

Discourses of “Imperialism” in the Late Qing Dynasty

Hanhao WANG

Xue-heng Institute for Advanced Studies & School of Government

Nanjing University

163 Xianlin Avenue, Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, China

wanghanhaonju@163.com

Abstract. Imperialism, the key concept of modern politics and society, entered China via Japan in the late Qing Dynasty. This concept had been endowed with rich connotations before Lenin’s assertion that imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism gained a dominant position in China. Liang Qichao influenced by the Waseda University of Politics, regarded “imperialism” as the result of “nationalism”. He advocated the cultivation of nationals to cope with international competition. At the same time, Kotoku Shusui being influenced by the European and American socialist thoughts, regarded “imperialism” as the product of the politicians and capitalists’ seeking profit from the centralization of power. Mencius, a classic Confucian text, became the native resource for absorbing this proposition, attention to the universalist thought which is constructed by Confucian moral theory such as compassion. But for other East Asian countries such as China and Korea, the claim had received little response.

Keywords. Imperialism, National imperialism, Kotoku Shusui, the kingly way

I. INTRODUCTION

It is known to all that imperialism played a vital role in modern Chinese history. On the one hand, from the perspective of historical experiences, the resistance of Chinese people against Western and Japanese imperialism could be regarded as a major dynamic force underlying the modernization of China. In a similar vein, Li Dazhao (1889-1927), one of the early leaders of the CCP, institutionalized the historical accounts of imperialism that infused later generations in his *Chronology of Great Events as Related to the Imperialist Invasion in the Orient: From the Discovery of the Route to India to the Signature of the Peace Protocol of 1901* as early as the 1920s. According to him, as China sank into a semi-colonial state due to imperialist invasions, Chinese intellectuals presented various proposals for the sake of national salvation and it was demonstrated by world history that only the communist party could save China. On the other hand, since

the publication of *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism: a popular outline* in 1917, Lenin’s (1870-1924) critique of imperialism had been widely embraced across the world with the continuing expansion of the Comintern. In May, 1924, not long after the formation of the First Kuomintang-Communist Alliance, the first six chapters of this book were translated and published in *Enlightenment*, the supplement of KMT’s official organ *The Republican Daily News*, and the first Chinese translation of the complete work came out in 1929. Lenin’s idea that “imperialism” derived from monopoly capitalism in its dying state constituted a theoretical basis on which Chinese communists anticipated the future world revolution. Therefore, resisting imperialism became a major task of Chinese communist revolution, and those who impeded its fulfillment would be labeled as “imperialists,” such as the Soviet Union in the Khrushchev (1894-1971) era, a representative of the so-called “socialist imperialism.”

As China started its economic reform in 1978, “imperialism” no longer occupied the center of political discourses against the backdrop of “farewell to the revolution,” which, however, served as a starting point of political resistance after being repeatedly revised by political economists in the West. With the unfolding of globalization, the increasing centralization of political and economic power, and the diminishment of developmental opportunities for third-world countries, imperialism remains “a word of tremendous narrative value and explanatory power.” (Komori, 2005: 18) This complicated situation eradicated “imperialism” from the purview of academic thinking and fixed it to the trite revolutionary discourse as a self-evident a priori notion. As a result, its historical implications are scarcely discussed, a phenomenon that hardly helps to clarify the relationship between imperialism and modern China.¹

I focus on imperialism in this paper not only out of my dissatisfaction with the situation, but also due to the long-existing attention I have paid to the pre-modern factors in China’s “modernization” process. As Joseph R. Levenson put it, confronted with the continuous aggression of Western powers in the late Qing dynasty, the Chinese gentry class began to realize that such Confucian ideas as tributary system, Sino-barbarian dichotomy, and the mandate of heaven were all “abandoned by history” (Levenson, 2009: 35) and failed to fit into the modern world. In their new mindset about the world, imperialism was not merely a translated foreign word, but referred to a global system with nation states as its constituents and power

competition as its dynamics. At the same time, the thoughts proposed by ancient Chinese philosophers in the Warring States Period were also revived with Confucianism, the predominant school of thought of pre-modern China, still functioning as the universal discourse of the intelligentsia rather than “something outdated” and one of the starting points of the critique of imperialism based on ethical codes in the East Asian cultural sphere.

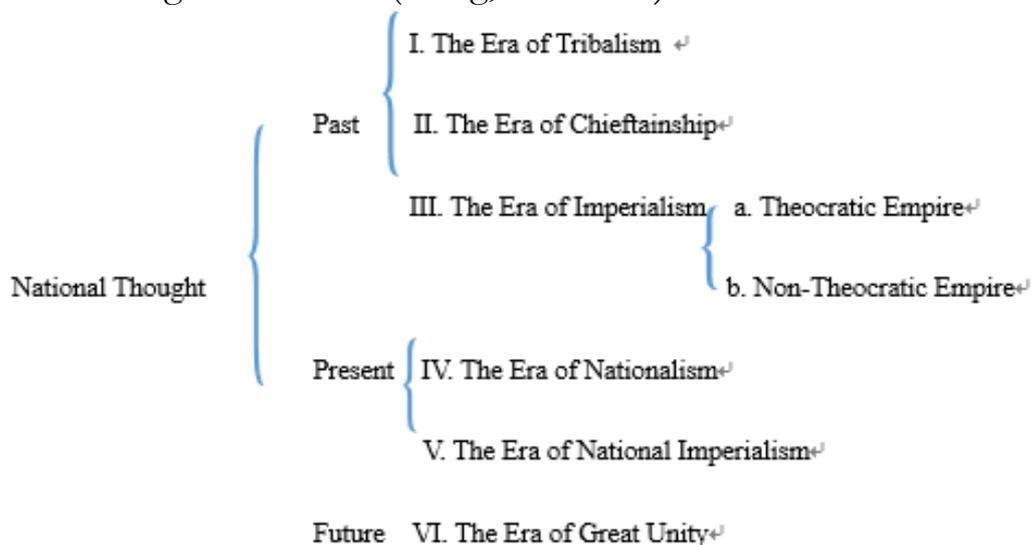
Since China at that time had not yet become a real nation state, as we examine the discourse of imperialism prevailing in the late Qing period, it is necessary to take Japan into consideration as an object of reference that was also exposed to the influence of Confucianism. In other words, the newly-emergent intellectual trends of late-Qing China were inspired by the experience of Japan, a previous member of the East Asian cultural sphere of Confucianism and Chinese characters. To be more specific, for one thing, the implication and origin of the concept of “national imperialism” proposed by Liang Qichao (1873-1929) constitute a major focus of this paper. For another thing, centering on the Japanese revolutionary Kōtoku Shūsui’s (1871-1911) earliest anti-imperialist work, namely *Imperialism: A Monster of the 20th Century*, my paper also investigates the formation of his critique of imperialism by virtue of Confucianist and socialist discourses and its influence on such anarchists as Liu Shipai (1884-1919). Moreover, the significance of imperialism for the nation-building of modern China is revealed at the end of my discussion.

II. IMPERIALISM, THE HIGHEST STAGE OF NATIONALISM

Given the fact that China’s understanding of the world was initially acquired through warfare, the issue that occupied the center of the Chinese intellectual world was how to achieve military success. The most direct approach turned out to be introducing modern weaponry and tactics, which then extended to reforms in industry, education, and other social domains. The second possible choice, among other things, was mass mobilization. In his “Similarities and Differences of the Intellectual Changes of the State,” an article published in *The China Discussion* in 1901, Liang Qichao for the first time in Chinese history adopted the notion of “national imperialism” to indicate Western powers that dragged China into an unprecedented crisis, and on this basis gradually formulated his nationalist proposals with “enlightening the people” as its specific

purpose.²

In the text, Liang explicitly demanded to transform the mindset of the Chinese people for the sake of social reforms, outlining the evolution of national thought as follows (Liang, 1977c: 30):



China was situated at the stage of non-theocratic empire, whereas Western countries were characterized by national imperialism. Though both sides featured the so-called “imperialism,” they differed from each other in terms of nationalist agendas. As far as Liang was concerned, with European countries successively turning into nation states according to the mainstream ideology of nationalism at the turn of the 19th century, a political balance was formed within Europe, which generated a new trend of imperialism under the influence of the “power faction” represented by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). Shifting focus from the people to the state, this new imperialism enabled Western countries to expand their power and benefit their nations by mobilizing the entire society. In face of this global trend, China, as Liang pointed out, should neither adhere to the old tradition of absolute monarchy, nor imitate the example of statism adopted by Western powers. The only way out for China was to follow the sequence of the development of national thought and take nationalism as its top priority.

In fact, Liang’s argument mainly drew on two theoretical resources: one was the Swiss scholar Bluntchli’s (1808-1881) doctrine of state sovereignty, and the other was the idea of “national imperialism” formulated by Paul Samuel Reinsch from the United States.³ As for the former, the major supporting text consisted of the Chinese translation of the fourth chapter of Bluntchli’s *The Theory of the State*, namely “The Origin of State Building.”

Serialized in *The China Discussion*, this article claimed that ancient states were established according to God's will, but then evolved into mere "powers" with the founding of religious and political autocracy in the medieval times, which led to a continuum of tyrannies and social rebellions; when it came to the end of the 17th century, the notion of "social contract" presented by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) prevailed among the intellectual elites of the Age of Enlightenment, but soon faced fierce opposition from the German scholars who ascribed the formation of the state to people's unanimous effort and advocated for a reconciliation between the "power" and the "contract" modes. As Bastid insightfully put it, these two concepts were quoted from Azuma Heiji's (1853-1925) *The Study of the State* and Hirata Tōsuke (1849-1925) and Hiratsuka Sadajirō's *The Theory of the State*, an abridged translation of the German version of *Deutsche Staatslehre für Gebildete*.⁴

As for national imperialism, what Liang relied upon was *World Politics: At the End of the Nineteenth Century, as Influenced by the Oriental Situation* by Paul Samuel Reinsch, the U.S. ambassador to China in the early republican period. Learning from the great historian Frederick Turner (1861-1932) as a Ph.D. student in his early years, Reinsch was profoundly influenced by Turner's frontier thesis in forming his understanding of the Far East. In his world-famous masterpiece *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, Turner viewed American history as a process of territorial expansion, which strongly informed Reinsch's *World Politics*, a book published in 1900 that for the first time forged the concept of national imperialism and demonstrated that nationalism developed into national imperialism due to its aggressive nature as well as the stimulating effect of commercial expansion, population growth, intellectual and academic progress and such emotional factors as patriotic belief. He also drew a clear distinction between the old-styled imperialism and the new one as "Roman imperialism tended to put all civilized people under the governance of a world empire; on the contrary, modern national imperialism recognized the co-existence of national states." (Reinsch, 1897: 12)

It is well known that when Liang Qichao fled to Japan after the Hundred Days' Reform, he accepted assistance from Ōkuma Shigenobu (1838-1922), Japan's prime minister of that time and the founder of Tokyo Senmon Gakkō (present-day Waseda University). In Japan, Liang worked hard to read Japanese books and composed *Learning Japanese through Chinese*,

encouraging his compatriots to use Japanese to approach Western politics and economics. (Liang, 2006b: 579-580) Knowledge about these two disciplines was first introduced by Takata Sanae (1860-1938), the father of the study of political science at Waseda University and an ardent supporter of constitutional imperialism, who taught “statecraft” since 1896 and published his lecture notes under the title of *Principles of Statecraft* in 1903. Not unlike Bluntchli’s *The Theory of the State* in terms of content, this book dedicated an entire chapter to the discussion of “nationalism and imperialism” and defined “national imperialism” as “Machiavellianism,” namely the employment of cunning and duplicity for the sake of national prosperity (Takata, 1905: 35).⁵

Not long after its publication of “Similarities and Differences of the Intellectual Changes of the State,” *The China Discussion* began to serialize *Imperialism* by Self-Awakening Lay Buddhist. Originally published in Japan’s *Civil News* (Tokyo), this essay took the lead in China to explain the concept of “imperialism” in detail, which celebrated “imperialism” as an inevitable outcome of human competition and a positive act driven by a strong desire of nation states for commercial expansion and population growth. Unlike things in ancient times when powers were at war, it places more emphasis strengthening the masses. For this reason, if Japan wants to prosper, the only way is to follow the trend and abandon its old consciousness of smaller powers. This article was later rewritten by Liang with the title of “On the General Trend of National Competitions” (Lun Min Zu Jing Zheng Zhi Da Shi) posted on *New Citizen* (*Xin Min Cong Bao*) (Tokyo). It basically kept the original political nationalism-centred objective and gave particular emphasis to economic competition, suggesting that although it was ever-important, we should not take the forest for the trees—“no nation could achieve economic prosperity without political independence.”

To sum up, what lies behind Liang’s “national imperialism” are two premises. First, the nationalism defined by state rather than race through making a distinction between struggle from the monarch and that of the mass of people. Second, to acknowledge rivalry with the state as the unit of such contention, i.e., the law of the jungle. Thereupon, Liang proposed “New Democracy” to realize nationalism. By New Democracy, it means to build a public morality for the sake of “mass people” so as to enhance the national thought and political ability of the Chinese people, and to form consciousness regarding enterprise, rights, obligations, freedom,

progress, self-respect, affiliation, profit-seeking, perseverance, and martial spirit. It is noteworthy that as to the Confucian ethics, Liang maintained that it was no longer relevant in times of competition and struggle because only warriors can ensure peace while the empty ethics can merely invite humiliation. (Liang, 2016e: 186, 192) In this context, “militarism” proposed by Cai E (1882-1916) and “the gold-iron theory” by Yang Du (1875-1931) who was a politician studying in Japan emerged successively. The former attempted to cast a “national soul” through military training while the latter insisted that China’s reform should rely on economic militarism for surviving in a world where countries may be cultivated internally, but barbaric externally. What Yang referred to, in other words, is to expand civil rights through commerce and strengthen national power through military might, which fundamentally requires the advent of constitutional monarchy. During the same period, Da Shou (1870-1939), a minister sent to Japan for investigation, also pointed out that “constitutionalism” is the means to build “competitiveness of fighting, wealth and culture” for the Chinese people, thus eventually realizing the goal of “imperialism”.

Nevertheless, Liang stopped his discussions on “national imperialism” when he visited the United States for investigation in 1903. On the one hand, the trip exposed weakness and influence-peddling of Chinese people living there when they engaged in such democratic activities as policy-making and elections, making Liang no longer hopeful about democracy being implemented in China. On the other, Liang began to doubt his belief on the origin of “imperialism”. After his return to Japan, Liang serialized his “Trust, the Demon of the 20th Century” (Er Shi Shi Ji Zhi Ju Ling Tuo La Si) on *Xin Min Cong Bao (New Citizen) (Tokyo)* and put Trust as imperialism of the world. In his opinion, the root cause of the popularity of imperialism in the United States lay in the over-expansion of capital triggered by Trust. And such expansion, as Liang claimed, would by no means end in Cuba, the Philippines or Hawaii. If we fail to combat it with unified strength, China may suffer most because the trend of expansion overwhelms that of military aggression of imperialism. Subsequently, Liang turned his revolutionary aspiration to constitutionalism, going so far as to assist Qing officials to draw up a report of inspection.

It is not hard to discover that Liang has an absolute bottom-line of “nation as the priority” in his narration. Therefore, this paper doubts the

research emphasis on Liang’s democratic thoughts made by previous scholars. Before his visit to Japan, he was mainly under the influence of *The theory of three ages and the Great Harmony* developed by his mentor Kang Youwei. He concluded it as three ages and six types of administration, including the Age of Turbulence (tyrannical system), the Age of Enhanced Peace (monarchic system) and the Age of Great Peace (democratic system). These three ages were also split into two parts: one was the dominance by local chieftains or feudalism, another was the dominance by aristocrat, dominance by the monarch, dominance by the monarch and the people, dominance by the president, and dominance without a government. From the perspective of nation-building, China was then at the transitional period from dominance by the monarch to the dominance by the monarch and the people, while western powers were basically under civil administration. Yet the world as a whole was still administrated by multiple sovereigns, leaving respective countries serving their own interests. For one thing, Liang advised Emperor Guangxu to encourage the free airing of views by proposing dominance by the monarch and the people; for another, he also set ‘Datong’ as an objective different from democracy to realize the unification of all nations free from rule by any president. When Liang went back to Japan, he abandoned this subject and took ‘state’ as a major topic to discuss, eventually following a path that diverged from Kang’s ultimate ideal of a constitutional monarchy. As a person who likes to make a struggle between ‘me today’ and ‘me yesterday’, Liang changed his thesis before and after his visit to America. Although it shows that his understanding toward ‘imperialism’ has turned from a political aspect to the economic one, the logic of competitiveness behind it never changed, because be it a democracy theory or constitutional monarch, the fundamental goal is to prevail in the international competition.

III. THE ANTI-IMPERIALISM IN CONFUCIAN SOCIALISM

While Liang emphasized the national identity on the basis of competitiveness of imperialism, Liu Shipai attempted to criticize imperialism by diminishing the competitiveness caused by national differences. In August 1907, Liu made a comment about ‘imperialism’ on his *Perspectives of Anarchism on Equality* (*Wu Zheng Fu Zhu Yi Zhi Ping Deng Guan*) posted on *Tian Yi* (*Natural Justice*) (Tokyo):

Since modern times, Western countries robbed military and financial resources from others and sought hegemony in the world in the name of imperialism.....such practice was embellished by two excuses: one for strengthening power, another for patriotism.....what they seek are only self-centred goals, and they treat foreigners not as equals to their compatriots. This is the reason why they pursue hegemony. (Liu, 2016: 104, 106)

Liu's criticism on military and economic expansion rooted from "imperialism" proceeded from "hegemony" and "patriotism". By quoting a statement of "a child falling into a well", he claimed that human beings are born good, which is called as "Ren" (benevolence) by Confucianism, "philanthropism" by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and "neighborliness" by Kropotkin (1842-1921). It aimed to realize human equality by evoking people's conscience in unification so as to eliminate the classification of class, profession, gender and even the boundary between the government and citizens, capitalists and employees and the strong and weak. Such an anti-imperialism logic derived from *Monster of the Twentieth Century: Imperialism* by Kōtoku Shūsui.

Kōtoku Shūsui was a famous journalist and revolutionist in modern Japan. His mentor was once Nakae Chōmin (1847-1901), a democratic theorist known as "Rousseau of Japan", when he studied *Mencius* and other Confucian works.⁶ But later, when he read the translation of Bernard Bosanquet's (1848-1923) *The Essence of Socialism (Syakaisyugi Sinzui)* by the German economist Albert Schäffle (1831-1903), he began to welcome socialism and co-organized a socialism seminar (renamed as socialism committee in 1900) with the then Christian socialist Abe Isoo (1865-1949), the union activist Sen Katayama (1859-1933) and others. (Kōtoku, 1967, vol. 5: 68)

The *Imperialism* published in 1901 was based on the opposition against Ito Hirobumi's (1841-1909) proposal to raise tax and military force which was actually an excuse to develop imperialism. In recent years western scholars have been exploring the oriental resource of such "anti-imperialism". This book was translated into French by a French scholar Christine Levy and into English by an American scholar Robert Tierney in 2015. The latter indicated that this book has provided a non-western perspective of imperialism. Generally speaking, 'imperialism' was

redeemed as at the highest stage of capitalism, but Kōtoku posed the question of why Japan could realize imperialism using its political power before it had acquired economic strength. (Tierney, 2015: 27-29) The book was also partly published in *Rising Sun Daily (Zhao Yang Bao)* in north Korea starting in 1906, but given its national condition, texts related to demilitarisation were still 'edited' in process of translation, though Korea at the time was also a country under Confucianism.

As for the content, Kōtoku attacked imperialism as “a policy formed with so-called patriotism as longitude and militarism as latitude.” (Kōtoku, 2004c: 19) By “longitude” he means the highest representation of ethics which was aroused as a “sense of compassion” when people see a child falling into the well. In this case, people’s motivation would be evoked anyway, no matter who the child is. However, when it comes to “patriots”, they would only be excited about the victory of their own countries during the war. If they do not, they will be assaulted as unpatriotic. In this regard, the “love” of patriotism was limited to one’s own nation, and not universal, but egoistic. As to “latitude”, Kōtoku believed that the military training can merely enable soldiers to be slavers of the nobility, and the passive peace realized through an arms race is also temporary and untenable. Therefore, he called for disarmament to achieve positive peace. As such, he also disagreed with the distinction between “personal imperialism” and “national imperialism” that was produced by ego-inflation of the whole nation, because both are about the same in terms of their barbarous nature. What Kōtoku hoped for was to suppress misplaced patriotism through justice and philanthropism, to eliminate barbaric militarism through reasonable socialism and to wipe out predatory imperialism through a cosmopolitanism of brotherhood. (Kōtoku, 2004c: 117)

The ideas of *Imperialism* mainly reflected two sources: one in the east and the other from the west. For the west, *Patriotism and Empire* was the main contributor. Its author John M. Robertson (1856-1933) once joined Rainbow Circle in 1899, an organization formed by Liberal Party, Fabian Society and socialists for solving such social issues as poverty and unemployment by reform of current free trade and laissez-faire. Hobson (1858-1940), the author of *Imperialism: A Study* published in 1902, was among the members of this organization. This book was undertaken by Grant Richards Press in 1899 with three parts contained: the springs of patriotism and militarism, the militarist regimen and the theory and practice of imperialism. Except for frame, two aspects of the book were

followed by *Imperialism*: first the anti-patriotism theory that compares patriotism to animal's nature; second the western history from ancient to modern times and literary examples, represented by Shakespeare (1564-1616). (Yamada, 1984: 47)

For the east, Mencius should be the representative. Kōtoku once mentioned that what made him an ardent democrat interested in social issues were the poverty brought by his family decline and books such as Mencius and *Answers and Questions about Political Affairs by Three Drunken Men* (*Sansuijin Keirin Mondo*) by Nakae Chōmin. (Kōtoku, 1967, vol. 5: 68). As noted above, Kōtoku's comments on patriotism in *Imperialism* was based on the perception of ethics in terms of compassion. In the *On How to Break down Imperialism* (*Ha Teikokusyugi Ron*) published by socialist Yamaguchi Yoshizō (1883-1920) in 1903, he prefaced it with a line from *Mencius*— “no monarch in the world today can refrain from slaughtering, which was similar to things happened during Mencius times: what bullies did at that time were no more than in the name of imperialism without a care about life.” (Yamaguchi, 1903: 1) By “bully” it means “hegemony”, contrary to the kingly way (Wangdao) advocated by Mencius. The difference between these two ideas, according to *Mencius*, is that the former pursues power but the latter favors benevolence. Kōtoku considered countries' competition today to be similar to wars among nations during Warring States Period. The practice of regarding military strength as the only way of expansion is the hegemonic way while the policy of benevolence built on “people first” is the kingly way, which can also be identified as socialism in *Imperialism*. Although he described the call for peace and kindness in times of “imperialism” as Lecturing on The Great Learning in a Skiff at the Ya Mountain,⁷ the socialist movement launched worldwide still served as a support for the moral values of *Mencius*. In Kōtoku's *Imperialism*, people he cited were no longer authorities such as King Hui and Duke Wen of Teng in *Mencius*, but virtuous intellectuals who are capable of implementing social reform and eventually realizing socialism.

It can be said that *Answers and Questions about Political Affairs by Three Drunken Men* (*Sansuijin keirin dondo*) served as the medium through which Chōmin accepted the views of *Mencius*, and during his studying time in France, he translated it into French. This is the demonstration of its importance to him. The time that Kōtoku became the student of Chōmin was exactly at the period of the publication of *Answers and Questions about*

Political Affairs by Three Drunken Men (Sansuijin keirin dondo) by Syusei Press in May, 1887. This book mainly consists of a discussion over national and international issues at that time among three fictional interlocutors: a western gentleman, Mr. Hero and Mr. South Seas. As their opinions vary, the western gentleman believes that only democracy can realize prolonged peace because no matter in the war or after, the mass of people would suffer the giant loss though they are compelled to enter the field. If it comes true, people will not only enjoy equality, but also a war-free world with peace ensured by justice and disarmament. However, Mr. Hero claims that warfare is inevitable for resource-limited nations to seek defense and development through expansion. It is such integration of ‘debating over the kingly way and the hegemonic way’ from *Mencius* into realistic context provided the direct resource for Kōtoku to consider “imperialism”.

The publication of *Imperialism* took place at a time when a large number of Chinese people were studying in Tokyo. As an unusual contributor to this intellectual community, Liang’s traditional thought was undoubtedly significant and far-reaching. Although Kōtoku’s books such as *Imperialism, A Long and Broad Tongue (Iyoukouzetu, 1902)* and *Essence of Socialism (Syakaisyugi Sinzui, 1903)* were translated into Chinese once they were published, they could only exert little influence of the time. The *Collection of Translated Book (Yi Shu Hui Bian)* initiated in 1900 by Chinese overseas students in Japan is the first one who mentioned Kōtoku’s *Imperialism*. But to the contrary, it contended that “When the monster out, standing against it leaves injuries while working with it produces profits. The key is how to control it.” The *Synopsis of the Bibliographies for New Studies (Xin Shu Mu Lu Gang Yao)* published by Tongya Press in September, 1903 also gave a comment on *Imperialism*, maintaining that given the idea of seeking peace in extreme disorder it contained in its criticism on European, American and Japanese external expansion, the book is still unpractical when it comes to real politics, especially for China which was then developing military strength.

For the influence of *Imperialism* on China, it is no doubt that *Monster of the Twentieth Century: Imperialism* translated by Zhao Bizhen in 1902 marks the highest level.⁸As a person who ever got in touch with Kang and Liang, Zhao determined to devote himself to revolution when he became the editor of *The China Discussion* after his escape to Japan upon the failure of staging an uprising to save the emperor in 1900. Two years later, he returned to Shanghai secretly, and 'no less than forty books he translated

there with more than two million characters were profoundly welcomed.' Apart from *Imperialism*, he also translated *A Long and Broad Tongue* (*Iyoukouzetu*) before he went to Hongkong. Nevertheless, when he was employed as the editor of *Commercial News* (*Shang Bao*) created by Kang and others, he was ejected by Hong Kong authorities on account of his comments on the expansion of imperialism. Such attitude is as clear as it showed. (Tian, 1983: 118-120)

Despite the fact that Zhao's version of *Imperialism* has few differences from the original one in terms of text, there still exist misreadings in the translation, of which the most salient is the rewriting of criticism on Studies on the State (Guo Jia Xue). According to the source text, both imperialism and statism are objects for Kōtoku to criticize because he thought they are used as excuses for feudal lords and senior statesmen to implement dictatorship. However, given China's national condition then, it was imperative to call for patriotism and statism, just as North Korea did. Therefore, for those backward countries, the "anti-imperialism" built on the "anti-patriotism" is a quite awkward position, or rather Zhao intended to set the goal of patriotism as "anti-imperialism". In an earlier essay, "On Failure" (Shuo Bai), he called upon all parties working together to fight against foreign enemies. (On Failure, 5447)

Two years after the publication of the translation, it was prohibited and destroyed by the Qing government, but its influence did not disappear thereupon. As Kōtoku was monitored by the Japanese government, he was imprisoned for his translation of *Communist League*. During the period of his imprisonment, he read the English version of *Fields, Factories and Workshops* by the anarchist Kropotkin, and gradually turned to anarchism after his release. Since then, Kōtoku began to keep in touch with China's anarchists, including sending letters to the newspaper *Tian Yi* (*Natural Justice*) founded by Liu Shipei and others, participating and addressing the socialist seminar they organized, and inviting people like Liu Shipei and Zhang Ji (1882-1947) to join his "Friday Speech" (Liang, 2016: 20). It was exactly the time when Liu being came under the influence of Kōtoku.

Yan Shian claims that the Moralism of Confucianism and the ideal of peace can contribute to solving confrontation and conflict in a peaceful way. This is what Mencius systematically presented as "Win over people by virtue" but was disregarded by intellectuals in modern times. (Yan, 2005: 42) Throughout the history of modern Confucianism, it is rare to see a figure like Kōtoku who inherited the concept of peace. While few

followed his ideas other than some anarchists with little influence, it cannot be denied that there is a possibility to combine Confucianism and Socialism. That means to start from human-beings and end with morality, during which the standard measure of national strength as military and economic power will be weakened. Is there any potential to realize persistent peace when the democracy fails to do so? In today’s world of ever-developing democracy, it is necessary to rethink this question.

IV. IMPERIALISM AND CHINA’S “MODERN TIMES”

The idea of “imperialism” originates from a French word *impérialisme* (*impérialism*) which was used to refer to external rule and expansion conducted by Napoleon III. Its English translation appeared in 1858 for the first time, indicating expansionism or colonialism that emerged against liberalism. In East Asia, this word was first used by the Japanese writer Takayama Chogy in September, 1898 in form of katakana “イムビリアリズム” and later was replaced by Chinese word “帝國主義” (Chen, 2012: 370-377). When this western concept appeared in late Qing Dynasty as “帝國主義”, the Chinese people explained it with a quote from *Mencius*, saying that “seeking strength through land expansion is what King Hui of Liang did for our nation.” Since then, the discussion of it began to be polarized.

On the one hand, Liang integrated “imperialism” within the evolution of China’s national thought and considered it as an inevitable result of western countries’ nationalism to accelerate the emergence of China’s. On the other, “imperialism” was also used as “power” in the meaning of “expansionism and jingoism”, as Dick Turpin concludes. In order to resist this power, Zhang Taiyan (1869-1936) and other revolutionaries in the late Qing Dynasty organized the “Asian Peace Association” in Japan in 1907, and united Asian countries who suffered aggression such as India and Vietnam to fight against “imperialism” for regaining sovereignty. Both sides recognized that there is a gap between the weak and strong. In addition, Kōtoku initiated a third way of understanding “imperialism” from the perspective of Confucianism. Japan was for him, a nation of virtue with a history of 2500 years, and should never abandon its moral values and resort to arms race. Instead, it should pursue scientific knowledge and civilized morality so as to seek happiness for every individual’s life.

Unfortunately, after the death of Kōtoku, this kind of critical voice gradually disappeared. In 1924, Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), the premier of the Chinese Kuomintang, delivered a speech on greater Asianism in Kobe, Japan, before peace talks with the Beijing government in the north. (Fujii, 1983; Sang Bing, 2015) Generally speaking, the address originated from the impact of the Immigration Act of 1924 by the United States on the Japanese Empire at that time. When some voices of introspection of Japan's previous Asian aggression arose, Sun tried to align with the Japanese authorities. Failing in this, he turned his attention to the Japanese people and tried to arouse their moral values with Mencius's "debate over the kingly way and the hegemonic way", thus giving the speech of "Great Asianism". In his presentation, he divided the world culture into the hegemonic culture of Europe and the kingly culture of Asia. He said that under the conflict between eastern and western civilizations, Asians should study European science with their original benevolence and morality preserved so as to restore Asia's status in the world. At the same time, he added the reorganization of the Kuomintang into the discussion, arguing that the kingly way will overwhelm hegemony in the future, just like what happened in Russia. At the end of the speech, Sun warned: "To be a hawk dog of Western hegemony or a shield of Oriental Wangdao, it is up to your Japanese people to make a careful choice."

Just a year after the reverberation of Wangdao in *Mencius* in Sun's speech, the journalist Cao Juren (1900-1972) re-punctuated Zhao Bizhen's version of *Imperialism*, and prefaced it as "What Kōtoku said is not only relevant, but also precious after 30 years of being tested!" Over these years, World War I (1914-1918) broke out, Russia, the imperialist country, established the Soviet regime through the October Revolution, the Communist Party of China was founded and "imperialism" was also defined as a concept hated by everyone in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* by Lenin. However, what distinguishes Lenin from Kōtoku is the comments on "imperialism" which focused more on the economic rather than moral level. As a result, such a "replaced" definition eventually made the moral reflection in *Imperialism* disappear.

After that, Cao Juren drafted *Reading on Imperialism by Kōtoku* on the day of the May 30th Anti-imperialism Movement, the National Day of Demonstration. (Cao, 1925: 3) During the movement, "Down with imperialism" became the slogan of the campaign, and a large number of books on "imperialism" were published one after another. In this wave,

Imperialism could only become a footnote of the era, though it was the pioneer of the time.

Notes

Translated by Liu Chao, School of Foreign Languages, Southeast University.

¹ With the introduction of the paradigm of German conceptual history into the study of modern China, some scholars have begun to adopt its theory and approach in their own historiographical works, such as Chen Liwei’s “The Origin of Imperialism” published in *Journal of the History of Ideas in East Asia* (Chen, 2012). This article, however, recognizes “imperialism” as a self-evident word, ignoring the ambiguous nature of its meanings.

² Zhang Hao holds the opinion that the analysis on “tangible partition” and “intangible partition” made by Liang in his *Blunt Words of Partition* is the demonstration of his understanding of imperialism in the two latitudes of territory and economy. At the same time, Liang also noticed the mass base of Western imperialism, the nationalism therefore became “a response to foreign imperialism”. Zheng Kuangmin, on the other hand, focused his attention on the influence of Japanese thought on Liang Qichao, pointing out that Japanese nationalism, especially the views of Takada Zaomiao, Fukuda and Kato Hirohiro, served as a great reference for Liang's understanding of “imperialism”.

³ Onodera Shirō found some paragraphs in “Similarities and Differences of the Intellectual Changes of the State” coincide with that of *Politics in the Political Circle at the End of the 19th Century*.

⁴ Recently, some people have questioned this. Through the comparison of the three texts, it is believed that *Theory of States on The China Discussion* is based on the copy by Hirata Tōsuke with reference to Azuma Heiji’s version. That means, it was produced both on Japanese and Chinese version. (Cheng, 2015)

⁵ In addition, shortly after the publication of Reinsch's first book, he translated it into Japanese in 1901 and named it “レイニッシュ氏十九世紀末世界之政治” [*World Politics at the End of the Nineteenth Century by Paul S. Reinsch*], which was renamed as *Teikokusyugi ton* [*On Imperialism*] in December of the same year.

⁶ Nakae Chōmin often told Kōtoku that “Su Shi was keen on studying *Mencius* and disregarded other schools so he could learn the essence of it. His efforts laid down the innovation of the past.” (Kōtoku, 1967b: 59).

⁷ In 1279, the Southern Song and the Mongolian army launched a large-scale naval battle in Yashan, and eventually the whole army of the Southern Song was destroyed. The minister, Lu Xiufu (1236-1279), jumped into the sea with the emperor on his back, bringing the dynasty to the end. During his lifetime, Lu used to warn himself with the Confucian classic, *The Great Learning*. The metaphor of “Lecturing on The Great Learning in a Skiff at the Ya Mountain” means to keep one’s morality in times of crisis. But it also refers to unrealistic endeavors.

⁸ The version that author saw includes 16 kinds of comments. The original version was the third edition of the Japanese version, but it was published in 1903, leaving the relationship between the two to be examined. In December 1906, the Tokyo Socialist Research Community (Tokyo Socialist Research Society) edited and published the “Socialist Series” signed by Shu Hun, including the *Monster of the Twentieth Century: Imperialism* which the author has not yet seen.

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