



# China under Western Aggression: Discourse Transformations, Identity Shifts, and National Reconstruction

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## Abstract

Following the Opium Wars, traditional notions of China as encompassing “all under heaven” (*tianxia* 天下) and the “Sino-barbarian dichotomy” (*huayi* 華夷) could no longer be sustained. Under the pressure and intimidation of the Great Powers’ advanced warships and fire power, the Qing government signed the unequal treaties and China was forced to adopt Western conceptual reasoning, discursive language, and rules of conduct. Western knowledge and lexicon was successively translated into Chinese, affecting transformations in local discourse and society. As part of this process, Japanese texts, which contained a great volume of Chinese characters, became an important medium for the transmission of Western epistemology. During the first Opium War between China and England, the cultural and political hegemony of the Great Powers were demonstrated through debates over interpretations of the Chinese character *yi* 夷. During the Late Qing, Chinese intellectuals drew on their foundations in traditional Chinese lexicon to understand and adopt the foreign-derived words *zhongzu* 種族 (race) and *minzu* 民族 (nation). This process reflects both shifts in how Chinese people regarded collective identity and the various presumptions underlying state-building visions.

## Keywords

translating discourse – race – nation – collective identity – state-building

Arnold J. Toynbee counts thirty-four civilizations among the many rich, resplendent, and long-standing civilizations that have existed from ancient

times to the present.<sup>1</sup> Those which have made it into popular discourse include the ancient civilizations of Babylon, Egypt, Greece, and Rome; Christian civilization, Arab civilization, Indian/Hindu civilization, the Sinitic civilization of the East Asian mainland, and so forth. Some of these ancient civilizations perished amidst competition and confrontation and others were fortunate enough to survive. In any case, the survivors underwent massive transformations in both form and content, adapting to the ever-changing world order and developments abetted by inter-cultural exchanges. The organizing principles of political power and society within them were also reformed, sometimes even to the point of becoming unrecognizable to their forbears.

Spurred on by the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment, the Christian states of Western Europe were the first to undergo the transition from feudal societies to modern nation-states. Anthony Smith's idea of a "civic model of the nation" came, in fact, from the 17th- to 18th-century Western European notion of a "national polity" characterized by a political identity founded on civil liberties and a representative government, and boundaries defined by shared culture and land.<sup>2</sup> The nationalist movements which subscribed to this pushed to establish new identity formations and bodies of national governance. Taking the Peace of Westphalia (1648) as a signal, they reshaped the nature of the European nation, rewriting the international order. The political transformation undergone by each spurred on transformation of their economy. New manufacturing processes were established and production limits removed, leading to rapid developments in Western European industry and technology. In the meantime, the social structures, ideology, and cultural discourse in European countries were reshaped and updated. Thus, one after another, they entered the new age of industrial civilization.

As European powers strengthened and prospered, they began to set their sights on the rest of the world. Faced with their aggression, the fate of native sovereignty in the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America took each down different historical paths. The Ottoman Empire was dissolved. The Mayan and Incan civilizations met with destruction and annihilation.<sup>3</sup> European colonies spread across the globe, bringing about irrevocable changes to the political

<sup>1</sup> Lu Fanzhi 魯凡之, *Zhongguo fazhan yu wenhua jiegou* 中國發展與文化結構 (Hong Kong: Jixian she, 1998), 26.

<sup>2</sup> The four signs of a "Civil ethnic polity" include: 1. territory forged by historical circumstance; 2. a unified legal and governmental body; 3. legal and political legal rights; 4. shared culture and awareness. See Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 11.

<sup>3</sup> "... twelve major civilizations, seven of which no longer exist (Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Cretan, Classical, Byzantine, Middle American, Andean) and five which do (Chinese, Japanese,

and cultural map of the world. In East Asia, neither the Qing government nor Japan could avoid the impact of the powerful, expanding colonial domain of the west.

## 1 Modern China Forced to Adopt Western Conceptual Reasoning, Discursive Language, and Rules of Conduct

Out of lands and environments vastly different from those of distant China, the European countries developed distinct cultural traditions and political systems. From this, arose two contrasting centers of civilization: the Mediterranean and East Asia.<sup>4</sup> Cultural exchange between China and Europe can be traced back to Catholic missionary activities. In 1583, Jesuit missionaries from the Vatican such as Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) entered China via Macau. Ricci collaborated with Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 (1562–1633) to translate key texts in science and technology such as Euclid's *Jihe yuanben* 幾何原本, *Celiang fayi* 測量法義, and *Tongwen suanzhi* 同文算指.<sup>5</sup> Such translations constituted the first systematic introduction of Western astronomy, mathematics, geography, and medicine to the Chinese people. From the late Ming (1368–1644) to the late Qing (1644–1911), foreign missionaries who lectured on Western civilization would translate certain Western terms into Chinese as part of their talks. This spurred on both translation activities in China and cultural exchange between China and the West. However, the introduction of China to Western political thought, social theory, and constitutional law would not occur until around 1840, the time of the first Opium War.

Beginning with the first Opium War (1839–1842), the Qing government suffered defeat after defeat in wars against foreign nations, ceding territory and paying indemnities. In its dealings with Western countries, China steadily lost the power to self-determine and was forced, instead, to accept Western conceptual reasoning, discursive language, and rules of conduct. Facing the imminent threat of annihilation, the Chinese people had no choice but to abandon traditional notions of China as “all under heaven” (*tianxia* 天下) as

Indian, Islamic, and Western).” See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 45.

4 Zhan Zhonghe 漢中和, “Dizhonghai wenhuaquan yu xifang wenming dutexing de genyuan” 地中海文化圈與西方文明獨特性的根源, *Hunan shifan daxue shehui kexue xuebao* 湖南師範大學社會科學學報, no. 4 (2010): 128–31.

5 Xiao Zhiqin 肖志欽 and Xiao Jian'an 肖建安, “Limadou jiqi dui Zhongguo fanyi shi de gongxian” 利瑪竇及其對中國翻譯史的貢獻, *Loudi shizhuan xuebao* 婁底師專學報, no. 4 (2003): 33–35.

well as the ethnic order based on a distinction between the central *hua* 華 and frontier *yi* 夷 peoples. Instead, they began to adopt European worldviews and principles of international relations.

On the surface, the Great Powers extolled notions of “equality” and “international law;” however, following the First Opium War and Second Opium War (1856–1860), the conditions under which the Qing government signed the peace treaty were completely devoid of “equality” or “parity.” When it came to foreign relations with China, the Great Powers consistently interfered in affairs concerning China’s frontier regions and affairs between local groups. Examples of this include Tsarist Russia recognizing the legitimacy of Yaqub Beg’s (1820–1877) rule in Kashgar, Xinjiang in 1872, and Britain forcibly opening the commercial port of Yadong 亞東, Tibet in 1888. Thus, the Great Powers used diplomatic pressure and military threats, and even occasional military intervention,<sup>6</sup> to undermine the authority of the Chinese central government, replacing it, instead, with Western interpretations and language.<sup>7</sup> They sought to alter the legal statuses of these regions under international law in order to stake a claim in Chinese frontier regions as either their colonies or their protectorates.

At the same time, diplomatic envoys, merchants, missionaries, and geographers from the Great Powers paid visits to every part of the Chinese frontier regions, building churches, organizing schools, opening schools, starting newspapers, and even developing writing systems for the oral languages of certain ethnic groups.<sup>8</sup> These visitors worked to infiltrate every level of frontier society,

<sup>6</sup> It would seem that, after unsuccessful attempts at opening trade routes with Tibet, British troops – invaded Tibet in 1903, occupying Lhasa and finally, in 1906, forcing the Qing government to sign the “Sino-British Convention on British and Tibetan Relations.” See Zhang Zhirong 張植榮, *Guojiguanxiyu Xizang wenti* 國際關係與西藏問題 (Beijing: Lüyou jiaoyu chubanshe, 1994), 42–44.

<sup>7</sup> Western ideas of “sovereignty (*zhuquan* 主權)” and “suzerainty (*zongzhuquan* 宗主權)” and the distinctions between them do not exist in Sinitic traditions. At the Simla Conference of 1913, England suggested dividing Tibet into “inner Tibet” (to include Qinghai the Kham region) and “outer Tibet” (consisting of Ü-Tsang), with the central Chinese government holding suzerainty, but not sovereignty, over the latter. See Zhang Zhirong, *Guojiguanxiyu Xizang wenti*, 62.

<sup>8</sup> From the end of the 19th century to the 1930s, missionaries active in Yunnan, Guizhou, and Sichuan provinces preached to ethnic minorities. Around that time, they devised and published on several ethnic minority orthographies. The British Methodist missionary Sam Pollard devised Old Miao script. The British James O. Fraser of the Inner China Mission developed Old Lisu script with Sara Ba Thaw, a preacher of the Karen peoples of Myanmar. Missionaries of the American Baptist Mission Society such as Josiah Nelson Cushing and O. Hanson devised Singpho writing. Vincent M. Young of the American Baptist Convention developed both the Lahu and Wa scripts. Australian missionary Gladstone Porteous devised

meddling in local affairs and inciting inter-ethnic conflict. Western powers sought to promote an image of the Qing dynasty as a country of multiple nations existing side-by-side. Starting with such labels as “Tibetan nation” and “Mongol nation,” Western languages introduced discourses of “nation,” “national self-determination,” and “national identification” to the elites of the many peoples – namely, the Manchu, Han, Mongol, Hui, and Tibetan – in China.<sup>9</sup> Slowly but surely, from the concepts and meanings behind these new Western-derived labels, would emerge new forms of political and cultural identity.

The actions of Western imperialist powers inevitably impacted inter-group relations and affected discursive shifts in the various jurisdictions of the Qing government. The elites of the various Chinese ethnic groups began to use Western discourse to describe not only the world outside of China, but also recent Chinese political history as well as shifts within and between Chinese ethnic groups across the dynasties. This was the start of a comprehensive discursive shift within Chinese society.

As China endured its passive and humiliating role in foreign diplomatic negotiations, its political system based on traditional notions of ruling “all under heaven” and identifying according to the so-called “Sino-barbarian distinction” (*yixia zhidian* 夷夏之辨) was replaced by one based on the forcibly imported idea of a “nation-state.”<sup>10</sup> Chinese people had much to reconsider: how to refer to those strange ocean-crossing peoples; how to refer to the surrounding tributary states of the Qing empire; how to refer, collectively, to the subjects of the Qing dynasty; how to refer to those groups governed by the Qing government, but with their own administrative bodies as well as ethnic origins, languages, religions, and ways of life that were wholly distinct; and, finally, how to maintain or rebuild the political entity known as China?<sup>11</sup>

Yi script. See Chen Jianming 陳建明, “Chuanjiaoshi zai xinan shaoshu minzu diqu de wenzi chuangzhi huodong” 傳教士在西南少數民族地區的文字創制活動. *Zongjiaoxue yanjiu* 宗教學研究, no. 4 (2010): 142–49.

<sup>9</sup> “Even the terms ‘Manchu’ and ‘Han’ referring to ethnicities is very modern ..... it wasn’t until the post-1900 hostility broke out between loyalists and revolutionaries that the Manchu-Han conflict came to a head. However, the concept of ‘Han ethnicity’ was also being re-invented.” See Sun Longji 孫隆基, *Lishixue jia de jingxian* 歷史學家的經線 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2004), 17.

<sup>10</sup> “Imperial China ... at the end of the Qing dynasty was forced into the straightjacket of a ‘nation-state.’” Sun Longji, *Lishixue jia de jingxian*, 21.

<sup>11</sup> The Qing government pursued a “diverse empire” where each district administered itself via the principle of “governing according to customary practice” (*yin su er zhi* 因俗而治). See Wang Ke 王柯, *Zhongguo, cong “tianxia” dao minzu guojia* 中國，從“天下”到民族國家 (Taipei: Zhengda chubanshe, 2014), 101.

To begin with, the Qing government officials used terms associated with frontier peoples, such as *manyi* 蠻夷 (barbarians), to refer to Europeans. The British, for instance, were called “red haired barbarians” (*hongmao yi* 紅毛夷 or *hongmao fan* 紅毛番). However, as European nations exerted their power in China, “foreign barbarians” (*waiyi* 外夷) became the neutral “countries” (*bangguo* 邦國). According to Sinitic tradition, diplomatic envoys from foreign countries were usually called “tributary envoys” (*gongshi* 貢使). However, in the case of Europe, that, too, changed to simply “envoy” (*gongshi* 公使). European envoys were permitted to reside in the capital. Instead of adhering to the traditional ritual of kowtowing in audience with the emperor, the envoys were, at their request, required only to bow respectfully.<sup>12</sup> The “tribute address” (*gongbiao* 貢表) which foreign envoys at court had previously had to present upon arriving at court was renamed “official document” (*guoshu* 國書). The word for agreements signed with foreign nations changed from *mengshu* 盟書 (alliance pacts) to *tiaoyue* 條約 (treaties). These gradual shifts in terminology signaled a thorough collapse of the traditional Chinese imperial order.

At the time, Chinese people who remained clear-headed observed that the Qing government was losing its authority over frontier lands and peoples to Western colonization. They saw how the existing social order and cultural logic was being thoroughly overturned, and how the Great Powers would cause rifts between different groups within a nation in order to conquer and enslave them.<sup>13</sup> Those in the know considered how to “defend the race and nation,” how, against the tides of discursive shifts, to form their own interpretations of the new lexicon.<sup>14</sup> Only by doing so could they reestablish a coherent identity among China’s people and keep the fragmentation and violence of in-fighting from breaking out across China’s vast territory.

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<sup>12</sup> Mao Haijian 茅海建, *Jindai de chidu: liangci Yapiān Zhanzheng junshi yu waijiao* 近代的尺度：兩次鴉片戰爭軍事與外交 (Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhi sanlian shudian, 2011), 250.

<sup>13</sup> “The British conquest of India was an act of urging Indian people to kill Indian people.” See Yang Du 楊度, “Youxue yibian’ xu” “遊學譯編” 敘, in *Xinhai geming qianshinian jian shi lun xuan ji* 辛亥革命前十年間時論選集, ed. Zhang Nan 張柵 and Wang Renzhi 王忍之 (Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhi sanlian shudian, 1960), 1: 251.

<sup>14</sup> *Datongbao* 大同報, a newspaper created by Chinese and Manchu bannermen studying in Japan, strongly promoted “Equality between Manchu and Han people and unity of Manchu, Han, Mongol, Hui, and Tibetan people as citizens of one great nation.” See Huang Xingtao 黃興濤, *Chongsu Zhonghua: jindai Zhongguo “Zhonghua minzu” guannian yanjiu* 重塑中華：近代中國“中華民族”觀念研究 (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 2017), 101–2.

## 2 Translating Terms between Western Languages and Chinese during the 19th Century

Western discourses and concepts that were brought into China by the Great Powers in the mid-nineteenth century had only recently emerged and become popular in Europe. The seventeenth century Enlightenment advanced innovation in philosophy, ethics, political science, economics, history, literature, and the natural sciences. The subsequent wave of new concepts and related terms that were born from new political beliefs, social movements, and developments in technology transformed existing words and phrases in the languages of European countries.

The word “nation” serves as an apt example. It stems from the Latin word “*natio*,” which has multiple meanings. According to the earliest and most widespread understanding, it “referred to a group of people who share a place of birth and are placed in the same category that is larger than a family but smaller than a clan; also, a people.”<sup>15</sup> French encyclopedists Denis Diderot (1713–1784) and Jean le Rond d’Alembert (1717–1783) reframed “nation” as “a collective word used to denote a considerable quantity of those people who inhabit a certain extend of country defined within certain limits, and obeying the same government.”<sup>16</sup> The *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens of the French Revolution* elevated the idea of “nation” to include ideas of sovereignty, stating that “the principle of sovereignty resides essentially in the nation.” The British historian Eric Hobsbawm (d. 2012) writes that “the modern sense of the word is no older than the eighteenth century (...).”<sup>17</sup> Elie Kedourie (d. 1992) writes on the “doctrine” of European nationalism at that time: “(...) that humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics which can be ascertained, and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, the central position of modern European nationalism is that every nation has the right to establish its own government.

The process by which Western concepts were transmitted to China was anything but direct. At first, Chinese people attempted to use existing Chinese words and phrases to translate Western words. Such words and phrases were

<sup>15</sup> Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1960.), 12–13. For further discussion on the evolution of the term “nation,” see Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 4–8.

<sup>16</sup> Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 14.

<sup>17</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3.

<sup>18</sup> Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 9.

inevitably informed by traditional Chinese worldviews and rational concepts that differed greatly from that of the Western concepts they were meant to represent. Therefore, Chinese scholars who first attempted to translate Western texts into Chinese could only do so by either using barely passable Chinese terms or coining new terms. In Lin Zexu's 林則徐 (1785–1850) *Sizhou zhi* 四洲志, a late 1830s Chinese translation of a work on world geography, the term for government officials from England (which is rendered *yinjili guo* 英吉利國) is translated using the traditional Chinese term for officials, *zhi-guan* 職官.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the government and its departments are translated as *yamen* 銜門, their navy translated as *shuishi* 水師, banks translated as *yinhao* 銀號, and expenditures translated as *suiyong* 歲用. The titles of government officials were rendered phonetically with annotations in Chinese. For instance, Lin translated the title of government official into *lübulai afuxi'er* 律布來阿付西爾 with *guanyin guan* 管印官 (official in charge of seals) as an annotation.<sup>20</sup> Another example of this is Yan Fu's 嚴復 (1853–1921) translation of "empire" as *yinbai'er* 英拜兒.<sup>21</sup>

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, it was very difficult to translate Western concepts and discourses using the Chinese that was available. When translating Thomas Henry Huxley's (1825–1895) *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays*, Yan Fu once mentioned the difficulty of adhering to the three principles of translation: reliability (*xin* 信), accuracy (*da* 達), and style (*ya* 雅).

It is already difficult to remain true to the ideological content of the source text; however, if one were to produce an indecipherable text based on a correct understanding of the source text, there would be no point in the translation. Thus, it is very important to take care with expression.... (The translator must) gain masterful understanding of the substance of the entire text; only then can the translation gain a natural smoothness. If the writing and content of the source text is abstract and difficult to understand, then one must do the work of laying the foundation and finding the correct resonances in the sections of the translated text that both precede and follow. In this way, one can better express its intended meaning. These methods are all meant to enhance the expressive power

<sup>19</sup> The original text renders *Yinjili guo* with the characters 英咈唎國, showing that the transliteration of names of countries continued to undergo revision and reconsideration. See Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸, *Wan Qing wenxuan* 晚清文選 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehuixue chubanshe, 2002), 4.

<sup>20</sup> Lin Zexu 林則徐, *Sizhou zhi* 四洲志 (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2002), 114–17.

<sup>21</sup> Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity – China, 1900–1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 360.

of the translated text. Only by achieving a smooth translation can one remain true to the source text.<sup>22</sup>

This passage highlights the difference between Chinese and Christian cultures while also reflecting how difficult it was for Chinese people to understand Western texts and to select the right words and phrases to convey them. Yan Fu, the pioneer of translating Western texts into Chinese, met with multiple hardships when using old Chinese words to translate the new foreign phrases.

One can see many examples in works of translation by Chinese translators that illustrate Yan's emphasis on "choosing the word that best fits the meaning" (*ji yi ding ming* 卽義定名). When translating Western names, place names, names of countries, occupations, and ranks of nobility, one must feel one's way through the process, testing and adjusting along the way. Fu Lei 傅雷 (1908–1966) translated the title of Honoré de Balzac's (1799–1850) *Le Cousin Pons* as *Bangsi jiujiu* 邦斯舅舅 (Uncle Pons), while Mu Mutian 穆木天 (1900–1971) translated it as *Congxiong pengsi* 從兄蓬斯 (Cousin Pons). To convey the five hereditary title ranks of the European nobility, Chinese translators used the Zhou dynasty's (1050–221 BCE) five feudal ranks: *gong* 公, *hou* 侯, *bo* 伯, *zi* 子, and *nan* 男.<sup>23</sup> Lin's *Sizhou zhi*, based on Hugh Murray's (1779–1846) *Encyclopaedia of Geography*, transliterates the names of countries in ways that differ from how they are translated today. For example, Egypt is rendered *Yiji* 依揖 instead of *Aiji* 埃及, and Persia *Bashe* 巴社 rather than *Bosi* 波斯. Chapters seven and twenty-seven of *Sizhou zhi* are both called "*Duluji guo* 都魯機國 (the Turkish country)," though they refer separately to the European and Asian parts of the Turkish Ottoman Empire.<sup>24</sup> Because Chinese knowledge of world geography was very limited at the time, *Sizhou zhi* was a work of translation that described the world to Chinese people and broadened their political and geographical knowledge. At the same time, this work also contains vestiges of the bewilderment faced and explorations pursued by Chinese translators as they sought to grasp the concepts and discourses of Western epistemologies.

<sup>22</sup> Yan Fu 嚴復, *Tianyan lun* 天演論 (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2002), 10.

<sup>23</sup> In 1884, Japan put into practice a new peerage system and granted old high-ranking imperial officials, those with an established reputation, and those who had contributed notably to the Meiji reformation the rankings of *gong*, *hou*, *bo*, *zi*, and *nan*. It is unclear whether European aristocrats were first referred to using the same ranks in Chinese translated texts or if this translation practice was borrowed from Japanese translators who had borrowed the ancient Chinese feudal ranks for both European and Japanese nobles.

<sup>24</sup> Lin Zexu, *Sizhou zhi*, 114–17.

### 3 Japanese Terms as a Key Medium through Which Western Discourse Was Introduced into China

Japan's translations played a unique role in facilitating the translation and acceptance of Western knowledge in China. During the Meiji Reformation, Japanese scholars systematically translated Western knowledge into Japanese, which effectively pushed forward modern developments in Japan's educational and industrial sectors. After the Qing government's loss in the First Sino-Japanese War, many members of the Chinese elite sought to learn from Japan's experience of "reformation" and "leaving Asia to join Europe" as a way to save China. Those studying abroad in Japan eagerly studied and consumed Western ideas through Japanese publications. Thus, Japanese became an established means for introducing Western knowledge into China. From the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, China set off on a course of book translation. Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) said that "translating books is truly a most pressing matter of today. Every day, those in China who understand the times talk constantly of reformation.... if we do not engage in the translation of foreign writings with haste, then reformation will become nothing but empty talk."<sup>25</sup> In 1905, the Qing government established a Western-style primary school where the history textbook was actually translated from Japanese educational materials.<sup>26</sup> The first Chinese version of *The Communist Manifesto* was also a 1919 translation from Japanese.<sup>27</sup>

In "Gezai Zhong-Xi zhijian de Riben – xiandai hanyu zhong de riyu 'wai lai yu' wenti" 隔在中西之間的日本 – 現代漢語中的日語 "外來語" 問題, published in the eighth issue of *Shanghai wenxue* 上海文學 in 1998, Wang Binbin 王彬彬 indicates that "of the specialized terminology we currently use in the humanities and social sciences, about 70% comes from Japan."<sup>28</sup> In another recent article, "Hunshen fama: bu jiang 'Riben hanyu' jiu buneng shuohua" 渾身發麻: 不講 "日本漢語" 就不能說話, Pei Yu 裴鈺 states, "During the Late Qing and Early Republican era, Chinese intellectuals also translated many terms

<sup>25</sup> Liang Qichao 梁啟超, "Chunqiu Zhongguo yidi bian xu" 春秋中國夷狄辨序, in *Yin-bingshi heji: Wenji* 飲冰室合集: 文集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 2: 57.

<sup>26</sup> Gu Jiegang 顧頽剛, "Zhongguo benbu 'yi ming jiying feiqi" "中國本部" 一名極應廢棄, *Yishibao* 益世報, January 1, 1939.

<sup>27</sup> At the end of 1919, Chen Wangdao 陳望道 translated the Japanese version of *The Communist Manifesto* into Chinese. Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 and Li Dazhao 李大釗 proofread it. It was published in August of 1920 by the Shanghai Socialist Research Publishing Company.

<sup>28</sup> Wang Binbin 王彬彬, "Gezai Zhong-Xi zhijian de Riben – xiandai hanyu zhong de riyu 'wai lai yu' wenti" 隔在中西之間的日本 – 現代漢語中的日語 "外來語" 問題, *Shanghai wenxue* 上海文學, no. 8 (1998): 71–80.

of the modern Western humanities and natural sciences. What is surprising, however, is that, pitted against the Chinese characters Japanese translators had used in their terms, the ones that Chinese scholars came up with always lost.”<sup>29</sup> One can observe this where the terms Chinese scholars came up with in translations of *Sizhou zhi* and other texts around the time were quickly overtaken by those used in Japanese translated texts. For “sociology,” Yan Fu had come up with “*qunxue* 群學,” however, the Chinese characters from the Japanese term, “*shehui xue* 社會學,” came to be commonly used. Other such instances include the term for economics, rendered *zisheng xue* 資生學 by Chinese scholars and *jingji xue* 經濟學 by Japanese scholars, and philosophy, rendered *zhixue* 智學 by Chinese translators and *zhexue* 哲學 by Japanese translators.<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, Japanese texts and terminology played an influential role in the establishment of modern thought in Chinese society. Following the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), Chinese scholars were in agreement about looking to Japanese texts to learn about Western civilization. In 1897, Liang Qichao and others pooled the capital to start the Datong Translation Bureau (*Datong yishuju* 大同譯書局). Their translated texts would “focus on Japanese, with some attention to Western languages, and prioritize political studies, followed by the arts ... in order to save China from impending crisis.”<sup>31</sup> In 1900, the late Qing scholar Gu Mingfeng 顧鳴鳳 declared that China should look to Japan as a model for self-strengthening because of the difficulty of learning Western languages. “From the time of the (Meiji) Reformation,” he wrote, “all manner of useful texts on Western politics and art had already been translated into Japanese.... Since China and Japan share one writing system, learning Japanese should take half the effort it would for a Chinese person to learn Western languages and character systems.”<sup>32</sup>

At the time Western knowledge and discourse was being translated into Chinese via their Japanese versions, educational reform and the vernacular movement in China were also underway. In the case of educational reform, China was “retiring the imperial examination system to uplift new learning.” The change brought about by Western political, social, and cultural ideas completely shook the foundations of traditional Chinese epistemology and political discourse. The resulting impact this had on Chinese writing style, grammar, punctuation, and conceptual language was historically monumental.

<sup>29</sup> Pei Yu 裴鈺, “Hunshen fama: bu jiang ‘Riben hanyu’ jiu buneng shuohua” 漢身發麻：不講“日本漢語”就不能說話, *Lianhe zaobao* 聯合早報, Feb. 9, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Liang Qichao, “Lun xue Ribenwen zhi yi” 論學日本文之益, in *Yinbingshi heji*, 4: 80.

<sup>31</sup> Liang Qichao, “Chunqiu Zhongguo yidi bian xu,” 2: 58.

<sup>32</sup> Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光, *Zhai zi Zhongguo: Chongjian youguan “Zhongguo” de lishi lunshu* 宅茲中國：重建有關“中國”的歷史論述 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), 186.

#### 4 Confrontation and War Due to Differing Interpretations of the Character *Yi* 夷

Within the traditional worldview of China as the center of “all under heaven,” the *yi-xia* 夷夏 distinction was an important concept that differentiated Chinese peoples from the central plains from those on the frontiers. However, the terms Chinese people used to refer to Westerners changed greatly throughout the course of their interactions. In Lin Zexu’s 1838 “Chouyi yanjin yapiān zhāngchēng zhe” 筵議嚴禁鴉片章程折, he referred to European countries as “foreign countries” (*waiyang* 外洋). Just one year later, in his “Yu geguo yiren chengjiao yantu gao” 諭各國夷人呈繳煙土稿, he referred to them as *yi*. In the *Sizhou zhi*, which Lin took charge compiling from 1839 to 1840, the British are referred to as *man* 蠻.<sup>33</sup> Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794–1857) referred to European countries as “Western *yi*” (*xiyi* 西夷) in his 1842 *Haiguo tuzhi xu* 海國圖志敘, but added that one should not take the traditional attitude of superiority towards these particular *yi*. From this, it is apparent that *yi* was commonly used at the time with regard to Westerners. By 1858, *yi* was no longer used to refer to the British. However, then provincial administrator of Jiangsu Deng Huaxi 鄧華熙 (1826–1916) still used “foreign *yi*” (*waiyi* 外夷) in reference to the Great Powers in an edict to the Guangxu Emperor (r. 1875–1908).

It is precisely because of the gulf between cultural norms and language usage, as well as the resulting mistranslations of words and concepts, that serious diplomatic conflicts, even some leading directly to war, have arisen between China and the West. In August 1834, the English-language newspaper *Chinese Repository* published a translated order from Lu Kun 盧坤 (1772–1835), the governor-general of Guangxi and Guangdong, to the Hong merchants in which the term *yimu* 夷目 (foreign leader) was translated as “barbarian eye,” causing great anger amongst British officials. On September 8, 1834, Lord Napier (1786–1834), British overseer of trade in China, taking personal offense at “barbarian eye,” declared war on the Qing government. Indeed, it could be said that “the first British military action in China was occasioned by neither opium nor trade,” but instead, “Napier’s determination to vindicate the honor of the government of His Britannic Majesty.”<sup>34</sup>

As the use of *yi* was so central to Sino-British conflict, the Treaty of Tianjin signed in 1858 included an Article 51 in Chinese which read, “It is agreed that, henceforward, the character ‘T’ 夷 (barbarian) shall not be applied to

33 Lin Zexu, *Sizhou zhi*, 114.

34 Lydia H. Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 63–65.

the Government or subjects of Her Britannic Majesty in any Chinese official document issued by the Chinese Authorities either in the Capital or in the Provinces.”<sup>35</sup> With the official censoring of *yi*, the character’s use in such words as *yixing* 夷行, referring to foreign trade, and *yiwu* 夷務, referring to foreign affairs, was replaced by *yang* 洋.

As Lydia Liu has pointed out, the legal banning of *yi* by the Treaty of Tianjin was responsible for “forcing the Chinese word to refer its signified ... onto the English word ‘barbarian.’”<sup>36</sup> Additionally, “... *yi/barbarian* articulates a particular vision of sovereignty at the meeting ground of the British and Qing empires.”<sup>37</sup> In discussions on the matter, Chinese officials continually emphasized that *yi* did not have negative connotations, that “Mencius himself said, ‘King Shun was an eastern *yi* and King Wen was a western *yi’*.”<sup>38</sup> Yet, when it came to this word, which has been in use throughout China’s thousands of years of history, it was not the Chinese understanding that mattered for how it was interpreted, but the British understanding. The nineteenth century Sino-British debate over *yi* was an interesting case of how Westerners firmly took hold of power over Chinese language, including the unilateral power to arbitrate on its interpretation.

## 5 Adoption of Terms Such as *Zhongzhu* and *Minzu*

In today’s China, *minzu* 民族 has long become a commonly used key term in everyday life as well as lawmaking and justice systems. However, its current meanings do not stem from traditional Chinese culture or thought but came into China during the late Qing. Its nuances and usages are still widely discussed and the debates around them are deeply informed by modern Chinese history. As such, the terms associated with it are critical to understanding how modern Chinese people have forged a new sense of identity and established a new thread of focus in modern Chinese thought.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 70–71.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 43. This passage appears in the following passage from *The Mencius*: “Shun was born in Zhu Ping, moved to Fu Xia, and died in Ming Tiao. He was a man of the Eastern *yi* lands. King Wen was born in Qi Zhou and died in Bi Ying. He was a man of the Western *yi* lands. The distance between the two lands was over a thousand *li*. The two men lived over a thousand years apart. But when it came to realizing their wishes in the central plains, the two were as one. Both the former and the latter are sages; both stood by the same principles.” See Jiao Xun 焦循, *Mengzi Zhengyi* 孟子正義, annot. Shen Wenzhuo 沈文倬 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 537–40.

### 5.1 “Minzu” in Traditional Chinese Texts

Notable scholar Ya Hanzhang 牙含章 (1916–1989) has written the entry “Minzu” for the *Zhongguo da baike quanshu* 中國大百科全書:

The term *minzu* in Chinese appears rather late period-wise. In ancient texts of China, the word *zu* is often used as is *min* 民, *ren* 人, *zhong* 種, *bu* 部, *lei* 類 as well as *minren* 民人, *minzhong* 民種, *minqun* 民群, *zhongren* 種人, *buren* 部人, *zulei* 族類 and so forth. However, the combination of *min* with *zu* as a single word occurred later. Although there are some scholars who believe that *minzu* was already in use in premodern Chinese society, it is difficult to confirm that it maintained a distinct orientation and stable meaning as a concept from premodern times to the present.<sup>39</sup> It is even harder to connect its meanings to that of our current usage as they originate in different epistemologies. In 1903, Liang Qichao introduced to China the German-Swiss political theorist and law scholar J.K. Bluntschli's ideas about ethnicity and nation. Thus, use of the word spread, and its meanings are often confused with the concept of race or nation. This confusion is inseparable from the influence of the Western European ideas.<sup>40</sup>

### 5.2 Minzu and Zhongzu in 19th Century Chinese Sources

As the Western ideological system gradually made its way across China in the mid-19th century via translated texts, Chinese scholars from the late Qing onward inevitably adopted newly imported terms such as race, nation, religion, sovereignty, and citizen when discussing Chinese history, society, and culture.<sup>41</sup> *Minzu* and its associated concepts was used not only to describe different groups of people residing in China from the late Qing to Republican (1912–1949) period; it, along with the other new terms, was also used to interpret and describe Chinese society of earlier periods.

39 “With careful research into various examples of *minzu*'s usage in premodern China, it is not hard to realize that its meaning is not clear, seeming to encompass many definitions, and is largely used to express '*minzhi zushu* 民之族属 [people's clan affiliation]' or '*minzhi zulei* 民之族类 [people's clan]'. Its meaning is very similar to *zulei*.” See Huang Xingtao, *Chongsu Zhonghua: jindai Zhongguo “Zhonghua minzu” guannian yanjiu*, 70.

40 Ya Hanzhang 牙含章, ed., “Minzu juan” 民族卷, in *Zhongguo da baike quanshu* 中國大百科全書 (Beijing: Zhongguo da baike chubanshe, 1986), 302.

41 Liang Qichao emphasized in particular the difference between traditional and modern notions of state (*guojia* 國家): “The state refers to the nation as the private property of a group. The premodern idea of the state necessarily began with the family ... and referred to the nation as the public property of its citizens.” Liang Qichao, “Datong yishu ju xuli” 大同譯書局敘例, in *Yinbingshi heji*, 2: 56.

According to scholarly research, the first use in Chinese of *minzu* in its modern sense appeared in Prussian missionary Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff's (1803–1851) *Jiushizhu Yesu Jidu xinglun zhi yaolue zhuan* 救世主耶穌基督行論之要略傳: "Preach to the multiple *minzu* both Chinese and foreign to repent one's sins and lay oneself open to the teachings of our savior Jesus Christ."<sup>42</sup> The fact that a European person used the Chinese *minzu* to translate "nation" undoubtedly influenced Chinese scholars. Westerners invented the concept of "race" and introduced it to China. It was a Westerner who, in 1892, translated into Chinese and published an essay which includes in-depth discussion on how to use skin color to racially differentiate humans.<sup>43</sup> The Dutch scholar Frank Dikötter has noted that the introduction of literary Darwinism to China in the nineteenth century by Yan Fu led to an abandonment of the traditional Chinese focus on culture as the most important standard by which groups of people were differentiated and its replacement by race.<sup>44</sup> This was a major shift from how group and political identity traditionally operated in China.

The shifts in framework occurring within the Chinese academic world can further be observed through shifts in Liang Qichao's language usage as one of the most influential thinkers of the Late Qing to Republican periods. From 1896 to 1901, undoubtedly influenced by Yan Fu, Liang used *zhongzu* in reference to groups of people. In 1896, he discussed "racial conflict" (*zhongzu zhi zheng* 種族之爭) in "Bianfa tongyi" 變法通議, arguing that "reforming China must necessarily start with equality between Manchu and Han races."<sup>45</sup> In 1897, he mentioned in "Chunqiu Zhongguo yidi bian xu" 春秋中國夷狄辨序 that "when later generations say 'yi' and 'di,' they are referring to their districts as well as race."<sup>46</sup> In 1899, he argued in "Lun Zhongguo yu Ouzhou guoti yitong" 論中國與歐洲國體異同 that "the Xirong, Lairong, Luhunrong, Qiangrong, Huaiyi, Chidi, Baidi, Changdi and other races all live among one another in the hinterlands."<sup>47</sup> When referring to different groups who have appeared in Chinese history, Liang uses the term "race" (*zhongzu*).

<sup>42</sup> Huang Xingtao, *Chongsu Zhonghua: jindai Zhongguo "Zhonghua minzu" guannian yanjiu*, 72.

<sup>43</sup> See "Ren wu fen lei shuo" 人五分類說 in *Gezhi huibian* 格致彙編 7.2 (1892) cited in Frank Dikötter 馮克, *Jindai Zhongguo zhi zhongzu guannian* 近代中國之種族觀念 (*The Discourse of Race in Modern China*), trans. Yang Lihua 楊立華 (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 1999), 52.

<sup>44</sup> Dikötter, *Jindai Zhongguo zhi zhongzu guannian*, 63.

<sup>45</sup> Liang Qichao, "Bianfa tongyi, lunyi shu" 變法通議・論譯書, in *Yinbingshi heji*, 1: 77.

<sup>46</sup> Liang Qichao, "Chunqiu Zhongguo yidi bian xu," 2: 48.

<sup>47</sup> Liang Qichao, "Lun Zhongguo yu Ouzhou guoti yitong" 論中國與歐洲國體異同, in *Yinbingshi heji*, 4: 64.

### 5.3 Minzu as Race and also as Nation

Wang Ke argues that “of essays about nationalism written by Chinese thinkers at the start of the twentieth century, nearly all were without exception derived from Japan.” He believes that the idea of *minzu* received by late Qing Chinese was “a misunderstanding that came from Japan.”<sup>48</sup> In Japan, Wang says, the English word “nation” was first translated into Japanese with the Chinese characters 國民 (*guomin/kokumin*). Further, “prior to the Meiji, the concept the Japanese now commonly express using the characters 民族 (*minzu/minzoku*) did not yet exist.”<sup>49</sup> In 1888, the geographer Shiga Shigetaka 志賀重昂 (1863–1927), in introductory remarks for the magazine *Nihonjin* 日本人, makes mention of the “Yamato race” (*Yamato minzoku* 大和民族). Wang writes, “the fact that *minzu* would emerge and become widely used in as racially homogenous a country as Japan is because it strengthens the idea of ‘one race as one nation’ for Japanese people.”<sup>50</sup> In other words, as a new group identity formation, the emergence of the “Yamato race” discursively establishes a theoretical foundation for a modern Japanese state based on ethnicity. In 1896, the word *minzu* appeared in an article published in the Chinese newspaper *Shiwu bao*’s 時務報 “Dongfang baoyi” 東方報譯 section, dedicated to translating content from Japanese newspapers. Chinese intellectuals immediately took notice, due largely to the fact that, following the First Sino-Japanese War, members of the Chinese elite of various ethnic backgrounds had been studiously learning from Japan lessons on national strengthening.

In 1898, Liang Qichao traveled to Japan and began engaging with Japanese texts. That year, he wrote, “It is my hope that, from now on, the Chinese nation (*minzu*) may once again come into the light and exist in the world freely and independently.”<sup>51</sup> At the time, he used *minzu* to refer to the many different groups residing within China. In 1901, Liang discussed in his work *Zhongguo shi xulun* 中國史敘論 the first instances where different groups in China used the word *minzu* across Chinese history. He also pointed out the extremely complex changes experienced by these groups who split up and rejoined as they continued into the present. He felt that using current names of ethnic groups to describe related ethnic groups he had found mentioned in the textual sources would be too simplistic. In the same essay, he also brings attention to

<sup>48</sup> Wang Ke 王柯, *Minzu zhuyi yu jindai Zhongri guanxi* 民族主義與近代中日關係 (Hong Kong: Xianggang Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 2015), 45 and 54.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 60–61.

<sup>51</sup> Jin Guantao 金觀濤 and Liu Qingfeng 劉青峰, *Guannian shi yanjiu: Zhongguo xiandai zhongyao zhengzhi shuyu de xingcheng* 觀念史研究：中國現代重要政治術語的形成 (Beijing: Falü chubanshe, 2009), 242.

a valence of *minzu* that is close to *guozu* 國族 (nation): “The final years of the Qianlong reign saw the most intense period of widespread conflict between Chinese *minzu* and other Asian *minzu*, as well as China and Asia.” He goes on to say, “The Asia of today is in a period where imperialism is being replaced by nationalism (*minzu zhuyi* 民族主義).”<sup>52</sup> Here, Liang uses *minzu* to mean both “nation” and to refer to the various races and ethnicities that make up China. In 1902, Liang manifestly introduces the term *Zhonghua minzu* 中華民族 (Sinitic/Chinese nation) in his work, *Lun Zhongguo xueshu sixiang bianqian zhi dashi* 論中國學術思想變遷之大勢.<sup>53</sup> In the same year, he writes in “Xin shi xue” 新史學 of the need for China to “unify the nation in order to exclude other nations.”<sup>54</sup> These examples begin to shed light on the relationship between *minzu* and the concept of nation.

#### 5.4 Constructing “China”: Does Guozu Include All Chinese People or Refer Only to the Ethnic Han?

Under the influence of foreign discourse, ethnic groups such as the Manchus, Han, Mongols, Hui, and Tibetans came to be known as *minzu*. As this was the case, Liang Qichao attempted to put forth two frameworks for group identification in order to better distinguish *minzu* from *guozu*. In his 1903 essay, “Zhengzhixue dajia Bolun zhili zhi xueshuo” 政治學大家伯倫知理之學說, he writes, “when speaking of *minzu* in China, we must encourage big nationalism over small nationalism. Small nationalism refers to the ethnic Han and other peoples in China whereas big nationalism unites the multiple ethnicities in China against foreign races.”<sup>55</sup> Here, “big nationalism” refers to *guozu* as including all Chinese peoples, whereas “small nationalism” maintains the by then popularized practice of referring to different groups within China as *minzu*. Liang emphasizes the importance of the former due to the dire circumstances of the times.

In his 1903 personal account *Gemingjun* 革命軍, Zou Rong 邹容 (1885–1905) referred to “the two hundred and sixty years after the royal Han (*Huanghan*

52 Liang Qichao, “Zhongguo shi xulun” 中國史敘論, in *Yinbingshi heji*, 4: 6, 11, and 19.

53 “齊, 海國也。上古時代, 我中華民族之有海思想者厥惟齊。” Liang Qichao, “Lun Zhongguo xueshu sixiang bianqian zhi dashi” 論中國學術思想變遷之大勢, in *Yinbingshi heji*, 7: 21. Shen Songqiao 沈松橋 renders “nation,” “nationalism,” and “nation-state” as “國族,” “國族主義,” and “國族-國家,” respectively. See “Wo yi wo xie jian Xuanyuan – Huangdi shenhua yu wan Qing de guozu jiangou” 我以我血薦軒轅 – 皇帝神話與晚清的國族建構, *Taiwan shehui yanjiu jikan* 台灣社會研究季刊 28 (1997): 1–77.

54 Liang Qichao, “Xin shi xue” 新史學, in *Yinbingshi heji*, 9: 11.

55 Liang Qichao, “Zhengzhixue dajia Bolunzhili zhi xueshuo” 政治學大家伯倫知理之學說, in *Yinbingshi heji*, 13: 75–76.

*minzu* 皇漢民族) lost their country," including himself as one of the "royal Han." He connected the ethnic Han with the Ming dynasty and considered the Yellow Emperor as an ancestor. At the same time, he grouped Mongol (as well as Manchu) people as a "Siberian race" rather than a Chinese race and suggested "eliminating those over five million peoples who wear animal furs on their bodies and horns on their heads."<sup>56</sup> In his preface to Zou's work, Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1868–1936) wrote that "driving away those foreign peoples would restore our lands to the glorious times of old. Since the China of today has already fallen to foreign invaders, what we should strive for is not revolution, but the restoration of what was."<sup>57</sup> In his 1903 work "Jingshi zhong" 警世鐘, Chen Tianhua 陳天華 (1875–1905) used the terms "Han race," "Han people," and "ethnic Han" interchangeably.<sup>58</sup> This reflects the fact that, although the foreign-derived concepts of "race" and "nation" were beginning to gain traction at the time, people's understandings of these terms were hardly consistent or uniform. Zou Rong, Chen Tianhua, and Zhang Taiyan, for instance, produced intensely narrow-minded Han nationalist discourse based on these concepts.

In 1905, Sun Yat-sen 孫中山 (1866–1925) discussed nationalism, civil rights, and citizens' welfare in the introductory remarks of the *Minbao* 民報.<sup>59</sup> In 1906, in "Zhongguo Tongmenghui geming fanglüe" 中國同盟會革命方略, he juxtaposed nationalism conceptualized as "for the nation (*minzu*)" versus "for the people (*guomin*)," highlighting the importance of "treating a country's people as the basis of nationalist movement" – hence, the concept of *guozu*.<sup>60</sup> Under the post-Xinhai Revolution order, Sun officially cast aside the provincial Han nationalist position of "driving away Dalu peoples in order to restore China," instead adopting the nation-building ideal of "uniting the five races" especially championed in northern China. In January of 1912, in "Linshi Dazongtong xuan yanshu" 臨時大總統宣言書 he clarified that "combining the Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui, and Tibetan lands as one country and bringing together the Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui, and Tibetan races as one people is what is meant by national unification."<sup>61</sup> For Sun, the *minzu* in *Zhonghua minzu* refers to but

56 Zou Rong 邹容, *Gemingjun* 革命軍 (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2002), 5, 7, 37, and 42.

57 Ibid., 1–4.

58 Chen Tianhua 陳天華, *Jingshi zhong*, *Meng huitou* 警世鐘 • 猛回頭 (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2002).

59 Sun Zhongshan 孫中山 [Sun Yat-sen], "Mingbao fakan ci" 《民報》發刊詞, in *Sun Zhongshan quanji* 孫中山全集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), 1: 288.

60 Sun Zhongshan, "Zhongguo tongmenghui geming fanglüe" 中國同盟會革命方略, in *Sun Zhongshan quanji*, 1: 311.

61 Sun Zhongshan, "Zai Nanjing Tongmenghui huiyuan jianbiehui de yanjiang" 在南京同盟會會員錢別會的演講, in *Sun Zhongshan quanji*, 2: 2.

one unit that comprises the *minzu guojia* 民族國家, or “nation state.” In 1923, Sun stated in the “Zhongguo guomindang xuanyan” 中國國民黨宣言 and “Zhongguo guomindang danggang” 中國國民黨黨綱 that “(we should) unite the various ethnic groups in the country to achieve a great Chinese nation.”<sup>62</sup> During the first of the new “Sanmin zhuyi” 三民主義 talks a year later, he asked, “What is nationalism? Based on the various scenarios in the history of Chinese society ... nationalism is *guozu zhuyi*.”<sup>63</sup> Additionally, “everyone joins together to form a great national group.”<sup>64</sup> Sun’s words all speak to the nationalism he sought, one which inherently casts the inclusion of all Chinese peoples as the change that will lead to a “great Chinese nation.”

### 5.5 Applications of Concepts of Minzu to the Studies of Chinese History

As *minzu* had by the late Qing entered discourses on relationships between different groups in China as well as been used to refer to those different groups, it was inevitable that the modern term would make it into the vocabulary of scholars who were, at the time, researching inter-ethnic relationships in Chinese history. Here, also, it is possible to observe in the diction of such scholars the indelible mark of Japanese influence.

In his 1928 publication, *Zhongguo minzu shi* 中國民族史, Wang Tonglin 王桐齡 (1878–1953) indicates, “Based on historical observations of events, there was only one *minzu* in the Far East. Historical sources refer to that race as the Eastern *yi*.”<sup>65</sup> Wang’s book is one of the first published works on the history of race and ethnicity in China. Applying concepts of *minzu* to describe the peoples of ancient China probably reflects his experience as an overseas student in Japan.

Many subsequent works sharing the title of Wang’s books followed in his application of *minzu*. One example is Lü Simian’s 呂思勉 (1884–1957) 1934 book which contains a passage on the characteristics of the ethnic Han: “As for the Han ... the more *minzu* are absorbed into their population, the vaster the nation’s lands shall be.”<sup>66</sup> Lin Huixiang 林惠祥 (1901–1958) writes in another eponymous book of 1936, “The history of *minzu* in China is a narrative of the changes undergone by China’s multiple *minzu* from past to present.

<sup>62</sup> Sun Zhongshan, “Zhongguo guomindang xuanyan” 中國國民黨宣言, in *Sun Zhongshan quanji*, 7: 3.

<sup>63</sup> Sun Zhongshan, “Sanmin zhuyi” 三民主義, in *Sun Zhongshan quanji*, 9: 184–85.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>65</sup> Wang Tonglin 王桐齡, *Zhongguo minzu shi* 中國民族史 (Changchun: Jilin chuban jituan, 2010), 9.

<sup>66</sup> Lü Simian 呂思勉, *Zhongguo minzu shi* 中國民族史 (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 1996), 3.

More specifically, it is a discussion of the origins of each, the evolution of their nomenclature, distinctions between their subgroups, their rises to and falls from power, cultural shifts, and issues concerning their interactions and intermingling.<sup>67</sup> Thus, *minzu* came to be adopted and widely used to describe different peoples throughout Chinese history.

## 6 Concluding Remarks

Looking back at China's interactions with Western powers around the time of the Opium Wars, it is evident that Western colonizers employed a double standard in their dealings with China. In the eyes of Europeans, the difference between "civilized" and "barbaric" people was a matter of racial essentialism. This is why the Great Powers of Europe applied a different moral and legal standard in diplomacy with one another versus when engaging the nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Without understanding this point, it is very possible to accept the universal value of Western concepts and discourse.

The Opium Wars represented a turning point in Chinese history. The arrival of Western political concepts and language overturned the Chinese cultural order and group dynamics that had traditionally been based on the ideas of a Chinese empire encompassing "all under heaven" and the "Sino-Barbarian dichotomy." In the new context of Western dominance, the Chinese people had little choice but to try to learn, understand, and adopt the foreign lexicon while also struggling to find ways to preserve the nation and its people despite the humiliating conditions.

Having now arrived at the international stage of the twenty-first century, broadly maintaining relations with many other nations is of utmost importance. While doing so, it is also important to communicate using language and concepts that are understandable and acceptable to others. The Western concepts and discourses that entered China during the modern period and which have since been adopted as part of the Chinese lexicon are now a necessary tool for building such relationships. However, it is precisely for this reason that researchers must remain cautious on two counts.

Firstly, many foreign concepts contain meanings which are incompatible with traditional Chinese worldviews; thus, we cannot unilaterally apply Western concepts to the understanding of ancient China, even less so to

67 Lin Huixiang 林惠祥, *Zhongguo minzu shi* 中國民族史 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1998), 2.

reductive interpretations of China today. To do so would be to risk the procrustean error of “maiming one’s feet to fit too-small shoes.” Thus, when discussing group dynamics in ancient China, we would do well to avoid using such modern Western conceptual terms as “nation” and “ethnic group.” Terms such as *chao* 朝 (dynasty) and *guo* 國 (state) have their own nuances and characteristics within the context of Chinese history. They are not interchangeable or discursively compatible with words used elsewhere in the world such as “empire,” “kingdom,” or, more recently, “nation-state.”

Secondly, we must carefully untangle the exact route by which these core concepts came into China and analyze the cultural background informing the different ways Chinese people understood these concepts in different time periods. After building concrete scenarios of how these foreign concepts were used in Chinese society during and after the Opium Wars, we must give them clear definitions. Since it is possible that Chinese people’s understandings of these concepts were partially different from their original definitions, it is necessary to add attributive or conditional words and explanations. Research in the fields of conceptual history and sociology of knowledge are essential to Chinese-foreign intellectual and cultural exchange. What we are facing are two completely different paths of historical development, two sets of fundamental concepts and language systems that arose from different political, economic, and cultural environments. Only with a strong foundation in conceptual historical studies can one open up mutual dialogue rooted in the essence of things and, gradually, actualize deep understanding between the two sides.

We must systematically work through all the Western political and cultural ideas accepted into China over the past two hundred years, acknowledge the gap between the two sides when engaged in comparative analysis of traditional China, seek out possible points of similarity, and analyze the reasons for the differences. Only by doing so can we truly recognize, through comparison, the Western world and, in turn, gain a deeper understanding of China and Chinese society. In terms of participating in international politics and cultural exchanges, Chinese people strive towards deep awareness of world civilizations, including those of the West. We should also try to understand more deeply the political and cultural traditions of the many peoples in China. From there, it may be possible to gain political and cultural self-awareness.

When the alternative to learning from Western countries is to perish as a nation, there is no choice but to do so. Only after grasping the rules of the West’s games – even drawing on knowledge passed down from Chinese ancestors to exhibit skill on an international stage – can the Chinese people start to take the initiative and begin to restore China’s cultural confidence. In order

to do so, they must position themselves firmly in the present world stage and, from its highest institutions of knowledge, learn to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of all the civilizations of humanity, including Western, Islamic, Indian civilizations as well as the Sinitic civilization. At the same time, they must master the ability to communicate cross-culturally and develop skills to facilitate harmonious interaction between different cultural groups, perhaps even merging them. To this end, the wisdom their ancestors maintained across thousands of years of Chinese civilization is an incomparable resource.

*Translated by Casey Lee*

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