*, pp. 152-154.

[229] Liang, *Xinmin Shuo*, p. 40.

[230] Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition*, p. 172.

[231] Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition*, pp. 184-185.

the failure of the 1898 reform movement, was the servility of the people.[232] And this, according to Liang, was essentially a spirit of resignation and submissiveness that could be traced back to the meek philosophy of life in Chinese cultural tradition, especially Daoism and Confucianism.[233] To cure the fatal illness in the national character, Liang turned to Rousseau's ideas on liberty as the best antidote to the Chinese "slavish mentality",[234] to liberate oneself from being the slave of one's own historical and social shackles.[235]

These three examples demonstrate that, while Liang formed his own thesis about how to cultivate an ideal Chinese personality, he held a rather eclectic approach to Western thought—he took freely from whatever was available to him then and there, and incorporated them into his own imagination of a stronger and better nation. And his project of national character remaking was propelled by the strong urge to rescue China from its inferior international position and to establish a powerful Chinese nation, guided by a Social-Darwinist worldview.

At a first glance, Liang's perception of the negative aspects of the Chinese nation were, in its form and content, similar to those of Smith's. Like Smith, he saw weakness in the Chinese national character, such as a servile nature, the lack of progress, and of public morality. He also deemed reforms as imperative, and believed that the reform of the culture, or the making of new people, was the foremost urgent matter.[236]

Although Liang and Smith both took the negative national character as their point of departure, they offered fundamentally different solutions to the perceived problems. The reforms proposed by Liang were nothing similar to Smith's proposal of Christian salvation. Smith believed that the weak character of the Chinese people, especially their "lack of conscience", could only be reformed by the teachings of Christian morality. Moreover, as the conservative force was so strong, the Christian civilization as an outer force had to fight its way into the minds of the Chinese. Liang, with a spirit of self-reflection, argued that the Chinese people, after comparing themselves with Western nations and identifying their own shortcomings, should make efforts "to reflect, to change, and to mend".[237]

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[232] Liang, *Xinmin Shuo*, pp. 63-64.
[233] Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition*, pp. 195-196.
[234] Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition*, p. 192.
[235] Liang, *Xinmin Shuo*, pp. 63-69.
[236] Liang, *Xinmin Shuo*, p. 2.
[237] Liang, *Xinmin Shuo*, p. 13.

What Liang firmly believed in was not Christian salvation, rather the power of self-renovation. To deal with what he regarded as shortcomings in the Chinese national character, Liang proposed to reform the people both at the individual level and the national level—if self-reform is achieved at the individual level, he argued, the remaking of the nation could be achieved at the national level.[238] In fact, Liang himself was a passionate practitioner of self-renovation. He regarded introspection as a way of self-cultivation, eventually leading to self-perfection. As he phrased it himself, "I care not if I challenge myself of yesterday with myself of today".[239]

This spirit of introspection and self-renovation was precisely drawn from Confucian intellectual tradition. The term "new people" (*xinmin*) drew the teaching of "daily reform of oneself" from the Confucian classic *Great Learning* (*Da Xue*). It was also with the attitude of a Confucian scholar that Liang promoted his thesis of "new people". Unlike Smith who claimed that the only salvation lay in Christian enlightenment, or James Legge who believed that Confucianism will "go to pieces" in its encounter with Christianity, Liang did not lose faith in Confucianism, neither did he equate Confucianism with the weakness in the national character.

As clearly stated in his *Discourse on the New People*, the reform he advocated was a combination of "reviving the existing cultural essence" and "importing the absent", both equally important for the making of "new people".[240] Present day commentators have associated Liang's thesis with the New Culture Movement, in the sense that they were both enlightenment movements aimed at using Western learning against Chinese learning, and they both attempted to reform the national character and to break from cultural tradition.[241] Such an association has rightly pointed out the similarities, but misinterpreted Liang's approach by playing down his emphasis on "reviving the existing cultural essence". Such an emphasis, already present in his "new people" thesis, later manifested itself in his intellectual life after the May Fourth Movement.

Another distinctive feature of Liang's proposition is that his critiques of the national character had always been outshone by his optimism, even right after the Hundred Day

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238 Liang, *Xinmin Shuo*, pp. 4-5.

239 Liang Qichao 梁启超, *Qingdai xueshu gailun* 清代学术概论 in Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi zhuanji No. 34* 饮冰室专集之三十四 (Shanghai: zhonghua shuju, 1941), p. 63.

240 Liang, *Xinmin Shuo*, pp. 7-9.

241 Li Zehou 李泽厚, *Zhongguo xiandai sixiang shilun* 中国现代思想史论 (Taibei: sanmin shuju, 1996), pp. 4 & 7.

Reforms failed. In 1899, Liang envisioned a bright future for the Chinese race in the 20th century in his *The Future of the Chinese Race*. He identified four national characteristics that would make the Chinese the most powerful race in the world—the ability of autonomy, adventurous nature, highly developed thought, and rich human and natural resources for business development.[242]

Such optimism was originated from Liang's romantic image of a young China as opposed to the Western conception of the old empire. Whereas Smith believed that the Chinese nation "faces the darkness of the remote past"[243], Liang claimed that "there is a young China in my heart", which was "splendid, strong and rich, elegant and graceful".[244] Such a romantic image was rationalized by his understanding of the modern nation-state system, where European countries were already members of and China was only on its way to. He personified the young nation as a rich and strong young man, "independent, free, progressive, better than Europe—the best in the world".[245] For this reason, since the article "On Young China", many of Liang's writings were published under the name of "a young man of young China".[246]

In the bright future he envisioned, the Chinese personality, through self-renovation, will turn from meek to assertive, from lethargic to vigorous, from slavish to liberated and independent; and the nation will eventually turn from weak to strong, from stagnant to progressive, from pre-modern to modern, from the "sick man of the East" to the splendid, independent, strong and graceful young man in his heart.

This vision, with China reclaiming its rightful place in the world, was described by Liang in a political fiction. There he imagined a peace conference in the Chinese capital Nanjing, joined by all friendly nations including England, Japan, and Russia. Again in his romantic image, a learned scholar and historian, Mr. Kong (Confucius), lectured on Chinese history of the most recent 60 years. During that time, as the story

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242 Liang Qichao 梁启超, "Lun Zhongguo renzhong zhi jianglai" 论中国人种之将来 (1899), in *Yinbingshi wenji No.3* 饮冰室文集之三 (Shanghai: zhonghua shuju, 1941), pp. 48-54: 49.

243 Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 320.

244 Liang, "Shaonian Zhongguo shuo", in *Yinbingshi wenji No.5*, pp. 7 & 11. For more discussion on this article, see Mei Jialing 梅家玲, "Faxian shaonian, xiangxiang zhongguo —Liang Qichao Shaonian Zhongguo shuo de xiandaixing, qimeng xushu yu guozu xiangxiang" 发现少年，想象中国----梁启超〈少年中国说〉的现代性、启蒙叙述与国族想象, *Hanxue Yanjiu* 汉学研究 (Taibei: June 2001), pp. 249-276.

245 Liang, "Shaonian Zhongguo shuo", p. 12.

246 Liang, "Shaonian Zhongguo shuo", p. 12.

told, the reforms had brought such rapid progress in China that Europeans and Americans sent their students to China, and they all understood the Chinese language, making such a magnificant scene possible.[247]

Both Lu Xun and Liang Qichao were very clear about their intention in comparing Chinese national character with that of the West. For Lu Xun, it was a means of self-inspection, to reform for the better, and to eventually "prove what on earth are Chinese".[248] And for Liang Qichao, Western perceptions could serve as a frame of reference for Chinese people "to reflect, to change, and to mend".[249] Although Lu Xun did not articulate what he views as real Chinese, what he intended to prove was obviously a nation better than the one described by Arthur Smith. And Liang, fascinated by the possibility of creating a young, energetic, graceful and powerful new nation, had drawn a much clearer picture through his "new people" thesis and other articles.

It is therefore not surprising that, even at the most critical period of Liang Qichao's intellectual journey, he did not lose his faith in Chinese culture and Confucianism. His "new people" thesis and many other writings of that time have demonstrated that what he attempted to create was "a complete new culture, instead of a completely new culture".[250] This "endeavour to create a syncretic new culture"[251] became much clearer in his later cultural propositions in the 1920s.

At this point, it is abundantly clear that Liang's advocacy of national character reform was a means to realize his cultural imagination. The conception of national character that he incorporated from Western (and Japanese) perceptions was chosen for the purpose of evoking nationalistic aspirations against such negative perceptions. His eclectic approach to Western perceptions and knowledge, especially to Western criticism, was meant to stimulate and inspire his fellow countrymen to look at the past and the present critically, and to work towards a better future.

Moreover, Liang's evaluation of the national character and the values he promoted—progress, enlightenment, and nationalism (*minzu zhuyi*)—have revealed that his

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[247] Liang Qichao 梁启超, *Xin Zhongguo Weilai Ji* 新中国未来记 (1902) (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2008).
[248] Lu, "Qiejieting zawen mobian lici cunzhao 3", p. 426.
[249] Liang, *Xinmin Shuo*, p. 13.
[250] Tang, *Global Space*, p. 225.
[251] Tang, *Global Space*, p. 5.

cultural imagination was to a large extent constructed within a modernist framework. He embraced what he deemed as essential to the modern West, and strived to use the national character reforms to aid the birth of a brand new modern nation out of the ruins of an old empire.

Yet, at the same time, it is noteworthy that Confucianism was not the central target of his critique of the national character. The reforms were not as radical as they sounded to be: even the most progressive measures—the remaking of the people—were not intended to overthrow the regime of Confucian morality and aesthetics. On the contrary, they should be understood as part of the strategy to the revitalization of Confucianism and Chinese culture, and to eventually restore an equal if not superior position of theirs as compared to that of Western cultures.

2) The West in Chinese Intellectual Search for "New People"

As Liang's *New People Periodical* had a wide circulation, his "new people" thesis, most notably articulated in the essays from his "golden age",[252] had inspired many Chinese intellectuals of his time. Leading intellectuals in the May Fourth Movement regarded him as a spiritual mentor; and the ideal personality, later emerging in the minds of the May Fourth as essential constituents of the aspired nation, was to a large extent grounded on Liang's thesis. In fact, the new personality in Liang's imagination had become an important and enduring part of the value system of 20th century China among the intelligentsia of various ideological persuasions.[253]

It is indeed justified to say that Liang's writings between 1899 and 1903 provided a common intellectual foundation that "cut across the later divisions between liberals and Marxists".[254] Hu Shi, seen as a leading liberal scholar of the May Fourth era and a representative of Chinese Enlightenment, wrote that Liang "pointed out an unknown world, and summoned us to make our own explorations...All sections of the *Discourse on the New People* opened up a new world for me..."[255] When Mao Zedong organized the "New People Society" in 1918, he was clearly inspired by Liang's call to remake the nation. As a dedication to Liang's *On Young China,* the biggest student association during the May Fourth Movement was named the "Young China Society".

[252] Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China*, p. 82.
[253] Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition*, pp. 304-307.
[254] Huang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism*, p. 8.
[255] Hu Shi 胡适, *Sishi zixu* 四十自叙 (Shanghai: Yadong tushuguan, 1933), pp.100 & 105.

Yet it must be pointed out that Liang's ideas on the national character and his "new people" thesis have been subject to rather different and sometimes even conflicting interpretations. When Liang called upon the Chinese to reflect on the national character with reference to the Anglo-Saxon model, he was following his nationalistic logic: only such self-renovation could lead to a China that is at least as strong as England. However, in Hu Shi's reading of *Discourse on the New People*, what Liang pointed out to him was that "there were peoples and cultures of a very high order".[256]

The "new people" thesis identified many shortcomings of the Chinese nation, yet Liang did not lose his belief in Chinese culture or Confucianism. This sense of optimism was later re-affirmed by his trip to post-WWI Europe. In an essay written in 1919, Liang called on the Chinese youth to "Attention! March! Billions of people on the other side of the ocean, at the bankrupcy of material civilization, are calling sadly for your help to elevate them...our ancestors in heaven, the Three Sages, and previous generations are looking to you to finish their cause!"[257]

It is abundantly clear that Hu did not share Liang's optimism of Chinese culture or his romantic image of a young China. In the eyes of Hu Shi, the Chinese nation was "stupid and lazy", "not progressive", "inferior", which explained why other cultures were needed to revive the weak nation and rejuvenate the half-dead culture.[258] For example, Hu wrote in 1930 that the only way for the nation to survive was to admit its inferiority:

> *We have to acknowledge that we are... inferior not only in a material and technical sense, but also in political system, morality, knowledge, literature, music, arts and physical strength…only if we admit, can we learn from others wholeheartedly […]. No matter what culture it is, as long as it revitalize us, we should take and absorb it to the utmost. To save and build our nation is like building a house, as long as we can use the material, we don't care where it is from.*[259]

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[256] Hu Shi, *Sishi zixu,* p. 105.

[257] Liang Qichao 梁启超, "Ouyou xinyinglu jielu" 欧游心影录节录 (1919), in Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji No. 23* 饮冰室合集之二十三 (Beijing: zhonghua shuju, 1989), p. 35.

[258] Hu Shi 胡适, "Jieshao wo ziji de sixiang—Hu Shi wenxuan zixu" 介绍我自己的思想——胡适文选自序 (1930) in *Hu Shi zhexue sixiang ziliao xuan* 胡适哲学思想资料选 (Shanghai: huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1981), p. 344.

[259] Hu, "Jieshao wo ziji de sixiang", pp. 344-345.

Hu's disappointment with the nation's inertia and Liang's optimistic view of the Chinese civilization were expressed almost at the same time, when Hu returned in 1918 from his study in the U.S., and Liang in 1919 from his trip to Europe. The two contradictory images they had reflected two types of viewpoints about China in the West: one that was heavily influenced by American liberal ideas and the other by European self-reflection of industrialization after WWI and their illusions of a utopian Orient.

Therefore, while Liang tried to use self-renovation to refute the perceptions of China as described by Arthur Smith, Hu had taken the perspective of Arthur Smith to look at China critically:

> *A foreign missionary is like an overseas student returning, he always carries a new perspective and a critical spirit. Such perspective and spirit are lacking in a nation that grows used to the existing order and becomes ignorant of it, and they are needed for any reform movement.* [260]

And, being the overseas student returning, Hu himself shared Smith's "new perspective" and "critical spirit":

> *Most worrying of China* […] *is that, everywhere, all kinds of sinful characteristics have been kept, too many, too deep* [...] *from the old countryside, to brand-new political organizations, where doesn't it have "Chinese characteristics"?*[261]

Liang emphasized the West as an inspiration to Chinese reforms, while Hu attached much greater importance to Western culture as one "of a very high order". In his "The Culture Conflict in China", he called for "wholesale Westernization" (*quanpan xihua*) and "wholehearted modernization", which he later revised to "full internationalization" (*chongfen shijiehua*). He explained that the Westernization he advocated was not, and could not be one hundred percent, but should be "sufficient enough" (*chongfen*)—quantitatively to the utmost and mentally with wholehearted dedication.[262] It seems

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[260] Luo Zhitian 罗志田, *Zaizao wenming de changshi: Hu Shi zhuan 1891-1929* 再造文明的尝试：胡适传 (Beijing: zhonghua shuju, 2006), p. 321.

[261] Hu Shi 胡适, *Hu Shi lunxue jinzhu* 胡适论学近著 (Shanghai: shangwu yinshuguan, 1935), pp. 552 & 556.

[262] Hu Shi 胡适, Chongfen shijiehua yu quanpan xihua 充分世界化与全盘西化, originally

that, for Hu, the West was not only a frame of reference for the making of the "new people", but also an indispensable outside force in the replacement of the old culture.

Liang Qichao, by the time of the New Culture Movement, had different intellectual concerns. Writing in 1915, and taking the examples of Korea and Thailand, Liang argued that it was disastrous for a nation to break with its past.[263] The national character manifested in cultural tradition should be safeguarded, for a nation dies when its national character is obliterated.

Hu on the contrary was not concerned that the loss of national character would jeopardize the Chinese nation. Instead, he was disappointed at his country because "the inertia was so strong that three steps forward was followed by two steps backwards, so it is still the same".[264] It was this inertia that he meant to fight against by promoting his "full internationalization", for, in his perception, there was no reason to be afraid of losing Chinese culture because the inertia of most people will be sufficient to keep the old culture.

Their different approaches in the search of a new people and a new culture represented two of the many contending propositions made out of different intellectual self-perceptions of the nation. It is clear that, within a wide cultural spectrum, there were other cultural proposals occupying the more polemic positions at both ends. For instance, as a direct rejection of Smith's criticism, Gu Hongming published *The Spirit of the Chinese People*[265] in 1915. While Smith mocked many Chinese cultural characteristics, Gu Hongming, in return, mocked the popularity of Smith's book:

> *John Smith in China wants very much to be a superior person to the Chinaman and Rev. Arthur Smith writes a book to prove conclusively that he, John Smith, is a very much superior person to the Chinaman. Therefore, the Rev. Arthur Smith is a person very dear to John Smith,*

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published at *Da Gong Bao* 大公报, June 21, 1935, see Jiang Yihua 姜义华 (ed.), *Hu Shi xueshu wenji* 胡适学术文集 (zhonghua shuju: 2001), p. 308.

263 Joseph Levenson, "History and Value", p. 172. Cited from Liang Qichao 梁启超, "Da zhonghua fakan ci" 大中华发刊词 (1915) in Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji No. 12* 饮冰室合集十二 (Shanghai: zhonghua shuju, 1941), pp. 33 & 83-84.

264 Hu Shi 胡适, "Guiguo zagan" 归国杂感, originally published at *Xin Qingnian* 新青年 Vol. 4, No.1. See also in *Hu Shi wencui* (Beijing: zuojia chubanshe, 1991), pp. 558-559.

265 Gu Hongmin 辜鸿铭, originally published as *Chunqiu Dayi* 春秋大义 (Beijing: Beijing meiri xinwenshe, 1915). Here I use the most recent version: Gu Hongmin, *The Spirit of the Chinese People* (Beijing: Foreign language teaching and research press, 2009).

and the "Chinese Characteristics" become a Bible to John Smith.[266]

To refute Arthur Smith's account of Western superiority, Gu described the Chinese spirit as "a state of mind", "a temper of the soul", "a serene and blessed mood".[267] Against the background of WWI, he regarded Chinese culture as the remedy for Western civilization, and "the (unspoilt) real Chinaman with his Religion of good citizenship and his experience of 2,500 years how to live in peace without priest and without soldier" would be the only solution to the wounded spirits after the war.[268] If we describe Liang's "new people" thesis and Hu Shi's proposal of internationalization as having shared the characteristics of a cultural syncretism, Gu apparently did not join these two in their pursuit of such "new people" and new culture.

3) Did Culturalism Ever Give Way to Nationalism?

As I briefly touched upon in the introduction chapter, Chinese self-perceptions at the time of Liang's "new people" thesis went through a dramatic transition. The discourse of national character as discussed so far can be read as a part of that historical transition from the Celestial Empire to a nation-state.

It is a widely accepted notion that the political culture of imperial China stressed a principle of ruling by culture more than nationality. John Fairbank described it as the "synarchy" with "a well-developed institution of foreign participation in its government".[269] A sense of cultural superiority was affirmed by the tribute system that demonstrated the empire's power and pride to neighboring countries. Therefore, an imperial Chinese outlook of the world was firmly established: "all under heaven" (*Tianxia*) is their civilized world, plus barbarian areas that were of little relevance.

Until the Shenzong Emperor's rule (r. 1067-1085) in the Northern Song Dynasty, imperial world maps still drew a wide Chinese area with very small surrounding seas, and the neighboring countries in unclear positions.[270] The world maps during the Ming

[266] Gu, *The Spirit of the Chinese People*, p. 95.
[267] Gu, *The Spirit of the Chinese People*, p. 63.
[268] Gu, *The Spirit of the Chinese People*, p. 8.
[269] John Fairbank, "Synarchy under the treaties," in idem. (ed.), *Chinese Thoughts and Institutions* (Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 204-231: 205.
[270] Zou Zhenhuan 邹振环, "Li Madou shijie ditu de kanke yu mingqing shiren de shijie yishi" 利玛窦世界地图的刊刻与明清士人的世界意识 in *Jindai Zhongguo de guojia xingxiang yu guojia rentong* 近代中国的国家形象与国家认同 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe,

Dynasty (1368-1644), as Matteo Ricci commented, were "said to show the whole world but their world was only limited to their fifteen provinces."[271] Ricci's description suggests that, from the perspective of an outsider, the concept of *Tianxia* was an inflated self-image as the result of ignorance of the outside world. It appeared to many in the West that, up to the end of the 18th century, the Chinese world still "stood intact, aloof, and uninterested in the West".[272] Such was also the conclusion of Macartney's embassy. When the Qianlong emperor rejected the British request to establish a consulate in Beijing, he deemed such a request inappropriate and unreasonable, for there were no precedents of such interactions and trade relations with other countries in the history of the Celestial Empire, nor did the Empire need to develop such relations:

> *As to your request* [...] *to be allowed to send one of your subjects to reside in the Celestial Empire to look after your country's trade, this does not conform to the Celestial Empire's ceremonial system, and definitely cannot be done* [...] *How can we go as far as to change the regulations of the Celestial Empire, which are over a hundred years old, because of the request of one man—of you, O King?* [...] *Why, then, do foreign countries need to send someone to remain at the capital? This is a request for which there is no precedent and it definitely cannot be granted.*[273]

It was after the first Opium War (1839-1842) that Matteo Ricci's Chinese language world maps were first introduced in Wei Yuan's book *Illustrated Annals of Overseas Countries (Hai Guo Tu Zhi)*, about 250 years after they were made. The defeat in the two Opium Wars stimulated many among the ruling elite to propagate modern technology to "enrich the country and strengthen the army". Their Self-Strengthening Movement (1860-1895) proposed the "Chinese learning for substance, Western learning for application" (*Zhongxue wei ti, Xixue wei yong*) solution and imported Western ideas in education, industrial manufacture, military training, and so on. Foreign encounters had impressed the ruling elite with advanced military technology, as the Mongolian horsemen had done before; but the movement did not change the

2003), pp.23-72: 49.

[271] Matthew Ricci 利玛窦 & Nicolas Trigault 金尼阁, translated by He Gaoji 何高济, *Li Madou Zhongguo zhaji* 利玛窦中国札记 (Beijing: zhonghua shuju, 1983), pp. 179 &181.

[272] C.P. Fitzgerald, *The Chinese View of Their Place in the World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 32.

[273] Cranmer-Byng, *Lord Macartney's Journal*, Appendix C, pp. 338-339.

ambivalent attitude towards Western culture,[274] and the sense of cultural superiority had not yet been put under scrutiny.

Defeat in the 1895 war with Japan declared the Self-Strengthening Movement a failure. The Qing Court did not learn from the movement how to deal with the West— the official Ministry of Foreign Affairs was only set up in 1901, almost 60 years after the first Opium War. Many subsequent attempts to confront Western challenges did not prevent it from collapsing. The following constitutional monarchy proposed by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao in the Hundred Day Reforms (1898) failed prematurely; soon after that, the late Qing New Policy reforms (1901-1911) were brought to an end by the 1911 revolution, which eventually overthrew the Qing Court.

The dramatic political transition shook the very ground on which the ruling elite based their perception of world and their nation's position within that order: the superior Celestial Empire had turned into a member among equal nation-states; even worse, it was defeated and humiliated by foreign intrusion. As such, the *Tianxia* worldview ran into unprecedented challenges. The term used by the Qing Court to indicate itself in diplomatic documents and international treaties reflected this changing process: during the rule of the Jiaqing Emperor (r. 1796-1820), the Court referred to itself as "the Celestial Empire" (*Tianchao*); starting from Daoguang (r. 1821-1850), terms such as "the Empire of the Great Qing" (*Daqingguo*) and "the Middle Kingdom/China" (*Zhongguo*) appeared more often; till Guangxu (r. 1875-1909), *Tianchao* disappeared and *Zhongguo* became the synonym for the state.[275]

Changes in the worldview and consequently in Chinese self-perceptions went hand in hand with the emergence and acceptance of modern concepts such as nation-state and nationalism. Terms such as "nation" (*minzu*) and "nation-state" (*minzu guojia*) were translated from the Japanese and introduced in China, then later became part of the political pursuit of the revolutionaries for a sovereign state.[276] Yan Fu's translation of *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* spread wide among intellectuals and students,

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[274] Xiao Gongqin 萧功秦, *Rujia wenhua de kunjing: jindai shidafu yu zhongxi wenhua pengzhuang* 儒家文化的困境：近代士大夫与中西文化碰撞 (Guilin: guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2006), p. 99.

[275] Kawashima Shin 川岛真, translated by Shen Zhongqi 沈中琦, "Cong tianchao dao guojia" 从天朝到国家 in *Jindai Zhongguo de guojia xingxiang yu guojia rentong* 近代中国的国家形象与国家认同 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003), pp. 265-281.

[276] Wang Ke 王柯, "'Minzu': yige laizi reben de wuhui" "民族": 一个来自日本的误会 in *Twenty First Century*, June 2003, pp. 73-83.

and inspired people to view China's defeat in a Social-Darwinist perspective. Notably, such imported concepts, such as nation-state, have in the Chinese context always been closely associated with resistance against foreign intrusion, in most cases Western intrusion. Regardless of the different political solutions and convictions, at this point, the worldviews of Chinese intellectuals had gone far beyond the "*Tianxia* versus barbarian" outlook.

The rise of the historical consciousness of a Chinese nation witnessed a no less traumatic and dramatic paradigm shift in the cultural realm. Running parallel to the movements of "learning from the West", traditional institutions and thoughts gave way to modern ones modelled after the West. Confucianism, once linked to the glory of Chinese civilization, seemed now unable to offer a solution to confront Western power in modern history. The incapability put Confucianism in an unprecedented crisis: not only was its past glory gone, even its own survival was at stake—its value was continuously questioned.

In "Chinese substance, Western application" (*zhong ti xi yong*), Chinese learning remained the substance. Reforms in the late Qing challenged the imperial political system together with its ruling ideology; and in 1905 when the imperial examination system was abolished, Confucianism lost its grip on the educational and hierarchical system. While the sense of cultural superiority had lost its material, institutional and political foundation, the national Self and cultural tradition that once represented its superiority became perceived of in a negative light. During the May Fourth Movement, Confucianism was at the center of criticism, held accountable for the fallen empire's corrupted system and the backwardness of the nation. By then, Confucian thought had followed the Qing empire's collapse, been driven to a peripheral position.

Inspired by Western thought, and often looking through Western lenses, Chinese intellectuals of different schools searched for ways of creating a new Chinese culture. In this process, new cultural conceptions began to emerge to make sense of the status quo in its historical and international context. The national character discourse was one of the conceptions in such cultural creations, and national character reforms became one of the most fundamental reforms to rebuild the national Self.

Along with it, we have seen many other conceptions and perceptions of China, originally from the West, being incorporated in Chinese cultural and political discourses, such as the image of the "sick man of the East" and the metaphor of China

as the “sleeping lion”.[277] Research has shown that such images were selected, translated and internalized to interpret and eventually overcome the nation’s now perceived inferior cultural status.

The incorporation of Western perceptions of China was at the same time a part of a larger shift in intellectual perceptions, that is, the acceptance of Western worldview and epistemological system within which China was framed and understood. This shift was clearly demonstrated in the internalization of conceptions such as nation-state, Social-Darwinism, and others that were believed to be of an universal nature.

For instance, the concept of “civilization” (*wenming*) during the late Qing and early Republican period was perceived as a universal standard to evaluate social morality, although it was somehow created and discovered in the West. Therefore, in the name of such a universal value, many in China were ready to use the yardstick of Western cultural preferences to evaulate Chinese behavior and attitude, which naturally turned into the criticism of a “lack of civilization”.[278]

Levenson described such a shift as a defeat of culturalism against nationalism,[279] in which the usefulness of Chinese thought was questioned against its Western rival, resulting in the demise of culturalism. Yet, after a careful examination of Liang Qichao’s “new people” thesis and his conceptions of the national character, one is led to ask whether culturalism indeed hopelessly gave way to nationalism.

As a scholar deeply grounded in a cultural tradition with a *Tianxia* worldview, Liang surely encountered the problem of cultural identity when he became profoundly affected by Western political thinking and moral outlook.[280] He admitted that the Anglo-Saxon people was the best and strongest in the world due to their superior national character—their independent, energetic, competitive and progressive nature. And he even concluded that it was not really an insult to call some Chinese “sick man of the East”.

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[277] Rudolf G. Wagner, “China 'Asleep' and 'Awakening': A Study in Conceptualizing Asymmetry and Coping with It,” *Transcultural Studies* (2011.1), pp. 4-139: 118.

[278] Luo Jianqiu 罗检秋, “Qingmo minchu zhishijie guanyu 'wenming' de renzhi yu sibian” 清末民初知识界关于“文明”的认知与思辨 in Zheng Dahua 郑大华, Huang Guangtao 黄光涛 and Zou Xiaozhan 邹小站 (eds.), *Wuxu bianfa yu wanqing sixiang wenhua zhuanxing* 戊戌变法与晚清思想文化转型 (Beijing: shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2010), p. 423.

[279] Levenson, *The Problem of Monarchical Decay*, pp. 150-152.

[280] Chang, *Liang Ch’i-ch’ao and Intellectual Transition*, pp. 113-4.

Yet he took the inferiority as a point of departure for his national character remaking project and for eventually realizing his romantic image of a strong and charismatic nation. Therefore, once the West was viewed in a less positive light, such as after the First World War, the sense of inferiority became replaced with self-confidence. It is then not so difficult to understand Liang's call in 1919 to help elevate "the people across the ocean" from "the bankruptcy of material civilization", and to accomplish the honorable mission of "ancestors in heaven" and "the Three Sages".[281]

Even for more radical critics and reformers of the national character, and more ardent advocates of Westernization, the intellectual introspection, under the surface of self-negation and even self-loathing, can be seen as driven by a profound sense of pride. Although Hu Shi claimed that the only way to save the nation was to admit its inferiority, he also expressed, in other occasions, the wounded pride he felt for his nation well before he started to advocate liberal ideas in China:

> *(China) as a thousand-year old ancient country, the leader of East-Asian civilization, suddenly turned north and called itself a pupil. Is there bigger shame than this in the world?*[282]

Even though Hu Shi complained that Chinese are "stupid and lazy", "not progressive", "inferior", the shame he felt was entangled with the patriotism he once expressed:

> *No one with some level of knowledge does not love his country. So my definition of world view is: cosmopolitanism is patriotism combined with humanitarianism. A short while ago I read the poem Hands All Round from Tennyson, which says:*
>
> *That man's the best cosmopolite*
> *Who loves his native country best*
>
> *I am delighted that his opinion coincided with mine.*[283]

The image of a strong Other, coupled with the nation's lost glory and recent humiliation, eventually led to a sense of inferiority. For Hu, the perception of an inferior Chinese culture was mixed with his patriotism, and brought about the feeling

[281] Liang, "Ouyou xinyinglu jielu", p. 35.

[282] Hu Shi 胡适, "Fei liuxue pian" 非留学篇, *Liumei Xuesheng Jibao* 留美学生季报 No. 3, January 1914. Chinese emperors face south in the court and their officials face north. "To turn north" means to admit one's inferior position in the hierarchy.

[283] Hu Shi 胡适, "Hu Shi liuxue riji," 胡适留学日记 in Hu Shi, *Hu Shi zuopin ji* 胡适作品集 (Taibei: yuanliu chuban shiye gufen youxian gongsi, 1986), p. 127.

of shame. The more glorious the past was, the more painful and shameful the loss of glory became. Thus, radical anti-traditionalism and "full internationalization" might have been Hu's bitter medicine to treat the national illness and to cleanse the shame of the lost glory.

Therefore, during the process of dramatic political and social changes, the demise of culturalism remains a question that invites different interpretations. And as this research suggests, the process of learning from the Other, or even partly becoming the Other, should be better read as the means to overcome the Other in a self-initiated cultural nirvana.

2.4. Concluding Remarks: "New" Culture for A "New" Nation?

In this chapter, I have analyzed that Western perceptions of China have been cultural by-products of European and American efforts to position themselves in the world. Yet, along with the increasing expansion of Western political and cultural influence, these Western perceptions have been internalized to various degrees by Chinese efforts to create a new cultural identity and to establish a new cultural balance between China and the West.

The analysis of the discourse of national character has demonstrated a fluid and complex interaction between Western perceptions of China and Chinese self-perceptions. I have studied the critiques of Chinese national character by American missionary Arthur Smith, and argued that his views of the nation and its cultural tradition are typical of an Orientalist interpretation of a foreign culture mixed with a "missionary mind". His account, read from its intellectual and religious context, represented the prevailing Western perceptions of China at the end of the 19th century, and witnessed the transition of such perceptions from a vaguely negative image of an empire towards a personified picture of the yellow race.

While some rejected Smith's account as groudless arrogance and racial antagonism, others perceived it as having provided a valuable new perspective for self-reflection. Despite varied intellectual responses, Smith's criticism of the Chinese national character became one discourse among many others that were employed by cultural reformers. It was identified as views of the stronger Other, and consequently used to critically evaluate the past and the national Self. The past was not lamented because its

heirs, through self-negation, were trying to create a new and better Self and to eventually glorify the national past.

The discourse of national character serves as an example of the profound influences of Western knowledge and perceptions on Chinese self-perceptions. When it came to the problem of Chinese and Western cultures, various forms of Chinese syncretisms appeared, and the major issue was how and how much to learn from the West. And in many cases, this issue, interpreted from another perspective, became a question of how and how much to criticize and discard cultural tradition, in particular Confucianism.

Thus, an interesting process of "self-orientalization", to borrow Dirlik's concept as introduced in the introduction chapter, can be observed within the historical transition from an empire to a nation-state. However, it is important to note that this process of internalization does not necessarily suggest that intellectual self-perceptions place Chinese culture in an inferior position, as was the case in the perceptions of many radical cultural critics.

In the case of Liang Qichao, his analysis of Chinese culture incorporated many negative aspects of Chinese characteristics as pointed out by Smith, yet his selection and adaptation of Western conceptions, as examined in his "new people" thesis, should be studied together with his optimistic cultural imagination for the national future, as an integral part of his efforts to create a new culture for a young and stronger Chinese nation. Liang had an eclectic approach towards both Chinese cultural tradition and Western thoughts, and to "import the absent" from the West was only one part of his cultural syncretic solution.

I have demonstrated that Liang's thesis formed a dialogue with Smith's perceptions; and furthermore, due to the influence of his conception of the ideal Chinese, this dialogue later became a part of the wider New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement,[284] in which various schools of Chinese thought engaged in cultural and political debates with foreign perceptions, especially Western criticism.

During this dialogue, Liang Qichao, as well as many others, then faced a dilemma of "history" and "value": he was, in Levenson's opinion, intellectually alienated from his Chinese tradition but still emotionally attached to it. If we subscribe to Levenson's

[284] As the New Culture Movement is intimately linked to the 1919 May Fourth Movement, it is often indicated as "the May Fourth" Movement in historical and cultural studies. This research also uses the term "the May Fourth" to name the New Culture Movement.

assertion of a dilemma of "history" and "value", and so acknowledge both were at play in intellectual perceptions of cultural tradition and visions of a future nation, it is still open to question whether there is such a clear-cut division between the two.

The attachment and loyalty to "history" is not adequate enough to capture Liang's optimism of Chinese culture. This chapter has shown that, though his "new people" personality was modelled after the Anglo-Saxon character, he nevertheless stressed that the new personality should be created on the foundation of both Western and Chinese culture.

And, as many have noted, learning from the West does not mean a complete intellectual alienation from tradition, nor does it mean that the "value" of tradition was intellectually and rationally disregarded. In fact, it was not the case for so-called cultural conservatives, neither was it the case for the cultural reformer Liang. Hao Chang argues that Liang was still intellectually commited in considerable measure to the Chinese cultural heritage with regard to both moral values and socio-political thought.[285]

According to Levenson's dichotomy, Liang remained loyal to tradition because he was emotionally attached to it. To turn it the other way around, his emotional attachment had caused his loyalty to tradition, i.e. history. However, as this chapter has shown, such attachment or loyalty do not necessarily lead to culturally conservative views. They can also give rise to radical cultural proposals and even cultural iconoclastic tendencies, for, in the logic of a cultural reformer, to criticize and even negate tradition can be the best way to inherit tradition. Thus, anti-traditional tendencies might not be a result of intellectual alienation, they could at the same time be caused by emotional attachment as well.

In fact, a paradoxical mixture of pride and loathing towards "history" is shared by most of the intellectuals. Cultural reformers, in their efforts to create a new culture in order to overcome the opposition between the past and the Other, could not escape the inferiority-superiority complex that came along the pursuit of a Western modernization. It has to be added that, for the self-reflective intellectuals, such strong emotions as pride, loathing, and shame were brought about by an intimate connection between the national, cultural Self and the individual, personal Self. The fate and dignity of national culture was partly perceived as the fate and dignity of the intellectual himself; Chinese

[285] Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition*, p. 118.

culture became his "tenderest concern",[286] and to search for a cultural identity then became a moral obligation.

This explains why, when Liang Qichao heard a philosopher in Paris complimenting Chinese civilization, he "suddenly felt several hundred pounds upon the shoulders". To him, the honor of Chinese civilization placed at stake every member of the nation's "own sense of confidence and dignity", and Liang regarded himself as "a bearer of a unique set of cultural values and beliefs".[287]

This intimate relations between the personal Self and the national Self were apparent in this "new people" thesis, which was based on the belief that to reform the individual is to reform the nation. In Liang's vision, once, and only if, the individual is liberated from the servile nature, the whole nation will become liberated and revitalized. It was in the same belief that he penned many of his articles to argue for a young and energetic nation under the name of "a young man of young China". And this perceived intimate relationship between the personal and the national, apparently, is nothing new to Chinese culture.

[286] Levenson, *Liang Qichao and the Mind of Modern China*, p. 108.
[287] Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition*, p. 117.