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MISREAD MEIJI JAPAN, OVERCOME REPUBLICAN CHINA:  
RETHINKING ZHENG XIAOXU'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

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MPhil

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The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Department of Chinese Culture

Misread Meiji Japan, Overcome Republican China: Rethinking Zheng Xiaoxu's  
Political Philosophy

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master  
of Philosophy

August 2019

## CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

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## **Dedication**

To my dearest grandfather and earliest mentor in literature, Xu Hanmin 徐漢民  
(1939-2019).

## Abstract

This thesis examines Zheng Xiaoxu's political philosophy in the context of modern Chinese intellectual history. It will depict his conservative revolution by means of culture as an inseparable part of a Chinese intellectuals' response to the national crisis in the early twentieth centuries. After investigating how Zheng was shaped as a Han traitor in historical Chinese literature during the early Republican period, the following subject matters will be analysed: his collaboration with the Japanese colonists which interacted with his imagination of new Asia, his musings about Chinese script/ Chinese learning, his misreading of Meiji Japan and finally his reconstruction of Confucian morality for overcoming Republican China.

In 1891, Zheng Xiaoxu was promoted to be a diplomatic attaché of Li Jingfang to Japan and hence he worked as a secretary in the legation of Qing Empire in Tokyo. In the following three years, he developed a self-discordant attitude towards the Meiji Restoration. On the one hand, he immersed himself in the modern sensual experience in modern Japanese cities and recorded his impression in his diary on advanced material outcomes of Meiji Japan including electric light, train, and western oil painting. On the other, he detested the parliamentary and constitutional political system in Japan. Keeping in mind the relationship between the aesthetics of written text and the legitimacy of political representation, this thesis traces the origins of Zheng's schizophrenic apperception of the Meiji Japan back to brush talks with several Japanese sinologists including Mori Kainan and Oka Senjin, where the Japanese sinologists taunted China and classical Chinese poetry. Zheng observed that there existed a connection between the crisis of Chinese script/ Chinese learning in Japan and Japan's westernization, which was leading to social disorder there.

Zheng's obsession with Chinese script/ Chinese learning later re-emerged in his proposed motion in the face of China's defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War.

After the 1911 Revolution, in Zheng Xiaoxu's eyes, Republican China wallowed in imitating the West and in embracing "the new learning," which could not be regarded as "China", and this had led to severe social and political disorder. Therefore, Zheng reckoned that an immense conflict existed between the modern disorderly democracy of the West and the ancient hierarchical monarchy of China, and this recognition had pushed him to replace Republican China by an anti-modern, anti-democratic but orderly community of empathy which he envisioned. By collaborating with Japanese, Zheng embarked on the journey of Confucian moral reconstruction in Manchukuo in order to seek for a new world order under the slogan of the "Kingly Way" against Communism, exclusive nationalism, and Euro-American capitalism. This thesis further attempts to explore two crucial concepts: "extending love" and "restraining self" in Zheng's narrative of the "Kingly Way," and it scrutinizes how his political philosophy internalized the colonial ideology of Manchukuo as a discourse of sentiment and morality. What could not be ignored is the ambiguous relationship between Manchukuo and China Proper under Jiang Jieshi's leadership in the aspect of ideological mobilization. Additionally, root causes of the failure of the "Kingly Way" in crafting a strong national identity of Manchukuo will be addressed in the context of the dialectics of aesthetics and nation.

Zheng Xiaoxu's rediscovery of Chinese script and the "King Way" constituted the core of his conservative revolution to transform imperial China into a modern state

by virtue of culture. Although in the end he was unable to rescue China through his political philosophy and thus lost his reputation, his appropriation of Confucian tradition as a sentimental capital against western capitalism, imperialist colonialism, and even radical nationalism, is in a way also reflected in contemporary China's response to the crisis of public morality and national identity building.



## Publication arising from the thesis

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XU, Yuji. “The Crisis of *wen* and its overcoming: Zheng Xiaoxu’s conservative encounter with modern Japan” 「文」的危機與超克：鄭孝胥與現代日本的保守相, in *Two-day International Symposium of Cultural and Linguistic Interactions Across Sinographic East Asia* 東亞漢字文化圈中的語言文化交流國際研討會, Hong Kong: The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. June 6-7, 2019.

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towards a more tricky question: how the western concept of “democracy” was transformed as an anti-Western political phrase in modern China.

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Especially, I wish to dedicate my thesis to my grandfather and earliest mentor in literature, Xu Hanmin (1939-2019). He gave me my beautiful Chinese name, taught me to appreciate Chinese art, revised my earliest creative essays, encouraged me to publish literary work. I will cherish forever these memories that we shared

together. I also feel fortunate to be his granddaughter. All my thoughts and writings are credited to him, ever and forever.

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## CHAPTER I Introduction

### Beyond the Treason: Zheng Xiaoxu's Conservative Revolution by Means of Culture

This thesis begins with the premise that the “Han traitor” (*Hanjian* 漢奸) Zheng Xiaoxu 鄭孝胥 was a modern statesman and traditional literati, who launched a conservative revolution to save China by means of reinventing Chinese learning and reconstructing Confucian values. The final years of the Qing dynasty and the early period of the Republic of China constituted a crucial phase of unprecedented changes in the Chinese political order. During that period, intellectuals from various quarters and of different persuasions attempted to find ways to cope with the numerous domestic and foreign challenges troubling China. While the demise of the emperorship and the birth of the “first republic in Asia” in 1911 made the monarchical system irrelevant to the nation’s collective destiny, it also ushered China into a chaotic political vacuum that lapsed into factional struggles and warlordism. Under these circumstances, neither the weak Republican government nor any other social institutions were able to replace the imperial system that had been dismantled.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, Chinese intellectuals’ public debates over fundamental concepts such as sovereignty (*zhuquan* 主權), the public (*gong* 公), rights (*quan* 權) and citizens (*guomin* 國民) – which appeared in late-Qing newspapers and journals – amounted to an exercise in imagining a new nation-state. Peter G. Zarrow emphasized the role of Chinese intellectuals in envisioning the nature of the state, and in developing varying attitudes towards kingship, both of which contributed to the creation of a new ideological system at the turn of the

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<sup>1</sup> Klaus Mühlhahn, *Making China Modern: From the Great Qing to Xi Jinping* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019), 209.



twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> However, because of Zheng's collaboration with the Japanese in the establishment of Manchukuo in the 1930s, his critical reconsideration of Meiji Japan's modernization process and the revolutionary political theory of *wangdao* 王道 (the "Kingly Way") were stigmatized and subsequently relegated to a long-standing oblivion.<sup>3</sup>

Rather than scrutinizing how a traditional scholar-official transformed himself into a Japanese collaborator, or investigating whether or not we should treat Zheng as a traitor, this thesis intends to argue that Zheng's political philosophy functioned as nothing less than a "cultural-intellectual approach" to saving China from socio-political chaos and cultural crisis by rejuvenating Confucian learning and reconstructing traditional Chinese structures of "feeling."<sup>4</sup> More specifically, based upon Zarrow's observation on the role of Chinese intellectuals in this historical

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Zarrow, *After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State, 1885-1924* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 1-23.

<sup>3</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu's political position in Manchukuo was ambiguous. Although as the first Prime Minister of Manchukuo, Zheng organized several cultural and educational activities to revive the "learning of Confucius and Mencius" (*kongmeng zhixue* 孔孟之學) and designed textbooks to preach the theory of *wangdao*, he could not wield any real power in state politics. However, Zheng always attempted to liberate Manchukuo from the Guandong Army's interference and transform it into an independent state under the name of the "international supervision" (*guoji gongguan* 國際公館). In May 1935, because Zheng expressed his dissatisfaction with Japanese dictatorial control over Manchukuo in public, he was dismissed from his post. With Japanese support, Zhang Jinghui 張景惠 replaced him as the second prime minister, remaining in office until the decay of Manchukuo in 1945. Mori Noriko 森紀子, *Tenkanki ni okeru Chūgoku jukyō undo* 轉換期における中国儒教運動 [The Chinese Confucian movement in an age of transition] (Kyōto-shi : Kyōto Daigaku Gakujutsu Shuppankai, 2005), 205-207; Li Jun 李君, *1931nian qian Zheng Xiaoxu* 1931年前鄭孝胥 [Zheng Xiaoxu before 1931] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2018), 303-304; Qin Yanchun 秦燕春, *Qingmo Minchu de wan Ming xiangxiang* 清末民初的晚明想象 [The imagination of late Ming in late imperial China] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008), 154; Zhao Qiuping 趙秋萍, "Shilun Zheng Xiaoxu de wangdao sixiang" 試論鄭孝胥的王道思想 [A study of Zheng Xiaoxu's *wangdao*] (master's thesis, Dongbei shifan daxue, 2015), 23-24.

<sup>4</sup> As for the phrase "cultural-intellectualistic approach," Lin Yusheng famously commented that in late imperial China, the first and second generation of the Chinese intelligentsia both held a strong belief that cultural revolution was the foundation for other changes in society. He further noted that the prevalence of such approach was attributed to the predisposition of monism and the deep-seated intellectualism in the Chinese traditional culture. See Yusheng Lin, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Antitraditionalism in the May Fourth Era* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 26-30.

transformative period, my thesis attempts to examine how Zheng's proposal was aimed not only at exploring a non-revolutionary alternative to transforming imperial China into a modern state, but also at overcoming the travails of modern materialism and the western quasi-religious paradigm of "nation-state." In addition to the aforementioned concept of *wangdao*, Zheng's proposal included the concepts of "international supervision" (*gongguan lun* 共管論), the "three *gong*(s)" (*sangong lun* 三共論) (referring to republicanism [*gonghe* 共和,] communism [*gongchan* 共產] and international supervision [*gongguan* 共管]), and his politicized interpretation of the competition between "Chinese script" (*Hanzi* 漢字)/"Chinese learning" (*Hanxue* 漢學) and "Western methods" 西法 (*xifa*), and finally, his involvement in the foundation of Manchukuo.

A native of Minhou 閩侯 county in Fujian province, Zheng Xiaoxu (1860–1938; courtesy name, Sukan 蘇戡; style name, Taiyi 太夷; also known by his studio names, *Yeqi anzhu* 夜起庵主 or *Zhizu zhai* 止足齋) was born in Suzhou in 1860. Under the educational supervision of his grand-uncle Zheng Shigong 鄭世恭, Zheng received scholarly training, beginning with the *Erya* 爾雅 and other Confucian classics when he was only four years old. Before serving as a secretary in Li Hongzhang's 李鴻章 unofficial advisory board (*mufu* 幕府) in 1885 and becoming a member of the Grand Secretariat (*neige zhongshu* 內閣中書) in 1890, he ranked as the first-place candidate (*jiyuan* 解元) in Fujian's provincial examination in 1882. In 1891, he was appointed as an attaché to Japan with Li Jingfang 李經方, the adopted son of Li Hongzhang, who was the Chinese Ambassador to Japan at the

time, and worked as a secretary (*shuji guan* 書記官) in the Qing legation in Tokyo.<sup>5</sup> In the following years, Zheng was promoted to the position of diplomatic administrator (*lishi guan* 理事官) in Kobe and Osaka, and established close relationships with Japanese politicians and scholars. After the First Sino-Japanese War, he returned to Nanjing and was appointed as a supervisor (*jiansi* 監司) in Zhang Zhidong's 張之洞 Self-Strengthening Army (*Ziqiang jun* 自強軍). As a member of Zhang Zhidong's *mufu*, Zheng Xiaoxu made great contributions to the Self-Strengthening Movement, providing valuable insights into the development of commerce, the building of railways and the training of this new army. Gradually, Zheng became a spokesperson for Zhang Zhidong's political reforms, and played a crucial role in developing his philosophy of *Zhongti xiyong* 中體西用 ("Chinese culture as essence and Western learning as practice").<sup>6</sup>

Zheng's political talent was further revealed in 1898. He started to hold the position of the secretary of the Office for the Management of All Foreign Affairs (*Zongli yamen* 總理衙門), the Guangxi Frontier Defence Commissioner (*Guangxi bianfang dachen* 廣西邊防大臣), and the Hunan Provincial Administration Commissioner (*Hunan buzhengshi* 湖南布政使). At the same time, he also threw himself into several important political reform movements (e.g. the Hundred Days'

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<sup>5</sup> After being adopted by Li Hongzhang, Li Jingfang worked as a secretary for his adoptive father. In 1882, he obtained the second highest degree (*juren* 舉人) in the imperial examination and was then appointed to work in the Office of the Beiyang Ministry. Thanks to his knowledge of English, Li's role in the foreign affairs of the Qing empire became gradually more important. From 1886 to 1892, Li conducted diplomatic duties in the Qing legations in Britain and Japan. In March 1895, he also participated in the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki which was led by Li Hongzhang. James Z. Gao, *Historical Dictionary of Modern China (1800-1949)* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 192.

<sup>6</sup> Zhu Jing 朱靜, "Qingmo minchu Zheng Xiaoxu shehui jiaoyi tanjiu" 清末民初鄭孝胥社會交誼探究 [The study of social relations of Zheng Xiaoxu from the late Qing to Republican China] (master's thesis, Huazhong shifan daxue, 2014), 21-23.

Reform and the New Policies of the late Qing dynasty) and won acclaim for promoting the construction of Jinzhou-Aihui Railway (*Jin Ai tielu* 錦瓊鐵路). In 1911, the fall of the Qing dynasty caused by the Xinhai Revolution provoked cultural and ethical frustration among the traditionalist literati. Similar to Chen Sanli 陳三立 and other Qing loyalists, Zheng chose retirement in the Shanghai concession where he owned a tasteful estate – the Haicang House (*Haicanglou* 海藏樓) – and voiced his determination to break with China’s Republican government. In 1923, he began to act as one of Emperor Pu Yi’s 溥儀 principal advisers on the reform of the imperial household. Owing to of the “Beijing Coup” (*Beijing zhengbian* 北京政變) in 1924, Pu Yi was expelled from the Forbidden City and was deprived of his title of emperor, which prompted Zheng and other late-Qing loyalists to begin the restoration of the monarchy and cooperate with the Japanese ultranationalist Kokuryukai (Black Dragon Society, or Amur River Society), and other Japanese officials.<sup>7</sup> In 1932, after installing Henry Pu Yi as the first ruler in Manchukuo under Japanese power, Zheng Xiaoxu assumed the office of the first Prime Minister and borrowed spiritual and ethical legitimacy from the Confucian concept of *wangdao* for Manchukuo.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The *Beijing zhengbian* referred to a military coup launched on 23 October, 1924 by Feng Yuxiang 馮玉祥 against Cao Kun 曹錕 and Wu Peifu 吳佩孚, two leaders of the “Zhili clique” (*Zhili junfa* 直隸軍閥). It usurped the dominant power of Beijing government from the Zhili clique to the “Fengtian clique” (*fengxi junfa* 奉系軍閥) with the establishment of the National Army (*guominjun* 國民軍). Moreover, after the coup, the amendment of “The Articles of Special Treatment on Qing Court” (*Qingshi youdai tiaojian* 清室優待條件) supported by Feng Yuxiang and Beijing government, directly resulted in the abolishing of Pu Yi’s title as the Qing Emperor and the expelling of his family from the Forbidden City. Therefore, the dethronement of Pu Yi in the Beijing Coup was considered by and large as the complete symbolic ending of the Qing. See S.K. Lim, *Modern Chinese History 1840 to 1949* (Singapore: Asiapac Books, 2012), 83. Zarrow, *After Empire*, 242.

<sup>8</sup> Regarding the biographical introduction of Zheng Xiaoxu’ life events and political career, see the recollections of Zheng’s grandson’s: Zheng Yingda 鄭穎達, and Qian Wanyue 錢婉約, “Huiyi zufu Zheng Xiaoxu jiqi ersun” 回憶祖父鄭孝胥及其兒孫 [Recall grandfather Zheng Xiaoxu and his descendents], *Ajia bunka kōryū kenkyū* (March 2008): 487-497. Zheng’s biography edited by Ye Shen 葉參, Chen Bangzhi 陳邦植 and Dang Yangzhou 黨庠周 was the first work that recorded his life experiences in detail; see Ye Shen, Chen Bangzhi, and Dang Yangzhou, *Zheng Xiaoxu zhuan* 鄭孝胥

According to the *a posteriori* moral reasoning of orthodox Chinese historiography, it is not surprising that historians have been inclined to see Zheng as a Han traitor, due to his collaboration with the Japanese in the 1930s. Yet, Zheng indeed harboured the rhetoric to save China. Before 1911, in the face of the menace posed by foreign colonialists, he actively participated in several national politico-economic reforms that aimed at rejuvenating late-Qing China. Zheng Xiaoxu loathed the party-state system and class struggle, hence he warned that the Xinhai Revolution and Communism threaten to destroy the national order.<sup>9</sup> He further thought that “China’s adoption of the Republicanism brought about nothing but incessant chaos.”<sup>10</sup> He believed that desire for material development, obsession with technical progress, prevalence of Western new learning, and blind interest in modern law, held the devastating potential to foster racial competition, moral degeneration and international wars. More importantly, in Zheng’s eyes, a lack of the spirit of *wangdao* had led to the prevalence of egoism in contemporary society, and was the reason that the Chinese Republic became a clumsy follower of European and American capitalist countries.<sup>11</sup> Unlike the mainstream Qing elites who admired Western modernity in the early twentieth century, Zheng Xiaoxu’s political pursuit

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傳 [Zheng Xiaoxu: A biography] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1989), 1-57. For a recent assessment on Zheng Xiaoxu’s political achievement, refer to Xu Linjiang 徐臨江, *Zheng Xiaoxu qianbansheng pingzhuan* 鄭孝胥前半生評傳 [Critical biography of the first half of Zheng Xiaoxu’s life] (Shanghai: xuelin chubanshe, 2003), 1-247.

<sup>9</sup> Tei Kōsho 鄭孝胥, *Ōdō seiji shidō genre: Kōkyō shinpen shakugi* 王道政治指導原理：孔教新編釋義 [Guiding principles of *wangdao* politics: New interpretation on Confucianism retold], trans. Nomura Zuihō (Tokyo: Fukagawa Boshien Shuppanbu, 1934), 91-93.

<sup>10</sup> Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, “Jiechuan longzhijie shi de zhongguoguan” 芥川龍之介的中國觀 [Akutagawa Ryūnosuke’s view on China], *Chenbao fukan*, June 12, 1926, 27.

<sup>11</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, “Manzhou Hangkong zhushi huishe chengli zhuci” 滿洲航空株式會社成立祝辭 [Congratulatory speech on the establishment of Manchukuo National Airways], in *Zheng Xiaoxu zhuan*, 41; Zheng Xiaoxu, “Di’erhui jiaoyu huiyi xunci” 第二回教育會議訓辭 [Official speech at the Second Educational Conference], in *Zheng Xiaoxu zhuan*, 44-45; Zheng Xiaoxu, “Riman facao xiehui zhuci” 日滿法曹協會祝辭 [Congratulatory speech at the Japanese-Manchurian Bar Association], in *Zheng Xiaoxu zhuan*, 48-49; Zheng Xiaoxu, “Wangdao guangyi” 王道廣義 [*Wangdao* in a broad sense], in *Zheng Xiaoxu zhuan*, 67-69; Zheng Xiaoxu, “Wangdao yu kexue zhi guanxi” 王道與科學之關係 [The relationship of *Wangdao* and science], in *Zheng Xiaoxu zhuan*, 71-72.

revealed an alternative response to the foreign colonialist challenge and approach to overcoming the material superiority of the West.

To redraw the contours of Zheng Xiaoxu's political career, several crucial questions must be addressed. Firstly, why did Zheng Xiaoxu chart a self-discordant narrative of Meiji Japan, that encompassed both his enthusiasm with Japanese material modernization and his aversion to the Japanese constitutional monarchy and parliamentarianism? Secondly, in the face of derision by Japanese sinologists toward contemporary China and *Hanshi* 漢詩 (Chinese poetry) – via *bitan* 筆談 (“brush talking” or “brush conversation”) – how had he reinvented *Hanxue* as a counter-concept of *xifa* to repudiate Meiji Japan's Westernization? Thirdly, what is the underlying continuity between Zheng Xiaoxu's musings on *Hanxue*, his initiatives after China's defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War and his political theory of *wangdao*? Finally, in the post-May Fourth context, how did Zheng Xiaoxu's *wangdao*, a dead Confucian concept, function as “a Confucian structure of feeling” to recreate new Chinese morality and civilization, and how was it practiced as a (trans-)national ideology of state sovereignty in Manchuria designed to compete with Republican China?<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, this thesis will also explore why Zheng's *wangdao* failed to endow Manchukuo with a nationhood capable of unifying different races.

Despite Zheng's failure to save China, his political attempts, as this thesis proposes, offered a typical example of how a conservative intellectual utilized

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<sup>12</sup> The “Confucian feeling structure,” in Lee Haiyan's 李海燕 elucidation, is a counterintuitive formulation and constitutes as a “dispersed element of modernity,” which emphasizes feeling as the most fundamental value to human existence, transforms morality into “subjectively meaningful experience,” and dramatizes the tangled relationship between the family and the state. Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 15.

ancient Chinese resources to conduct a cosmopolitan anti-capitalist and anti-colonialist programme in East Asia during the early twentieth century. Therefore, this study specifically investigates the intellectual source, development, and limitations of Zheng Xiaoxu's political theory, and explores how his anti-modern perception of Meiji Japan was embodied in his contribution to the building of Manchukuo, whilst asking questions about revolution, modernity, aestheticization of nation and East Asian values.

### ***Hanjian*, Collaborator's Nationalism and Zheng Xiaoxu's Imagination of New Asia**

(1) Who is a *Hanjian*?: a modern anxiety of Chinese national identity

Before interpreting Zheng Xiaoxu's political philosophy, this section tries to unfold how and why Zheng was depicted as a *Hanjian* during the early twentieth century. Furthermore, the relationship between the mass sentiment and the discourse of *Hanjian* during the rise of modern print culture in Republican China will also be discussed.

The term *Hanjian* had existed for a long time in Chinese history, however, its meaning had shifted on various occasions. In late imperial China, it revealed a modern anxiety about Chinese national identity. According to the *Cihai* 辭海, a large-scale standard Chinese dictionary-encyclopaedia, *Hanjian* was initially used to describe "scum of the Han race" (*Hanzu de bailei* 漢族的敗類) but later came to signify those who collaborated with foreign colonialists and crippled China's national interests.<sup>13</sup> From a semantic perspective, as Frederic Wakeman Jr. once

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<sup>13</sup> Xia Zhongnong 夏征農 ed., *Cihai* [Sea of words] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1999), 2: 2475.

pointed out, “you have to be Han in order to be a *hanjian*.”<sup>14</sup> As an epithet in the Chinese political discourse, the ever-changing meaning of *Hanjian* evokes some fundamental questions in the definition of Chinese national community, the relationship between the individual and the state, and finally, what it means to be a “Chinese.”<sup>15</sup> Wang Ke’s pioneering overhaul of the shifting connotations of *Hanjian* in Chinese history reminds us that during the late-Qing period, *Hanjian* referred to people who betray the interest of the Han Chinese group (*Hanzu*) 漢族, a modern concept that emerged from anti-Manchu sentiments. The radical nationalist revolutionaries aimed to establish a new China, a single Han-ethnic state. In other words, the rhetoric of *Hanjian* functioned primarily as an ideological tool to achieve the establishment of a modern Chinese nation-state.<sup>16</sup> Through Zheng’s diary, it is not surprising that the first instance in which Zheng was called a *Hanjian* can be traced back to a threatening leaflet from some self-proclaimed revolutionaries on December 4, 1911.<sup>17</sup> Thus, from the very beginning the judgment of Zheng Xiaoxu as a *Hanjian* was a product of the construction of the racial identity of *Hanzu* people.

Moreover, one cannot overlook the link between media culture and Chinese modernity. As Megan Ferry has noted, the modern print media delivered to China the message of awakening and emancipation, which helped to construct mass culture, to shape people’s perceptions of reality, and to deploy “the power dynamics

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<sup>14</sup> Frederic Wakeman Jr., “*Hanjian* (Traitor)! Collaboration and Retribution in Wartime Shanghai,” in *Becoming Chinese: Passages to Modernity and Beyond*, ed. Yeh Wen-Hsin (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 299.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen John Hurley, “Shame of a Nation: The Evolution of *Hanjian* since the Late Qing” (undergraduate’s thesis, Williamsburg: College of William & Mary, 2012), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Ke Wang, “A Study of ‘Han Traitor’: Discourses from the Dynastic Era to the Formation of the Nation-State,” *Chinese Studies in History* 48, no. 4 (2015): 394-395.

<sup>17</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji* 鄭孝胥日記 [Diary of Zheng Xiaoxu], ed. Lao Zude (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993), 3: 1365.



of a society” in the Republican era.<sup>18</sup> In Joan Judge’s eyes, modern Chinese print culture moulded not only the emerging public opinion, but also the new civic morality in late Qing China.<sup>19</sup> Following their arguments, I would like to consider the attribution of *Hanjian* status to Zheng Xiaoxu in the 1930s to be the direct result of an alliance between the imagination of the nation-state and print politics. For example, in 1932 Gu Sheng 谷聲 published an article to upbraiding Zheng for being the leading character of the *Hanjian* group that helped the Japanese to establish a puppet government in Manchuria, and for his taking pride in being its prime minister, even though Zheng did not hold any real power.<sup>20</sup> Ban Bao 斑豹 adopted the same tone in his essay, “Zheng Xiaoxu’s Pseudo-official Position” (*Zheng Xiaoxu zhi weiguangzhi* 鄭孝胥之偽官職), published in the magazine *Saturday* (*Libailiu* 禮拜六). By calling Zheng a traitor controlled by Japan, Ban Bao castigated him for proposing educational policies that aimed at the “extermination of the race and the nation” in his position as the Minister of Culture and Education in the “pseudo-state” (*weiguo* 偽國) of Manchukuo.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Shuang Ren 霜刃 summarized Zheng’s ineptness in three aspects: pledging loyalty to the abrogated Qing emperor Pu Yi, devoting himself to betraying the country and the nation, and becoming a henchman for Japan.<sup>22</sup> In 1933, the Hebei High court issued a warrant for Zheng Xiaoxu’s arrest, which was published in the magazine *China Revolution* (*Zhongguo geming* 中國革命). It declared that, only through capital punishment of

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<sup>18</sup> Megan M. Ferry, *Chinese Women Writers and Modern Print Culture* (New York: Cambria Press, 2018), 20-23.

<sup>19</sup> Joan Judge, *Print and Politics: ‘Shibao’ and Culture of Reform in Late Qing China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 31, 107.

<sup>20</sup> Gu Sheng [pseud.], “Zheng Xiaoxu jiangsi” 鄭孝胥將死 [Zheng Xiaoxu is dying], *Daya huakan*, no. 335 (December 1932): 1.

<sup>21</sup> Ban Bao [pseud.], “Zheng Xiaoxu zhi weiguangwei,” *Libailiu*, no. 474 (1932): 453-454.

<sup>22</sup> Shuang Ren [pseud.], “Kelian de Zheng Xiaoxu” 可憐的鄭孝胥 [Poor Zheng Xiaoxu], *Wenhua*, no.28 (1932): 13.

Zheng Xiaoxu could other collaborators who worked for Japan in the January 28 Incident and the Defense of the Great Wall (*Changcheng zhanyi* 長城戰役) be deterred and the central (Nanjing) government's determination for national struggle be manifested.<sup>23</sup> More notably, a satirical cartoon entitled "The Prime Minister of Puppet Manchukuo – Zheng Xiaoxu" (*Wei Manzhouguo zongli—Zheng Xiaoxu* 偽滿洲國總理——鄭孝胥) which was incorporated into the preface of Chen Binhe's 陳彬龢 *Manzhou weiguo* 滿洲偽國 (*Puppet Manchukuo*), denounced his very act of selling the nation to Japan in 1945.<sup>24</sup>

During the early Republican era modern Chinese newspapers and popular visual culture – including photos and cartoons – functioned as a visual “vernacular” to channel the nationalist message and create a sense of collective political participation among the populace. Those vulgarly written editorials which described Zheng Xiaoxu as a quisling written in were marshaled in the wider performance of moral trial. They enabled the urban readers to constitute themselves as the spectators in a public courtroom. Thus, what condemnations on Zheng suggest here is modern Chinese newspaper indeed produced an imagined space to evoke mass nationalist sentiment, enhance the negative reference of *Hanjian* and conduct an invisible judgement when the modern judicial system was weak and incapable of being understood by the majority of common people in the early era of Republican China.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> “Tongji Zheng Xiaoxu” 通緝鄭孝胥 [The wanted notice of Zheng Xiaoxu], *Zhongguo geming* 2, no.11 (1933): 27.

<sup>24</sup> Chen Binhe ed., *Manzhou Weiguo* 滿洲偽國 [Puppet Manchukuo] (Shanghai: Riben yanjiu she, 1933), figure 3.

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion on the place of human sentiment (*qing* 情) in modern jurisprudence in the twentieth century, see Eugenia Lean, *Public Passions: the Trial of Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Popular Sympathy in Republican China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 109-112.

The newspaper articles rebuking Zheng's treason emerged not merely in left-wing journals like *Images of the War in the Northeast* (*Dongbei zhanying* 東北戰影) and rightist propagandistic magazines (such as the journal *Zhongguo geming* which maintained that China should be fascisized) but also in bourgeois literary newspapers, for example, *Libailiu* and *Daya huakan*.<sup>26</sup> Thanks to a broad readership, the popular media had the ability to instigate tendentiously, they advanced criticism of Zheng's treason in the first half of the twentieth century and "reinforced the loyalty/betrayal dichotomy that had already been established in recent history of resisting foreign intrusions."<sup>27</sup> To some extent, this proves persuasively that there was a consensus on Zheng Xiaoxu's *Hanjian* identity across varying political partisanships and stances taken by different social classes after the 1930s.

(2) The ideological hegemony of "nation-state" and collaborationist nationalism  
In order to reinforce "a resistentialist narrative of collaboration in Nationalist China" and eliminate the ideological enemies of Jiang Jieshi's regime, the Suzhou political verdict was delivered in the late 1940s against the group of *Hanjian* who once were Wang Jingwei's 汪精衛 associates and collaborated with the Japanese during wartime. The verdict based its legal foundation on the Philippe Pétain trial in France.<sup>28</sup> Since then, *anti-Hanjian* campaigns not merely served to stimulate nationalist sentiments, but were also supported by the legal system under the category of national law and the pursuit of political legitimacy of "nation-state" in

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<sup>26</sup> "Dongbei hanjian zhi mianmu" 東北漢奸之面目 [Appearances of the northeastern Han traitors], *Dongbei zhanying*, no.2 (1911): 3.

<sup>27</sup> Yun Xia, "Traitors to the Chinese Race (*hanjian*): Political and Cultural Campaigns Against Collaborators During the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945," (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2010), 23.

<sup>28</sup> Margherita Zanasi, "Globalizing Hanjian: The Suzhou Trials and the Post-World War II Discourse on Collaboration," *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 3 (June 2008): 746-750.

modern China. Later, the moral denunciation on Zheng Xiaoxu's recreancy appeared in popular newspapers in Republican China, which was in turn solidified in contemporary Chinese historical literature after 1949. The linear historiography of *Zheng-as-Hanjian* was bolstered by the imagined narrative of "nation-state" that supposed the existence of a modern state founded by a united single nation superior over individuals, political parties, and any secular organizations. In order to rethink his role in modern Chinese revolution, I will examine the limitations of the use of "nation-state" as a discursive paradigm in the judgment passed on Zheng Xiaoxu.

While a Chinese identity marked by Confucian ritual and a patriarchal family system had existed for a long time prior to the fall of the Qing dynasty, the modern notion of the Chinese nation-state was not created until the early twentieth century. Yet, constructing "Chinese-ness" entwined the dual ideological process of nation-building and state-building, which incorporated various interpretations of nation and state as perceived by different social groups.<sup>29</sup> A "Han-centred" national identity was no more than a discursive representation of a "nation" of China. Furthermore, at that time, there was not a strong state either, but rather a strong statist discourse in China, as Prasenjit Duara has observed.<sup>30</sup> In other words, it was untenable to denounce Zheng Xiaoxu as a *Hanjian* as there was not a unified Han China with a legitimate sovereignty to be betrayed. The weakness of Republican China not only lay in material civilization and military power, but also in sovereign legitimacy. More specifically, due to the compromise between the northern imperial court and the southern revolutionists that characterized the establishment of Republican China that started with revolutionary uprisings and ended with the conservative abdication from

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<sup>29</sup> Peter Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895-1949* (London: Routledge, 2005), 55-57.

<sup>30</sup> Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 170.

the Qing empire, was doomed to shake the sovereign legitimacy of the Republic itself.<sup>31</sup>

Admittedly, within a progressivist and nationalist outlook, it is inevitable that Zheng's involvement in crafting Manchukuo and his advocacy for "international supervision" became a conspicuous indication of his treason. Nevertheless, even though Zheng envisioned Manchukuo as an independent state breaking with Republican China, he never advocated a permanent withdrawal of Manchuria from China proper. Rather, as an alternative solution to rescue China from disorderly warlordism and brutal foreign colonialism, Manchukuo might be understood as Zheng's last attempt to recover a China-centred Asian order. In other words, Zheng's approach was similar to the ones taken by other collaborators who also proposed nationalist manifestos to reconstruct a New China, and also devoted themselves to establishing puppet regimes sponsored by the Japanese during the 1930s. Some examples include the Reformed Government of the Republic of China (1938–1940) in Nanjing under Liang Hongzhi's 梁鴻志 leadership, and the Provisional Government of the Republic of China (1937–1940) in Beijing under Wang Kemin's 王克敏 leadership. Zheng Xiaoxu indeed developed a "collaborationist nationalism" to overcome the Guomindang's supposedly-orthodox ideology and the Communists' drastic national imagination while embracing the traditional Confucianism and Oriental cultural spirit as its core political representation.<sup>32</sup> To a certain extent,

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<sup>31</sup> Zhang Yongle 章永樂, *Jiubang xinzhao, 1911-1917* 舊邦新造：1911-1917 [The remaking of an old country, 1911-1917] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2011), 51; Zarrow, *After Empire*, 238.

<sup>32</sup> The term "collaborationist nationalism," coined by Timothy Brook, refers to "a historically specific form of late colonial ideology," and helps us to trace Zheng Xiaoxu's political philosophy after 1911. In Brook's view, Chinese collaborators who adopted the nationalist assertion always pursued the possibility of "reforming and restoring the to an original and purer condition." See Timothy Brook, "Collaborationist Nationalism in Occupied Wartime China," in *Nation Work: Asian Elites and National Identities*, eds. Timothy Brook and Andre Schmid (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 161-163.

Zheng's "selling out" of his country suggested that the function and the implication of state could be practiced in a different way during the war time.<sup>33</sup>

As Yumi Moon has suggested, collaborators were those who "failed to justify the validity of their choices more broadly among the occupied."<sup>34</sup> Based on her definition of "collaborators," this thesis holds that the reason why Zheng Xiaoxu was viewed as a collaborator was that he did not manage to save China in accordance with his ideology, not because his political proposal inherently involved betraying the interests of his country. Therefore, this thesis focuses on exploring not only why and how he leveraged "ethical" motives for saving China to justify his support for Japanese colonial rule, but also why his "logic of collaboration," namely, "dependence in order to preserve independence," ultimately backfired.

### (3) From Manzhou to Manchuria: the railway and a new Asia

Zheng Xiaoxu's turn to collaboration with Japanese colonialists in founding Manchukuo was not an opportunistic act. In order to explore Zheng's "logic of collaboration" and thus to map out a full-scale picture of his political philosophy, it is necessary to note that, prior to the Xinhai Revolution of 1911, he had already constructed a northeast (Dongbei 東北)-centered Asian blueprint to save Qing China.<sup>35</sup> Thus, what becomes explicit is that to Zheng, the founding of Manchukuo

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<sup>33</sup> Dongyoun Hwang, "Wartime Collaboration in Question: An Examination of the Postwar Trials of the Chinese Collaborators," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 6, no.1 (2005): 92.

<sup>34</sup> Yumi Moon, *Populist Collaborators: The Ilchinhoe and the Japanese Colonization of Korea, 1896–1910* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 5.

<sup>35</sup> Geographically, Zheng's usage of "Manzhou" denoted the northeast China areas and the northeastern parts of Inner Mongolia, which almost overlapped with the Japanese terminology of "Manchuria" (Manshū 滿州) that was first applied in Takahashi Kageyasu's 高橋景保 *Outline Map of Japan's Frontiers (Nippon Henkai Ryakuzu 日本邊界略圖)* in 1809. However, at a political level, "Manzhou" was at odds with "Manchuria," as the latter is an imperialistic product, coexisting with Manchuria-Mongolia (Man-mō 滿蒙), which appeared widely in the Japanese colonialist plan to encroach East Asia and subsequently in the Western media, especially after the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. According to Thomas Lahusen, the strive to name the Northeast region implied that the region was not merely a space of contest but also "an allegory of a much large and ominous phenomenon: that of the survival, until today, of the old imperial and colonials desires for expansion

was not a completely disgraceful and dirty deal between the speculator and the foreign invader, but rather a continuation of his previous imaged rejuvenation of China and Asia, which will be further discussed below.

The competition for the northeast of China has always been a focal point of modern Asian history, which in turn sowed the seeds of international tension among Russia, Japan and other Western powers in the early twentieth century. In 1904, the Russian southward expansion into northeast China was considered to pose a threat to Japan's national security and its political interests in Korea, resulting in the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. On September 5, 1905, the war was ended by the conclusion of the Treaty of Portsmouth and the Russian imperialists' concessions of the Liaodong Peninsula and partial ceding of Sakhalin Island. Following the Japanese takeover of the Chinese Eastern Railway north to Changchun and its accompanying coal mines from the Russians, and the acquisition of two ice-free ports, Lüshun and Dalian, Japan was thereafter gradually acknowledged as a legitimate power in Manchuria.<sup>36</sup> In 1906, Japan's South Manchuria Railway Company (*Mantetsu* 満鉄, abbreviated as the SMR) was founded to cover the duties of public welfare and local industries, the promotion of education and scientific research, and the improvement of civil administration and economic development in

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and 'living space.'" Thus, in this thesis, upon exploring on Zheng's musings on the Asian identification, the term "Manzhou" will be employed instead of "Manchuria" in order to avoid some unnecessary preconceived political confusions. Mariko AsanoTamanoi, introduction to *Crossed Histories: Manchuria in the Age of Empire*, ed. Mariko AsanoTamanoi (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 1-3; Thomas Lahusen, "Colonized Colonizers: the Poles of Manchuria," in *Crossed Histories*, 151-152; Junko Miyawaki – Okada, "What 'Manju' Was in the Beginning and When It Grew into a Place-name," in *Tumen Jalafun Jecen Aku: Manchu Studies in Honour of Giovanni Stary*, eds. Alessandra Pozzi, Juha Antero Janhunen, Michael Weiers (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 159-160.

<sup>36</sup> S.C.M. Paine, "The Chinese Eastern Railway from the First Sino-Japanese War until the Russo-Japanese War," in *Manchurian Railways and the Opening of China: An International History*, eds. Bruce A. Elleman and Stephen Kotkin (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2010), 24-26.

the "railway zone."<sup>37</sup> Despite its somewhat duplicitous admixture of "private, joint-stock corporation" and "state-privileged" authority, the primary mission of the company was "the financially self-sufficient operation, maintenance, and expansion of the railway line."<sup>38</sup> Parallel to the Guandong Army's military surveillance, the SMR attracted plenty of Japanese civilian expatriates and private investment, and gradually achieved large dominance in the Guandong Leased Territory, even though it worsened Japan's diplomatic relations with China, Russia, and other Western powers like the U.S., it laid the foundation for the colonialist construction of Manchukuo in the 1930s.<sup>39</sup>

Emerging as an imperialist technology, iron rails created ambiguous areas of "sovereignty" in semi-colonial China, extending the power of foreign colonists from the coastal enclaves to the interior, and making military control and commercial transportation more feasible.<sup>40</sup> It was under this environment of international competition for control over railway lines in the northeast of China that Zheng embarked on his narrative of new Asia and "new Manzhou." In 1909, Xi Liang 錫良 succeeded Xu Shichang 徐世昌 as the Viceroy of the so-called "Three Northeast Provinces" (*Dongsansheng zongdu* 東三省總督), who continued Xu's ruling policy of "opening up" and "balance of power" in the area. Observing that the railways in the northeast had already been "carved up" by Russia and Japan, Xi Liang was

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<sup>37</sup> M. Royama, "The South Manchuria Railway Zone: and the Nature of Its Administration," *Pacific Affairs* 3, no. 11 (November, 1930), 1020-1025; Shinkichi Etō, "China's International Relations 1911-1931," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 13: Republican China 1912-1949, Part 2*, eds. John K. Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 89-90.

<sup>38</sup> Y. Tak Matsusaka, "Japan's South Manchuria Railway Company in Northeast China, 1906-34," in *Manchurian Railways and the Opening of China*, 37-41.

<sup>39</sup> Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 29-35.

<sup>40</sup> Bruce A. Elleman, Elisabeth Köll and Y. Tak Matsusaka, introduction to *Manchurian Railways and the Opening of China*, 6-7.



acutely aware of the necessity of securing international supervision of Dongbei's railroads through foreign capital loans, therefore, the plan to build the Jinzhou-Aihui railway was incubated based on American investment.<sup>41</sup> On February 8, 1910, invited by Xi Liang and Cheng Dequan 程德全, Zheng Xiaoxu made his departure northward from Shanghai to Fengtian and enthusiastically participated in drafting the twenty articles of loans and contract labour during the negotiation with the American investment banker and diplomat Willard Dickerman Straight in the following months. Simultaneously, it is worth noting that Zheng even performed comprehensive research on Dongbei from the perspectives of geography, history, demography and Russian and Japanese economic permeation. Several editorials concerning Manzhou's rail-lines and the impediments to the establishment of Jinzhou-Aihui railway were both published and mentioned in his personal diary, where he mourned that without state sovereignty, Manzhou would get caught in endless wars and chaos.<sup>42</sup>

More saliently, before the 1911 Revolution, Zheng already associated the Asian identity with the imagination of new Manzhou. At the turn of the twentieth century, "Asia" was "an ideal elite construct" that witnessed the emergency of a global consciousness of China's position in the world among modern Chinese intellectuals.<sup>43</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu firmly believed that "in the twentieth century, the great things under heaven will only happen in Asia" (*ershi shiji tianxia dashi weizai Yazhou* 二十世紀天下大事惟在亞洲), suggesting that this would include the rise of a new India and a new Manzhou.<sup>44</sup> Talking with Lu Weishi 陸偉士, Zheng exhorted

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<sup>41</sup> Li Jun, *1931nian qian Zheng Xiaoxu*, 137-139.

<sup>42</sup> Xu, *Zheng Xiaoxu qianbangsheng pingzhuàn*, 227-229; Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 3: 1234.

<sup>43</sup> Rebecca E. Karl, "Creating Asia: China in the World at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century," *The American Historical Review* 103, no.4 (Oct., 1998), 1117-1118.

<sup>44</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 3:1222.

that as an Asian during this century, it is appropriate to discern Asia's current political position in world affairs. If, China is capable of constructing a railway network running through Asia, then Qing dynasty's repressed plight will be subverted and intruders' businesses in Asia also will be slashed and may even be utilized by China.<sup>45</sup> Hence, to him, the significance of China's self-management of the Jinzhou-Aihui railroad was that it would not only destroy Russia-Japanese monopoly in the economy and transportation of the northeast, but also integrate the three north-eastern provinces together to establish a new Manzhou, contributing to the emancipation of China from foreign imperialistic exploitation, and in turn empowering China as the leader of Asia (that would share power with Russia, the leader of Europe).<sup>46</sup>

What Zheng's idea of "international supervision" on Dongbei/Manzhou ignored was the hidden, collusive relationship between transnational capital and foreign imperialism. His vision of borrowing from the U.S. to nationalize Qing China's railways and cripple other imperial powers' political and military aggression proved to be a ridiculous daydream, because he overlooked the nature of the American investment as a reliable financial aid. Yet, as for the United States, financial support for the Qing government's construction of the railway was no more than part of the "dollar diplomacy" headed by President Taft and Secretary of State Philander C. Knox, an informally expansionist but seemingly "idealistic humanitarian" policy "substituting dollars for bullets," so that American banks and

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 3: 1181; 1272-1273; Xu, *Zheng Xiaoxu qianbangsheng pingzhuan*, 229-230.

<sup>46</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 3:1326-1327.

industrialists enabled to pump American investment into the economic vacuums of Manchuria to crack down Russian hegemony in the Far East.<sup>47</sup>

Though the proposal of Jinzhou-Aihui railway was ultimately abortive due to the serious impediments from Russia and Japan as well as negative responses from Britain and Germany, Zheng's comprehension of foreign assistance and Asian identification resembles his understanding of Manchukuo in the 1930s.

As a great colonial laboratory based upon Zhang Xueliang's warlord regime, to Japanese power-holders, Manchukuo imitated modern nondemocratic governmentality – such as fascist Italy and Nazi Germany – and also borrowed the blueprint of Meiji Japan, which embraced several socio-political experiments – including racial harmonizing, a planned economy, and urban planning mainly influenced by Haussmann's renovation of Paris in the nineteenth century and Ebenezer Howard's theory of "Garden cities" – under the rubric of "the Great East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere."<sup>48</sup> However, at the same time, it also was an intellectual experimental field that Zheng Xiaoxu developed his *gongguan lun* to his "wangdao-ism." He hence held that Japanese colonist power was a reliable resource to liberate north-eastern people from suffering the warlord dogfight and the Republican government's despotic dictatorship. To take his jubilant statement that the Great

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<sup>47</sup> Zhao Donghui 趙冬暉 and Sun Yuling 孫玉玲 eds., *Kunan yu douzheng shisi nian 苦難與鬥爭十四年* [Fourteen years of suffering and struggle] (Beijing: Zhongguo dabaikē quanshu chubanshe, 1995), 1: 12-16. As for the historical origin and the development of "dollar policy" in the early twentieth century, see Martin J. Sklar, *The United States as a Developing Country: Studies in U.S. History in the Progressive Era and the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 78-101.

<sup>48</sup> Suk-Jung Han, "Those Who Imitated the Colonizers: the Legacy of the Disciplining State from Manchukuo to South Korea," in *Crossed Histories*, 165-166; Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 65-73. As for Manchukuo's city planning, see Koshizawa Akira 越澤明, *Wei Manzhouguo shoudu guihua 偽滿洲國首都規劃* [Manchukuo capital planning], trans. Ou Shuo 歐碩 (Beijing: shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2011), 80-169. Moreover, the aspect that how Manchukuo's urban architecture embodied its political ideology of *wangdao* has also received scholarly attention. See Yishi Liu, "Competing Visions of the Modern: Urban Transformation and Social Change of Changchun, 1932-1937" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2011), 1-28.

Empire of Japan or the friendly nation (*youbang* 友邦) recognized Manchukuo as an independent state as an example, it is evident that Zheng turned the problem of Japanese colonization into a question of “justice” (*zhangyi* 仗義).<sup>49</sup> When Zheng’s “new Manzhou” was transformed into Japan’s “new Manchuria” resisting the Euramerica-centred capitalism, the Chinese communism as well as the western colonialism, his slogan of “Manchuria-ism” (*Manzhou zhuyi* 滿洲主義) and “Manchuria’s new state” (*Manzhou xin guojia* 滿洲新國家) was ineptly destined to sew up the fatal breach between the reality of violent colonial occupation and the ideal of “trans-national” political fellowship.<sup>50</sup> Manchukuo was rarely viewed as an orthodox, sovereign state with regards to its legitimacy. However, its existence unearthed a subtle conundrum of modern politics, whether it is engineering an oppressed colonial empire or an independent nation-state. For the purpose of fostering a strong national loyalty, the question becomes that of achieving a fair balance between the following two factors. First, (trans-)national exploitative capitalistic hierarchy; second, the universal equivalence of the sentimental identification.

### **Conservative Revolution by Means of Culture: Overcoming Western Capitalism and East Asian Values as an Alternative to Modernity**

Before summarizing the previous studies on Zheng Xiaoxu and outlining the contents of the next three chapters, this section will first elaborate on how one should understand Zheng Xiaoxu’s political choice and ideological philosophy as an

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<sup>49</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, “Chengren jinian yanci” 承認紀念演辭 [Commemorative speech for recognition], in *Zheng Xiaoxu zhuan*, 43-44.

<sup>50</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, “Manzhou jianguo suyuan shilue” 滿洲建國溯源史略 [The brief history tracing the origin on Manchukuo building], in *Wei Manzhouguo shiliao* 偽滿洲國史料 [Historical materials on puppet Manchukuo], eds. Shi Lizhen 石麗珍 and Wang Zhimin 王志民 (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuyin zhongxin, 2002), 463-465, 477-481.

conservative revolution to save the nation from both the demotic political disunity brought about by warlordism and the colonization brought about by Western capitalist powers, before going on to develop an understanding of the relationship between Western modernity and East Asian values.

The first question we encounter is how to define the term “conservative revolution.” In early Western history, the word “revolution” was applied in the field of astronomy to describe the eternal recurrent movement of the stars that was uncontrollable and beyond the control of man. In the modern Western sense, “revolution” connotes a process of complete and fundamental change where “the course of history suddenly begins anew,” which contains the eagerness for, and conviction in, novelty.<sup>51</sup> As a representative cross-cultural and trans-lingual practice between Japan and China, when the modern Japanese *kakumei* was translated back to China and accepted by late Qing intellectuals (e.g. Kang Youwei 康有為, Wang Tao 王韜, Zhang Taiyan and Sun Yat-sen 孫中山) positively or negatively, the Chinese *geming* 革命 (revolution) no longer represented the loss of a dynasty’s Heaven mandately in the traditional Confucian context, namely, “replacing the mandate of one dynasty with that of another.”<sup>52</sup> More specifically, in semi-colonized imperial Chinese society, “revolution” signified the questioning of the political legitimacy of the Qing dynasty, evoked the mass consciousness of national salvation, and served as an imagined path to uncover the universal truth about historical progress. Furthermore, it also envisioned a new political system built on violence that

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<sup>51</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1963), 21-42.

<sup>52</sup> Peter G. Zarrow, “Introduction: New Discourses and Everyday Life in Modern China,” in *Creating Chinese Modernity: Knowledge and Everyday Life, 1900-1940*, ed. Peter G. Zarrow (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 10; Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate, A Trilogy, Volume 2: The Problem of Monarchical Decay* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 119-122.

transforms the legal subject from the emperor to the populace.<sup>53</sup> Hence, what was seen as revolutionary was the establishment of Republican China which accomplished a process where “Chinese/nation-state” ousted “Manchu/dynasty,” rather than a dynasty replacing the previous one. Later, the association of revolution with modernity was expressed more clearly among the May Fourth intellectuals and social activists. Leo Ou-fan Lee held that the dichotomies between “new” and “old,” between the “modern” and the “ancient,” and between the “future” and “past” produced a unilinear sense of time and history that is recognized as untraditional and Western.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, undergoing revolution was understood as a necessary step to achieving modernity, which became a common belief in Republican China.<sup>55</sup> To a certain extent, “revolution” was considered to be a euphemistic metaphor to describe the future, newness and progress through the Chinese quest for modern identity, national independence and state-building. In this regard, the formulation of “conservative revolution” seems like an antinomy.

In essence, revolution itself means restoration which involves a primitive impulse to return to the past, the conservative, and the original. When “revolution” was first employed as a political term to call the collapse of the Rump Parliament and the restoration of the monarchical rule in England in 1660, the paradoxical nature of this word appeared. “Revolution” later gained a more precise meaning, signifying the exemption of King James II and the handover of throne to William III

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<sup>53</sup> Chen Jianhua 陳建華, “*Geming*” *de xiandaixing: zhongguo geming huayu kaolun* 「革命」的現代性：中國革命話語考論 [The modernity of ‘geming’: Textual studies on revolution discourses in modern China] (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1992), 23-30.

<sup>54</sup> Leo Ou-fan Lee, “In Search of Modernity: Some Reflections on A New Mode of Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Chinese History and Literature,” in *Ideas Across Cultures: Essays on Chinese Thought in Honor of Benjamin I. Schwartz*, ed. Paul A. Cohen and Merle Goldman (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1990), 110-111.

<sup>55</sup> Chen, “*Geming*” *de xiandaixing*, 164.

and his wife Mary II in 1668, that is, the “Glorious Revolution.”<sup>56</sup> Obviously, this revolution did not destroy the monarchical system, on the contrary, in Edmund Burke’s eyes, it preserved the ancient laws, liberties and the ancient constitution government which is the “only security for law and liberty” for England.<sup>57</sup> Despite the fact that zealous insurrectionists participated enthusiastically in the French and American revolutions, what they pleaded for was to restore the old and more orthodox order that had been violated by the dictatorship of absolute monarch, or the maltreatment of the colonial government, respectively.<sup>58</sup>

Additionally, after the First World War, the rise of “Conservative Revolution” instead offered us a fresh angle to posit Zheng’s political thoughts in global and comparative perspectives. Reinvented by Armin Mohler in his doctoral thesis in 1949, the “Conservative Revolution” hinted at a loose movement that was constitutive of a group of philosophers, writers, journalists and politicians who embraced radical right-wing thoughts and rejected “liberalism, socialism, democracy, and internationalism” in the time of the Weimar Republic.<sup>59</sup> However, “modern techniques of action” and “restorative ideological elements” were characteristic of Germany’s Conservative Revolution, which was different from the traditional Conservatism that solely aimed to return to the monarchy and laid the groundwork of the deep-seated cooperation between conservatives and the Nazi Party.<sup>60</sup> By radicalizing Nietzsche and his writings, it criticized consumerism and

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<sup>56</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, 42-43.

<sup>57</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1951), 29.

<sup>58</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, 43-44.

<sup>59</sup> Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 1.

<sup>60</sup> In Corey Robin’s definition, conservatism is “a meditation on—and theoretical rendition of—the felt experience of having power, seeing it threatened, and trying to win it back.” Martin Broszat, *The Hitler State: The Foundation and Development of the Internal Structure of the Third Reich*, trans, John W. Hiden (London: Longman, 1981), 346; Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4. As for the historical relation between Conservatism and Fascism or Nazism, see Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism:*

*laissez-faire* economy, attempted to transform the mass will into compliance with a noble authority and charismatic leaders, as well as searched for “a new order, a new ethos, and a new unity in the West under German leadership.”<sup>61</sup> Recently, Brian Tsui’s thorough study on the right-wing of the GMD sheds new light on the nationalist movement beginning with the anti-communist coup – on 12 April, 1927 – in modern China as a conservative revolution. In his analysis, the following factors prompted Jiang Jieshi 蔣介石 and his entourage (including Dai Jitao 戴季陶) to launch a mass political movement with the new elevation of Chinese traditional Confucianism: first, wariness of spread of the communist ideology of class struggle among the youth and the industrial workers; second, fear for the permeation of materialist consumerism in the urban areas; lastly, avidness for the revival of nation-state and the recovery of political sovereignty from imperialism. Echoing other radical conservative movements in fascist states, such a movement towards a new order was both conservative and revolutionary: while on the one hand it refused to attack socio-political hierarchy and inequality, on the other it aimed to overcome Western liberal capitalism and the Soviet Union’s state socialism in order to craft an alternative modernity free from capitalist materialism.<sup>62</sup> Thus, it is notable revolution and restoration are very much intertwined. To a certain degree, the means and the ideology of revolution are detached, which makes the boundary of revolution and restoration blurred. Sometimes, revolution is no more than a radical measure to

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*Comparison and Definition* (New York: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 14-15; Jeremy Noakes, “German Conservatives and the Third Reich: An Ambiguous Relationship,” in *Fascists and Conservatives: The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. Martin Blinkhorn (London: Routledge, 1990), 72-98.

<sup>61</sup> Edgar J. Jung, “Germany and the Conservative Revolution,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 352.

<sup>62</sup> Brian Tsui, *China’s Conservative Revolution: The Quest for a New Order, 1927-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 9-14, 28-32.



restore a seemingly more orthodox social order where “everything is what it ought to be.”

Therefore, following Brian Tsui’s application, “conservative revolution” is employed to delineate Zheng Xiaoxu’s political philosophy in order to highlight how Chinese Confucian intellectuals developed an alternative version of modernity, and how they utilized foreign capitalism and ancient Confucian resources to modernize China. Zheng Xiaoxu’s pursuit of modernity in Republican China embodied an intrinsic desire to resist imperialist capitalism and its political representation. His abhorrence of communist class politics, the social disorder and the warlord conflicts that arose from the 1911 revolution, and party-state system shaped by Republican China, drove his political proposal in an anti-modern direction. Meanwhile, when Zheng appropriated the ancient Confucian idea of *wangdao* as the national ideology of Manchukuo, he indeed launched a spiritual revolution to overcome the social unevenness caused by the modern capitalism and borrowed the foreign colonialist power for building a new China. Hence, *wangdao* was reshaped as an unchanging national essence, namely, the “regime of authenticity,” to search for the independent political sovereignty of Manchukuo and conserve the timeless moral purity of the nation.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, Zheng invented a cyclical dynamic mechanism of Chinese history in the theory of three *gong(s)*:

共和生子曰共產，共產生子曰共管。共氏三

世，皆短折。共氏遂亡，皇清復昌。<sup>64</sup>

*Gonghe* (Republicanism) incubates *gongchan*  
(Communism); *gongchan* incubates *gongguan*

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<sup>63</sup> Prasenjit Duara, “The Regime of Authenticity: Timelessness, Gender, and National History in Modern China,” *History and Theory* 37, no. 3 (October 1998): 288-301.

<sup>64</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 4: 2072.

(international supervision). The three generations of *gong* were all ephemeral. When all generations of *gong* perish, the Imperial Qing will be restored.

For Zheng, the republican system, the rise of communism, and colonialist occupation were not the present reality. Rather, he considered them to be short-lived phenomena that would soon become the historical past irrevocably. In a way, the recovery of the Qing dynasty, a dead and forever lost subject that “remains *epekeina tes ousias*, beyond the phenomenon or beyond being,” was understood as a necessary messianic salvation and a new future yet to come.<sup>65</sup> To a certain extent, the theory of three *gong* crafted a historical view different from progressivism’s linear homogeneous time sense, where the past/the dead overlapped with the present/the living, which implied that the modern reality of the Republic of China at the time was haunted by the spectre of the Qing dynasty. On the one hand, Zheng had no intention to create a quasi-Western modern country and insisted on maintaining the previous social hierarchy and kingly rule. On the other hand, his approach to modernity and quest for a well-positioned China in Asia that aimed to transcend the Euro-American capitalist order and inhibit the social chaos triggered by the introduction of communism, and reset the relationship between China/the East/the colonized and the Japan/the West/the colonizer. Therefore, I refer to Zheng Xiaoxu’s political philosophy and its practice as an conservative revolution.

In addition, I would like to revisit Lin Shaoyang’s 林少陽 phrase, “revolution by means of culture” (*dingge yiwen* 鼎革以文), that foregrounded Zheng Xiaoxu’s political philosophy, especially, *wangdao*, and his contribution to building

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<sup>65</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 125.

Manchukuo as a non-violent and even anti-violent revolution structured by culture (*wen* 文)/language (*yuyan* 語言).<sup>66</sup> While ceding that exclusive nationalism and strong militarism were causes of world calamity, Zheng Xiaoxu assumed that if a nation took universal love, propriety, and righteousness as its operational principle under the teaching of *wangdao*, then, military force would become unnecessary, because, in case of an emergency like foreign encroachment, a “*wangdao* nation” and a benevolent government would receive protection from the entire world. Diagnosed by Zheng, “a national heart illness” was the crucial physical obstacle of China’s path to peace and reformation, which was characterized by the violation of justice, anti-foreignism, and the distinction of races. Additionally, the family was the fundamental organ of a nation, that tied the individuals with morality and affection, whilst restraining personal selfish desire.<sup>67</sup> In this regard, compared with revolution by dint of military force (*wuli* 武力) (e.g. the 1911 Revolution), Zheng Xiaoxu’s ideological orchestration through *wangdao* not only represented an anti/counter-violent way *to save* China through the reconstruction of Confucian morality, but also enhance the ethical legitimacy of his revolutionary discourse. However, from another perspective, Zheng’s political philosophy germinated from Japanese sinologists’ mocking of Qing China and Chinese poetry in Meiji Japan via language/Chinese script, thus he viewed Japan’s learning *xifa* as an appeal for its separation from its literary Chinese identity. Antagonism between Chinese script/*Hanxue* and *xifa* was endowed with an attempt to overcome Western

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<sup>66</sup> Lin Shaoyang 林少陽, *Dingge yiwen: Qingji geming yu Zhang Taiyan “fuguing” de xin wenhua yundong* 鼎革以文——清季革命與章太炎「復古」的新文化運動 [Revolution by means of culture: The late Qing revolution and Zhang Taiyan from 1900 to 1911] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2018), 17-37.

<sup>67</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, *Wang Tao (The Kingly Way): An Outline of the Political-moral Code of the Manchukuo Government* (1934; repr., Dalian: Manchuria Daily News, 1934), 5, 11-25, 32-33.

democratic politics and powerful military force, which also coalesced into his narrative of *wangdao* in Manchukuo in the 1930s (this will be further elaborated in the third chapter of this study).

### **Previous Studies on Zheng Xiaoxu and His Political Philosophy**

As mentioned above, prior to his death, the inchoate remarks on Zheng Xiaoxu's political life mainly consisted of subjective editorials published in the popular press without much academic exposition. However, apart from those articles which condemned Zheng for selling out China, the memoirs of Reginald F. Johnston, the tutor of the last Qing emperor Henry Pu Yi, delineated a different ideological trajectory of Zheng Xiaoxu. In his writing, Johnston recalled working together with Zheng Xiaoxu in the Forbidden City, describing with approval Zheng's effective management in the Imperial Household Department as well as his loyalty, as shown in his plan to rescue Xuantong 宣統 Emperor from Feng Yuxiang's threat.<sup>68</sup> In 1932, Johnston then published an essay named "Manchuria and its Prime Minister" in *The English Review*. He reminded the reader that "he [Zheng Xiaoxu] has no intention of becoming, or of allowing his imperial pupil and master to become a mere puppet in the hands of Japan, and that he does not regard Manchuria as permanently and irrevocably detached from China." Zheng's vision of Manchukuo was thus at odds with some contemporary scholars of his generation: in order to keep a distance from the native country, a decadent and chaotic place, he felt that the temporal independence of Manchukuo was necessary. Additionally, in Zheng's blueprint, with a well-managed and prosperous political situation, Manchuria may "constitute a constant stimulus and incitement" to Chinese politicians and nationals

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<sup>68</sup> Reginald F. Johnston, *Twilight in the Forbidden City* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1985), 342-344, 450.

of other countries who pursue an enlightened nation, and would also reunite two Chinas (Manchukuo and China proper) to shield from egoistical and atrocious militarists.<sup>69</sup>

Johnson's description of Zheng Xiaoxu resonated with a pseudonymous editorial from the journal *Oriental Culture Monthly* (*Dongfang wenhua yuekan* 東方文化月刊) during the end-stage of the Manchukuo regime. Titled "The great man of an era—Zheng Xiaoxu," (*Yidai weiren – Zheng Xiaoxu* 一代偉人——鄭孝胥) the article commended Zheng for his meritorious achievements in politics. His clockwork discipline in his quotidian personal life, his participation in the building of Manchukuo without using military forces, his sagacious political idea of the "Kingly Way," his benevolent character and his loyalty to the Qing are all attributable to his charisma as a politician, it adds.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, almost at the same time, Ye Sen and his co-authors, Chen Bangzhi and Dang Yangzhou, wrote the very first biography of Zheng which was distributed by Manchuria Book Corporation in 1938. This work, which was originally issued by a colonial propaganda institution with the intention to justify Zheng's treasonous behaviour, paved the way for the contemporary study of Zheng.

From the birth of the People's Republic of China to the end of the Cultural Revolution, studies on Zheng Xiaoxu experienced a stall, due to his "political

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<sup>69</sup> Reginald F. Johnston, "Manchuria and its Prime Minister," *The English Review, 1908-1937* (1932): 643-651.

<sup>70</sup> I should point out that the journal *Dongfang wenhua yuekan* was not a colonial propagandistic agent controlled by the Japanese or Manchukuo; rather, it was only a cultural magazine established in Beijing in 1938. It devoted itself to introduce Chinese, Japanese, and Indian culture, restore Confucian spirit, to embrace modern sciences, as well as to expound and propagate the classical scriptures of Mahayana under the slogan of "promotion to the peace of the East Asia." See "Yidai weiren – Zheng Xiaoxu," *Dongfang wenhua yuekan* 1, no.6 (1938): 77-80. For the journal information, see Late Qing Dynasty Periodicals Full Text 晚清期刊全文數據庫, "Literature Navigation: *Dongfang wenhua yuekan*," accessed 16 April, 2019, <http://www.cnbkxy.com.lib-ezproxy.hkbu.edu.hk/literature/literature/f22c5a22bfd038ed14246e4b31ead9ed>.

incorrectness” under the ideology of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). During this period, the main contribution to our understanding of Zheng came from Henry Pu Yi’s autobiography. Composed in the Fushun Prison under stringent surveillance and ideological education from the CCP, the autobiography condemned Zheng as “the servant of [Western] invaders.” “What Zheng pursued was an international supervision by foreign powers [*lieqiang gongguan* 列強共管],” Pu Yi recollected, “which was more progressive than Zhang Zhidong’s idea of *Zhongti xiyong*... He and I both believed that, only through international supervision could I recapture my throne and continue ruling the Great Qing.” He also mentioned that “in Zheng’s eyes, the Northern Expedition was understood as an implementation of ‘Communism’.”<sup>71</sup> Although Pu Yi’s writing was highly subjective and even somewhat contradictory, it provided great details on Zheng’s political divergence from Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 and the embarrassing predicament in which he was caught between Pu Yi’s distrust and the Guandong Army’s suspicion in Manchukuo.

(1) Reconsideration of Zheng’s political philosophy: from the 1980s to the 1990s  
After the Cultural Revolution, several historiographies of Manchukuo

emerged in Mainland China. It is commonly held that the monograph, *The History of Puppet Manchukuo* (*Wei Manzhouguo shi* 偽滿洲國史) written by Jiang Niandong 姜念東, Yi Wencheng 伊文成, Jie Xueshi 解學詩, et al. in 1980, should be seen as the first effort to map out Zheng Xiaoxu’s journey to revitalize the Qing dynasty, which in turn ushered waves of academic research on Zheng Xiaoxu in China.<sup>72</sup> In

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<sup>71</sup> Aisin-Gioro Pu Yi 愛新覺羅溥儀, *Wode qianbansheng* 我的前半生 [The first half of my life] (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 1999), 245-255.

<sup>72</sup> See, Jiang Niandong, Yi Wencheng, Jie Xueshi, et al. eds., *Wei manzhouguo shi* (Shenyang: Jilin renmen chubanshe, 1980), 84-120, 13-148.

this new era of research, Zheng was still described in negative terms. For example, in Yang Zhaoyuan's 楊照遠 words, Zheng's genuine pursuit to return to the imperial governance meant more as an act of betrayal of nation's benefits rather than an attempt to resume monarchism, which revealed the "typical blending of feudal force in collusion with imperialism in modern Chinese history."<sup>73</sup>

Paralleling historical narratives of the CCP, the Taiwanese historian Hu Pingsheng's 胡平生 usage of *fubi pai* 復辟派 (restoration camp) to scrutinize Zheng's political choice with lower risks of *a priori* ethical judgment. In light of Hu's far-reaching elaboration, after 1911, Qing loyalists' appeal to the rehabilitation of the Qing regime was not groundless. Firstly, although the Republic of China was the heir to the territory and the sovereignty of the imperial Qing, it also faced the unremitting chaos under the competition of warlords and political factions that highlighted the fact that a consolidated national identity had not yet emerged. Secondly, the monarchists were usually well-respected, and they often stayed in foreign settlements so as to evade direct control from the Republican government. Simultaneously, the deposed emperor still received preferential imperial treatment from the Republic, which allowed him to maintain a small court in the Forbidden City and to continue the reign title of Xuantong. Such was the ambiguity for both the old Qing officials and Pu Yi that a plausible hope for the Qing's revival had been bred.<sup>74</sup> In addition, Hu also observed how Zheng went in quest of overseas support when Pu Yi started living in exile in Tianjin. As Hu put it, "in the name of 'Pu Yi,' Zheng engaged in soliciting donations for disaster relief, in the compilation of

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<sup>73</sup> Yang Zhaoyuan, "Zheng Xiaoxu yu wei manzhouguo" 鄭孝胥與偽滿洲國 [Zheng Xiaoxu and puppet Manchukuo], *Shehui kexue zhanxian*, no.1 (March 1987): 204.

<sup>74</sup> Hu Pingsheng, *Minguo chuqi de fubipai* 民國初期的復辟派 [Restoration camp during the early Republican era] (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1985), 64-66.

“Essentials of Generations of Governments during the Qing Reign” (*Qingchao lidai zhengyao* 清朝歷代政要) and in the initiation of the “Disarmament World Congress” to establish the abrogated emperor as a moral paragon. In order recapture the throne, Zheng and his son Zheng Cui paid a visit to influential Japanese politicians and later persuaded the emperor to employ foreigners from the UK, Europe and Russia as guest advisers (*keqing* 客卿) on matters including propagating Pu Yi’s virtuous reputation and resisting aggression from international communism.<sup>75</sup>

In the early 1990s, the National Museum of Chinese History (located in Beijing) initiated a project to compile Zheng Xiaoxu’s personal diaries. Lao Zude 勞祖德 edited a five-volume version of Zheng Xiaoxu’s diary, to which a supplement was published in 1993. It immediately evoked many responses in the field of history, both in China and abroad. For example, Xu Weimin 徐偉民 utilized Zheng’s diary as the main source of information and discovered that Zheng was opposed to executing peace negotiations and to signing the Treaty of Shimonoseki with the enemy country, which included the ceding of the Liaotung peninsula and Taiwan peninsula to Japan as a clause after the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895. Due to China’s crushing defeat in that war, he proposed positive reforms on military affairs, legal institutions, bureaucratic organizations, and also commercial developments which aimed to resuscitate the prestige of the Qing dynasty.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, Chen Laixing 陳來幸 examined Zheng’s experience as a diplomatic consul in Osaka and Kobe via his diary. She suggested that Zheng Xiaoxu not only witnessed the

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 467-473.

<sup>76</sup> Xu Weimin, “Zheng Xiaoxu de jiaowu zhanzhengguan” 鄭孝胥的甲午戰爭觀 [Zheng Xiaoxu’s view on the first Sino-Japanese War], *Anqing shiyuan shehui kexue xuebao*, no.2 (May 1997), 38-40.



establishment of *Zhonghua huiguan* 中華會館 (Chinese Guild Hall), a national symbol that unified overseas Chinese in Japan, but even played an instrumental part in its management, and handled judicial disputes between Japanese and Chinese inhabitants.<sup>77</sup>

The situating of Zheng Xiaoxu's complicated identity and political ideas in modern Chinese intellectual history is another issue that has evoked discussion. Hirano Kenichiro's study of "the various types of collaborators with various backgrounds and motives" called attention to the fact that "their own motives as much as the Japanese coercion accounted for their collaboration with Manchukuo." It is noteworthy how the ex-Qing monarchists who came from Fujian Province, including Zheng Xiaoxu, constituted the most singular group from the south of China. They followed Pu Yi to Manchukuo hoping to revive or to reinvent the continuity of the Qing dynasty, which in effect, "gave the puppet state a degree of legitimacy."<sup>78</sup> Li Kang 李康 specifically compared Zheng's theory of the "Kingly Way" with Japan's imperial way. For Zheng, there were two types of Kingly Way: the "non-armed Kingly way" (*fei wuzhuang wangdao* 非武裝王道) deriving from Manchukuo, and the "armed Kingly way" (*wuzhuang wangdao* 武裝王道) coming from Japan. However, when Japan further radicalized its plan to encroach into Asia and to confront the U.S. in the late 1930s, the Confucian doctrines of *wangdao* and the abolition of the military (*mibing* 弭兵), which Zheng actively advocated, stopped being effective in mobilizing the public. That is to say, "all the world under one

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<sup>77</sup> Chen Laixing, "Zhonghua huiguan de chengli he shenban huaqiao shehui" 中華會館的成立和神阪華僑社會 [The establishment of Chinese Guild Hall and overseas Chinese Society in Kobe], *Huaqiao huaren lishi yanjiu*, no.3 (September 1997): 43-48.

<sup>78</sup> Kenichiro Hirano, "The Japanese in Manchuria 1906-1931: A Study of the Historical Background of Manchukuo" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1983, 419-423).

roof,” (*hakkō ichiu* 八紘一宇) the core spirit of the imperial way (*huangdao* 皇道) substituted Zheng’s Kingly Way as the core ideology of Manchukuo. This was especially true after 1940, the year in which Pu Yi brought the Sun Goddess (Amaterasu-ōmikami 天照大神), the major deity of the Shinto religion, from Japan to Manchukuo.<sup>79</sup>

Yet, before rushing to the conclusion that “the Kingly way was used as a countermeasure against the Three People’s Principles (*sanmin zhuyi* 三民主義), the Nationalist government and also the Republic of China,” there is an implicit contradiction in the State-Founding Proclamation of Manchukuo (*Manzhouguo jianguo xuanyan* 滿洲國建國宣言) composed by Zheng Xiaoxu that might merit some more careful examination, just as Shin’ichi Yamamuro 山室信一 has suggested.<sup>80</sup> On the one hand, the Proclamation was a crusade against the ruling regime based on the party-state system of the Republic. On the other hand, it upheld principles such as “all under the heaven belongs to all” (*tianxia weigong* 天下為公), “ethnic harmony” (*minzu xiehe* 民族協和), and “popular rights and people’s livelihood” (*minquan yu minsheng* 民權與民生) which resonated with Sun Yat-sen’s *sanmin zhuyi* (Three Peoples’ Principles) and the principle of national self-determination.<sup>81</sup> In other words, the ideology of Manchukuo envisioned by Zheng Xiaoxu was in confrontation with, but at the same time benefited from, the Republic of China. In particular, the author depicted the details of the signing of the Japan-

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<sup>79</sup> Li Kang, “Zheng Xiaoxu yu wei Manzhouguo chuqi kuilei zhengquan” 鄭孝胥與偽滿洲國初期傀儡政權 [Zheng Xiaoxu and the puppet regime of Manchukuo in the early stage], *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu*, no.4 (December 1995): 127-131.

<sup>80</sup> Shin’ichi Yamamuro, *Manchuria Under Japanese Dominion*, trans., Joshua A. Fogel (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 89-90.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-90.

Manchukuo Protocol of 1932 between Baron Nobuyoshi Mutō 武藤信義 and Zheng. Six days before the signing, Zheng announced his resignation because taking orders from Japan would hinder the ability to wield power in Manchukuo as Prime Minister. The dispute with Tokuzō Komai 駒井徳三 and the unfair political hierarchy between Japanese and Chinese inhabitants urged Zheng to place Manchukuo under international supervision. Shinichi Yamamuro further mentioned that, “in order to realize this aspiration, it was necessary, paradoxically, to deny the independence of Manzhouguo [Manchukuo] by accepting the position of the Republic of China, namely the Lytton Commission’s criticism of Manzhouguo as specious, issue a plan which would put China’s northeast region under international supervision...” Additionally, in Yamamuro’s explanation, Zheng Xiaoxu never ceased to aspire to a continuous Qing regime that could return to the Forbidden City one day, which seemed to be merely a way of absolving himself of his reputation as a traitor.<sup>82</sup> Komagome Takeshi 駒込武 developed an engaging exposition which compares the opinions of Shiraki Tachibana 橘樸 and those of Zheng Xiaoxu on the “Kingly Way,” given their diverging political ideas on “self-governance” and “monarchy” in Manchukuo. Zheng denounced “patriotism” and “militarism” while praising “philanthropism” and “etiquette,” as he believed in the need to repress the development of a military-centred capitalism and the rising tide of Chinese nationalism, under the political regime ruled by Jiang Jieshi and Zhang Xueliang 張學良.<sup>83</sup> In this regard, in the Guandong Army’s eyes, Zheng Xiaoxu was

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 145-148, 149, 152.

<sup>83</sup> Komagome Takeshi, *Shokuminchi teikoku Nihon no bunka tōgō* 植民地帝国日本の文化統合 [The Cultural Integration of the Colonial Japanese Empire] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996), 271-294.

indisputably an exemplary teacher in educating Manchukuo's ordinary people on the "Kingly Way."<sup>84</sup>

In the 1990s, with the completion of the compilation of Zheng's diary, academic perspectives on Zheng Xiaoxu's political philosophy broadened, especially in the study of the Chinese intellectual history. His multifaceted views on the Sino-Japanese War and the reform movements of the late Qing dynasty, as well as his experience as a diplomatic consular in Japan all received more nuanced treatment than before. It was inevitable that, although moral considerations played a significant role in the study of Zheng as a collaborator, the contributions of Japanese scholars' studies remind us that the complexity of Zheng's political logic can be traced back not only to the political reality of his times, but also to the thoughts of other modern Chinese and Japanese intellectuals.<sup>85</sup> The dichotomy between resistance and collaboration is insufficient as a framework to investigate how and why collaborators like Zheng accepted the colonial empire as a potential stage on the path to their political goals. More specifically, historians have realized that Zheng had the self-awareness to rebuild orthodox order and to revive the throne, and that categorizing him as a traitor/*Hanjian* could belie Zheng's other ideals – like saving the country and overcoming the West.

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<sup>84</sup> Suk-Jung Han, "Puppet Sovereignty: The State Effect of Manchukuo, from 1932 to 1936" (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 1995, 132-133.

<sup>85</sup> See, Zhao Lingshi 趙聆實, "Weiman zhimin tongzhi sixiang gaishu — Zheng Xiaoxu de 'wangdao sixiang'" 偽滿殖民統治思想概述——鄭孝胥的「王道思想」 [Overview of the colonial ruling ideology of puppet Manchukuo——Zheng Xiaoxu's *wangdao*], *Weiman huanggong bowuyuan nianjian*, no.1 (1987): 68-73; Jiang Zhiping 蔣志平, "Zheng Xiaoxu jiqi 'sangong lun'" 鄭孝胥及其「三共論」 [Zheng Xiaoxu and his theory of three *gong*], *Weiman huanggong bowuyuan nianjian*, no.1 (1984): 155-162.

(2) Unfinished project: de-stigmatization and reconstruction on the historical narrative of Zheng Xiaoxu

Entering the twenty-first century, the study of Zheng Xiaoxu continues to be an intriguing topic for research into the history of the Second World War in East Asia. Dialogue has been established between the academia of the East and the West about Zheng in at least three areas of scholarship. The first revolves around the understanding of Zheng's political identity and his peculiar viewpoint on constitutionalism and foreign debt. The second is the study of Zheng's views on Japan and the discourse of modernity. The third is Zheng's political philosophy with regards to designing Manchukuo and striving for the restoration of the Qing dynasty.

Research has borne fruit in the following areas: the redefinition of Zheng's identity in the aftermath of the debacle of the imperial system; the realignment of his long-term interest in constitutionalism and foreign investment; and the exploitation of Manchuria within late Qing intellectual history. To distinguish Zheng from Song or Ming dynasty loyalists, Fu Daobin 傅道彬 and Wang Xiuchen 王秀臣 made use of the paradigm of "cultural loyalist" (*wenhua yimin* 文化遺民) to depict Zheng Xiaoxu's life experience after 1911. They encourage researchers to reconsider how Zheng's political turn to Japan played a heuristic role in the political manifestation of the cultural resistance to the new Republican regime on the part of the traditionalist elites.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, Zheng's perception of the Republic of China was never stable, from the beginning to the end. Before the collapse of the Qing, Zheng scorned the southern elites who embraced revolution as a means to achieve republicanism. Shortly after the Wuchang Uprising (*Wuchang qiyi* 武昌起義), Zheng saw himself as a coordinator between the imperial court and the revolutionary party, which to a

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<sup>86</sup> Fu Daobin and Wang Xiuchen, "Zheng Xiaoxu he wanQing wenren de wenhua yimin qingjie" 鄭孝胥和晚清文人的文化遺民情結 [Zheng Xiaoxu and the complex of cultural loyalism of late Qing intellectuals], *Beifang luntan*, no.1 (2002): 1-2, 5-8.

certain degree implies that he accepted republicanism.<sup>87</sup> In this light, Zheng's own soliloquy of "the Republican country is an enemy country" (*minguo nai diguoye* 民國乃敵國也) failed to delineate a comprehensive contour of his early viewpoint on republicanism. A biography of Zheng Xiaoxu where he is defined in terms of a cultural conservative elite was written by Xu Linjiang. Unfortunately, the author deliberately neglected Zheng's involvement in the Manchukuo "puppet" government. Compared to other scholars who uncritically rehashed Zheng's life in general terms, the Chinese-American scholar Zhou Mingzhi 周明之 examines Zheng's actions while keeping in mind the two key words of "loyalism" and "modernity" in order to avoid making moral judgments a priori, thereby offering a peculiar examination of Zheng's endeavour in reviving a moral society of *wangdao* under the imperial regime. Though sketchy in its exposition, the author's observations shed light on Zheng's objection to the party-state system and the law on the ground that they lie beyond the realm of Confucian beliefs. As a Confucian "fundamentalist," Zheng considered the party-state to be an interest-driven tool to achieve private gains for a clique, and he proposed that morality and etiquette can shape a social ethos to educate people in a way which is superior to law.<sup>88</sup>

Several scholars have noted the complexity of Zheng's views on international relations with Russia and Japan, foreign capital and constitutionalism. When the

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<sup>87</sup> Sun Ai-xia 孫愛霞, "Shilun Qingyimin dui gonghe minguo renzhi de fuzaxing" 試論清遺民對共和民國認知的複雜性 [A study on the complexity of late Qing loyalists' attitude towards Republican China], *Tianjin daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)*, no.5 (September 2011): 461-462. Marjorie Dryburgh rather emphasize that although Zheng Xiaoxu's interest in mediating the crisis could be traced in his diary, his first response to the 1911 revolution was quite conservative and inimical. Marjorie Dryburgh, "The Fugitive Self: Writing Zheng Xiaoxu, 1882-1938," in *Writing Lives in China, 1600-2010: Histories of the Elusive Self*, eds. Marjorie Dryburgh and Sarah Dauncey (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 115.

<sup>88</sup> Zhou Mingzhi, *Jindai zhongguo de wenhua weiji: Qingyilao de jingshen shijie* 近代中國的文化危機：清遺老的精神世界 [Cultural crisis in modern China: Qing loyalists and their spiritual world] (Jinan: Shandong daxue chubanshe, 2009), 1-4, 97, 236-241.

Eurocentric powers tightened their grip via capital export, especially in the case of the foreign-indebted railway across China, as Ma Linghe 馬陵合 has revealed, Zheng welcomed foreign investment in the economy of Manchuria and in the construction of Jinzhou-Aihui railway in order to break the monopoly of Russia and Japan in the Northeast. Furthermore, Zheng treated the foreign debt and the strategy of “balance of power in diplomacy” (*junshi waijiao* 均勢外交) as a mild approach to achieving the constitutional regime and the nationalization of the key railways.<sup>89</sup> Yu Hongwei 于宏威 has claimed that Zheng’s constitutionalism was not merely a countermeasure to revolution and imperialist annexation, but also a platform for the enlightenment of the populace and the expansion of peoples’ rights.<sup>90</sup>

The interest in dissecting Zheng Xiaoxu’s diplomatic experience in Japan has been arising in light of greater interest in the modernity discourse in the late Qing. The encounter with art museums, western zoos, botanical gardens, and all the other novelties that embody the civilized outcome of the Meiji Restoration, were recorded elaborately in Zheng’s diary, and aroused in him a range of complicated emotions that included curiosity, interest, rejection, and insecurity.<sup>91</sup> Meanwhile, Zheng realized that in the case of the Meiji government the crux of carrying out a policy of Westernization lay in the growth of industry and commerce.<sup>92</sup> However, although the

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<sup>89</sup> Ma Linghe, “Jiekuan keyi jiuguo?—Zheng Xiaoxu tielu waizhaiguan pingshu” 借款可以救國？——鄭孝胥鐵路外債觀評述 [Can loans save China?—Zheng Xiaoxu’s viewpoint on the foreign debt in railways], *Qingshi yanjiu*, no.2 (May 2012): 81-90.

<sup>90</sup> Yu Hongwei, “1906-1908nian de Zheng Xiaoxu yu yubei lixian gonghui” 1906-1908 年的鄭孝胥與預備立憲公會 [Zheng Xiaoxu and the Constitutional Preparation Association during 1906 to 1908], *Shijiazhuang tiedao daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 8, no.3 (September 2014): 90-94.

<sup>91</sup> Fukazawa Kazuyuki 深澤一幸, “Tei Kōshoshi no chūnichi koushikanin jidai” 鄭孝胥氏の駐日公使館員時代 [The era of Zheng Xiaoxu’s service as consul at the Chinese Embassy in Japan], *Gengo bunka kenkyu*, no.32 (2006): 27-38.

<sup>92</sup> Yu Haichao 于海超, “Zheng Xiaoxu yu Riben guanxi tanyan” 鄭孝胥與日本關係探研 [The study on the relation between Zheng Xiaoxu and Japan] (master’s thesis, Hebei Normal University, 2016), 9-10.

success of material civilization and the Westernization of social customs were conspicuous and impressive in Zheng's eyes, he expressed a strong aversion towards Japan's parliamentarism and drastic political revolution during the Meiji era. He asserted that Japanese political reform brought nothing but social disorder and tension due to the shift of monarchical power into other hands. According to Zhu Jing, Zheng's bifurcated opinion on the Meiji Reforms' material achievements and political re-organization, was an expression of the late Qing intellectuals' call for "*Zhongti xiyong*."<sup>93</sup> Facing modern Japan, Zheng's steadfastly ethnocentric conviction of the superiority of Confucianism and Chinese culture, and his criticism Chinese poems by a group of Japanese sinologists, argued Yu Haichao, should be viewed as an attempt by a conservative intellectual to preserve the dignity of the Qing dynasty.<sup>94</sup> Zheng's comprehension of the relation between China and Japan shifted after the First Sino-Japanese War. Zhang Jian has noted that, after 1895, Zheng's nationalism intertwined with pan-Asianism advocated by Japan to unify the yellow races so to confront the white. In 1905, with Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War, he no longer treated Japan as an "island race" (*dao zu* 島族) but a model "eastern neighbour" (*dong lin* 東鄰) in his poem "Seeing Off Brother Cheng to Japan" (*Song Chengdi zhi Riben* 送程弟之日本).<sup>95</sup> As Zou Jinxi 鄒金喜 has pointed out, in the period between the Hundred Days' Reform and the 1911 Revolution, Zheng's attitude towards Japan changed from castigation to emulation and then to cooperation, a transition which was determined by dual identity of Japan

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<sup>93</sup> Zhu Jing, "Cong Zheng Xiaoxu riji kan Zhengshi 'Ribenguan' de yanbian" 從《鄭孝胥日記》看鄭氏「日本觀」演變 [From Zheng Xiaoxu's diary to perceive the change of his view on Japan], *Huazhong shifan daxue yanjiusheng xuebao* 20, no.2 (June 2013): 134-135.

<sup>94</sup> Yu Haichao, "Zheng Xiaoxu yu Riben guanxi tanyan," 12-13.

<sup>95</sup> Zhang Jian 張建, "Zheng Xiaoxu shizuozhong de Riben guan yanbian" 鄭孝胥詩作中的日本觀演變 [The evolution of Zheng Xiaoxu's view on Japan in his poems], *Neimenggu nongye daxue xuebao* (*shehui kexue ban*), (December 2012): 196-197.



itself— both an enemy country that invaded the Northeast of China and a potential co-agent in resisting Western imperialism.<sup>96</sup>

While Zheng Xiaoxu decided to draw support from Japan in building Manchukuo, he also crafted his theory for rationalizing his “treason.” As a project that professed to be able to surmount factionalism and material modernity and continue the logic of “open door” (*menhu kaifang* 門戶開放) policy and *gongguan lun*, Zheng Xiaoxu’s *wangdao* aspired to install a dictatorial regime with the integration of traditional Chinese ethics, which saw Italian fascism as the perfect political prototype.<sup>97</sup> In fact, “the state-wide doctrines of the Great Unity (*Datong* 大同) and the ‘Kingly Way’ (*wangdao*) represented the political symbols of this ideology of Eastern civilization,” argued Prasenjit Duara. They tangibly became an ideological bond between the following groups: political figures of the old society, such as Yuan Jinkai 袁世凱, Zhang Jinghui, and Yu Chonghan; radical Confucian monarchists, such as Zheng Xiaoxu and his supporters; and finally numerous religious organizations and universalist redemptive societies.<sup>98</sup> Luo Dan 羅丹 held that the essence of Zheng’s *gongguan lun* was to pullulate material civilization with the aid of both foreign capital and the emperor’s prestige. In contrast to revolutionists’ racist discourse, the theory of *wangdao* acted as a response to international cooperation after the First World War, which aimed at eliminating the

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<sup>96</sup> Zou Jinxi, “Cong ‘cibang su yi tou’ dao ‘jinri riguang huiwanguo’: Zheng Xiaoxu Ribenguan de zhuanbian lichen” 從「此邦俗亦偷」到「今日日光輝萬國」：鄭孝胥日本觀的轉變歷程 [From “the country is mediocre and despicable” to “the brightness of today’s Japan illuminates the world” :The transformation of Zheng Xiaoxu’s viewpoint on Japan] (master’s thesis: National Tsinghua University, 2009), 43-74.

<sup>97</sup> Zheng Xinting 鄭欣挺, “Xinhai ‘guobian’ xia de Qingyimin: yi Zheng Xiaoxu wei taolun zhongxin” 辛亥「國變」下的清遺民：以鄭孝胥為討論中心 [Qing loyalists after the Xinhai ‘national revolution’: the study centred on Zheng Xiaoxu] (master’s thesis, Donghai University, 2008), 86-87, 98.

<sup>98</sup> Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, 112.

boundary between the Manchu and the *Hanzu*, and between the Western nations and the Eastern nations.<sup>99</sup> The Taiwanese scholar Lin Zhihong's 林志宏 classic critique of the late Qing loyalists' imagination of communism prods us to gain a deeper understanding of Zheng's political philosophy. At the first level, his *sangong lun*, with its implication that threats to China came from republicanism, communism and international supervision, indeed reflected that in the context of hostile international rivalry between fascism and communism, Zheng was reluctant to admit China was to be either carved up by the foreign powers or controlled by the Republican government. At the second level, as the symbolic resource for both an Eastern civilized discourse as well as a traditional social order, the Kingly Way was destroyed by the 1911 revolution. Zheng and other conservatives asserted that the Kingly Way could deliver spiritual legitimacy to Manchukuo, such that it might combat Western modernity, which in their view was a product of spiritual degradation and the rule of Might (*badao* 霸道), whose democratic institutions were adopted by Republican China. Lin concluded that when the ideology of "nation-state" was rarely articulated in China proper before the 1940s, these headstrong loyalists reinvented *wangdao* as a "new tradition" and merged it with modern military force with the purpose of the re-establishment of "Chinese world order" (*Zhonghua shijie zhixu* 中華世界秩序).<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Luo Dan, "Zheng Xiaoxu de zhengzhi lixiang jiqi sixiang beijing chutan" 鄭孝胥的政治理想及其思想背景初探 [The initial study on Zheng Xiaoxu's political ideas and their philosophical background], *Higashi Ajia bunka kōshō kenkyū*, no.6 (March 2013): 420-425.

<sup>100</sup> Lin Zhihong, "Wangdao letu: Qing yimin de qinggan dizhi he canyu 'Manzhouguo'" 王道樂土——清遺民的情感抵制和參與「滿洲國」 [Dreamland of the Kingly Way: Emotional resistance and the participation of Qing loyalists in Manchukuo], *Xinshi xue* 18, no.3 (September 2007): 73-101. As for the concept *badao*, I borrow its English translation from Sun Yat-sen's speech delivered at Kobe on November 28, 1924: "to oppress others with the cult of force, in the language of the Ancients, is the rule of Might. Therefore, European civilization is nothing but the rule of Might." (*zhezong zhuanrong wuli yapo ren de wenhua, yong women Zhongguo de guhua shuo jiushi "xing badao"* 這種專用無力壓迫人的文化，用我們中國的古話說就是「行霸道」，所以歐洲的文化是霸道的文

It should not be forgotten that the intellectual sources of Zheng's ideology were not unitary but diverse. Rather than adopting the philosophy of the *Great Learning* 大學 (*daxue*) in its entirety, Zheng removed the "self-cultivation" (*xiushen* 修身) from the "eight steps" (*bamu* 八目) and exalted "stabilizing the family" (*qijia* 齊家) as the core practice of *wangdao*. Liu Hengxing 劉恆興 pointed out that Zheng emphasized family morality rather than individualistic freedom as the more influential factor in determining social order, public morality and the will of the people. His view indeed reflected the philosophical influence of Japan.<sup>101</sup> In addition, Zheng's political ideas, such as *gongguan lun* resonated with many late Qing elites, those who sought to achieve modern development in China whilst avoiding the monopolization of colonialist power through international supervision. For that, Li Jun discussed several cases in his thesis. For example, in 1906, Xiong Xiling 熊希齡 envisioned the Northeast to be a permanently neutral place with balanced diplomatic policy. Xu Shichang, the viceroy of the Three Northeast Provinces, also believed that appropriating the policy of "opening door" by the U.S. and attracting foreign financial support were the more viable approach to solving the Northeast's plight. Meanwhile, Sun Yat-sen, who was always labelled as a progressive revolutionary, also proposed opening to the Euro-American powers in order to attract foreign capital, talent, and advanced technology. In Sun's view, opening to the West, insofar as it reversed imperial China's "closed door" policy

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(七). See Sun Yat-sen, *China and Japan: Natural Friends, Unnatural Enemies* (Shanghai: China United Press, 1941), 145; Huang Yan 黃彥, ed., *Sun Wen xuanji* 孫文選集 [Selected works of Sun Wen] (Guangzhou: Guangdong sheng renmin chubanshe, 2006), 3: 624.

<sup>101</sup> Liu Hengxing, "Wangdao zhixing, shiyu qijia: 'manzhuguo' datong shiqi jiating lunli sixiang lunshu" 王道之行，始於齊家——「滿洲國」大同時期家庭倫理思想論述 [The Kingly Way begins with governance within families: thought and discourse on family ethics in the *Datong* period in Manchukuo], *Hanxue yanjiu* 32, no. 2 (June 2014): 234-235.

(*biguan suoguo* 閉關鎖國), was to be the only way to overcome the material backwardness.<sup>102</sup>

The foregoing paragraphs raise a more intriguing question, namely, why Zheng Xiaoxu's *wangdao* was unable to save Manchukuo from destruction. More specifically why the Confucian Kingly Way could neither craft a nationalism that was strong enough to bring together people of different ethnicities, nor reduce the social discrepancies produced by capitalism in spite of the promise of the "harmony of the five races" (*gozoku kyōwa* 五族協和). Rana Mitter investigated the obstacles in producing a Manchukuoan nationalism, determining that the philosophy of the Kingly Way advocated by the collaborationist Chinese elite Yu Chonghan and the zealous Qing loyalist Zheng Xiaoxu based Manchukuo on Confucian-Mencian ideals, which were so devoid of meaning and content that they failed to provide "any real explanation of what made it different from simple good governance." In addition, Mitter also proposed that *wangdao* was "unable to penetrate very far," due to the fact that "it made very little attempt to tie itself specifically to the Northeast, or to provide a genealogy for the state." Yet, in Zheng Xiaoxu's statement, the Kingly Way was euphemistically described as "strongly antimodern" and constituted "another hindrance to the essentially modern idea of nationalism," which was weakened by modern "patriotism" and universal military education. In short, it was impossible to manufacture a modern nation-state through *wangdao*, an ancient anti-state ideology with "the universalistic explanations," in only 14 years.<sup>103</sup> Roh Jun-su

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<sup>102</sup> Li Jun, "Cunzai zhiyou" yu "bianqian zhigu"—1931nian yiqian Zheng Xiaoxu sixiang yanjiu" 「存在之由」與「變遷之故」——1931年以前鄭孝胥思想研究 [Reasons for existence and change: The study of Zheng Xiaoxu's philosophy before 1931] (PhD diss., Hebei Normal University, 2011), 115-118.

<sup>103</sup> Rana Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 93-100.

盧俊秀 instead argued that there was a fatal fissure between the name of and the reality of Zheng's *wangdao*. At the practical level, for the purpose of extending the legitimacy of the Qing and rejuvenating Confucianism, *wangdao* sought international supervision, especially Japanese military power, in order to overcome modern Chinese crises. At the theoretical level, due to the unconditional dependence on Japan and Manchukuo's lack of a concrete plan based on its state building, Zheng Xiaoxu, as a frustrated politician, achieved nothing but the nominal operation of Manchukuo as the state of "Kingly Way."<sup>104</sup>

Zheng's reflections on the relationship between Manchuria and China proper also deserve further discussion. Through reviewing his article, "A Brief History of the Origin of Manchukuo Building" (*Manzhou jianguo suyuan shilue* 滿洲建國溯源史略), Huang Yuhan 黃昱瀚 urges one to reconsider Zheng's view on the racial identity-based boundary between the Manchu-Han and the nation-state. To Zheng, before the Xinhai Revolution, both Manchuria, the birthland of the Manchu, and China proper constituted the two geographical domains that belonged to the Aisin Gioro clan. When the revolution deprived Pu Yi of the legitimate power to administer China proper, it was reasonable for the successor of Aisin Gioro to rebuild an independent country in his ancestral place. By doing so, Zheng saw the former Qing emperor as a legitimate head of state in Manchukuo, which reflected the opinion of the vast majority of Confucian loyalists, that is, Manchukuo was to represent the extension of the Qing regime. Nonetheless, to weaken the connection between the Manchukuo and Qing dynasty, and to announce the former as a new

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<sup>104</sup> Roh Jun-su, "Manjuguggwa Jeong Hyoseo (1860-1938) ui jeongchi sagang" 滿洲國斗 鄭孝胥 (1860-1938)의 政治思想 [Manchukuo and Zheng Xiaoxu's political ideas], *Gyeongju Sa Hak* 41, (December 2016): 59-91.

country, the Guandong Army endeavoured to undercut the representation of the traditional Chinese imperial rituals in Pu Yi's coronation ceremony in 1934. Huang identified the main paradox being that public support for the *new* state of Manchukuo was built on the monarchists' identification with the *old* emperor, which inevitably destabilized Manchukuo inwardly.<sup>105</sup> Chen Shixuan 陳仕軒 adopts the research approach of New Qing History studies and made the conclusion that Zheng Xiaoxu constructed Manchurian history from a perspective based on the political opposition between China proper and Manchuria, in contrast to the official nationalism and Han-centered historical narrative, it served to seek the subjectivity of Manchukuo.<sup>106</sup>

However, studies of Zheng Xiaoxu from Mainland China rarely overcome the barriers of nationalist judgement, nor manage to isolate themselves from moral judgements. For instance, Liu Jinghui 劉晶輝 has maintained that Zheng's theory of *wangdao* was an ideological masquerade used to paralyze resistance towards Japanese intruders, erode their patriotism, and conceal the Guandong Army's bloody fascist atrocities in Manchuria.<sup>107</sup> In a similar way, for Chen Xiuwu 陳秀武 the search for the roots of Manchukuo demonstrated not only Zheng's ridiculous historical view on the schismatic relation between the Manchu minority and the Han

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<sup>105</sup> Huang Yu-han, "Shilun 1934nian Manzhouguo shishi dizhi de lunshu yu shiren renshi" 試論 1934 年滿洲國實施帝制的論述與時人認識 [The discourse about the founding of Manchukuo monarchy in 1934], *Jinan shixue*, no.17 (July 2014): 50, 64-72.

<sup>106</sup> Chen Shixuan, "Shuqing, wutuobang yu ziwo jiyi: Zheng Xiaoxu de zhengzhi shixue" 抒情、烏托邦與自我技藝：鄭孝胥的政治詩學 [Lyric, utopia and self-techniques: a study of Zheng Xiaoxu's political poetics] (master's thesis, National Chi Nan University, 2017), unpublished.

<sup>107</sup> Liu Jinghui, *Minzu, xingbie yu jiecheng: Weiman shiqi de "wangdao zhengzhi"* 民族、性別與階層：偽滿時期的「王道政治」 [Nation, gender, and class: The *wangdao* politics during the period of puppet Manchukuo] (Beijing: shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2004), 18-20.

majority, but also his shameful compromise with Japan where he offered Chinese sovereignty in exchange for Pu Yi's imperial throne.<sup>108</sup>

In the late twentieth century, the study of Zheng Xiaoxu was treated as a taboo subject under CCP rule and somewhat ignored by the Sino-Japanese academia elsewhere. The recent years, a welcome reverse of this trend has come about, and Zheng has increasingly drawn the attention of contemporary scholars. However, strictly speaking, so far there is no academic monograph on Zheng Xiaoxu in either English or Japanese. More saliently, there are only a few studies on Zheng Xiaoxu's political philosophy that are free from a strong moral overtone or a unified and linear national narrative. The unsystematic study on Zheng's political thoughts not only obscures the fact that his primary motivations lie in the protection of national interests, but cemented the monolithic resistentialist view where his collaboration with the Japanese occupation. To understand his worldview, therefore, it is necessary to know not only the domestic and international political situations that he confronted, but also how he marshalled the "symbolic resources" of ancient Chinese culture in response. His desire for subjectivity of China vis-à-vis the hegemony of the West and Japan through the reconstruction of Confucian universalism and Asia's cultural values represented the wider double mission of late Qing intellectuals, who were in search for Chinese modernity whilst conducting a cosmopolitan anti-colonial and anti-capitalist programme.

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<sup>108</sup> Chen Xiuwu, "Wei Manzhouguo 'jianguo jingshen' de zhimin benzhi" 偽滿洲國「建國精神」的殖民本質 [The colonial nature of 'the spirit of nation building' of puppet Manchukuo], in *Weiman lishi wenhua yu xiandai zhongri guanxi* 偽滿歷史文化與現代中日關係 [The history and culture of puppet Manchukuo and the modern Sino-Japanese relationship], ed. Shang Xia 尚俠 (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2014), 1: 6-15.

## Chapter Outline

My narrative of Zheng Xiaoxu's political philosophy in saving China will be developed from a variety of Zheng's writings, including his diaries, his poems, his calligraphic work as well as his political essays and speeches.

The main body of this thesis is divided into two chapters. By engaging with the interaction between aesthetics and political legitimacy, Chapter Two, "Light and Mirror: Zheng Xiaoxu's Conservative Encounter with Modern Japan," begins with a close reading of Zheng Xiaoxu's experience in Japan in the 1890s and analyses his schizophrenic apperception of the Meiji Restoration. On one hand, his fascination with the electric light, trains, and oil painting, proved how Zheng was impressed by the visible material outcomes of the Meiji Restoration. On another hand, he belittled parliamentarism and constitutional government in modern Japan and warned the Chinese political elites against following the example of Japan in establishing democratic institutions. Rather than considering Zheng's aversion to the Westernization of Japanese politics under the epistemic intellectual structure of *Zhongti xiyong*, I will argue that Zheng linked the downfall of *Hanzi/Hanxue* – that he perceived from Japanese sinologists' (for instance, Mori Kainan and Oka Senjin) disdain for China and *Hanshi* via *bitan* (brush talk) – to the chaotic political circumstances caused by the Meiji Constitution of 1889. Thus, to Zheng, overcoming modern Japan or *xifa*, resided in the restoration of the superiority of *Hanzi*, which was also embodied in his response to the Qing empire's failure in the First Sino-Japanese War.

Chapter Three, "Sentiment, Morality, and Saving China: *Wangdao*, Manchukuo and the Aestheticization of the Nation," probes how Zheng Xiaoxu's theory of *wangdao* transformed into a discourse of sentiment and morality in order to make Manchukuo a trans-national, selfless community of empathy. By examining two



terms which occupy a central position in Zheng's *wangdao*-ism, "extending love" (*boai* 博愛) and "restraining self" (*keji* 克己), I consider how *wangdao* was utilized as colonial propaganda in Manchukuo, while it also revealed the ambiguous connection between the ideological mobilization of Manchukuo and China proper. On the one hand, the narrative of *boai* – which aimed at resisting communism, exclusive nationalism, and Euro-American oppression – instead echoed the emergency of inward sentiment in modern Chinese life and referred to the universal role of equal affinity in creating a state. On the other hand, emphasizing the discipline of desire, the official promotion of the discourse of *keji* in Manchukuo resonated with the moral reconstruction in Republican China under Jiang Jieshi's leadership. Furthermore, I would like to point out *wangdao*'s inefficacy in fostering a strong identity in Manchukuo because Confucian feeling and morality were unable to mobilize common people to aestheticize Manchukuo while sewing up the social and economic gap engendered by the Japanese colonial hegemony.

The thesis ends with a more intriguing question that is, in order to overcome Republican China in a sense of politics and culture, how Manchukuo was involved in Zheng Xiaoxu's imagination of a new China.

## CHAPTER II Light and Mirror: Zheng Xiaoxu's Conservative Encounter with Modern Japan

In his diary entry for September 22, 1891, Zheng Xiaoxu included an architectural drawing of “an embassy in Tokyo” (*dongjing shishu* 東京使署). It was first and only time in his life that Zheng would include a drawing in his daily recordings. In the text accompanying the drawing, without any specific explanation of why he incorporated this picture, Zheng only expressed his “obsession” with two modern types of lamp:

床之南有電氣燈兩枝，每枝之光抵三十二枝

洋燭，遇年節及宴會乃點之。

煤氣燈四枝，向南一枝，夜夜點之。

1

To the south side of the bed are two electric lights.

Every electric light is able to produce a brightness equivalent to 32 wax candles. They would be used during the New Year Festival and during banquets.

There are also four gaslights, with one lying towards the south. They are turned on every night.

Here, the modern lamp functions as a visual *punctum* that pricks Zheng and evokes his unconscious desire for modernity. In Roland Barthes's analysis, the *punctum* also has “a power of expansion” that is always metonymic.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, for Zheng, the modern lamps of the embassy, especially the electric lights, not only represent the

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<sup>1</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 234–235.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000), 25–27, 43–45.

visible material emblem of Meiji Japan, but also mark an enlightened “vision-centered modernity.”<sup>3</sup>

Lamp technology, Zheng’s apotheosis of modernity, appeared several times in Zheng’s diary entries from Japan. Describing a car journey to Yoshiwara (the red-light district in Tokyo, which was legalized by the Japanese government in 1873) with Ding Yuting 丁禹廷 and other friends, Zheng writes that the prosperous urban landscape – constituting modern electric lights and people wearing Western-style clothes – brought about a sensation of “indescribable vertigo” (*xuanhuang buke mingzhuang* 眩晃不可名狀) in him.<sup>4</sup> On September 29, 1891, intrigued by Tokyo’s night scene that recalled his memories of the splendor of the imperial city of Beijing, Zheng composed a poem recording the previous day’s dinner gathering with friends in Shibaguchi, paying particular note to the numerous lights and the shadows that they cast on a night without a moon.<sup>5</sup>

In the West, the invention and adoption of gas lighting coincided with the industrialization of Great Britain during the early nineteenth century, while the subsequent electrification and centralization of lighting would coincide with the advent of monopoly capitalism around the early twentieth century. Historically speaking, artificial light has carried many cultural signifiers. Street lighting was valued as a guarantee of social stability in absolutist states like that of France during the reign of Louis XIV (1643–1715). Acts of lantern smashing were in turn intimately connected with instances of plebeian revolt against absolutist power: not

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<sup>3</sup> See Mi Jialu 米家路, “Shijue de xiangxiang shequn: lun ‘Heshang’ zhong de meijie zhengti, xuni gongmin zhuti yu haiyang wutuobang” 視覺的想象社群：論《河殤》中的媒介政體、虛擬公民主體與海洋烏托邦 [The visually imagined communities: Media state, virtual citizenship and oceanotopia in *River Elegy*], *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue banniankan*, no. 30 (December 2016): 26.

<sup>4</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 215.

<sup>5</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, *Haicanglou shiji* 海藏樓詩集 [Haicanglou poetry anthology], commentary by Huang Kun 黃坤 and Yang Xiaobo 楊曉波 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003), 15.

just in the Paris uprising of 1832, but in other rebellions of the nineteenth century in Europe. Later, it could be said that in commercialized cities artificial lighting represented both an industrial triumph over nature and a catalyst for the social stratification of the bourgeoisie and the working class.<sup>6</sup>

While it was recognized as a technological import from the West, in late Qing China artificial lighting became an icon of the modern, civilized city. Gas lights first entered China in 1865, and in the Shanghai concession of the 1870s they were called “*zilaihuo*” 自來火 (automatic fire) or “*dihuo*” 地火 (ground fire). In 1882, R.W. Little established the Shanghai Electric Company and erected the first electric street light in the city, on Nanjing Road.<sup>7</sup> Through a close reading of several poems published in *Shenbao* 申報, Wang Tao’s *Yingruan magazine* (*Yingruan zazhi* 瀛壖雜誌) and Yuan Zuzhi’s 袁祖志 *Records from Overseas* (*Tanying lu* 談瀛錄), Lü Wencui 呂文翠 delineates the modern landscape of Shanghai in the 1880s, teasing out the relationship between modern light and Chinese visual modernity. She notes that the advent of Western lighting technology not only reformed the everyday lives of ordinary people by extending leisure time into the night, but also redefined interpersonal relationships and sensory experiences in cities.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night: The Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Angela Davies (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1995), 30–76, 79–143.

<sup>7</sup> Yao Gonghe 姚公鶴 ed., *Shanghai xianhua* 上海閒話 [Shanghai anecdotes] (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1917), 1: 27; Sun Yutang 孫毓棠 ed., *Zhongguo jindai gongyeshi ziliao: diyi ji 1840–1895 nian* 中國近代工業史資料：第一輯 1840–1895年 [Materials on modern Chinese industrial history: Volume 1, 1840–1895] (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1957), 194–195.

<sup>8</sup> Lü Wencui, “Boli, deng yu shijue xiandaixing: qingse xushi chuantong zhi ‘haipai’ bianyi” 玻璃、燈與視覺現代性：情色敘事傳統之「海派」變異 [Glass, lamp, and visual modernity: The mutation of the erotic writing tradition in the “Shanghai school”], in *Guanying kanzhan: Huaren diqu shijue wenhua yanjiu* 觀影看展：華人地區視覺文化研究 [Viewing, exhibiting, gazing, and moving images: essays on Chinese visual culture], eds. Wu Fangzheng 吳方正 and Lin Wenqi 林文淇 (Taipei: Shulin chubanshe, 2009), 1–14.

In the Republican period, the invisible threat of colonialist civilizational discourse was imbricated into the significance of modern lighting. In the first chapter of Mao Dun's 茅盾 novel, *Midnight* (*Ziye* 子夜, 1933), the neon sign reading "LIGHT, HEAT, POWER" has been regarded as symbolic of urban writers' "ambivalence and anxiety" toward the intrusive presence of foreign imperialism and Western lifestyles.<sup>9</sup>

As a conservative Confucian elite, Zheng Xiaoxu's hyper-awareness of modern lighting is a reflection of its symbolic relationship to the enlightenment passage from darkness to light.<sup>10</sup> Zheng saw in the street light a bright and Westernized Japan, instead of a backward country subjugated by the Qing dynasty. Accompanying this was the unavoidable process of the "Othering" of China itself, as a rapidly Westernizing Japan was also discovered as a figurative ideological mirror of late Qing China. Bearing this in mind, this chapter will consider how light or modern visuality functioned as a symbolic mechanism through which Zheng developed his ambivalent understanding of Meiji Japan.

This chapter will also examine Zheng's multi-sensory experience in modern Japan in the context of his ambivalent attitude towards the Meiji Restoration of the 1890s. While the new material spectacle of "Japan/the West" became for Zheng a sensual lure into modernity itself, he belittled the socio-political trends of parliamentarianism and constitutionalism, considering the political aspect of the Meiji Reformation to be a source of "social disorder." Finally, an attempt will be

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<sup>9</sup> Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 3–5.

<sup>10</sup> For example, in the European Enlightenment, the image of light (*lumière*) was cast as a philosophical and historical discourse against superstition, which referred to the rational progress and human knowledge. The term *ténèbres* (darkness) was invoked by French Enlightenment thinkers to criticize the concrete secular socio-political institutions and forces, in their own era or in the past. See Rolf Reichardt, "Light against Darkness: The Visual Representations of a Central Enlightenment Concept," trans. Deborah Louise Cohen, *Representations*, no. 61 (Winter 1998): 109–114.

made to re-contextualize Zheng's paradoxical attitude towards modern Japan in light of his subsequent response to the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895).

### **From Gallery to Train: Space, Speed, and Sensing Modern Japan**

It is commonly held that the modern subject is constituted by his or her sensual perception of the external world.<sup>11</sup> This section will reflect on the remaking of Zheng himself, and of Qing China, in the sensory experience of the East Asian hetero-space of Meiji Japan.<sup>12</sup> This was a historical/epistemological dilemma that Meiji Japan's material superiority over Qing China, the cultural center of Asia, which Zheng would later overcome by means of culture/*wen*. Taking Zheng's diary as a representation of an encounter between a conservative Chinese intellectual and a modern, Westernized city, I aim to illuminate the complicated (trans-)national political discourse that lay behind the unconscious desires expressed in his writing.

The first situation in which Zheng practiced *seeing* modern Japan was in a gallery of Western art in Tokyo, which he attended with Lin Jiebi 林介弼 and a

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<sup>11</sup> Laikwan Pang, *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 6.

<sup>12</sup> In using the term "hetero-space" to describe Meiji Japan my intent is to highlight the country's dual identity after 1867 in the global context. Geographically speaking, Japan is an Asian country, located in the so-called "Far East" in Western recognition. However, under the slogan of "Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarians" (*Sonnō jōi* 尊王攘夷) the anti-Tokugawa movement lay a foundation of the birth of the Meiji government that aimed to abandon the iniquitous treaties imposed from the Western powers and become an independent member of international society. Westernization in Japanese foreign policy came in the form of an embracing of the Western diplomatic system and international law of nation-states, while the advent of the "*Datsu-A ron*" 脫亞論 (theory of the departure from Asia for Europe) proposed by Fukuzawa Yukichi 福澤諭吉 in 1885, marked itself as a turning point in cultural orientation of Japan, toward the status of a civilized Western nation. In addition to adopting a Western style of constitutionalism and fostering a strong national army, the Meiji government also embraced Western lifestyles, from hairstyles to the daily diet. Hence, in the early 1890s, Meiji Japan was indeed a hetero-space incorporating characteristics of both the East and the West, in contrast other Asian countries at the same time. See Hidemi Suganami, "Japan's Entry into International Society: The Expansion of International Society," in *Meiji Japan: Political, Economic and Social History, 1868–1912*, vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Meiji State*, ed. Peter Kornicki (London: Routledge, 1998), 8–12; Nancy K. Stalker, *Japan: History and Culture from Classical to Cool* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018), 214–232.

westerner on June 9, 1891. He wrote of this experience in his diary, and recorded his impressions of several oil paintings in detail:

有數大廳事，悉掛畫鏡，約百許面，大小不一，山水、人物、花草悉備，皆望之如生。所為夕陽村塢、斷港林薄，頽唐深窈，各極其妙。<sup>13</sup>

There are several big halls in which hang almost one hundred paintings of various sizes depicting natural landscapes, people, flowers and plants, and all of which are lifelike. Some paintings capture the setting sun over a village, others depict meandering rivers and dense foliage, but all are bleak and abstruse, each with their own characteristics.

Zheng's attention later turns to a painting of two women:

又有二婦，長與人等，裸身角力，左以頤抵右之乳，俯蹂而入，右以肩壓左之項，迫使下屈，臂手撐拒，不敢小緩，而努力之狀猶在兩股踝間也。旁擁視者數人，神皆注焉。又一美婦行昏翳間，草莽叢雜，意殊驚恐，為迷路也。<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 204.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

[There is a painting of] two life-size women. They are nude and wrestling. The left-hand woman's chin constricts the right-hand woman's breast for intimidating the right one. The right woman's shoulder constricted the left's neck to force the left one to squat. Their arms and hands are locked in opposition, neither daring to relax, while their thighs and ankles are still in tension. Meanwhile, numerous spectators are all immersed in the painting. There is another drawing that depicts a beautiful woman who walks in a dark and overgrown rural scene. Her facial expression is greatly panicked. It seems as if she has lost her way.

Zheng's sentimental perception of these Western oil paintings turns the gallery into an exotic space of visual newness and emotional domination. Zheng's voyeuristic gaze manifests a representational structure of "state/gender." Symbolically speaking, the East is always represented as a feminized and passive object lacking in (sexual) potency. With this in mind, the painting of two nude women grappling with one another can be read as a metaphor borne of recent historical hindsight, that is, its subtext is the competition between Japan and China.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Jaqueline Berndt has asserted that nude painting, especially the representation of female nakedness, not only suggest the relevance between corporeality and the new actuality of nation, but also transformed "nature/nude" into the "cultural/fine art." Mentioned in passing, the nude was accepted as a canonical modern western artistic genre by Japanese elites in the late nineteenth century. Held in 1881, Japan's second National Industrial Exhibition first introduced the Western aesthetics of quotidian nakedness that would come to be categorized as "pictures of naked people" (*jinbutsu seki raga* 裸體人物圖). Early Japanese nudes would also appear in a very European disguise. In 1893, for instance, Kuroda Seiki's 黒田清輝 *Chōshō* 朝妝 (Morning toilette), the first full nude in Japan,



Yet behind the pornographic embodiment of female nudity there also lies the capitalist commodity logic. In observing that the visual language of modern European publicity materials internalized the visual structure of traditional oil painting, John Berger draws an analogy between seeing and possessing when he states that “oil painting did to appearances what capital did to social relations.”<sup>16</sup> For Berger, oil painting reduced the image (in this case that of two nude women) to an exchangeable commodity, and transformed the status of the individual in relation to art; becoming either “spectator-owner” or “spectator-buyer”.

Zheng’s writing objectifies (even fetishizes) the female body as an urban landscape that evokes his sensory impulsion to consume Tokyo instinctively. The narrative of the visit to the erotic space of the gallery also epitomizes a double-gaze visual mechanism: while he records every detail of the painting of the wrestling women, he also notices that other people are absorbed in it. Zheng’s gaze at the other beholders of the paintings can be interpreted as a cross-cultural practice, between Japan and China, in which he is both spectator and a part of the spectacle of the historical imagination.

The seductiveness of the second painting lies in the power structure of Zheng’s identification of the lost woman’s fear with his own loss of direction. His ekphrastic decoding euphemistically expresses his worry about a new, unknown, Westernized Japan. Zheng’s identification with a weak and lost woman reflects an elite conservative Confucian male confronted with his own cultural and

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render a naked French woman in front of a full-length mirror (See Figure 1). After the 1910s, the female nude painting no longer served to “achieve a modern male agency,” and rather ushered in a new age of deploying “Japaneseness.” Hence, Zheng Xiaoxu’s experience of the Western-style oil painting of the nude female in Tokyo constituted a micro-window into Japanese acceptance of Western art in the Meiji era. See Jaqueline Berndt, “Nationally Naked? The Female Nude in Japanese Painting and Posters (1890s–1920s),” in *Performing “Nation”: Gender Politics in Literature, Theater, and the Visual Arts of China and Japan, 1880–1940*, eds. Doris Croissant, Catherine Vance Yeh, and Joshua S. Mostow (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 307–315, 320.

<sup>16</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), 83, 87, 134–141.

psychological castration, while Meiji Japan (and its technological progress) is transformed into a masculine, threatening Other. On a similar theme, his visit to the gallery ends with the viewing of a mural of the American Civil War, whose vivid portrayal of a grand war scene, and notably the heavy casualties caused by advanced weapons, evokes a psychical shock in Zheng.<sup>17</sup>

Zheng's museum experience can be understood as a "discovery of landscape," that changed his way of perceiving Japan. For Karatani Kōjin, "the discovery of the landscape" can be understood as "an inversion of semiotic configuration."<sup>18</sup> In other words, what Zheng saw in the gallery was not only the oil paintings themselves, and a new style of art that belonged to the Western aesthetic tradition, but also an unprecedented "epistemological constellation" that was brought about by Japanese material progress and Westernization.

Just as *seeing* oil painting/the West has been considered a desired mechanism of perceiving modern space via vision, railway travel too exemplifies how capitalist exchange and the circulation of goods changed the perception of speed and everyday life in the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> In the 1890s – more than twenty years after Commodore Matthew C. Perry first brought a tiny locomotive model to Japan in 1854 – the steam train was cast as a synonym for the Western industrial revolution, modern power and technological progress, becoming a universal theme in literature and art.<sup>20</sup> In Zheng's diary the train is both a machine and a medium by which to rewrite the correspondence between clock time and visual speed. His very short and

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<sup>17</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 204.

<sup>18</sup> Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, trans. Brett de Bary (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 27.

<sup>19</sup> Marian Aguiar holds that there are connections between modernity, railway mobility and capitalism that are both rhetorical and practical. See Marian Aguiar, *Tracking Modernity: India's Railway and the Culture of Mobility* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 1–6.

<sup>20</sup> Stalker, *Japan*, 226–227.

compact sentences capture the new corporeal sensation of railway travel, and the novelty of observing the natural landscape from within a technological space:

午後，峙青（黃峙青）來邀同往橫濱，遂坐  
小車至新橋，買票登火車……飯畢，同子  
明、峙青出浴……二人皆出，視鐘已九點  
過，亟還。受生（黎受生）令駕車僕曰：  
「九點之火車已不及，可十一點急行車  
耳。」火車之尤速者曰急行車，日四發，皆  
有定刻……月色朦朧，馳歸如飛，渡由新  
橋，乃坐小車到暑。入室，十二點半矣。(23  
June 1891)<sup>21</sup>

In the afternoon, [Huang] Zhiqing invited me to go to Yokohama with him. We took a small car to Shimbashi where we bought train tickets... After dinner, I went to the baths with Ziming and Zhiqing... When we left, we saw that the clock was showing 9pm, already late. Shousheng's hostler told us: "The 9pm train has already departed, but the 11pm high-speed train is an option." The fastest train is called the express train, and it departs four times per day according to a strict schedule... In the dim moonlight the train appeared to be flying. When it arrived at

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<sup>21</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 211.

Shimbashi, I transferred to a small car to the embassy. It was half past midnight when I finally arrived home.

上車，電光北起，黑雲如山，其勢甚疾，月  
鉤猶未墜。(10 August 1891)<sup>22</sup>

Boarding the train, a bolt of lightning flashed from the north. The black clouds were like mountains. The train was very fast. The moon did not fall down.

Zheng's recognition of the de-naturalizing and de-sensualizing effects of the development of railway travel can be read in these passages. He fails to grasp any image of the evanescent landscape because of the velocity of the train itself ("flying" and "fast") compromises his visual perception.<sup>23</sup> The exterior landscape seen by Zheng from the window of the train compartment is filtered through the motive machine ensemble of which he is a passenger. As Wolfgang Schivelbusch has claimed, "the annihilation of space and time" caused by railroad travel was a disconnection between the traveler and the landscape. To be more specific, spatial distance could no longer be perceived "by means of sensory recognition of... physical exhaustion."<sup>24</sup> Comparing the second diary entry with the first, Zheng's corporeal reaction to the railway is analogous, even as his mode of expression has become even further streamlined.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>24</sup> Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, trans. Anselm Hollo (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: The University of California Press, 1986), 10–12, 24.

The implications of train scheduling also deserve to be better examined. In the first passage, Zheng's party chooses to take the express train after missing the train at 9 pm, while he also notes that the express train departs according to a "strict timetable" (*dingke* 定刻).

On the first level, this episode offers an opportunity to reflect on a new era in which the will of machines takes precedent over the will of individuals, and in which the sense of time was altered as a result. The first Japanese railway line, from Tokyo to Yokohama, was built with the financial support of the Meiji government in 1872 (it was extended to Kōbe by 1889). Andrew Gordon has asserted that in Japan, modern train travel introduced a new system of chronology, in which time was calculated down to the minute, a phenomenon that increased the popularity of watches and clocks among the general population, as well as promoting the consciousness of punctuality.<sup>25</sup>

On the second level, the timetable (and the rail network to which it refers) not only emblemizes the unified time of a modern nation-state, but also connects disparate places in an "imagined community," both politically and practically.<sup>26</sup> In the early 1840s, several individual railway companies in Great Britain proceeded to set a standard time on their own railway lines. In 1842, with the foundation of the Railway Clearing House, those companies coordinated with each other to form a national railway grid, and Greenwich Mean Time was adopted as the unified time employed by the railroad system. This "railway time" was adopted nationwide in Great Britain by 1880.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, in 1883 the major railway companies in the USA

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<sup>25</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 71.

<sup>26</sup> Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman, "Introduction: Tracks to Modernity," in *The Railway and Modernity: Time, Space, and the Machine Ensemble*, eds. Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), 19–20.

<sup>27</sup> Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, 43–44.

replaced a medley of 53 local times with 4 time zones.<sup>28</sup> In Zheng's account of his train journey he experiences not only a modern urban civilizational tempo, but also the universal clock time of a modern nation-state, as dictated by a Western capitalist system of transportation and exchange.

Zheng's sensory experience in Meiji Japan departs from the stereotyped image of conservative Chinese Confucian elites: he enjoyed the public baths, visited the botanical garden and the zoo, drank beer and grape wine, tried to master English and Japanese, took a photo with friends, and purchased foreign books.<sup>29</sup> His enthusiasm for newly issued photographs of geisha girls and their performances even brought an air of dandyism to Zheng's ostensibly diplomatic journey;<sup>30</sup> as did his *flânering* on the streets of nineteenth-century Tokyo.<sup>31</sup>

Zheng's use of macaronic writing – that is, using Chinese script and Japanese pronunciation to transliterate English – is an example of the transcultural practices adopted in a globalized modern metropolis like Tokyo. The Chinese words “*huodie'er*” 伙蝶兒 or “*huoche'er*” 伙徹兒 were for instance used as a substitute for the English term “hotel” and the Japanese loanword “ホテル” (*hoteru*).<sup>32</sup> The incorporation of trans-linguistic hybridity of writing has been characterized by Peng Hsiao-yen as “the essence of transcultural modernity.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Beaumont and Freeman, “Introduction: Tracks to Modernity,” 19–20.

<sup>29</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 213, 236, 221–222, 243, 237, 258, 246, 210, 211, 239, 382.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 239, 245.

<sup>31</sup> The concept *flâneur* was firstly explored by Charles Baudelaire and then was developed in Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*. As an empty male subject, the *flâneur* was an aimless secret observer of the urban landscape, who was abandoned in the crowd. His activity, *flânerie*, manifested the intoxication from the capitalist commodity forms. See Keith Tester, “Introduction,” in *The Flâneur*, ed. Keith Tester (London: Routledge, 1994), 1–7; Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1983), 55.

<sup>32</sup> Li Zhensheng 李振聲, “Riji zhong de Zheng Xiaoxu dongying waijiao shengya” 日記中的鄭孝胥東瀛外交生涯 [Zheng Xiaoxu's diplomatic experience in Japan in his diary], *Zhongguo wenhua*, nos. 25–26 (Autumn 2007): 137.

<sup>33</sup> Hsiao-yen Peng, *Dandyism and Transcultural Modernity: the Dandy, the Flâneur, and the Translator in 1930s Shanghai, Tokyo, and Paris* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 60–61.

Zheng's indolent writing about modern Tokyo is legitimated by what I refer to as his "detective perspective;" in that the pleasure of the material culture of Meiji Japan was always coupled with a reflective watchfulness.<sup>34</sup>

Two passages from Zheng's Tokyo diary reflect his complicated feelings toward the visible superiority of Japanese technological progress. The first such passage is from his diary entry on June 19, 1891, describing a visit to a modern industrial factory in Ueno:

坐馬車至上野勸工場縱覽，百工雲集，所業  
皆精，使人歎息，有《周官》之遺意而私憾  
中原之不講也。(19 June 1891)<sup>35</sup>

I took a carriage to visit an industrial workshop in Ueno; it is amazing that there are more than one hundred craftsmen with such excellent skill. Japan has inherited the true significance of the *Zhouli* (Rites of Zhou) that China ignores, as I personally regret.

The second passage is a section from a verse composed in 1892, which was entitled "Miscellaneous Poem for Winter (Following the Rhyme of 'Looking Up I See in Sovereign Heaven the Bright Sun Speeding')" (*Dongri zashi: yi yangshi huangtian bairi su weiyun* 冬日雜詩：以仰視皇天白日速為韻)<sup>36</sup>

How is the current trend,

運會今何世，

<sup>34</sup> Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, 40–41.

<sup>35</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 209.

<sup>36</sup> The line, "looking up I see in sovereign Heaven the bright sun speeding" comes from Du Fu's 杜甫 "Songs Written While Residing in Tonggu County in the Qianyuan Reign" (*Qianyuanzhong yuju tongguxian zuoge qishou* 乾元中寓居同谷县作歌七首). I quote from Stephen Owen's translation, in Du Fu, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, trans. and ed. Stephen Owen (Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 2: 260.

[Japan] is more formidable than the West.	更霸起西方。
Who can nourish soldiers and peasants,	誰能安士农，
the only way is to develop industry and commerce.	唯聞逐工商。
A million foreign businessmen come to Japan,	贾胡合千百，
it becomes thriving and strong immediately.	其國旋富強。
This fashion arises from the East,	此風既東來，
it is too fierce to resist.	凌厲世莫当。
Japan seems like playing child's game,	日本類兒戲，
change becomes like a craze.	變化如風狂。
The secret of the Heaven could already be seen,	天機已可見，
the human heart is however furious.	人心奈披猖。
I worry about that there are no men of talent,	誠恐時無人，
ritual and moral discipline are going to die out.	禮義坐銷亡。
If heroes all were here,	豪傑皆安在，
then spreading flattering custom would be in vain.	俗佞空张皇。 <sup>37</sup>

Even though Zheng was impressed by Japan's modern industrial advances, and bemoaned Qing China's lack in terms of technology, he treats Japan's progress scornfully, as *erxi* 兒戲 (child's game). In other words, compared with the *Zhongyuan* 中原 (literally "the center," referring to China), Japan remained as inferior as a "child." Even though Zheng understood that technological improvement was indebted to the prosperity of trade, industry and foreign capital, which projected Japan as a more powerful entity than the West. As Hsiao-yen Peng has noted, Walter

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<sup>37</sup> Zheng, *Haicanglou shiji*, 24.



Benjamin observed that the *flâneur* was undergoing a revolutionary historical shift and yet was incapable of perceiving it.<sup>38</sup> As a *flâneur* in Tokyo, Zheng was not conscious of the revolutionary nature of the Meiji Restoration, that is, that it was becoming the West. Rather he asserted that Japan's chasing of the West gave rise to demoralization and a loss of tradition, with ignoring the significance of saving the human mind and social custom. Seen through the lens of the struggle between visible material culture and invisible spiritual civilization, we can discern that the sensual pleasure of modern Japan contained a threat to the traditional China-centered cultural system, a condition that Zheng strived to overcome by the means of repudiating the Meiji regime and its political reforms.

### **Overcome by Meiji Japan: Between *Xifa* and *Hanxue***

Shih Shu-mei has pointed out that Japan played a double role in the making of Chinese modernity, as both a reliable transmitter of foreign culture and a potent colonialist presence.<sup>39</sup> How to overcome Japan was cast as a project of China's own search for a path to modernization. As Paul A. Cohen has illustrated, the closeness of culture, character, geography, and race, as well as the history of coercive intervention by Western imperialists, fostered a historical intimacy between China and Japan, yet also shaped China's paternal attitude towards the latter. Cohen describes China's response to Japan's turn to modernization and Westernization in the mid-nineteenth century as "an uneasy mixture of admiration, envy, and contempt."<sup>40</sup> In this section, I will discuss Zheng's disagreement with the

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<sup>38</sup> Peng, *Dandyism and Transcultural Modernity*, 6.

<sup>39</sup> Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917–1937* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 4.

<sup>40</sup> Paul A. Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Wang T'ao and Reform in Late Ch'ing China* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), 99.

parliamentary system and constitutional monarchy of Meiji Japan, even while he admired the material outcomes of its reforms.

Before elucidating on Zheng's negative assessment of Meiji Japan's political institutions, let us briefly examine a couplet that he wrote for the Chinese Guild Hall in Kōbe on July 17, 1892 at Li Jingfang's (the Qing Ambassador to Japan) request, which reveals much about his views on Sino-Japanese relations (a topic which will be subjected to further examination below):

赤縣統皇圖，天下為家，到此更征中國盛；

東鄰佔樂土，太平無事，從今長保亞洲親。<sup>41</sup>

China rules over the imperial dynasty. All under Heaven is one family. It [the Guild Hall] testifies to the prosperity of China. The neighbor to the east is seizing happiness. The situation of the world is peaceful. From now on, the harmony of Asia will be blessed forever.

Thematically speaking, the subtle correspondence between “the prosperity of China” (*Zhongguo sheng* 中國盛) in the first line, and “the harmony of Asia” (*Yazhou qin* 亞洲親) in the second line, is deserving of further attention. On one hand, the premise of the “prosperity of China” sits alongside the Qing dynasty's domain over all that lay “under Heaven” (*tianxia* 天下); a dominion which traditionally included Japan. On the other hand, while the “harmony of Asia” refers to the relations between Qing China and Japan, in the tail line of the couplet Japan is designated only as an “eastern neighbor” of China. From this it could be concluded that, in the

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<sup>41</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 300.

early 1890s, Zheng Xiaoxu's understanding of Sino-Japanese relations was dominated by "[the Confucian concept of] *tianxia*" (*Rujia tianxia guan* 儒家天下觀).<sup>42</sup>

Many scholars have argued that Zheng's perspectives on modern Japan can be related not only to his Confucian training, but also to the conventional perceptions of Chinese intellectuals. These included not only China's status as the "Celestial Empire" (*tianchao shangguo* 天朝上國), but also the philosophy of *Zhongti xiyong* that was propagated during the Self-Strengthening Movement.<sup>43</sup> However, these descriptions fail to note the antagonism between *xifa* and *Hanxue* proposed by Zheng Xiaoxu. Viewing Japanese sinologists' contempt for Chinese script/ *Hanxue* as a problem of cultural aesthetics as the result of Meiji Japan's penchant for imitating the West/ *xifa* which is a problem of political identification on its own, Zheng therefore perceived the prevalence of *xifa* in Japan as a challenge to the legitimacy of Qing China as the cultural and political center of East Asia.

In his study of the late Qing reformer and public intellectual Wang Tao, Cohen suggests that a China-centered imaginative order and a Japanese Sinophile culture informed Chinese intellectuals' narratives of Japan during the late Qing,

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<sup>42</sup> Xu, *Zheng Xiaoxu de qianbansheng pingzhuan*, 70.

<sup>43</sup> For instance, engaging with Zheng Xiaoxu's eight-legged essay on the *Daxue* in the Imperial examination, Xu Linjiang highlights that Zheng's emphasis was on "*xiansheng zhixue*" 先聖之學 (the learning of ancient sages) as the original, which represented a common value held by other Qing intellectuals. As Zou Jinxi has suggested, performing as a secretary in Li Hongzhang's *mufu*, Zheng Xiaoxu retorted upon Gustav von Detring's flaunt about the supreme greatness of German empower in Europe, which unearthed Zheng's belief in the superiority of Confucian culture and Sinocentrism. Zhu Jing reminded us that, in Zheng's diagnosis of Meiji Restoration, what problem Qing China should avert was to break restoration with innovation. To assert that Zheng's preserve restoration within innovation" (*yu kaihua zhizhong cun shoujiu zhiyi* 于開化之中存守舊之意) echoed Zhang Zhidong's idea of "*Zhongti xiyong*" is seemingly not an overstatement. Besides, she also mentioned that in his diary, Zheng expressed his positive appraisal on Feng Guifen's 馮桂芬 political philosophy that was delineated in *Xiaobinlu kangyi* 校邠廬抗議 [Protest from the study of Xiaobin]. Xu, *Zheng Xiaoxu de qianbansheng pingzhuan*, 35–38; Zou, "Cong 'cibang su yi tou' dao 'jinri riguang huiwanguo': Zheng Xiaoxu Ribenguan de zhuanbian lichen," 17; Zhu, "Qingmo minchu Zheng Xiaoxu shehui jiaoyi tanjiu," 15; Zhu, "Cong Zheng Xiaoxu riji kan Zhengshi 'Ribenguan' de yanbian," 135.

when many educated Japanese still read and wrote Chinese.<sup>44</sup> Echoing his observation, I will argue that Zheng’s dismissive attitude towards the political reforms of Meiji Japan was formed in light of the dual crisis of Chinese script and *Hanxue* in Japan after 1868.

First of all, Zheng did not detest the Western institution of constitutionalism itself. He even acted as a radical leader of late Qing China’s own constitutionalist movement, and served as the president of the Constitutional Preparation Association (*yubei lixian gonghui* 預備立憲公會) in Shanghai, from 1906 to 1910.<sup>45</sup> His critique of Meiji Japan was in essence a result of this “Eastern neighbor” (that once was an extension of the “prosperity of China”) no longer paying sufficient credit to *Hanxue*, and instead turning to *xifa*. Zheng confronted scorn for Qing China and *Hanxue* from Japanese sinologists that was both political and cultural, and in which he sensed a fracture with Chinese civilization and the East in general – a point that I will elaborate on further later.

Moreover, it should be noted that Zheng’s suspicion toward the Self-Strengthening Movement brings into doubt the stereotype that he was a faithful henchman of the *Zhongti xiyong* principle. A dialogue between Zheng and his English teacher Li Yiqin 李一琴 sheds light on how Zheng rethought the contemporary fashion for following foreign affairs:

余曰：「……中國風氣，懶而無恒，所以不振。君在歐洲久，但學歐人勤與信與知大體，則為得其大矣。世習洋務，惟得脫帽、

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<sup>44</sup> Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, 99–100.

<sup>45</sup> See Murata Yūjirō, “Dynasty, State and Society: The Case of Modern China,” in *Imagining the People: Chinese Intellectuals and the Concept of Citizenship, 1890-1920*, eds. Joshua A. Fogel and Peter G. Zarrow (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 130-131.

執手、啖洋菜、呂宋煙耳，宜其為歐人所輕也。」 (14 June 1891)<sup>46</sup>

I [Zheng Xiaoxu] replied, "... The reason for Qing China's wane was due to the Chinese ethos: laziness and a lack of perseverance. You spent a long time in Europe. (You may) know that it is important to learn from the Western peoples' diligence, trustworthiness, and sensibleness. However, there are those for whom their knowledge of worldly affairs is only to imitate the taking off the hat, shaking hands, eating Western food, and smoking cigars, and who therefore are made light of by the Westerners."

In employing the traditional Confucian virtues of "diligence" (*qi* 勤) "trustworthiness" (*xin* 信) and "wisdom" (*zhi dati* 知大體) to summarize what Chinese should learn from the West, Zheng's comment can be read as a revalorization of the Self-Strengthening Movement. Zou Jinxi mentions that Zheng's censure of the superficiality of learning "foreign affairs" was in correspondence with the ideology of the Self-Strengthening Movement itself (namely, *Zhongti xiyong*).<sup>47</sup> First proposed by Feng Guifen in an article titled "On the Adoption of Western Knowledge" (*Cai xixue yi* 采西學議), *Zhongti xiyong* referred to the premise that Chinese tradition and Confucian ethics should be regarded as the origin of reviving

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<sup>46</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 206.

<sup>47</sup> Zou, "Cong 'cibangsu yitou' dao 'jinri riguang huiwanguo': Zheng Xiaoxu Ribenguan de zhuanbian licheng," 20–21.

China, while Western means of achieving prosperity and strength should be treated as a supplement.<sup>48</sup> Feng believed that the only thing the Qing Empire had to learn from the “Western barbarians” was their skill in manufacturing “solid ships and effective guns.”<sup>49</sup> Zheng however contended that the superficial adoption of Westernization – rather than altering lazy social ethos – would only engender the contempt of foreigners. Here, his positive assessment on “the Western peoples’ diligence, trustworthiness, and wisdom” went beyond the traditional debate between *ti* 體 (essence) and *yong* 用 (practice) in the genealogy of overcoming the West and in the context of learning from the West. An additional linguistic point is that Zheng used the term *yangwu* 洋務 instead of *yiwu* 夷務 to designate “foreign affairs.” In Lin Xuezhong’s study, the shift from *yiwu* to *yangwu* expressed China’s acceptance of international law and the establishment of modern diplomacy.<sup>50</sup> Lydia H. Liu reminds us that the ban on using the character *yi* 夷 (barbarian) in Chinese official documents – enforced under the Anglo-Chinese Treaty of Tianjin in 1858 – created a civilized order that was buttressed by the British Empire, while repressing Qing China’s universalistic claims.<sup>51</sup>

In this vein, I intend on arguing that Zheng’s vision of Meiji Japan was complicated by the realization that: (1) the clash between China / Asia and the West was a competition of two civilizations in a global context; and, (2) Japan’s full-scale Westernization had led to its severance from the identity of “Asia” itself – which

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<sup>48</sup> Feng Guifen, “On the Adoption of Western Knowledge,” in *China’s Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1839–1923*, eds. Teng Ssu-yu and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 52.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>50</sup> Lin Xuezhong 林學忠, *Cong Wanguo gongfa dao gongfa waijiao: wan Qing guojifa de chuanru, quanshi yu yingyong* 從萬國公法到公法外交：晚清國際法的傳入、詮釋與應用 [From the law of all states to international law diplomacy: The introduction, interpretation and application of international law in late Qing China] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2009), 26.

<sup>51</sup> Lydia H. Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 32–34.

was a metonymy for the failure of Chinese civilization. Hence, to Zheng, the threat posed by Japan's Meiji Restoration was not a crisis *arriving from* the West, but one *arising within* the East. In the context of Zheng's encounters with a Westernized Japan, "Chinese script/*Hanxue*" came to be symbolic of the imagined sovereignty of the Qing dynasty in Asia.

In the remainder of this chapter I will elaborate on several encounters between Zheng Xiaoxu and Japanese sinologists conducted in a writing genre known as *bitan*, and which express how in Zheng's logic the crisis of Chinese script/*Hanxue* in Meiji Japan was projected as a cultural representation of the Westernization of Japanese politics.

(1) Begins with *bitan*: a crisis of Chinese characters and *Hanxue* within the East

*Bitan* literarily signifies a substitute for oral communication, that is to use a brush to write Chinese for delivering messages or exchanging verses, which was a mode of communication within the so-called "East Asian Chinese character cultural community" (*Dongya hanzi wenhuaquan* 東亞漢字文化圈), namely, the cultures of China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. In the late Qing period, the ascendance of Sino-Japanese *bitan* was taken as proof that Chinese culture still exerted a significant influence in modern Japan. From the Tokugawa period to the Meiji Restoration, many Japanese officials, literati, and samurais, were still able to write and read Chinese and even compose Chinese poetry, although at that time Japan had created its own language, *kana* 仮名.<sup>52</sup> Chinese was even the official written medium

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<sup>52</sup> Wang Xiaoqiu 王曉秋, "Jindai Zhongri bitan de xingtai yanjiu: yi 'Dahenei wenshu' wei zhongxin" 近代中日筆談的形態研究：以《大河內文書》為中心 [A study of the genre of modern Sino-Japanese brushtalking: Focus on *Ōkōchi Bunsho*], in *Zai Riben xunzhao Zhongguo: xiandaixing ji shenfen renting de zhongri hudong* 在日本尋找中國：現代性及身份認同的中日互動 [Searching

between the Japanese and the Americans during the negotiations over the Treaty of Kanagawa (*Kanagawa Jōyaku* 神奈川條約) of 1854.<sup>53</sup> D. R. Howland further points out that although, as a linguistic phenomenon, *bitan* defied the categories of speech and text, it was clear that it was a language practice that marked not only a “shared writing (system)” (*tong wen* 同文) in Chinese script, but also a common civilization.

In the Confucian classics, the distinguishing of writing (*wen* 文) from speech (*yan* 言) was the vehicle of truth, the stable representation of the words and speech, as well as the beginning of history.<sup>54</sup> In this regard, the political implications of *bitan* were obvious: on a temporal level, it emblemized a shared historical past and tradition of cultural identity between China and Japan; on a spatial level, it evoked a common Chinese civilized community and functioned as a bridge linking the island country of Japan with the Asian mainland. Through his *bitan* engagements with Japanese sinologists, Zheng came to perceive a crisis of Chinese script in the East and in Japan, particularly when sinologists like Oka Senjin 岡千仞, delivered their contempt for Qing China via Chinese writing itself.

On November 14, 1891, Zheng attended a meeting held by the Asia Association (*Ajia kyōkai* 亞細亞協會) in Tokyo’s Red Maple-leaf Club (*Kōyō-kan* 紅葉館) with Qiu Qiao 秋樵. In his diary entry, he recorded that during the feast, after exchanging their name cards, Senjin communicated with Zheng via *bitan* and expressed his disdain for Qing China.<sup>55</sup> Senjin’s satirical *bitan* conversation with

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for modernity and identity in Japan–China interactions in the modern period], ed. Wu Weiming 吳偉明 (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2013), 45.

<sup>53</sup> Demin Tao, “Negotiating Language in the Opening of Japan: Luo Sen’s Journal of Perry’s 1854 Expedition,” *Japan Review*, no. 17 (2005): 92–93, 106.

<sup>54</sup> Douglas Howland, *Borders of Chinese Civilization: Geography and History at Empire’s End* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 53–56.

<sup>55</sup> A famous Japanese sinology, who had also mastered Western learning, Senjin accepted an invitation from Wang Tao and travelled to Shanghai in 1884. In his travelogue, entitled Sightseeing



Zheng must be understood in light of the history of Chinese script in Japan. Bearing this in mind, Senjin's attack is not only on China's cultural traditions, but also on a classical scholarly Sinitic training acquired by Japanese intellectuals. The *bitan* conversion itself is reduced to a self-referential structure: as a traditional Confucian intellectual who saw himself as a mentor to Japanese in literary Chinese studies, what Zheng could only decode was Chinese that conveyed the scorn from the "Eastern neighbor."

Chinese script constituted the primary resource in the origins of Japanese writing in the first millennium AD. Early writing activity in Japan was first performed by immigrant scribes who were proficient at composing in Chinese.<sup>56</sup> The double rootlessness/Chinese-ness of the Japanese writing system led inevitably to written Chinese being identified as both Japanese and Chinese. Senjin's making light of Qing China via *bitan* was thus an expression of a desire to obliterate vestiges of Chinese-ness from the past, and deny the primacy of China in the making of Japanese culture, which corresponded to the slogan "*Datsu-A*" 脫亞 (transcending Asia) that was popular during the Meiji period.

Zheng's second provocative encounter with Chinese script in a Japanese context was initiated by a Japanese sinologist through *kanshi* 漢詩 (classical Chinese poetry). "Like brushtalking [*bitan*], poetry written on and for selected occasions was a discourse situated ambiguously between conversation and text."<sup>57</sup> On January 7,

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Notes (*Kankō kiyū* 觀光記遊), Senjin observed in China poor hygienic and living conditions in urban areas, the downfall of traditional rituals, abnormal indulgence in the Six Classics (*Liujing* 六經), and opium use. Senjin proposed a range of reformatory proposals, most of which were derived from the reforms undertaken by Japan in the Meiji Restoration. Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 249; Hu Tianshu 胡天舒, "Gang qianren de Zhongguo guan: yi 'Guanguang jiyou' wei zhongxin" 岡千仞的中國觀：以《觀光紀遊》為中心 [Oka Senjin's view of China: A study of *Kankō kiyū*], *Lishi jiaoyu wenti*, no. 1 (2018): 79–82.

<sup>56</sup> Christopher Seeley, *A History of Writing in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1991), 1, 25–26.

<sup>57</sup> Howland, *Borders of Chinese Civilization*, 57.

1893, Mori Kainan 森槐南, a Japanese pioneer of *kanshi* in the 1890s, wrote a letter to Zheng with attaching his eight pieces of seven-character quatrain entitled *Jilin Poetry Anthology* (*Jilin shixuan* 雞林詩選). As an official poet who engaged a public interaction with contemporary Qing poets, Kainan's verse works usually were regarded as a qualitative zenith of the Sinitic culture in Japan during the Meiji period.<sup>58</sup> Yet, one poem he sent to Zheng, which derided the decadence of the style and the quality of Chinese poetry after the reigns of the emperors Qianlong 乾隆 and Jiaqing 嘉慶. Near the end of this verse, Kainan composed the following line: "Facing such a situation should China not feel ashamed?" (*ruci Zhongyuan wukui fou* 如此中原無愧否). Kainan's belittling of Chinese poets provoked a furious retort from Zheng:

乃作書與之曰：「閱新聞報紙，見足下絕句八首……其詩句誠頗清穎……惜口角佻達……貴國自改學西法以來，蒸蒸日上，漸即富強，極為可喜；然漢學益衰，時務之士恨不舉而廢之……但欲作詩人，亦貴先立根本。根本者何？惟曰敦厚而已。敦厚之反，謂之浮薄……時務之士之輕漢學久矣，亦由吾黨學者多輕薄自喜之徒有以召侮也。足下自今往后，如果能立身于敦厚，益為有體有

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<sup>58</sup> Matthew Fraleigh, "At the Borders of Chinese Literature: Poetic Exchange in the Nineteenth-Century Sinosphere," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Chinese Literatures*, eds. Carlos Rojas and Andrea Bachner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 377; Robert James Tuck, "The Poetry of Dialogue: *Kanshi*, Haiku and Media in Meiji Japan, 1870–1900" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2012), 101–102.

用之學，勿徒以一得自矜，則貴國之漢學或  
可振于既絕，一洗時俗之詬病，固大善  
矣……」 (7 January 1893)<sup>59</sup>

I [Zheng] therefore wrote a letter to him: “I read your eight quatrains in the newspaper... The verses are indeed clean and elegant... yet they are also giddy and profligate... it is good to see that Japan becomes gradually more flourishing and powerful after adopting Western ways. Meanwhile, Chinese learning is on the decline inch by inch. People who know the times and circumstances are unsatisfied with the uselessness of Chinese learning and appealing for its abolition... However, if you would like to be a poet, it is also important to establish the essence. What is this essence? Only *dunhou* (sincerity). It is said that the reverse side of *dunhou* is *qingbo* (immodesty)... Japanese scholars have looked down on Chinese learning for a long time. Such an insult has partly been incurred by the many Chinese scholars who are flippant and complacent people. Henceforward, if you conduct yourself in *dunhou*, acquire the

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<sup>59</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 334–335.

[Confucian] learning of the essence and the  
practice in order to rid yourself of arrogance,  
then Japan's *Hanxue* may be rejuvenated from its  
current low ebb and dispense with the  
deficiencies that people have denounced. That  
would be a great thing..."

On the surface, this letter reads as Zheng instructing Kainan in the principles of Chinese poetics. The term *dunhou* first appears in the Confucian classic *The Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸) — originally a chapter of the *Book of Rituals* (*Li ji* 禮記) — where it is linked to the term *wenrou* 溫柔 (meek) in the phrase *wenrou dunhou* 溫柔敦厚 (meek and sincerity).<sup>60</sup> Referring to an ideal poetic mode and personality, it was later understood as a criterion of poetic writing, namely that of “kindness and morality in intention and restraint and gentleness in expression.”<sup>61</sup> In making reference to *dunhou*, Zheng aimed to remind Kainan of the traditional Chinese poetics of *kanshi* and transformed the problem of the aesthetics of Chinese classical poetry into one of the politics of the Sino-Japanese relationship. In terms of the inherent power structure of the encounter, Zheng performed “himself/China” as a mentor guiding the student “Mori Kainan/Japan.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Liu Wenzhong 劉文忠, *Wenrou dunhou yu Zhongguo shixue* 溫柔敦厚與中國詩學 [Meek and sincere and Chinese poetics] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2015), 1–10.

<sup>61</sup> Xiaorong Li, “Rewriting the Inner Chambers: The Boudoir in Ming-Qing Women’s Poetry” (PhD diss., McGill University, 2006), 88–89.

<sup>62</sup> However, as for Zheng Xiaoxu’s critical opinion on Japanese poets’ *kanshi* works, in Kazuyuki Fukazawa’s 深澤一幸 account, inasmuch as the Sino-barbarian dichotomy exercised the influence on the traditional Chinese official class (*shidafu* 士大夫) unconsciously, Zheng had no intention to treat the Japanese Sinologists and their literary works fairly. See Fukazawa Kazuyuki, “Tei Kōsho to Tōkyō no Kangaku shiya tachi” 鄭孝胥氏と東京の漢学者たち [Zheng Xiaoxu and sinologists in Tokyo], *Gengo bunka kenkyū*, no. 34 (2008): 61–81.

In his reply, Zheng also reflected on the contested and antagonistic relationship between *Hanxue* and *xifa*. In his articulation, “*Hanxue/China*” lay in *dunhou*, which was related to the “essence” (*genben* 根本), while the *xifa* that Japan pursued in the Meiji era was connected to *qingbo* 輕薄 (immodesty), and which was non-functional in terms of *ti* and *yong*. “The learning of the essence and the practice” (有體有用之學) — a concept developed by Neo-Confucians during the Song-Ming dynasty that emphasizes both on the metaphysical essence and the political function.<sup>63</sup> The crisis Zheng observed in Kainan’s poems was not merely that Chinese learning was being toppled by Western ways, but also the rupture of the cultural identity of Japan with literary Chinese and with the hierarchical Sinocentric world order.

Zheng’s lamenting of the loss of “*genben/Hanxue*” in the process of Japan’s total Westernization was not ungrounded. Meiji Japan’s material modernization did in fact involve the movement for the abolition of *kanji* 漢字 (Chinese script), which endeavored to replace *Hanxue* with *xifa* as the essence/*genben* of learning. In 1866, Maejima Hisoka 前島密 issued a proposal for abandoning the use of Chinese script in Japanese writing to Prince Tokugawa Yoshinobu 德川慶喜, and denounced Chinese script as a barbarian primitive language and the cause of Japan’s backwardness.<sup>64</sup> Zhong Yurou has pointed out that during the period from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, revolutions in the inscribing of non-alphabetic language systems worldwide were driven by a phono-centrism that

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<sup>63</sup> Yu Ying-shih 余英時, *Zhongguo sixiang chuantong de xiandai quanshi* 中國思想傳統的現代詮釋 [The modern interpretation of Chinese intellectual tradition] (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2003), 187.

<sup>64</sup> Komori Yōichi 小森陽一, *Riben jindai Guoyu pipan* 日本近代國語批判 [Critique of Japanese national language in the modern era], trans. Chen Duoyou 陳多友 (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 2004), 103.

was a response to the invention of modern technology reliant on Western alphabets.<sup>65</sup> In Meiji Japan, the abolishment of Chinese script became a necessary step to becoming Westernized, accompanied by the creation of a modern national language. For Karatani Kōjin, the movement of “unifying spoken and written languages” (*genbun-itchi* 文言一致) undermined “the privileged status of writing (as *kanji*),” and implied the formation of a new Japanese subjectivity in the Meiji era.<sup>66</sup> In re-examining the ambiguous situation of Chinese script in Japanese writing during the modern era, Koyasu Nobukuni theorizes that the “double otherness” (*erchong tazhexing* 二重他者性) of written Chinese, which was both a written sign of the sound sign/spoken sign and an “Other” of Japanese, another “Other” of the *logos*.<sup>67</sup> When a flood of new lexical words were imported from the West to Meiji Japan they were overwhelmingly rendered in the linguistic “Other” of the Chinese script.<sup>68</sup> Put differently, Othering or abolishing Chinese script referred not only to a process of transforming Chinese script/*Hanxue* into the political and aesthetic residuum, but also an attempt to separate Japan from China.

Juxtaposing the movement for script reform in the 1880s with Kainan’s satirical verses allows us to explore the (trans-)national political struggle beneath Zheng’s writing. For Kainan, the adoption of Chinese classical poetics to express his contempt for the compositions of Qing poets was charged with the intrinsic negation of the orthodox aesthetic tradition of *kanshi*. Zheng’s recourse to the Confucian

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<sup>65</sup> Yurou Zhong, “Script Crisis and Literary Modernity in China, 1916–1958” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2014), 1–3.

<sup>66</sup> Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, 51.

<sup>67</sup> Koyasu Nobukuni 子安宣邦, *Dongya lun: Riben xiandai sixiang pipan* 東亞論——日本現代思想批判 [East Asia theory: criticism on Japanese modern thoughts], trans. Zhao Jinghua 趙京華 (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 2010), 251.

<sup>68</sup> Seeley, *A History of Writing in Japan*, 136–138.

poetic principle of *dunhou* was a reminder of the roots of Japanese literature and writing in Chinese culture.

This resonates with Zheng's diary entry for September 1, 1892, in which he records his opinions on the "Proposal for Strengthening to Korean King" (*Shang Gaoliwang ceqiangshu* 上高麗王策強書), an article published in a Japanese newspaper on the same day. In his diary entry, Zheng specifically indicates that the only way to avoid Japanese reform is to "preserve restoration within innovation."<sup>69</sup> It is reasonable to assume that, in Zheng's rhetoric, Chinese script/*Hanxue* is cast as a cultural representation of "preserving restoration," whereas Japanese sinologists' disdain for Chinese writing was projected as a mutation of Westernized "innovation."

(2) *Xifa* and *luan*: heterogeneity of the eastern neighbor and Zheng Xiaoxu's misreading of Meiji Japan

Zheng's perception was that Japan's Westernization represented a threat arising from within the East itself. In his writing, the Japanese political reforms after 1890 became a metonymy of the cultural crisis of Chinese script/*Hanxue*. Zheng deemed that in implementing the policies of constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary system, Japan was breaking Asian homogeneity and bringing about "disorder" (*luan* 亂). His unease and anxiety with could be explained in terms of a "quasi-*jamais vu* experience": once Qing China's familiar neighbor to the east, Japan had come to seem like a total stranger.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 318.

<sup>70</sup> Contrary to "*déjà vu*," the concept "*jamais vu*" is a psychological experience in which we feel unfamiliar with a situation or something that we should be familiar with. See Katherine Withy, *Heidegger on Being Uncanny* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015), 54.

On January 3, 1892, two friends of Zheng's – Zhang Xiuhai 張袖海 and Liu Zizhen 劉子貞 — called attention to the embarrassing situation of the Japanese government, and insisted that the incongruity between the national rulers and the populace would result in the social disorder.<sup>71</sup> Agreeing with their assessment on Japan's future, Zheng recapitulated a brief history of Meiji Japan's political reforms in his diary:

.....明治改用西法之初，與國人立約五條，  
曰「俟我為之二十年，而後議其得失。」今  
已二十余年，不得不立國會議院。既而議員  
慾節國費，與政府不合，於是罷議員之至者  
數百人，遣大臣佈告國中，約五月后更舉議  
員。民間大嘩，益欲與政府為難，黨人相  
持，從而煽動.....國中之得民望者，副島種  
臣、谷干城等不過數人，皆不主西法者。如  
此數人執政，而亂可弭，猶為幸也，但恐一  
動而難遏耳。<sup>72</sup>

...In the early days of Meiji Japan's adoption of Western ways, [the government] promulgated to its citizens the Five Articles [the Imperial Oath of Five Articles] and announced that it would weigh the gains and losses [of learning Western ways] after 20 years. After more than 20 years, it

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<sup>71</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 260.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 260–261.



necessarily came about that the Imperial Diet be introduced to Japan. Recently however, councilors wanted to cut the national budget, which led to a conflict with the central government. Thus, the government discharged several hundred councilors from the employment and issued a public notice stating that new councilors would be elected after five months. The populace felt unsatisfied and increasingly came into antagonism with the government. Partisans ignited rivalries with one other and incited the populace. Those people who gained in popularity, like Soejima Taneomi and Tani Tateki, do not advocate Western ways. If people like them held power, then the disorder would be contained. Although it is lucky to control it, political unrest could not be avoided.

Zheng ended his entry with a sigh and described Meiji Japan's Westernization as "the failure from the Heaven" (*tianbai* 天敗).<sup>73</sup> Then, in a letter to the general of Fujian (*Fujian jiangjun* 福建將軍), Xi Yuan 希元, Zheng criticized Japan's adherence to Western models as crude, noting that "the more party gathering holds, the more people's intention instigated by villains; however the parliament was convened, the government was unable to behave itself." (*danghui yusheng, ze*

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 261.

*jianren deyi shanqitu ye; yihui jikai, ze zhengfu moneng anqiwei ye* 黨會愈盛，則奸人得以煽其圖也；議會既開，則政府莫能安其位也)<sup>74</sup>

Furthermore, he shared some of Zhang Xiuhai's concerns over a more pernicious imitation of Europe in Japan: ministers had set up their own newspaper institution and ensured that public voice on the current social situation tallied with their political proposals.<sup>75</sup> To borrow the rhetoric of the *Japan News* (*Nihon Nyūsu* 日本新聞) – dominated by Tani Tateki 谷干城, a conservative statesman who preached “kingly way” politics and discountenanced the Europeanizing of the Meiji government – “after the reform, the appearance of Japanese society is progressive yet the interior of it is rotten.”<sup>76</sup>

Before interpreting Zheng's distaste for Meiji Japan's constitutional government and parliamentary system, we must revisit the history of modern Japanese politics and the significance of the Meiji Constitution of 1889.

Drafted by Yuri Kimimasa 由利公正 and Fukuoka Takachika 福岡孝弟, and finalized by Kido Takayoshi 木戶孝允, the Charter Oath (also called the Imperial Oath Of Five Articles) was proclaimed by Emperor Meiji on April 6, 1868, and expressed a commitment to enacting reform in Japan. However, over the following decades “political activists within and outside the government struggled to give the articles specific meanings” according to their own interests (see for instance the ambiguous promises of “deliberative assemblies” and “public discussion” made in

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<sup>74</sup> Huang Qingcheng 黃慶澄, “Dongyou riji” 東游日記 [Diary of a journey to the east], in *Zouxiang shijie congshu: jiwu yiqian Riben youji wuzhong* 走向世界叢書：甲午以前日本遊記五種 [From East to West, Chinese travellers before 1911: Five travelling notes of Japan before the First Sino-Japanese War], ed. Zhong Shuhe 鐘叔河 (Hunan: yuelu shushe chubanshe, 1985), 361.

<sup>75</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 310–311.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 311; Motoyama Yukihiro, “The Confucian Ideal of Rule by Virtue and the Creation of National Politics: The Political Thought of Tani Tateki,” trans. W. J. Boot, in *Proliferating Talent: Essays on Politics, Thought, and Education in the Meiji Era*, eds. J. S. A. Elisonas and Richard Rubinger (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 195–196.

its first article).<sup>77</sup> In the 1870s, with the support of government officials, the “*keimō* movement” (enlightenment movement) witnessed the rapid embrace of Western values and the embracing of the British and French as the paragons of “*bunmei*” 文明 (civilization). Meanwhile, the newspaper press formed a “medium for debate” and gained its voice in engaging with political questions like popular assembly and public participation in national policy-making, although it would later be dragged into the partisan schism of the 1880s.<sup>78</sup>

Faced with unequal treaties imposed by the Western powers and mounting protests from the “movement for freedom and people’s rights” (*jiyū minken undō* 自由民權運動), the enactment of the national constitution and the introduction of judicial system came to be viewed as the keys to making Japan a powerful modern state in the Western style.<sup>79</sup> The Meiji Constitution was proclaimed on February 11, 1889. Based on the Prussian Constitution of 1850, it was drafted by the so-called *genrō* 元老 (oligarchs), a small group of leaders who studied European politics at the head of Itō Hirobumi 伊藤博文, and in whose control lay the Japanese bureaucracy of the 1880s.<sup>80</sup> A realization of the spirit of the Charter Oath, the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution not only put an end to domestic social conflicts (including the Boshin War and a series of the samurai revolts), but also invented the ideal of the “nation” (*kokumin* 國民), and embedded it into the cultivating of the “state” (*kokka*

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<sup>77</sup> Mikiso Hane and Louise G. Perez, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Westview Press, 2009), 85–86; Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 78.

<sup>78</sup> Janet A. Walker, *The Japanese Novel of the Meiji Period and the Ideal of Individualism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 17; James L. Huffman, *Creating A Public: People and Press in Meiji Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 71–73, 111–149.

<sup>79</sup> Norikazu Kawagishi, “The Constitution of Japan: An Unfinished Revolution” (J.S.D diss., Yale Law School, 2003), 45–47.

<sup>80</sup> Yukio Matsui, “Characteristics of the Japanese Constitution: An Overview,” *King’s Law Journal* 26, no. 2 (2015): 189.

國家).<sup>81</sup> In short, the implementation the constitution and the convening of the Imperial Diet transformed Japan into Asia's first modern nation-state with Western constitutionalism, and more prominently, marked the appearance of Japanese nationalism, independent national identity and a newfound collective subjectivity in the late nineteenth century.

For Zheng, the circumstances surrounding the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution were a continuation of the “Chinese script/*Hanxue*” crisis.<sup>82</sup> Zheng represented the squabbles over the state budget as the political “disorder” (*luan*) that resulted from adopting *xifa*, an assessment which resonated with the Japanese anti-West thinker. For example, Tani Tateki's characterization of Europe as the “*luanguo*” 亂國 (disorderly country).<sup>83</sup> This echoed Zheng's belief that the Japanese penchant for *xifa* (and the absence of *genben*) had resulted in the decline of Chinese script/*Hanxue*. In both cases, de-Sinicization has negative consequences. Put another way, the crisis of Chinese script/*Hanxue* and the “disorder” of Japanese politics were two sides of the same coin, in that both unearthed a new beginning for Asian order in the deviation from Sinocentrism. Modernization of the political structure of the state, to an extent, was attributed to Meiji Japan's heterogeneity that wedged into the

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<sup>81</sup> Hidemasa Kokaze, “The Political Space of Meiji 22 (1889): The Promulgation of the Constitution and the Birth of the Nation,” *Japan Review*, no. 3 (2011): 119–120; Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 21.

<sup>82</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 311.

<sup>83</sup> There was indeed a loophole of power balance on the approval of annual state budget between the Diet and the government in the Meiji Constitution. On December 27, 1890, under the scope of Article 67 of the Meiji Constitution, 63 members from the House of Representatives – led by Ōe Taku 大江卓 – called for a revision of the budget proposed by the government (that was, a reduction of 8,880,723 yen). Yet, in January 1891, the finance minister Matsukata Masayoshi 松方正義 announced the opposite stance of the government concerning the revised budget submission that produced a skirmish with the Diet. Although, the conflict on the budget issue ended with the mutual compromise of the government and the Diet and, partly, the defection from the Tosa faction of the Liberal Party (*Jiyūtō* 自由黨) in March 1891, the Meiji Constitution, drafted by the oligarchs, in fact sanctioned and legitimized the power-sharing of the parties in political administration which in turn weaken their control of the government. See Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 91–92; George Akita, *Foundations of Constitutional Government in Modern Japan 1868–1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 76–82.

Western discourse of “civilization,” which revealed a new world order that was dominated by the West and materialism. Therefore, I would liken Zheng’s dislike for parliamentarianism and constitutional monarchy to the anxious response from the Chinese Confucian literati to a gradually pressing challenge that the traditional order of Chinese script in East Asia before the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894. More intriguingly, the nature of the Meiji Constitution of 1889 that created the first modern Asian state with Western constitutionalism was misunderstood as *luan*, a passive phrase in the realm of Chinese Confucian politics, which could be interpreted as Zheng’s unconscious attempt to overcome Meiji Japan.

Zheng’s misreading of *xifa*, and his conceiving of Chinese script/ *Hanxue* as an aesthetic-political entity, can be traced back to recent developments: Japan’s identity crisis and Qing China’s ambiguous foreign relation policy with Japan in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Coinciding with its entry into the modern nation-state system, Japan’s remaking of its identity was predicated on a double farewell to China and to the Sino-centered worldview. Firstly, in the context of *Toyo* 東洋 (East Asia), Meiji Japan adopted Western politics and technologies in order to reframe itself as a civilized state vis-à-vis the modern Western world. Secondly, in order to throw off the hegemony of this Western world, the later emergence of “Pan-Asianism” constituted a new world order guided by Japan through the construction of an aesthetic and ethnic selfhood.<sup>84</sup>

Chinese intellectuals failed to comprehend Japan’s epochal split with China. Parallel to Japan’s search for a new status in Asia, between the 1850s and the 1890s,

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<sup>84</sup> Yumiko Iida, “Fleeing the West, Making Asia Home: Transpositions of Otherness in Japanese Pan-Asianism, 1905–1930,” *Alternative: Global, Local, Political* 22, no. 3 (July–September, 1997): 424–427.

Qing China employed diplomacy in its relationships with Western colonialist powers (in the form of several international treaties) and other Asian countries (by maintaining the tributary system). In 1871, as a product of these double guiding principles in foreign relationships, the Sino-Japanese Friendship and Trade Treaty (*Zhongri xiuhao tiaogui* 中日修好條規 or *Nisshin shūkō jōki* 日清修好條規) was signed. This treaty was the first between China and Japan in the context of modern “international law,” and it satisfied a vision – proposed by Li Hongzhang and other Chinese elites – of the “alliance with Japan,” in which Japan (still treated as an affiliated Eastern country of Qing China within the Sino-foreign world order) was to be utilized as a foreign ally in confronting the Western threat.<sup>85</sup>

Beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, drastic changes in the world order came into conflict with the traditional centrality of Chinese civilization in the East Asian order. While the Qing dynasty was on the wane, Meiji Japan gradually Westernized and garnered for itself a powerful international voice as a civilized nation-state. Yet it was not until victory in the first Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 that Japan was recognized as the new center of Asia. Unsurprisingly, faced a modern Japan that chased *xifa*, Zheng Xiaoxu’s conservative response, that is, the reinvention of Chinese script/*Hanxue* for confirming China as the origin, in fact, represented an invisible cultural past to haunt the historical Sino-Japanese relation in reality.

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<sup>85</sup> Bo Peilin 薄培林, “Lihe yu qianzhi: jiawu zhanzheng qian Zhongguo de ‘lianri’ yanshuo” 聯合與牽制：甲午戰爭前中國的「聯日」言說 [Forming a partnership or making a feint: “Alliance with Japan” views in China prior to the Sino-Japanese War (1894)], *Kansai Daigaku Tōzai Gakujutsu Kenkyūsho Kiyō gu* 関西大学東西学術研究所紀要, no. 43 (2010): 145–147.

## Invisible War and Visible Asian Order

Zheng Xiaoxu's enterprise in evoking Chinese script/*Hanxue* as a counter-ideology of *xifa* was abortive after China's defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War. The war, however, was not ungrounded historically. Originating from the debate of *Seikan ron* 征韓論 (Advocacy of the Conquest of Korea) in 1873, Meiji Japan embarked the competition for the liberation of Korea from China. In early 1894, the Donghak Peasant Revolution (*donghak nongmin hyeogmyeong* 東學農民革命) in the southwestern of Korean peninsula urged the Korean government to petition for the Qing dynasty's military support. But Japan saw the presence of Qing's troops in Korea as a menace to Korea's independence and sovereignty and a violation of the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1876. In July 1894, the Japanese army staged a *coup d'état* and occupied the Korean royal palace, establishing a puppet government in Seoul. China's ignorance of the warning signs of a Japanese military build-up resulted in a naval battle near Pungdo 豐島 in Korea, on July 25, 1894, the first naval battle of the Sino-Japanese War.<sup>86</sup> The consequences of the war of 1894–1895 between Qing China and Meiji Japan were far-reaching in Asia, extending beyond the nineteenth century. To the Qing empire, Japan's victory smashed the traditional Sinocentric world order, freeing Korea from the status of a vassal state, and more saliently, it subjugated the island of Taiwan to the Japanese colonialist system with aggravating the semi-colonial condition of Qing China.<sup>87</sup> To Meiji Japan, victory boosted self-

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<sup>86</sup> Mitani Hiroshi, foreword to *The Sino-Japanese War and the Birth of Japanese Nationalism*, trans. David Noble (Tokyo: International House of Japan, 2011), xii–xvi; Stewart Lone, *Japan's First Modern War: Army and Society in the Conflict with China, 1894–95* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), 25–29.

<sup>87</sup> Kuang Xinnian 曠新年, "Dongya yu Zhongguo de lishi renshi" 東亞與中國的歷史認識 [Historical interpretation of East Asia and China], in *Zhongguo wenming: wenhua zhuanxing de licheng* 中國文明：文化轉型的歷程 [Chinese civilization: A history of cultural transformation], eds. Chow Kai-Wing 周佳榮 and Hou Laiying 侯勵英 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Educational Publishing Co., 2010), 166.

confidence and nationalism, as the country “seemed to have achieved membership in the line of Western imperialists.”<sup>88</sup> Meanwhile, Chinese script/*Hanxue*, the knowledge of a defeated country, was abandoned in Japanese society. Those who proposed the Romanization of Japanese script and those who advocated the use of *kana* alone both fuelled the movement for the abolishment of Chinese script, especially after 1895.<sup>89</sup>

Zheng’s awareness of the implications of the Sino-Japanese War for East Asia was limited. In his view, the defeat of the Beiyang Fleet (*beiyang jiandui* 北洋艦隊) could be boiled down to the influence of Li Hongzhang and the corruption and ill-discipline of the Qing court.<sup>90</sup> Unable to conceive that victory had come about thanks to the military advances and technological progress (the Japanese internalization of *xifa*) made during the Meiji Restoration, Zheng opposed the Qing dynasty’s suing for peace. He deemed that to amplify the armed troops for protracting the war, rather than to compromise with Japan, was the only way to surrender the Japanese to Qing China. Once Chinese court makes the concession for tentative harmony and accepts some unequal requirements from the Eastern neighbor, the will of people will be lost, and Chinese will be hostile to the Manchu ruler.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Susanne Klien, *Rethinking Japan’s Identity and International Role* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 57–59; Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 432–433.

<sup>89</sup> Li Haoyu 李浩宇, “Cong Hanzi cunfei zhegyi tanlun Riben de hanzi guan: yi 1901 nian Inoue Enryō de ‘Hanzi buke feilun’ weili” 從漢字存廢爭議談論日本的漢字觀——以 1901 年井上圓了的〈漢字不可廢論〉為例 [Japan’s views on Chinese characters through debates on the use or prohibition of Chinese characters: As an example of Inoue Enryō’s “Chinese characters cannot be prohibited”], *Shixue yanjiu*, no. 29 (July 2018): 132.

<sup>90</sup> Zou, “Cong ‘cibangsu yitou’ dao ‘jinri riguang huiwanguo’: Zheng Xiaoxu Ribenguan de zhuanbian licheng,” 37–38; Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 436.

<sup>91</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 1: 455.



On January 17, 1895, after the Qing court dispatched Shao Youlian 邵友濂 and Zhang Yinhan 張蔭桓 as the imperial commissioners to negotiate with the Meiji government for the truce, Zheng articulated his response to China's defeat in the war and shared it with Shen Yuqing 沈瑜慶. Aside from the internal reform, like purging bureaucratism, updating government decrees and laws, and developing commerce and advanced weapons, the crux of bringing the first Sino-Japanese war to an end would be sending a “persuader” (*shuoke* 說客) to Japan, who would impress upon the country its disadvantage against China. Zheng saw himself as the most suitable person to be in charge of lobbying Japan (in Chinese).<sup>92</sup> Worth noting here is that “language/Chinese script/*Hanxue*” remains central to Zheng's perception of the war, as he was still intended to consider Meiji Japan, the close Eastern neighbor, and its culture, as an extension of the Chinese writing system, part of Chinese learning, and a representation of traditional Sino-centered world order.

In 1895, the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki crushed the contest between *xifa* and *Hanxue* coined by Zheng and his proposal of lobbying in Chinese. As a treaty between Qing imperial and Meiji Japan, the Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed in three languages: Chinese, Japanese, and English. More importantly, there was a clause incorporated into an auxiliary treaty of it called the “Special Convention of Protocol” (*Yiding zhuantiao* 議定專條), which regulated that if there were any disputes from China or Japan, the English version of the Treaty would be the exclusive reference. As Quan Hexiu 權赫秀 demonstrated, the English treaty became the “authentic text” in subscribing the Treaty of Shimonoseki.<sup>93</sup> Here,

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 463.

<sup>93</sup> Quan Hexiu, “Maguan tiaoyue'de Zhong Ri Ying wenben yitong kao” 《馬關條約》的中日英文本異同考 [A comparative study on the Chinese-Japanese-English language version of the Treaty of Shimonoseki], *Twenty-First Century*, no. 86 (December 2004): 38–39.

compared with Japanese and Chinese, two non-alphabetic character systems, English, a phonetic alphabet, referred to a legal authenticity, which not only symbolized *xifa* that competed with *Hanxue*, but also a new civilizational global order supported by advanced technology and Western discourse of modernity.<sup>94</sup> To a certain degree, the Treaty of 1895, stood for the failure that Zheng Xiaoxu invented Chinese script/*Hanxue* as the imaginative capital to resist *xifa* and Westernization. In a word, imprinted as the decline of “the East Asian Chinese character sphere” and the turning point of Japan’s road of “departure from Asia for Europe,” the visible first Sino-Japanese war was an invisible war of the dominated culture in East Asia, and also, a reconstruction of visible Asian order that was embedded into the reform of the Japanese writing in the 1890s and even the crisis of Chinese script in the early twentieth century. Historically speaking, in the confront of visible material outcome and strong military power, Chinese script/*Hanxue*, that is, the invisible spiritual civilization, functioned to overcome *xifa* and Westernization but yet was overcome by them after the first Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95. Later, as a reaction to the military defeat of the Qing Empire in the Sino-Japanese war in 1895, the 1898 reform movement was officially undertaken by Emperor Guangxu 光緒. It renounced the “traditional Sinocentric world-view” and Chinese learning whilst it embraced *xifa* and the modern western knowledge (or new learning 新學). Hence, the reform of 1898 is usually regarded as an important watershed “in the history of

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<sup>94</sup> It is worth mentioning that in the Sino-Japanese Friendship and Trade Treaty of 1871, there was a special clause which required that every piece of Japanese official document to be sent to Qing China to have its the Chinese translation attached. It alluded to the persistence of the dominance of a China/Chinese script-centred order in the Sino-Japanese relation. Liu Yuzhen 劉雨珍, *Qingdai shoujie zhuri gongshi guanyuan bitan ziliao huibian* 清代首屆駐日公使館員筆談資料彙編 [A collection of brushtalks by the staff of the first Qing embassy to Japan] (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 2010), 1: 1-2.

China's intellectual break with the values of Confucian civilization."<sup>95</sup> The abortion of Zheng's conviction in using Chinese script/ *Hanxue* to overcome Meiji Japan/ the West, was echoed in the Chinese intellectuals' discovery of the West as "a world civilization" itself after the 1890s.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Charlotte Furth, "Intellectual Change: from the Reform Movement to the May Fourth Movement, 1895-1920," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 12, *Republican China 1912-1949, Part 1*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 322.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 323.



Figure 1: Kuroda Seiki (1866-1924), *Chōshō*, *Acceptance and Reinterpretation: Western Painting in East Asia in the Early 20th century*, accessed May 12, 2019, <https://skim607.omeka.net/items/show/83>.

### CHAPTER III Sentiment, Morality and Saving China: *Wangdao*, Manchukuo and the Aestheticization of the Nation

If Zheng Xiaoxu's reinvention of Chinese script/*Hanxue* could be read as an unconscious attempt to overcome *xifa*/material westernization with the rebuilding of an Asian/Chinese identity, then, his political theory of "*wangdao*" – laden with a revolutionary reference to withstanding Republican China's democratization and Europeanization – was a continuity of the former.<sup>1</sup> In a political article titled "The relationship of *wangdao* and science," Zheng gave voice to his dissatisfaction with the Republican government's zealotry in imitating Europe/America at every step:

……試以中華民國論之，崇拜歐美之製造，  
謂孔孟之學，不可以復用於今日，一切文  
字，皆當廢棄。其取法於歐美者，曾未得其  
皮毛，而已傲其聖賢，輕其父母，暴民肆  
虐，國內大亂……<sup>2</sup>

...Take the Republic of China as an example, it worships Western technology and articulates that the teachings of Confucius and Mencius are out of accord with the current situation, and that all of their words must be discarded. Yet these advocates of adopting methods from the West

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<sup>1</sup> The term *wangdao* was first recorded in the *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書) as follows: "Being neither partial nor partisan, the King's Way is smooth and even." Distinguishing from *badao*, that denotes leadership by force and high-handed policies, *wangdao* was typified as the core value of Mencius' political narrative, which "relies on persuasion and moral example." Michael Nylan, *The Five "Confucian Classics"* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 141; Denny Roy, *Return of the Dragon: Rising China and Regional Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 26.

<sup>2</sup> Zheng, "Wangdao yu kexue zhi guanxi," 71.

have not acquired even the most superficial  
knowledge, as such they defy the sages and men  
of virtue, slight their parents, incite the wanton  
destruction of the mob, and bring about great  
disorder...

Zheng's article would end with a forceful appeal for people to regain the morality necessary for making *wangdao* manifest.<sup>3</sup> The burgeoning trend toward following the Euro-American in Republican China (over learning Confucian and Mencian theory) evoked in Zheng a discontent that was in some way analogous to his repudiation of Meiji Japan's reforms and the encroachment of *xifa* into the field of Chinese script/*Hanxue*. More specifically, at the early stage of the building of Manchukuo, Zheng noticed that the national education in Republican China was on the rocks because of the revolution of 1911, similar to those Japanese sinologists' marginalization of *Hanxue* in Meiji Japan in the late nineteenth century. People were always fond of the "new learning" imported from beyond China, and tired of the "old knowledge" rooted in the traditional Chinese wisdom, which gave rise to a phenomenon of "neglecting the essential while attending to the trifling" (*sheben zhumo* 捨本逐末).<sup>4</sup> Again, the essential/*genben* here referred to *Hanxue* at a narrower level, and more specifically the traditional Confucian emphasis on benevolence and righteousness. Notable also are Zheng's remarks on the consequences of idolizing the West – the "*luan*" that he had identified in the Japanese political situation after the convening of the first Diet in the late nineteenth century. Furthermore, after his retirement in Shanghai in 1918, during a meeting

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 71–72.

<sup>4</sup> Zheng, "Di'erhui jiaoyu huiyi xunci," in *Zheng Xiaoxu zhuan*, 44–45.

with Zhang Xingyan (Shizhao) 章行嚴 (士釗), Zheng asserted frankly that, “China is already disorderly and can take pride only in military force [*weishang bingli* 唯尚兵力]... Only under a virtuous autocratic government [*xianneng zhuanzhi zhi zhengfu* 賢能專制之政府] can disorder and dissension be subdued.”<sup>5</sup>

Zheng penned a political essay titled “Discussion of restoring things to order” (*Boluan fanzheng yi* 撥亂反正議) which vehemently warned that if China remained disordered and was not governed with sagacity, Western powers would soon carve it up.<sup>6</sup> Occupied by “northern rebels and southern villains,” the Republic of China was no longer regarded as “China” by Zheng.<sup>7</sup> Here, “disorder” (*luan*) was not merely the result of Europeanism or Westernization, but also of republicanism and, especially, communism in the late 1920s. In other words, in Zheng’s envision, after the downfall of the Qing dynasty, the subtle relationship between the crisis of *wen*/Confucian learning (the major component of *Hanxue*) and the Chinese political structure was forged under the slogan of *luan*, which reflects his inchoate anxiety with Meiji Japan and also functioned as the prologue to his revolution by means of culture.

At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, like the other late Qing intellectuals, Zheng Xiaoxu faced “not just a crisis of political order, but a far deeper crisis—a crisis of

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<sup>5</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 3: 1720.

<sup>6</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, *Wangdao guankui* 王道管窺 [Understanding the Kingly Way], (Shinkyō: Manshūkoku Kokumuin Sōmuchō jōhō sho, 1934), 5–8.

<sup>7</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 3: 1396; Lin, “Wangdao letu,” 79–80. Regarding the relationship between the crisis of order and Zheng Xiaoxu’s reinvention of *wangdao* after the Xinhai revolution, Jon Eugene von Kowallis provided us with a fresh perspective. In the context of comparative literature, he perspicaciously compares Zheng Xiaoxu with Ezra Pound—an American modernist poet who later turned to fascism during the Second World War. He argues that Zheng Xiaoxu, like Pound, appropriated Confucianism and reformulated the discourse of *wangdao* to apply them to the modern society. Fuelled by “self-doubt and existential crisis,” Zheng drove himself to collaboration with the Japanese, and hailed Manchuria as the most felicitous place to rebuild the Chinese civilization and the traditional imperial order. Jon Eugene von Kowallis, *The Subtle Revolution: Poets of the “Old Schools” During Late Qing and Early Republican China* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Center for Chinese Studies, 2006), 221–230.

orientational order.”<sup>8</sup> Combining “learning” (*xue* 學) with national survival and development, Chinese intellectuals tended to see the direction of Chinese culture/scholarship as the direction of China’s reform. As Luo Zhitian 羅志田 has pointed out, in the early twentieth century, Chinese intellectuals reached a twofold crisis, namely, “the loss of the country” (*wangguo* 亡國) and “the loss of all under Heaven” (*wang tianxia* 亡天下).<sup>9</sup> The latter, especially, in Lin Shaoyang’s explanation, signified that “culture”/*wen* – including ethics, morality, righteousness, benevolent love, and faith – that propped up Heaven (*tian* 天) would wither away, even though the country was still powerful at the material level.<sup>10</sup> In Zheng’s schema, *wangdao* (“the oldest and most enduring moral code in China”) served as the foundation for a cultural revolution through the reconstruction of traditional Confucianism.<sup>11</sup> It is a means by which to reshape China and reestablish the orthodoxy of Chinese culture, the legitimate foundation of Manchukuo “in a discourse of cultural authenticity,” and also the ultimate value of morality and politics vis-à-vis the Western civilized genealogy of “nation-state” and the challenge from Euro-American capitalism.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, instead of simplistically taking Zheng’s participation in the creation of Manchukuo as an act of treason against China, I would like first to discuss two concepts crucial to his theory of *wangdao*, namely, “extending love” (*boai* 博愛) and “restraining self” (*keji* 克己), and to situate them within the framework of

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<sup>8</sup> In Chang Hao’s elaboration, the “orientational order” was founded by “orientational symbolisms” and functioned as a socio-political order of institutional existence based on the “cosmological kingship.” Hao Chang, *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis: Search for Order and Meaning, 1890-1911* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 6-8.

<sup>9</sup> Luo Zhitian, *Inheritance within Rupture Culture and Scholarship in Early Twentieth-Century China*, trans. Lane J. Harris and Mei Chun (Boston: Brill, 2015), 354, 191.

<sup>10</sup> Lin, *Dingge yiwu*, 101–102.

<sup>11</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, *Wang Tao*, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, 2.



“Confucian structure of feeling.” I argue that during the post-May Fourth period, Zheng reconceptualized Confucian feeling in order to make a Manchukuo of empathy, and to shape the colonized people of Manchukuo into sentimental and self-disciplined subjects by the 1930s. After concluding that on the basis of *wangdao* (that is a discourse of sentiment and morality), Manchukuo was envisaged as a legitimate sovereign state capable of contributing to the quest for a new Asian order, I will end my elaboration with an analysis of how and why Zheng’s conservative revolution failed to prevent Manchukuo from becoming corrupted.

### ***Boai, Keji and the Dead Confucian Term Wangdao: Sentiment, Self and a Manchukuo of Empathy***

(1) *Wen* and the order of things: the involution of Confucianism

Zheng Xiaoxu’s application of the term *wangdao* first appeared in his criticism of Zhu Qianzhi’s 朱謙之 book *The Path to Datong* (*Dao datong zhi lu* 到大同之路) on January 28, 1929. Zhu, a famous Chinese philosopher who gained his reputation in promoting anarchism during the May Fourth period, reinterpreted Sun Yat-sen’s Three People’s Principles in a traditional Confucian context and held that Sun’s narrative of the “Great Unity” could be traced back to the *Great Learning*: hence, “*datong* is *wangdao* while *xiaokang* [小康 moderate prosperity] is *badao*” (*gu* ‘*datong*’ *ji wangdao*, ‘*xiaokang*’ *ji badao* 故「大同」即王道，「小康」即霸道).<sup>13</sup> Lin Zhihong instead reminds us that although Zheng denounced Zhu’s discussion of Sun Yat-san’s political philosophy and viewed it as echoing back to

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<sup>13</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 4:2218. As for the biography for Zhu Qianzhi, see Nicholas Bunnin, “Zhu Qianzhi (Chu Chien-chih),” in *Biographical Dictionary of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Philosophers*, eds. Stuart C. Brown, Diane Collinson, and Robert Wilkinson (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 872. Arif Dirlik mentioned briefly Zhu’s experience in serving as an editor of the *Beijing University Student Weekly* (*Beida xuesheng zhoubao* 北大學生週報) and considered the debates on anarchism and labor from the weekly under Zhu’s leadership as an indirect proof of anarchist influence within university students’ activities. See Arif Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 173.

communist theory, here, he also discovered the intellectual resources of those traditional concepts.<sup>14</sup> For instance, in 1937, Zheng wrote that his reinvention of *wangdao* was capable of “correcting the world to be peaceful and reform the drawbacks caused by hegemony” (*keyi ganhua shijie zhi heping, wanhui bashu zhi liubi* 可以感化世界之和平，挽回霸術之流弊).<sup>15</sup> However, intriguingly, compared with Zhu Qianzhi – who re-elucidated *The Book of Changes* (*Zhouyi* 周易) from a romantic perspective of “pure love” (*chuncui aiqing* 純粹愛情) and eulogized the “new Confucianism” (*Xin Kongjiao* 新孔教) as a kind of “human life” (*ren de shenghuo* 人的生活) in the 1920s – the theory of *wangdao* developed by Zheng Xiaoxu also inaugurated a sentimental Confucian movement by the establishment of human’s moral sentiment in the post-May Fourth era.<sup>16</sup> In the following years, according to his diary, Zheng did not dip into any rhetoric of *wangdao* until he accepted the invitation from Kantarō Suzuki 鈴木貫太郎, who served as an admiral of the Imperial Japanese Navy to record his own understanding of *wangdao* and “open door” (*menhu kaifang* 門戶開放) policy on June 3, 1932.<sup>17</sup> Later, the completion of two articles, namely, “*Wangdao* and world salvation” (*Wangdao*

<sup>14</sup> Lin, “Wangdao letu,” 75.

<sup>15</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 5: 2672.

<sup>16</sup> Zhang Lijun 張歷君, “Weiqing lun yu xin kongjiao: lun Zhu Qianzhi wusi shiqi de kongjiao geminglun” 唯情論與新孔教：論朱謙之五四時期的孔教革命論 [The theory of emotion and new Confucianism: on Zhu Qianzhi’s Confucian revolution in the May Fourth period], *Xiandai zhongwen xuekan*, no. 2 (2019): 41–42. Additionally, Zhu Qianzhi argued that *qing*/feeling, constitutes the potential “to affect and to be affected” –the ontology of the immanence of the universe. Apart from the intellectual influence of *Zhouyi* and neo-Confucianism, his irrational understanding of the world as the “force-relations” of affect was attributed to his immersion in Liang Shuming’s 梁漱溟 philosophy and Henri Bergson’s theory of “creative evolution.” Critically inherited by Fang Dongmei 方東美, Shen Congwen 沈從文, and Zhang Jingsheng 張競生, what resided in Zhu’s pantheist and emotionalist philosophy was an attempt on the part of human intuition to overcome the bifurcation of the subject and the object, witnessing the rising of the discourse of the counter-enlightenment in the May Fourth Movement. See Peng Hsiao-yen, *Weiqing yu lixing de bianzheng: wusi de fanqimeng* 唯情與理性的辯證：五四的反啟蒙 [Dialectics between affect and reason: The May Fourth counter-enlightenment] (Taipei: Lianjing chubanshe, 2019), 234–270.

<sup>17</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 5: 2387.

*jiushi zhi yaoyi* 王道救世之要義) and “Enquiring *wangdao*” (*Wangdao huowen* 王道或問) marked the official birth of Zheng’s political theory of *wangdao*.

The critical issue that I would like to highlight here is not why Zheng Xiaoxu had a stubborn cult for utilizing traditional cultural capital and collaborating with Japanese enemies, but how a dead Confucian term, *wangdao*, was re-evoked and appropriated for creating a modern moral feeling that was the core of an alternative order of modernity in Manchukuo during the post-May Fourth era. My characterizing of *wangdao* as “dead vocabulary,” I hope, would prod us to contemplate the potential relationship between the modern fate of Confucianism and Zheng’s elaboration of *wangdao* theory.

First and foremost, Confucianism gradually detached from the centrality of Chinese culture in late imperial China. The prevalence of Western knowledge and practical science, as well as the growth of commercial-industrial lifestyles, both corrupted the Confucian literati’s conviction in Confucian learning, ways of life and thoughts.<sup>18</sup> Especially, in 1905, the abrogation of the civil service examination not only accelerated the destruction of Manchu rule by cutting off its imperial bureaucracy, but also alienated Chinese intellectuals from the worship of the emperorship and the identification with Confucianism.<sup>19</sup> Second, the de-canonization and de-legalization of Confucianism “gravitated unerringly to any monarchical movement,” which also served as a typical representation of “totalistic iconoclasm/anti-traditionalism” in the early Republican period, as Confucian

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<sup>18</sup> Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy, Volume 1: The Problem of Intellectual Continuity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 64.

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), xxxv–xxxvi, 587–588; Wang Fansen 王汎森, *Zhongguo jindai sixiang shi de zhuanxingshidai* 中國近代思想史的轉型時代 [The transformative era of the intellectual history of modern China] (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gufen youxian gongsi, 2007), 139.

learning failed to provide a continuous approach to cope with the challenge from the foreign powers, but proved to be obstructive in China's self-transformation.<sup>20</sup> For example, May Fourth scholars such as Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 undertook to attack “ritualism, Confucianism and the Confucian family business” as part of the pursuit of the new and the intensive political-cultural competition with the West in the 1920s.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the restoration of Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 in 1915 and the Manchu restoration of July 1917 always evinced an ambiguous association with Confucianism, which identified its ineptitude in coining an imaginary national community after the Xinhai revolution of 1911.<sup>22</sup> Hence, in modern China, the death of Confucianism referred to be anachronistic in the level of temporality and inefficient in the layer of spatiality.

What I am going to add is a deeper question of Chinese script/*wen* that Zheng Xiaoxu had to overcome. Beginning in the late Qing dynasty, a rupture between traditional language (the signifier) and the value (the signified) was caused by the invasion of new, indefinable things from beyond China, which, along with the disturbing of the social order, forced Chinese scholars and intellectuals to re-discover *wen* itself and attempt to reconstruct the classical connection of language/naming and things/fact in a “disorderly world” (*luanshi* 亂世).<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, I call attention to the relationship between Confucian learning and the Chinese script/*wen* in the context of modern China. The radical intellectual Qian

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<sup>20</sup> Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate, Volume 2: The Problem of Monarchical Decay*, 10; Lin, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness*, 26–30.

<sup>21</sup> Luo, *Inheritance within Rupture*, 27.

<sup>22</sup> Han Hua 韓華, *Minchu kongjiaohui yu guojiao yundongyanjiu* 民初孔教會與國教運動研究 [A study of Confucian Associations in the early Republic and the Movement of State Religion] (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2007), 272.

<sup>23</sup> Lin Yicheng 林易澄, “Jindai Zhongguo yuyan zhuanxiang de jige cemian” 近代中國語言轉向的幾個側面 [The linguistic turn(s) in modern China] (master's thesis: Guoli Taiwan daxue, 2007), 2–3.

Xuantong 錢玄同 insisted for instance that in order to free China from the poison of Confucianism, Chinese script should be abolished first. In this respect, Chinese script and Confucian learning sometimes overlapped conceptually.<sup>24</sup> In other words, classical Chinese (the ancient signifier) that Zheng Xiaoxu used in promoting *wangdao* was a dead language after 1919, which could neither resume an old Confucian-centered order of value (the signified fact), nor foster a new order of things in modern Republican China. Instead, by employing an outdated language with little political legitimacy, Zheng's infatuation with *wangdao* was inevitably understood as an "anachronistic nostalgia" for a lost past forever and an unredeemed "future ever."

In my opinion, because of the double death of Confucianism and its linguistic vessel, Zheng Xiaoxu's *wangdao* was by no means a holistic resurrection of Confucianism (i.e. a regressive spiritual and political reaction), but rather an internationalization of the abstract Confucian learning/*wen* into the heart, that should be understood as a revolutionary *involution* of daily moral sentiment.<sup>25</sup> David Wang has previously applied the term "involution" in the context of modern Chinese literature, determining that "it does not return to the point of origin... it differs from revolution only in that its trajectory is not felt to point ahead."<sup>26</sup> Therefore I aim to show Zheng's rhetoric of "boai/subjective feeling" and "keji/objectification of the self" echoed an epochal transformation that "inward sentiment" (*qing* 情) occupied a

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<sup>24</sup> Qian Xuantong, "Zhongguo jinhou zhi wenzi wenti" 中國今後之文字問題 [The problem of Chinese script in the future], in *Qian Xuantong wenji* 錢玄同文集 [Collected works of Qian Xuantong] (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 1999), 1: 162–168.

<sup>25</sup> Mori Noriko, however, regarded Zheng Xiaoxu's reinvention of Confucianism as a heterodox ramification of the Chinese Confucian movement in the early twentieth century, see Mori, *Tenkanki ni okeru Chūgoku jukyō undo*, 195–208.

<sup>26</sup> David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849–1911* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 31–32.

peculiar location in Chinese social and cultural life in the twentieth century.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, this thesis also emphasize that how the discourse of sentiment and morality was in collusion with a puppet state under imperialist Japanese control.

(2) When “love” came to Manchukuo: Confucianism and cosmopolitanism

The extant written material by Zheng Xiaoxu seldom defines *wangdao* in any explicit sense, apart from a very general and abstract summarization of the concept in his opening remarks for the Kingly Way Academy (*Wangdao Shuyuan* 王道書院), delivered on June 1, 1937, in which he stated that, “*wangdao* is doctrine of integrating morality with politics” (*wangdao zhe, nai daode yu zhengzhi heyi zhi xueshuo* 王道者，乃道德與政治合一之學說).<sup>28</sup> Yet, *boai*, elaborated by Zheng as the practical method for implementing *wangdao*, served as a response to the ascendance of modern patriotism, endowed with centrality in integrating common people into a sympathetic community via an inborn quality, while leveling social hierarchies and political communities. Thus, what I first intend on addressing is how *boai* was posited by Zheng as an imaginatively ideological discourse for popularizing quasi-nationalist sentiment in Manchukuo.

In 1932, several months after the foundation of Manchukuo, Zheng first expounded that “extending love” was the dominate basis on which *wangdao* theory would confront the prevalence of patriotism.<sup>29</sup> In an article entitled “Guomin jiaoyu tan” 國民教育談 (On national education), he further insisted that benevolent

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<sup>27</sup> Lee, *Revolution of the Heart*, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 5: 2672. In order to promote the ideology of Manchukuo, the Kingly Way Academy was established by Zheng Xiaoxu in June 1937. Before Zhang Jinghui succeed Zheng Xiaoxu as Prime Minister of Manchukuo, Zheng was officially in charge of the Academy and gave several speeches and lectures in that school. Ronald Suleski, “Manchukuo and Beyond: The Life and Times of Zhang Mengshi,” *International Journal of Asian Studies* 14, no.1 (January 2017), 85; Lin, “Wangdao letu,” 87.

<sup>29</sup> Zheng, *Wangdao guankui*, 4.

individuals (*renzhe* 仁者) could love other people, who must have a “warm heart” (*rexin* 熱心). When people in Manchukuo all have the capacity to love and rescue others, then, the realization of *wangdao* will be very near.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, his apprentice Cheng Kexiang 程克祥, who later pledged loyalty to Dai Li 戴笠 through the recommendation of Yu Youren 于右任, specifically accounted for Zheng’s “people’s way” (*rendao* 人道), the antithesis of “selfish gain” (*sili* 私利) or the “selfishness with harming others” (*sunren lijì* 損人利己) as “the principle of humans’ mutual love” (*renlei hu’ai de yuanli* 人類互愛的原理) with an emphasis that the deficiency of *rendao* engendered a military disaster of bullying the weak and those in the minority.<sup>31</sup> Thus, Kiyoshi Kawakami 河上清 specifically believed that the essence of Zheng’s *wangdao* is “fellow-feeling” that embodied the Confucian concept of benevolence (*ren* 仁).<sup>32</sup> Notwithstanding the obvious fact that to Zheng, the First World War and the national political havoc in Republican China from the 1910s to the 1920s were ascribed to the blinkered complex of patriotism (*aiguo* 愛國), he seemed subsequently to develop a more intricate relationship between *aiguo* and *boai* in Manchukuo:

愛國之愛與博愛之愛，為同乎？為異乎？必

對之曰異也。愛國之愛與博愛之愛，相容

乎？不相容乎？必對之曰不能相容也。愛國

<sup>30</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, “Guomin jiaoyu tan,” in *Minguo shiqi zhexue sixiang congshu: Zheng Xiaoxu wangdao yanjiangji* 民國時期哲學思想叢書：鄭孝胥《王道演講集》 [Series of philosophic thought during the period of Republican China: A collection of Zheng Xiaoxu’s speeches on *wangdao*], eds. Lin Qingzhang 林慶章 and Jiang Qiuhua 蔣秋華 (Taizhong: Wentingge tushu youxian gongsi, 2010), 106:157.

<sup>31</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, “Mibing shuoyi” 弭兵說一 [The First piece on disarmament], in *Minguo shiqi zhexue sixiang congshu*, 179.

<sup>32</sup> Karl Kiyoshi Kawakami, *Manchukuo: Child of Conflict* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), 111–112.

之愛與博愛之愛，可捨其一而取其一乎？必對之曰，不能舍其一也。然則奈何？曰以愛國為體，以博愛為用。故愛國之至者，必歸於博愛。<sup>33</sup>

Is the “love” of *aiguo* [“love for country,” i.e. patriotism] the same as the “love” of *boai*, or is it different? [I] have to state that they are different. Is the “love” of *aiguo* and the “love” of *boai* compatible? [I] have to contend that they are not compatible. As for the aforementioned two “loves,” could we abandon one while preserving the other? [I] have to say that neither of the two “loves” can be abandoned. In this case, what can we do? I hold that (we) should treat *aiguo* as the essence and regard *boai* as the function, as such those who are extreme patriots will also arrive at *boai*.

From a perspective of the etymological connection, the appellation *boai* rarely appears in the traditional narrative of Confucius and Mencius in the early Spring and Autumn Period, and it was first applied by Wei Zhao 韋昭 (204–273) in his annotations to the *Discourses on the States* (*Guoyu* 國語), in which it is stated that “extending love to people is benevolence” (*boai yuren weiren* 博愛於人為仁).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, “Boai yu aiguo” 博愛與愛國 [Extending love and patriotism], in *Minguo shiqi zhexue sixiang congshu*, 139.

<sup>34</sup> See Wei Zhao’s annotations in, *Guoyu* 國語 [Discourses on the States] (Changsha: shangwu yinshuguan, 1931), 33.



Another pre-Qin Confucian classic, *The Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiaojing* 孝經), pointed out that instead of adopting coercive methods like law or punishment to regulate the people, the wise ruler should follow and abide by the unchangeable pattern of Heaven and Earth in order to promote filial piety gently. Therefore, “the ancient kings, seeing how their teachings could transform the people, set before them therefore an example of the most extended love” (*xianwang jian jiaozhi keyi huamin ye, shi gu xianzhi yi boai* 先王見教之可以化民也，是故先之以博愛).<sup>35</sup> In a sense, compared with the bureaucratic legal articles and the rigorous penal system, the concept of *boai* represented a tender way of instilling morality and also a practical expression of Confucius’ inchoate concept of *ren*. Resonating with the narrative of combining *boai* with *ren* – proposed by Confucians like Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 in the Han dynasty – Han Yu 韓愈 stated that “*boai* can be said as *ren*” (*boai zhi wei ren* 博愛之謂仁), which laid the foundation for Cheng Yi 程頤, who argued that *boai* should be viewed as an activity to create the life in an ontological sense.<sup>36</sup> Although there were a broad range of scholarly debates on the meaning of “sentiment” in pre-modern China, we can at least be sure that the nature of *qing* or *ai* and even *boai* was a virtue rooted in an abstract core value of Confucianism, benevolence (*ren* 仁), which is entrusted to *tian* at a religious level.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Jian Chaoliang 簡朝亮, *Xiaojing jizhu shushu* 孝經集註述疏 [Collected comments and narrative essays on the *Classic of Filial Piety*], ed. Zhou Chunjian 周春健 (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2011), 51. For a translation of the aforementioned sentence, see James Legge trans., *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism. Part I The Shu King, the Religious Portions of the Shih King, the Hsiao King* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966), 474.

<sup>36</sup> Huang Junjie 黃俊傑, *Dongya rujia renxue shilun* 東亞儒家仁學史論 [A history of discourses on humanity in East Asian Confucianism] (Taipei: Taiwan daxue chubanshe, 2017), 140; Huang Yong 黃勇, “Cheng Yi yu jingdian chanshi” 程頤與經典詮釋 [Cheng Yi’s onto-hermeneutics], in *Zhongri sishu quanshi chuantong chutan* 中日《四書》詮釋傳統初探 [The Chinese and Japanese interpretive history of the *Four Books*], ed. Huang Junjie 黃俊傑 (Taipei: Taiwan daxue chubanshe, 2008), 415–416.

<sup>37</sup> Chen Lai 陳來 has outlined a general history of the philosophic debate on the relationship between *ren* and feeling or love, as contributed by Chinese Confucians in different times; see Chen Lai,

Although Zheng Xiaoxu's recovery of *boai* marginalized its metaphysical significance (i.e. its connection with an ontology of *ren*), it pragmatically applied the concept to coping with several pressing concerns, including racial struggles and state-building in Manchukuo.

If we could recall that Zheng had previously been denounced as a *Hanjian* by anti-Manchu revolutionaries in 1911, it was evident that advocates of republicanism based their revolutionary legitimacy on the confrontation between the Han and the Manchu, which triggered Zheng's subsequent distaste for racialist politics.<sup>38</sup> In 1930, warning that racialism is identical to international competition and village brawls, Zheng commented that "those who make disparaging comparisons between white and yellow, China and the rude tribes, Manchu and Chinese, Caucasian and Oriental, South and North, use racial prejudice for unworthy purposes."<sup>39</sup> In some ways, extending love from the self to others was to dissolve the boundaries between humans through the invisible flow of *qing*, a sentiment which stood in contrast with the exclusivist nationalist activity in the 1910s.

More saliently, the expression of *boai* either was a euphemistic endorsement of Zheng's consideration of the nature of the world or corresponded to the multi-ethnic structure of Manchukuo and the colonialist civilizational mission that it undertook in the Second World War. On November 14, 1911, in a meeting with Meng Sen 孟森, a well-known historian specializing in the Ming-Qing historical

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*Renxue benti lun* 仁學本體論 [The ontology of benevolence] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2014), 29–169.

<sup>38</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 3: 1359–1361. In the book *Kongjiao xinbian* 孔教新編 (*Confucianism retold*), Zheng Xiaoxu creatively "misread" Confucius's teaching principle – "to educate students without discrimination" (*youjiao wulei* 有教無類) – emphasizing that sage's teaching would attain an assimilation of "the other" via the "love of the same race" (*tonglei zhiai* 同類之愛). Tei Kōsho, *Ōdō seiji shidō genre*, 54–55. As regards to the historical context under which this book was written, see Mori, *Tenkanki ni okeru Chūgoku jukyō undo*, 196–200.

<sup>39</sup> Zheng, *Wang Tao*, 16.

studies during the Republican era, Zheng Xiaoxu gave his reason for withdrawing from society and living in Shanghai as a loyalist of Qing dynasty after the Xinhai revolution:

世界者，有情之質；人類者，有義之物。吾於君國，不能公然為無情無義之舉也。共和者，佳名美事，公等好為之；吾為人臣，惟有以遺老終耳。<sup>40</sup>

*Qing* is the substance of the world. Human beings are righteous. To the Emperor's country, I could not avowedly make a ruthless and immoral move. The Republic is a gorgeous name and sounds like a fancy event to which all would aspire. Nonetheless, as a courtier of the Qing, I can only remain loyalist till death.

Noticeably, Zheng Xiaoxu's engagement with *qing* and *yi* 義 (righteousness) dramatized his antagonism with Republican China by means of a neat sentimental narrating. To be a loyalist became a consequence of being a person with feeling and righteousness. His choice between pledging loyalty to the Qing dynasty and embracing republicanism was no longer a political action but rather a sentimental dilemma. Zheng's de-substantialization of the world made his conservatism an aesthetic impulse, free from any judgment of right and wrong, which prophesied that his betrayal of China and participation into the establishment of Manchukuo were an inescapable appeal that should be perceived as a performative trauma of feeling.

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<sup>40</sup> Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 3: 1356.

After 1932, Zheng specifically consummated the above-mentioned dialectical logic of *aiguo* and *boai*. Thus, before embarking on the dialogue between the identity of the new state and the narrative of *wangdao*, I am going to open my observation with a historical overview of Manchukuo in a wider genealogy of East Asian civilizations. Intriguingly, although Chinese official historical writing always negates Manchukuo as an independent state and portrays it as a puppet regime under Japanese brutal colonialism – by affixing the prefix *wei* 偽 (false) – after recapturing the ravaged territory of the “Three Eastern Provinces” (*Dong sansheng* 東三省) in 1945, the birth of Manchukuo could also be understood as an expression of the Wilsonian concept of “self-determination” *ab initio*.<sup>41</sup>

In terms of ideological rhetoric, Manchukuo represented itself as a new and ideal state, on one hand it claimed that its birth would liberate thirty million people from the military repression of the Zhang family’s (Zhang Zuolin 張作霖 and Zhang Xueliang) stratocracy and the ruling system of the Republican government in the north east, while on the other it attached to itself to a world-historical significance – that of the third revolution with the realization of the East Asian moral politics to overcome the Euramericanism and bolshevism.<sup>42</sup> Compared with the “Imperialization Movement” (*kōminka undō* 皇民化運動) in Korea, Taiwan and other Japanese colonies, the Guandong Army at no point forced the people of Manchukuo to become the loyal imperial subjects of the Japanese Emperor. On the contrary, in order to cultivate “Manchukuoans” (*Manzhouguo ren* 滿洲國人), the

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<sup>41</sup> Gavan McCormack, “Manchukuo: Constructing the Past,” *East Asian History*, no. 2 (December, 1991): 106.

<sup>42</sup> Yamamuro, *Manchuria Under Japanese Dominion*, 88–93.

Manchukuo government promoted Chinese instead of Japanese as the official language of Manchukuo (*Manzhouyu* 滿洲語).<sup>43</sup>

Nonetheless, in the 1930s, to both Japanese colonialists and Chinese collaborators in Manchukuo, the conundrum threatening this utopian vision was how to manufacture harmonious relations and engender unity between different indigenous races (e.g. the Han Chinese, the Mongolians, the Manchus) and foreign settlers from Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Russia. In other words, the issue was how to incubate Manchukuo nationalism for presenting an independent sovereignty.

Zheng Xiaoxu's *wangdao*-ism and the discourse of *boai* were appropriated and transformed as a cogent spiritual coagulator in the nurturing of a (trans-) national identity for Manchukuo. The two passages quoted below were both composed by Zheng on different occasions, and by deploying traditional Confucian vocabularies, they map out a generative space of *feeling* alongside the erasing of Chinese nationalism:

……惟其以博愛為主、所以無種族、無國  
際、所謂萬物並育而不相害、道并行而不相  
悖也……王道無外、對於人類、皆有並存之  
責……<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Han, "Puppet Sovereignty," 260–261. Leo Ching's sophisticated study of the "Imperialization Movement" in Taiwan provides us with a critical understanding of Japanese colonialist cultural control from 1937 to 1945. Through events like the "national language movement" 國語運動 (*kokugo undō*) the "'Japanization' of Chinese names" 改(日本)姓氏 (*kaiseimei*), and the "volunteers' system" 志願兵制度 (*shiganhei seidō*), *kōminka* not merely instilled an inner faith in the Japanese Emperor, but also a daily corporeal mechanism for the externalization of colonial identification. Especially, differentiating from the assimilation 同化 (*dōka*), Ching argued that as a colonial objectification, *kōminka* shifted the task of becoming Japanese from the colonizers to the colonized, and thus, for the first time, "the struggle over identity emerges as the dominant discourse" in Taiwanese colonial history. Leo T.S. Ching, *Becoming "Japanese": Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 89–97.

<sup>44</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, "Neisheng waiwang jiangyi buyi" 內聖外王講義補遺 [Supplement to "inner sageliness with outer kingliness"], in *Zheng Xiaoxu zhuan*, 65.

... The only way is to conduct *boai* so as to obliterate the boundaries between races and states, [resulting in] the so-called [state in which] *all things are nourished together without their injuring one another, (and) the courses of the seasons and of the sun and moon, are pursued without any collision among them*... To human beings, *wangdao* is nothing more than a responsibility of coexistence...<sup>45</sup>

嗟夫，人之觀念、恒觸於所見、人之感化，  
恒激於所不見、知此者、可與言王道矣。<sup>46</sup>

Alas, humans' concepts are always predicated on the visible; while humans' reformation is always predicated on the invisible. Only those that understand this can begin to talk about *wangdao*.

The first piece of writing leverages *boai* in order to expound upon another concept – *wu zhongzu* 無種族 (no race) – which in Zheng's conceptualization was not limited to rejecting the rivalry between the Han and the Manchu races, but also related to the creation of harmonious relations between different indigenous and foreign races in

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<sup>45</sup> The sentence “all things are nourished together without their injuring one another... are pursued without any collision among them” comes from the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸). The famous Chinese philosopher Tang Yijie 湯一介 specially indicated that such doctrine refers to the coexistence of diverse *others*. I cite the English translation of it from James Legge's work. James Legge trans., *The Four Books* (Hong Kong: The International Publication Society, 1953), 38; Yijie Tang, *Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity, and Chinese Culture* (Heidelberg: Springer 2015), 303.

<sup>46</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, “Jiexiao baojiang luxu” 節孝褒獎錄序 [Preface to the testimonial memoirs of filial piety], in *Zheng Xiaoxu zhuan*, 42.

Manchukuo. This alluded to another state-building idea, namely, “inter-racial harmony” (*minzoku kyōwa* 民族協和), sometimes denigrated as a hollow and superficial official slogan. Moreover, what I also would like to underscore is that the term *wu guoji* 無國際 (no state boundaries) implies not only a response to Zheng’s theory of “international supervision” and Manchukuo’s “open door” governing policy, but also a subtle pretext for Sino-Japanese alliance in making Manchukuo’s pan-Asianist brotherhood, while opposing to the surge of the Chinese nationalist movement in wartime China.

In a way, to Zheng, based upon the basic tenet *boai*, “a responsibility of coexistence” was supposed to unify the ruled and the ruler at the level of *qing*. As Prasenjit Duara has stated, unlike European imperialism in nineteenth century, the colonial experiment in establishing Manchukuo in 1932 signified a new turn in imperialism, which show little intent to reproduce the objective differences between the colonizer and the colonized, nor pursue a subjective assimilation of the latter.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, “becoming Japanese/the colonist” no longer served as a persuasive principle in governing the colony, instead, the problem of how to become a Manchukuoan for enhancing the legitimacy of Manchukuo’s sovereignty emerged around 1932. Soon after the founding of Manchukuo, the Concordia Association (*xiehe hui* or *kyōwakai* 協和會), a quasi-official organization on the basis of fascistic corporatism for indoctrinating the mass and mediating the central and the local, was launched in April 1, 1932, having been developed from the former Manchurian Youth League and the Majestic Peak Society. As the “spiritual mother of the government” (*zhengfu de jingshen muti* 政府的精神母體) espousing “selfless and

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<sup>47</sup> Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, 73.

absolute love” (*wusi de juehui de aixin* 無私的絕對的愛心), the Concordia Association’s ideology could be characterized as anti-capitalist, anti-communist and anti-Three People’s Principles, in an attempt to neutralize and overcome class and racial fissions and maintain a unified community.<sup>48</sup>

Echoing Manchukuo’s political reality, Zheng’s concept of *boai* in this first passage remains open to a multiple interpretations: (1) extending love from individual self to others as connoting respect for the “betweenness” among different ethnic communities (although the “harmony of five races” did not guarantee the racial equality); (2) at the same time, with the de-boundarization of races and states, *boai* served as a vehicle to transform heterogeneous cultural identities into a utopian “oneness” of solidarity.<sup>49</sup> Then, to revisit his revised logic of *boai* and *aiguo*, that is, “*aiguo* as the essence, *boai* as the practice” (*aiguo weiti, boai weiyong* 愛國為體，博愛為用), it should not be forgotten that the concept of “country” (*guo* 國) in Zheng’s formulation of *aiguo*, was distanced from the modern Western political genealogy of “nation-state,” as Manchukuo represented a multicultural and transethnic moral community founded upon East Asian essence. Because of the constitution of *qing* or *ai* in mobilizing different ethnic and national people, the

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<sup>48</sup> McCormack, “Manchukuo,” 115; Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, 73–75; Zhongyang dangangan 中央檔案館, Zhongguo dier lishi dangangan 中國第二歷史檔案館, and Jilin sheng shehui kexue yuan 吉林省社會科學院 eds., *Riben diguo zhuyi qinhua dangan ziliao xuanbian: weiman kuilei zhengquan* 日本帝國主義侵華檔案資料選編：偽滿傀儡政權 [Selected archival sources of Japanese imperialist occupation in China: The puppet regime of Manchukuo] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), 594–595; Louise Young, “Ideologies of Difference and the Turn to Atrocity: Japan’s War on China,” in *A World at Total War: Global Conflict and the Politics of Destruction, 1937–1945*, eds. Roger Chickering, Stig Förster and Bernd Greiner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 344. Regarding the historical development of the Concordia Association, see Xueshi Xie, “The Organization and Grassroots Structure of the Manzhouguo Regime,” in *China at War: Regions of China, 1937–1945*, eds. Stephen R. MacKinnon, Diana Lary and Ezra F. Vogel (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), 136–140.

<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, Zheng emphasized that the reason Emperor Xuantong could be qualified as the master of Asia was because he had already been deprived of the throne for the twenty years, and as a result he was a fair and lenient leader without any bias with regards to races and states, nor with the intention of bullying the weak. Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 4: 2345.



boundary of the new state was liquid, and indeed went beyond a hypostatic scope confined by a traditional *geo-politik*.

However, at the same time, a trickier issue should be pointed out: in the 1920s and the 1930s, other than Zheng's narrative of *boai*, the concept of love also emerged in the Chinese Communism's revolutionary ideology. In contrast to *boai*, a non-violent sentimental approach free of class struggle and socialist revolution to build a harmonious utopia in Manchukuo, to the Communists, the true love is achieved through revolution, namely, "doing away with private property and Confucian propriety."<sup>50</sup> Thus, to the Communism, love is not merely the product of a new socialist economic relationship "for everyone to develop his potential to the utmost and to realize liberty and equality," but also the connection of "individual sentiments" and "collective revolutionary passion."<sup>51</sup> Competition for *love* or the individual inner sentiment between Manchukuo and China Proper under the Chinese Communist Party's ruling, uncovered two contrasting paths to save China and disparate understandings of modern politics in the terms of class struggle and the relationship between the individual and the collective.

In the second passage, Zheng perceives the dynamic connection between daily individual feeling and abstract national ideology. Inheriting Mencius's theory of "heart-nature" (*xinxing* 心性), Zheng stresses that what alters humans' views is their experience with others in the external world, and what reforms humanity is the invisible inner reaction.<sup>52</sup> Only after knowing such creed, *wangdao*, the ideology of

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<sup>50</sup> Lynn Pan, *When True Love Came to China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015), 255.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 255-256. Jianmei Liu, *Revolution Plus Love: Literary History, Women's Bodies, and Thematic Repetition in Twentieth-Century Chinese Fiction* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 16-18.

<sup>52</sup> Liu Shu-hsien 劉述先 and Liu Yuedi 劉悅笛 both contributed to the understanding of Mencius's ideas on "heart-mind," "nature," and moral feeling. Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 instead depicted that in Mencius's theory, these three concepts, namely *xin*, *xing*, and *qing*, are the same. See Shu-hsien Liu and Kwong-loi Shun, "Some Reflections on Mencius's View of Mind-Heart and Human Nature,"

Manchukuo, can be discerned. I wish to point out a political structure behind Zheng's rhetoric that *wangdao* begins from affect and human nature is capable of being affected, which reasserted either the nature of the world that was made by *qing*, and the role of *aibo* in producing a community transcending the border of nations and overcoming the colonialist unevenness.

Let me raise another example, Zheng Xiaoxu's calligraphic inscription "*xintong litong* 心同理同" (same heart, same principle), as an illustration of the relation between the subject of feeling and the modern state of empathy (See Figure 2). Published in 1935 in Tokyo, his inscription was collected in the book *Tōa bunka ronshū* 東亞文化論集 (Analects of East Asian culture), issued by the Association of East Asian Nation and Culture 東亞民族文化協會 (*Tōa minzoku bunka kyōkai*) with the aim of propagandizing Manchukuo's East Asian morality and spirit.<sup>53</sup> As Lee Haiyan has contended, "the modern subject is first and foremost a sentimental subject, and that the modern nation is first and foremost a community of sympathy."<sup>54</sup> *Tongxin* here proposed a reductionist understanding, namely, the principle/*li* of building Manchukuo was rooted into the heart/the natural instinct of love that every human possesses.<sup>55</sup> This was a positive confirmation of the

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*Philosophy East and West* 46, no. 2 (April, 1996): 143–164; Liu Yuedi, "The Global Value of Mencius's Ideas on Moral Feeling and Reason: Reinterpreting the Feeling of Compassion From the Perspective of the Philosophy of Emotion," *Cultural and Religious Studies* 4, no. 6 (June, 2016): 372–386; Mou Zongsan, *Xinti yu xingti* 心體與性體 [Substance of heart and substance of nature] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999), 3: 369–379.

<sup>53</sup> *Tōa minzoku bunka kyōkai* ed., *Tōa bunka ronshū* (Tokyo: *Tōa minzoku bunka kyōkai*, 1935), inscription 3.

<sup>54</sup> Lee, *Revolution of the Heart*, 15.

<sup>55</sup> Besides, it is not difficult to find that Zheng's reinvention of *boai* is reminiscent of Kang Youwei 康有為. As an unorthodox Confucian philosopher who stood for love or *boai* as the "constituent principle of life" and as the measure of the Confucian doctrine *ren*, Kang envisioned a Utopia that embraces all people without "kinship, racial, or class distinctions" and discards "the drawbacks of capitalism" in his *Datong shu* 大同書 (*The Book of Great Unity*) in the late Qing period. Kung-chuan Hsiao, *A Modern China and A New World: K'ang Yu-wei, Reformer and Utopian, 1858-1927* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975), 90, 160, 457.

subjectivity of Manchukuoans with positing an equal identity of sentiment, meanwhile, it also tactfully defused the negative contest between the radical individual and the collective imagination of the puppet regime. The Manchukuo conceived of by Zheng Xiaoxu's *boai* inevitably fell prey to Japanese colonialism, which but shared the same writing structure of early republican literary works that linked with the individual's erotic desire and romantic love with the national emancipation and the elitist enlightenment. When the discourse of *love* came to Manchukuo, it not only tried to subsume class and national conflicts, cover up the face of Japanese colonialist exploitation, and withstand Euro-American oppression, but also converted the dead Confucian narrative of feeling into a cosmopolitan topic, that is, how "universal equivalence and affinity" would participate in the construction of modern nationhood.<sup>56</sup>

(3) Where we should to place self and self's desire: the discipline of the heart  
Always intertwined with the narrative of *boai*, *keji* also occupies a heuristic position in Zheng Xiaoxu's theory of *wangdao*. If *boai* is the elementary means by which to realize *wangdao* for shaping people's collective sense of belonging and the puppet regime's ruling legitimacy, then, in Zheng's vision, *keji* is the most ideal reconfiguration of the individual and their inner desire.

I am going to articulate that Zheng's *keji*, a kind of traditional Confucian virtue, indeed tied the treacherous enterprise of political mobilization of Manchukuo with a national genealogy of the moral reconstruction and the civilizational re-

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<sup>56</sup> For example, Zheng Xiaoxu once wrote that "the whites are carnivores, and their cruel instinct is different from the yellow race whose diet is based on the cereal. Nowadays, under the oppression by the white race with respect to the fields of politics and law, implementing *wangdao* thus becomes necessary to salvage the nation from their subjugation" (*Baizhongren shirou, canren zhi xing butongyu huangzhongren zhi shiguzhe. Jinchu bairen yapo zhixia, budeyi er tu zicun, gu wangdao shiyu zhengzhi, falv*. 白種人食肉，殘忍之性不同黃種人之食穀者。今處白人壓迫之下，不得已而圖自存，故王道施于政治、法律). Zheng, 5: 2403; Lee, *Revolution of the Heart*, 86.

creation in the China proper during the post-May Fourth era.<sup>57</sup> Xu Guoqi has commented that as the product of “China’s double betrayal,” the May Fourth Movement involved a “huge identity vacuum,” because to the Chinese of that time, neither their own cultural tradition nor the Western discourse of justice operated as a reliable source in the search for an equal position for China in a new international order.<sup>58</sup> However, although the ethical regulations of Confucian “rites” (*lijiao* 禮教) were the target under anti-traditionalist rubric, Confucian moral virtues and its values were not equivalently attacked, but even glorified by some radical elitist enlighteners and anti-Confucianist May Fourth scholars, including Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培, Li Dazhao 李大釗, Hu Shi, and so on.<sup>59</sup> During 1923–1924, initiated by Liang Qichao’s negative appraisal of Western civilization and enlightenment values, the debate over “science and metaphysics” (*kexue yu xuanxue* 科學與玄學) among modern intellectuals like Zhang Junmai 張君勱 and Ding Wenjiang 丁文江, unfolded a re-evaluation of the position of selfhood (or inner spirit) in historical transformation, with the discourse of selfhood constituting a fresh force in the search

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<sup>57</sup> The first time that *keji* entered the discursive field of Chinese philosophy was in Confucius’s reply to his student Yan Yuan 顏淵, referred to in the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), and the original expression is “*ren* is to restrain self and to revive rites” (*keji fuli wei ren* 克己復禮為仁). However, to Confucians of later generations, it was hard to reach a consensus on the exact meaning of *keji fuli* 克己復禮. Especially, Zhu Xi 朱熹 explained *ji* 己 (the self) as *siyu* 私慾 (selfish desire) with an emphasis of the conflict between *yu* 慾 (desire) and *ren*, which triggered fierce discussions in the Ming and Qing dynasties, even though his interpretation is recognized as an important facet of Neo-Confucian orthodoxy. Gary Arbuckle, “*Keji fuli*,” in *The Encyclopedia of Confucianism*, ed. Xinzhong Yao (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 325–326; Zhang Kunjiang 張崑將, “Zhuzi dui *Lunyu* Yan Yuan ‘keji fuli’ zhang de quanshi jiqi jiqi Zhengyi” 朱子對《論語·顏淵》「克己復禮」章的詮釋及其繼起爭議 [Zhu Zi’s interpretation of “Master Oneself and Return to Propriety” in the *Analects* and It’s Controversies], *Taida lishi xuebao*, no. 27 (June, 2001): 84–94.

<sup>58</sup> Guoqi Xu, *China and the Great War: China’s Pursuit of a New National Identity and Internationalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 274–275.

<sup>59</sup> Gao Like 高力克, “Wusi lunli geming yu rujia dexing chuantong” 五四倫理革命與儒家德性傳統 [The ethical revolution of the May Fourth and the moral tradition of Confucianism], *Twenty-First Century*, no. 53 (June, 1999): 50–52.

for modernity.<sup>60</sup> In this context, departing from the timeworn paradigm of colonial studies, I make the argument that Zheng's deliberation of *keji*, or cultivating self and self's desire, should be positioned on a wide intellectual spectrum of the Confucian morality and human's subjectivity, which uncovered a political relevancy among the personal psychology, the individual body and the social ethics.

In the summer of 1932, Zheng Xiaoxu delivered a series of speech on *wangdao* at a summer school in Xijing 新京. In a draft of his first speech in the series, entitled "Learning the inner sageliness of *wangdao*" (*Wangdao neisheng zhixue* 王道內聖之學), described *keji* as a method of retraining or overcoming the self:

內聖之學無它、惟克己二字而已、己者身之  
謂也、人皆有身、身皆有慾、欲之所包者  
廣.....故克己者、必先制慾.....<sup>61</sup>

*Neisheng zhixue* is nothing more than *keji*  
[restraining the self]. The self is also referred to  
in terms of the body. All human have bodies, all  
bodies have desires, and these desires are wide-  
ranging... Those who arrive at self-restraint,  
must first control desire...

In equating "self/ji" with "body" that is the genesis of *yu*, Zheng hints that *yu* is natural and inborn. Later, resonating with Cheng Kexiang's discussion of "heavenly principle/human desires" (*tianli renyu* 天理人欲), Zheng argued that "the heavenly

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<sup>60</sup> Kirk A. Denton, *The Problematic of Self in Modern Chinese Literature: Hu Feng and Lu Ling* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 46–51.

<sup>61</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, "Wangdao neisheng zhixue," in *Zheng Xiaoxu zhuan*, 58.

principle is connected to humans' heart, while humans' desires are associated with the lived body" (*tianli xiyu xingling, renyu xiyu xingti* 天理係於性靈，人欲係於形體), thus warning that *renyu* 人欲 (human desires) should be conquered by *tianli* 天理 (heavenly principle).<sup>62</sup> Overcoming *renyu* by *tianli* can be accounted for by a process of the psychosomatic discipline, namely, the "heart-mind/inner self" overcomes the "lived body/external self." Put differently, Zheng's "heart-body" dualism focuses on the tension between *tianli* and *renyu*, which is supposed to separate the heart from the body/the self as the dominate substance. Liu Hengxing has highlighted that Zheng's critique of desire does not imply a faith in the kind of "asceticism" that advocates the abandonment of all desires and sensory pleasures from the lived body, as Zheng was aware that the nature of *yu* is neutral, containing neither absolute goodness nor evil.<sup>63</sup> Yet, for Zheng, due to the development of commerce and technology, excessive desires from the corporeal body – including sexual permissiveness, debauched lifestyle, and profit-dominated avarice – were extremely out of place. The heart-mind has to subdue people's undue indulgence in erotic lust and avarice, otherwise, human nature (*renxing* 人性) would be engulfed by animal nature (*shouxing* 獸性), and good nature (*xingshan* 性善) would disappear with the prevalence of bad nature (*xing'e* 性惡).<sup>64</sup>

Zheng also noted that the "learning of outer kingliness" (*waiwang zhixue* 外王之學) refers to the concept of "benefiting others" (*lita* 利他), which is identical with the meaning of *keji*.<sup>65</sup> The equation of *lita* and *keji* not only engenders a

<sup>62</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, "Pi Cheng Kexiang tianli renyu lun" 批程克祥天理人欲論 [Comment on Cheng Kexiang's discussion of *tianli renyu*], in *Minguo shiqi zhexue sixiang congshu*, 137.

<sup>63</sup> Liu, "Wangdao zhixing, shiyu qijia," 243.

<sup>64</sup> Zheng, "Wangdao neisheng zhixue," 58–59.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 59–60.

spontaneous mechanism of releasing the energies and desires of the self, but also exposes a kind of new social ethics pertinent to the public and the private:

人心漸薄、更務其私、始則先己而後人、繼  
則利己而損人.....<sup>66</sup>

The human heart gradually becomes more  
unsympathetic, and people become more inclined  
to work for themselves. This begins with  
prioritizing oneself before others, benefiting  
oneself and harming others ...

Aloofness lures people into a trap of egoism, accompanied by sinking into *siyu*, which further leads to confrontation between the private and public, as well as threatening the “highest morality” (*zuigao zhi daode* 最高之道德) itself, *wangdao*.<sup>67</sup> Serving the public, instead of working for the self (*wuqisi* 務其私), suggests that *keji lita* reflects an appeal of the new social morality that for the ruler, he is obliged to treat citizens with sincere solicitude; for the common people, he should prioritize others before himself. Employing the concept “psyche-politics” (*xin de zhili* 心的治理) coined by Liu Jihui 劉紀蕙, it should not be controversial that Zheng Xiaoxu’s narrative of *keji* redistributes the personal “ethical life” (*lunli shenghuo* 倫理生活) as an invisible but evaluative state capital that places a premium on ensuring domestic productivity.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, in the modern neo-Confucian observation, *xin* 心 is an immanent experience of human morality, but not a metaphysical object, which

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<sup>66</sup> Zheng Xiaoxu, “Datong xiaokang zhi shiyi” 大同小康之釋義 [Interpretation on *datong* and *xiaokang*], in *Zheng Xiaoxu zhuan*, 63.

<sup>67</sup> Zheng, “Neisheng waiwang jiangyi buyi,” 64.

<sup>68</sup> Liu Jihui, *Xin zhi tuopu: 1895 shijian hou de lunli chonggou* 心之拓樸：1895 事件後的倫理重構 [The topology of psyche: The post-1895 reconstruction of ethics] (Taipei: xingren wenhua shiyanshi, 2011), 19.

is born in a practice (*gongfu* 工夫) to liquidate selfish interests and subjective prejudices.<sup>69</sup> Modern vices like contempt for the “national essence” (*guocui* 國粹) as Confucianism, partisan competition, destruction of social hierarchies, sexual licentiousness and profit-driven ethos were diagnosed by Zheng to be the result of a deficiency of *keji*, endangering Manchukuo’s political solidarity and social stability that he depicted in terms of an ideal national status, *ren* 仁. To be clear, *keji*, therefore, for rectifying peoples’ moral shortcomings, aims to re-fabricate a pure corporeal body of “Manchukoans” by the means of disciplining their heart, which witnessed the production of a new ethical value, that is, to serve the public/others, or repress amoral, self-centered desires. It covertly shifted the national contradiction of Manchukuo from the actual conflict between colonist and colonized to the metaphysical clash between the heart/the self and the body/others. Similar to the case of Guomindang’s reformatory experiment on ex-communists in the Republic of China – which Brian Tsui has astutely examined – the idea of *keji* also functioned as a quasi-“political conversion” through reforming the body and the mind of Manchukuo’s subjects.<sup>70</sup> Particular to Manchukuo, however, after overcoming the amoral tendency in the heart, the meek body and the “ontological energy” of life undertook the laboring or sexual surplus in the colonial periphery located in the crossroads of northeast Asia, which were incorporated as a driving power in Japanese imperialist expansion during the Second World War.<sup>71</sup> For instance, it is no wonder that promoting obedience as the very female virtue in high-profile, the

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<sup>69</sup> Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, *Zhongguo sixiangshi lunji* 中國思想史集論 [Collected essays on the history of Chinese philosophy] (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1959), 248–249.

<sup>70</sup> Brian Tsui, “Reforming Bodies and Minds: Anticommunism and Transforming Political Enemies in Nationalist China,” *Positions: Asia Critique*, forthcoming.

<sup>71</sup> Mark Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: the Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan’s Imperialism, 1895-1945* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), ix–x.



feminine ideal sanctioned by Manchukuo officials was that of the “good wife, wise mother” (*xianqi liangmu* 賢妻良母), which, as Norman Smith observed, “directed women’s energies towards bolstering their families, strengthening the economy, and contributing to the war effort.”<sup>72</sup> Despite the rising tide of female liberation and education, Manchukuo’s women were expected to overcome self-centered, individualistic behavior and the greedy desire for the material, a tendency which was described in terms including the “drunken-life dream-death” (*zuisheng mengsi* 醉生夢死) lifestyle and self-degeneration into a “flower vase” (*huaping* 花瓶).<sup>73</sup>

Meanwhile, an inherent paradox embedded into *keji* should be noticed. As I have noted, *keji* concentrates on an impulse of overcoming self. In Zheng’s Confucian texts, it is possible to identify a premise that the self is a moral agent which is able, or could be trained, to root out the immoral corporeal desires with an “inner check” of personal moral action. Nevertheless, Zheng’s ideological statement *keji* failed to be dislodged from the Japanese colonial context and his experience of colluding with the enemy, the remarkable parallel existed between his emphasis on the heart and the inner spiritual, moral power in Manchukuo and the re-acceptance of “the school of heart-mind” (*xinxue* 心學) among modern Chinese intellectuals, for example, Liang Shuming, Xiong Shili 熊十力, and particularly the chieftain of Guomindang, Jiang Jieshi, during the post May-Fourth era.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Norman Smith, *Resisting Manchukuo: Chinese Women Writers and the Japanese Occupation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 15, 31.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 32–40. As for the other studies of Manchukuo’s women, see Cai Yaqi 蔡雅祺, *Zhizao zhanzheng yinying: lun Manzhouguo de funü dongyuan* (1932-1945) 製造戰爭陰影——論滿洲國的婦女動員 (1932-1945) [The manufactured shadow of war: On the feminine mobilization in Manchukuo (1932-1945)] (Taipei: Guoshiguan, 2010), 78-260; Wenwen Wang, “From the Family to the State: Shifts in Manchukuo Female Education Principles (1932-1945),” *Education Journal* 8, no. 2 (April, 2019): 57–62; Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, 131–169; Liu Jinghui, *Minzu, xingbie yu jieceng*, 12–105; 163–232.

<sup>74</sup> Benjamin I. Schwartz, “Themes in Intellectual History: May Fourth and After,” in *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 12*, 439–442.

Spontaneous overflow of self-cultivation elevated the self as a sentimental, moral and modern identity in which Charles Taylor has identified three aspects: (1) the selfhood with inward depths; (2) the affirmation of a quotidian life; and (3) “the expressivist notion of nature as an inner moral source.”<sup>75</sup> Zheng’s ideological design of *wangdao* mobilized the colonized to re-orient transcended redemption, social fulfillment and patriotic identification with an “illegitimate” state in ordinary interpersonal connectedness, secular work and family bond, softening the conflict between heroic nationalism and everyday values.<sup>76</sup> Manchukuo, thus, was not a shameful client state under Japanese colonial control, but rather a moral paradise whose peoples could purify the evil of the nation and the world via a virtuous personality, claiming the inheritance from the cultural legacy of Chinese past.

Likewise, at that time, the Guomindang, the later legitimate sovereign government of Republican China under Jiang’s leadership, also orchestrated a revolution of the “heart” with the adoption of Confucianism, by presenting itself as the orthodoxy of Chinese politics. In 1918, Sun Yat-sen published the *Philosophy of Sun Yat-sen* (*Sun Wen Xueshuo* 孫文學說) which proposed that the Nationalist Party’s state-building program would begin with a shock to the “heart.”<sup>77</sup> In 1924,

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<sup>75</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), x.

<sup>76</sup> As for the contradiction between patriotic love/the heroic and romantic love/the everyday, see Lee, *Revolution of the Heart*, 9–10.

<sup>77</sup> Sun Yat-sen, “Xinli jianshe (Sun Wen xueshuo): zixu” 心理建設（孫文學說）：自序 [Psychological construction (Sun Wen Theory): Preface], in *Sun Zhongshan Xuanji* 孫中山選集 [Selected works of Sun Yat-sen] (1956; repr., Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 105. In January 1920, Sun also mentioned that *geming* depends on a change in human thought, or a “revolution of the heart” (*gexin* 革心), in a letter to overseas Guomindang comrades. See Sun Yat-sen, “Zhi haiwai Guomindang tongzhi han” 致海外國民黨同志函 [A letter to overseas Guomindang comrades], in *Sun Zhongshan Quanji* 孫中山全集 [The complete works of Sun Yat-sen], eds. Zhongguo shehui shekeyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo Zhonghua mingushi yanjiushi 中國社會科學院近代史研究所中華民國史研究室, Zhongshan daxue lishixi Sun Zhongshan yanjiushi 中山大學歷史系孫中山研究室 and Guangdong Sheng shehui kexueyuan lishi yanjiushi 廣東省社會科學院歷史研究室 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), 5: 210.

Sun gave a series of lectures on the Three People's Principles in Guangzhou and assessed the "inherent morality" of the Chinese – "loyalty and filial piety, benevolence and love, trust and righteousness, [and] peace" (*zhongxiao* 忠孝, *ren'ai* 仁愛, *xinyi* 信義, *heping* 和平) – as the inspiration for the revolutionary mission of the party, while tying the personal "barbaric" conduct with the failure of China.<sup>78</sup> The death of Sun in March 1925 left a vacuum, and the interpretation of his political thoughts to his successors. Chen Lifu 陳立夫, who was one close advisor of Chang and the head of the CC clique, developed Sun's *minsheng* by combining the school of Yin-Yang and Five Elements (*yinyang wuxing* 陰陽五行) and Wang Yangming's 王陽明 philosophical theory. His "vitalism" (*weisheng lun* 唯生論) advocated a life of service, which could be realized through the abstinence of unnecessary desires, and the extension of love.<sup>79</sup> Dai Jitao, instead, devoted himself to "Confucianizing" Sun's Principles, reinventing *boai* and *ren'ai* as the revolutionary action against class struggle, and stressed the rejection of individualism and the benefits to the self of a common responsibility in human co-existence, after a conversion from radical Marxism to anti-communism in 1925.<sup>80</sup> The New Life Movement (*xinshenghuo yundong* 新生活運動), launched by Jiang in February 1934, glorified the native yet peripheral imperial ethics – "propriety, justice, honesty, shame," (*li* 禮, *yi* 義, *lian* 廉, *chi* 恥) – as the "innate knowledge of the good" that would awaken the national spirit, discipline "unclean" citizens' bodies, and correct "irregular" personal

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<sup>78</sup> David Bowles, "Finding the Way: Guomindang Discourse, Confucius, and the Challenges of Revolutionary Traditionalism in China, 1919–1934" (PhD diss.: University of Oxford), 2016, 52–79.

<sup>79</sup> Lv Houxuan 呂厚軒, *Chixu 'daotong': Guomindang shiquanpai dui rujia sixiang de gaizao yu liyong* 持續「道統」：國民黨實權派對儒家思想的改造與利用 [Continuity of orthodoxy: The Guomindang's transformation and utilization of Confucianism] (Jinan: Shandong renmin chubanshe, 2013), 68–84.

<sup>80</sup> Bowles, "Finding the Way," 80–95.

behaviors, thereby making a “collective life” (*tuanti shenghuo* 團體生活) in “clothing, food, shelter, [and] conduct” (*yi* 衣, *shi* 食, *zhu* 住, *xing* 行).<sup>81</sup> Although, according to Arif Dirlik, Jiang’s appeal to a new life was a mass mobilization that trivialized moral principles in relation to hygienic and behavioral improvements, its emphases on the rejection of private interests and the “unity of knowledge and action” (*zhixing heyi* 知行合一) were based upon an affirmation of humans’ virtuous nature.<sup>82</sup> *Xin* as a discursive field of struggle bore witness to not only the competition for political and cultural orthodoxy between the Nanjing government and Manchukuo’s nation-building project by means of the reinterpretation of Confucian discourse and moral values, but also the ambiguous relation between those two regimes under the similar slogan of “recovering China” in the 1930s.

In summary, Zheng’s *wangdao* in Manchukuo was a sentimental formulation in its call for love and discipline of the heart. The foundation of Manchukuo, therefore, was based in a sentiment of solidarity beyond family bonding or traditional tribal community that also represented a new civilizational order of the world, which provided with a third approach to save China, distinguishing from both Republican and Communist regimes.<sup>83</sup> Collaboration with Japanese invaders, to Zheng, was a conceptual approach to liberate the Northeast China from the

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<sup>81</sup> Lloyd E. Eastman, “Nationalist China during the Nanking decade, 1927–1937,” in *The Nationalist Era in China 1927–1949*, eds. Lloyd E. Eastman, Jerome Ch’en, Suzanne Pepper and Lyman P. van Slyke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 30–31; Jennifer Lee Oldstone-Moore, “The New Life Movement of Nationalist China: Confucianism, State Authority and Moral Formation” (PhD diss.: University of Chicago, 2000), 138–181; Lei Xianglin 雷祥麟, “Xiguan cheng siwei: xinshenghuo yundong yu feijiehe yufangzhi zhong de lunli, jiating yu shenti” 習慣成思維：新生活運動與肺結核防治中的倫理、家庭與身體 [Habituating the four virtues: ethics, family and the body in the anti-tuberculosis campaigns and the New Life Movement], *Jindaishi yanjiu jikan*, no. 74 (October, 2011): 160–164.

<sup>82</sup> Arif Dirlik, “The Ideological Foundations of the New Life Movement: A Study in Counterrevolution,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 34, no.4 (August, 1975): 956–959; Lv, *Chixu ‘daotong,’* 93–98.

<sup>83</sup> Karatani Kōjin, *The Structure of World History: From Modes of Production to Modes of Exchange*, trans. Michael K. Bourdaghs (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 212–213.

Nationalist government's autocracy, as his obsession with China essentialized Chinese civilization and culture, or *wen*, going beyond the externalist scope of the definition of modern "nation-state" in western political genealogy. The notion "a lyricism of betrayal" crafted by David Wang in the study of Hu Lancheng 胡蘭成, applies to Zheng's logic of aestheticizing or lyricizing the nature of the world, the state and human nature.<sup>84</sup> Based upon "*wangdao*-ism," Zheng Xiaoxu's musings of Manchukuo against the politics of communism, exclusive nationalism, and capitalism in the interwar period, revealed his conservative revolution of saving China by means of Confucian sentiment and morality.

### **Betrayal, an Elegy: The Failure to Save China**

Accompanying the defeat of the Empire of Japan in the Second World War, the collapse of Manchukuo in August 1945 pronounced Zheng Xiaoxu's *wangdao* impoverished. Zheng himself also fell under the category of *Hanjian* as he was unable to detach Manchukuo from the control of Japanese colonialism and make it an independent state for overcoming a powerful frame of modern "nation-state." Yet, a thornier problem should not be cast aside: why did Manchukuo unavoidably come to nothing, or, why did Confucian feeling (*boai* and *keji*) fail to create a dreamland of the Manchukuoans? It could not be denied that in the early 1940s, when Pu Yi decided to establish a National Foundation Shrine and promulgated that the spiritual source and state prosperity of Manchukuo were derived from "the divine blessing"

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<sup>84</sup> In Wang's analyses, Hu perceived not only the Second Sino-Japanese War as a fight of civilization between the East and the West, but also the advent of Nationalism and Communism as the worst impact of the Occidentalism after May Fourth Movement. Specifically, triggered by *qing*/feeling, to Hu Lancheng, a fresh life force was "the most primordial human faculty" and also, the origin of revolution. As he found, what resided in Japanese civilization is a "pure, immense and prolonged feeling" that is capable of coping with Western hegemony. Therefore, siding with Japanese aggressor was a prerequisite for the self-regeneration of Chinese civilization. David Der-wei Wang, *The Lyrical in Epic Time: Modern Chinese Intellectuals and Artists Through the 1949 Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 156–167.

of Amaterasu-ōmikami, Manchukuo indeed forfeited its ideological autonomy and subordinated itself as a mobilized state of resource supply to Japan in the Pacific theater of the Second World War.<sup>85</sup> The absurd union of the Japanese empire and Manchukuo hampered Confucianism as a legitimate expression of national identity. But, I would like to address the question of the futility of *wangdao* as a foundation for nationhood in Manchukuo in the more macroscopic context of national aestheticization.

Karatani Kōjin explains that “what we call nation-state must be understood instead as Capital-Nation-State.”<sup>86</sup> Whereas on the basis of sentimentality, the nation, usually considered as a noneconomic fancy or a cultural, political and ideological issue, rather, lies in a type of exchange different from commodity exchange—reciprocal exchanges, and it “is thus a demand for the egalitarian” for solving economic struggle and social class contradictions engendered by the capitalistic market, and preventing capital-state from collapse.<sup>87</sup> Compared with the slogan “fraternity” in the French Revolution, synonymous with Adam Smith’s “sympathy” or “fellow feeling,” that turned the French “citizens” into the French “nation,” *boai* and *keji*, two similar expressions of moral sentiment, instead failed to produce an association that transcended class and which could be incorporated into nationalism.<sup>88</sup> On the one hand, *wangdao* ineluctably evoked the spiritual continuity between the Qing dynasty and Manchukuo, alluding to the legitimacy of ruling that came from *tian* in a metaphysical sense. On the other hand, the political apparatus for spreading *wangdao* was scarce. In pre-modern China, intellectuals’ loyalty to

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<sup>85</sup> Yamamuro, *Manchuria Under Japanese Dominion*, 164–165.

<sup>86</sup> Karatani, *The Structure of World History*, 220.

<sup>87</sup> Karatani Kōjin, *Nation and Aesthetics: On Kant and Freud*, trans. Global Asias (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1–11.

<sup>88</sup> Karatani, *Nation and Aesthetics*, 15.

emperor or imperial court was associated with the civil-service examination system, which transformed a pure Confucian moral sentiment into the basis for breaking down the barriers of economic and political hierarchy. Such a mechanism of social mobilization was abolished in the late Qing and no longer restored in Manchukuo and China Proper governed by Jiang. *Wangdao*, the Confucian narrative, then only worked as a brittle expostulation of *qing* that neither gathered different ethnic peoples together, nor mitigated the uneven conflicts of the state that caused by the Guandong Army's military repression, the SMR's economic exploitation, and the Japanese colonizers' superior social position. In general, Zheng's *wangdao* incapably aestheticized the Manchurian geographical territories/state as the national landscape and the innate boundaries. The collapse of Manchukuo was the result of the unstable trinity of "the capital economics--the state's redistribution of resources--the national empathy," instead of the external destructive power. Furthermore, it also should be clear that Zheng Xiaoxu's betrayal is a failure of saving China by the means of *qing* or Confucian moral sentiment that was inefficiency in manufacturing a "capitalism without capitalism," that is, "overcoming its excess of social disintegration."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real: Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates* (London: Verso, 2002), 131.

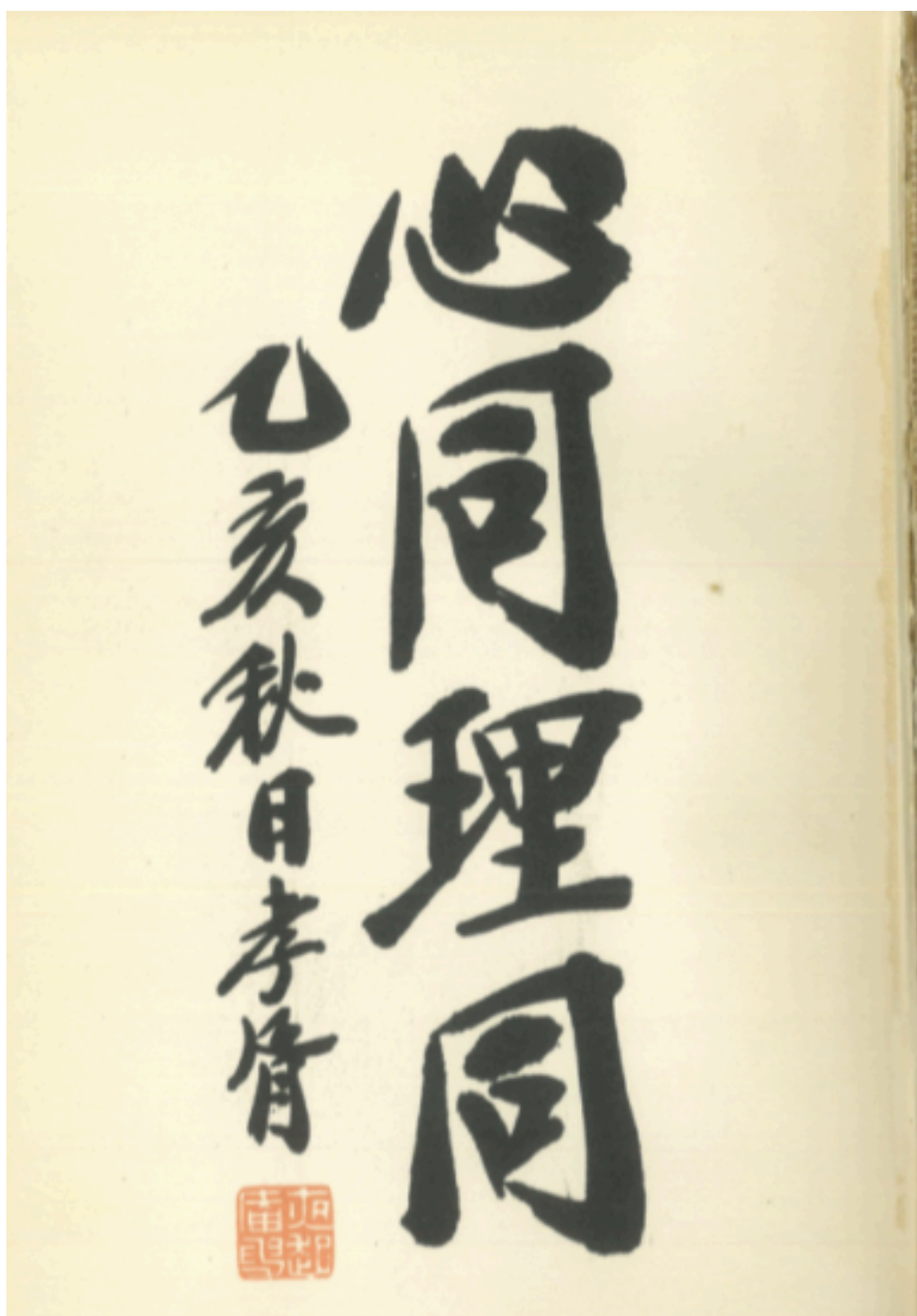


Figure 2: Zheng Xiaoxu's inscription "xintong litong"



## CHAPTER IV Conclusion: Overcome Republican China

From his reinterpretation of Chinese script and *Hanxue* in opposition to Westernization, to his reinvention of *wangdao* against communism and the modern paradigm of “nation-state,” Zheng Xiaoxu’s conservative revolution by means of culture expressed a paradoxical engagement with the relationship between tradition and modernity.

If, Zheng’s misreading of Meiji Japan was decoded as his distrust of western democratic ideology and political modernity, then, his collaboration with Japanese in building Manchukuo should be addressed in a more complex standpoint: what was his understanding of China? Manchukuo, embracing modern military, organic bureaucratic mechanism and westernized social-political governance from Japan and borrowing traditional Chinese Confucian discourse as its legitimate ideological expression, was differentiated from the Republic of China. More specifically, the latter was a modern nation-state on the western political spectrum. In other words, the reason why Republican China failed to represent his vision of China was that it could not revive a China-centred civilizational order, neither domestically and nor overseas, not because it modernized itself as a quasi-Western country. The dislocation of social rank of people and the deficiency of cultural identification with the past and the traditional stripped Republican China of the old glory of “China” (*zhonghua* 中華) and its “Chineseness.” At the same time, China, Zheng attempted to save or revive, was by no means an archaic dynastical ruling (i.e. Qing empire). Instead, appropriated Japanese colonial power, Zheng Xiaoxu’s enterprise of remaking China underlined his ambition of overcoming Republican China’s western modernity.

Even though “searching for cultural alternatives to Westernization programs” was “often associated with conservative and traditionalist circles” in the aftermath of the First World War, doubt in the West and in its civilizational discourse continues to be an on-going reality in non-Western states.<sup>1</sup> After 1976, the death of Mao Zedong witnessed not merely “the retreat from revolutionary Communism in the mainland China,” but also the decline of the historical paradigm based upon “the teleology of the revolution.”<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, coinciding with the crisis of capitalism in the West in the 1980s, the economic success of East Asian societies (for instance, Japan and the “Four little dragons”) embraced the revival of Confucianism as an alternative ideology to re-assert self-identity and respond to a new “de-centered” global structure.<sup>3</sup> Resonating with Zheng Xiaoxu, who evoked Confucian spirituality to overcome the Darwinist racial struggle, Western materialism and radical nationalism, it is clear that the Confucian revival in the “Sinic area” was the reconstruction of Confucian ethics that are compatible with the modern capitalism.

By rediscovering and reinventing the aesthetic politics of Chinese script and *wangdao*, Zheng Xiaoxu’s appeal to overcome the West and reconstruct the Confucian morality, although, had miscarried, it still reminds us that in the history of Chinese modern state building, conservative revolution by means of culture constituted a powerful yet unnoticed trend to modernize China and to search for its civilizational subjectivity in a wider East Asian political genealogy whilst competing with the Western ideological narrative.

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<sup>1</sup> Dominic Sachsenmaier, “Searching for Alternatives to Western Modernity—Cross Cultural Approaches in the Aftermath of the Great War,” *Journal of Modern European History* 4, no.2 (2016): 243-244, .

<sup>2</sup> Arif Dirlik, *Culture and History in Postrevolutionary China: The Perspective of Global Modernity* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2011), 107-108.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

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