

NOTE: This paper was written as part of a seminar on modern Chinese literature in the Columbia University graduate school of arts and sciences. I later presented a much briefer version at a comparative literature graduate student conference at New York University in Spring 2008. Since I have no further plans to work with this material, I am posting the entire work on academic commons. Please cite appropriately.
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andy

LIVING COMPARATIVELY

ON THE COMPARISONS OF INDIA AND CHINA IN THE WORKS OF KANG YOUWEI AND ZHANG TAIYAN

ANDREW B. LIU • FALL 2007

One of the more remarkable but unobserved occurrences invariably effaced by area studies is the obvious fact that the peoples of the world outside of Euro-America have been forced to live lives comparatively by virtue of experiencing some form of colonization or subjection enforced by the specter of imperialism. This experience of living comparatively inevitably disclosed the instrumentalizing force of classificatory strategies promoted by the imperial dominant that invariably hierarchized relationships everywhere colonialism and imperialism spread. The Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsuro, recognizing in the consequences of this assault in the 1930s the formation of a "double life," developed a theory of "layering" (*jūsōsei*, 重層性) that supposedly characterized Japan's history since the time of origins to explain why Japanese were compelled to live comparatively – life in double time – as a condition of their modern transformation.

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This is a paper about comparison. It does not strive for an exhaustive account of all comparison *qua* comparison, but it does attempt to distill the spatio-temporal conditions of modern comparative thinking by analyzing a series of essays written by exiled intellectuals during the last decade of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911 CE): an era before Cold War-style area studies artificially marked off the boundaries of various 'Asian' civilizations. Specifically, I look at the trope of late Qing China as comparable to British India in the writings of famed reformer Kang Youwei (康有為) and revolutionary Zhang Taiyan (章太炎, also Zhang Binglin 章炳麟). My goals are thus twofold: first, an explication of the actual writings; and second, some thoughts concerning the significance of comparison in modern nationalist thought in the colonial world.

While researching this paper, I became convinced that in order to understand comparison, one must begin with an emphasis on the *grounds* upon which each thinker builds its argument. For, through comparison, writers not only create theories for understanding several non-identical

¹ Harry Harootunian, "Some Thoughts on Comparability and the Space-Time Problem," *boundary 2*, 32:2 (2005), 26.

entities but also create theories that can, and must, be extended to accommodate and encompass other entities as well. As an example, Kang relied upon a social scientific, topographically-based framework, which allowed him to argue for the inevitability of the British occupation of India and the natural tendency for all governments to solidify their central government in order to resist foreign invasion. Kang envisioned comparisons spatially, pairing China and India principally because of the sizes of their lands and populations. By extension, the relative fall and decline of other empires around the world also pivoted around the question of space.

In contrast, Zhang placed more emphasis on time. While not abandoning considerations of space, he nonetheless bridged differences between different nations by emphasizing their common histories, encompassed in his theory of national essence. In the words of Wang Hui, Zhang's national essence project meant "the reworking and exegesis of language, institutions, and personal biography" of the past and actualizing them for political projects in the present and future.² Again, when extended, Zhang's grounds of comparison created an expansive theory of world history and of the positions of not simply India and China but also of the great powers of his day. By emphasizing time, Zhang could do what Kang could not; namely, he could account for the complex relationship of the past with the present and hence levy a critique of the present without slipping into the language of inevitability and of fixed laws of governance. As I hope to show in my final section, Zhang's sensitivity to time helps explain his seemingly contradictory convergence of interests in the past and in a revolutionary present and future.

In constructing these arguments, I have inevitably overlooked crucial details concerning both Kang and Zhang as multidimensional thinkers. I do not wish to argue reductively that Kang was a purely spatial and Zhang a purely temporal thinker. However, I do think that their competing arguments about China's relationship with the world cannot be understood without recourse to these heuristic categories. Further, I think that the larger, vicious disagreements the two shared in their lifetimes lend credibility to the opposition I offer here. Nonetheless, I have tried to cope with the problem of reductionism by focusing solely on a specific body of texts, which, rather than the men who wrote them, are the feature of this paper. But in the interests of historicizing each work, I begin both of my analyses by explaining the particular contexts in which they were written.

² Wang Hui, "Zhang Taiyan's Concept of the Individual and Modern Chinese Identity," trans. Mark Halperin, in *Becoming Chinese: Passages to Modernity and Beyond*, ed. Yeh Wen-hsin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 242.

In the first section, I explain Kang Youwei's 1902 essay on India by beginning with the 1898 100-day reforms, a pivotal event that altered the climate of late Qing intellectual debate towards more radical directions. In the following section, I describe Zhang Taiyan's journey from an ambivalent reformer in the late 1890s to an exiled radical in Tokyo writing for the *People's Journal* (民報). As Zhang was the more complicated figure with a deeper investment in the idea of an Indian-Chinese alliance, my analysis of him constitutes the majority of the paper.

Finally, I want to address the unavoidable question of "why India?" Based upon perusing the existing literature, I have found that there seem to be three main arguments for why China should be studied alongside India: Buddhism, modern colonialism and the current growth booms shared by both countries' economies, which have been affectionately dubbed by some analysts as "Chindia." However, I am dissatisfied with the terms of the question "why India?" because it fails to ask "why China?" It seems to me that there is no better reason to study China than to study China alongside India, or any other part of the world for that matter. My point is that the area studies model of history and literature, I have found, relies upon managing scholarly interests *first* by fixing research onto a bounded territory and then *second* by choosing a topic that happens to fall within the range of that territory. This invites an uncritical attitude towards that first move of spatial enclosure, which can result in ethnocentrism ("I study China because it is important for the Chinese people") and/or forced research topics ("I'm going to apply this theory to the study of China"). As an alternative, I think it is important to begin with questions that are not spatially bound and that follow themes and historical phenomena without fixing in advance the units of analysis. Inevitably, of course, language and familiarity with a field of study necessitate some settling. But for this paper I have tried to focus on a specific phenomenon – a consistent theme invoked by writers contemporaneous with one another – rather than take "India," "China" or "Asia" as my topic of research. It seems like a good way to keep open the possibilities for thinking India and China without reifying them in advance.

KANG YOUWEI

1898: ONE UNFORGETTABLE (AND IRREPRESSIBLE) SUMMER

Although traditionally described as embodying the failure of reform during the last decades of the Qing dynasty, the 100-day 1898 *Wuxu* reforms (戊戌變法), wherein the Qing Guangxu Emperor employed leading advocates of modernization and constitutionalism such as Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao to oversee the reform of the Qing court, have received more positive reassessment as a social and political shift from sovereign control by court officials to greater legitimacy for popular rule.³ Peter Zarrow directly refuted the idea that the reform period and its demise, which resulted in the execution and exile of the reformers, was a tragic shortcoming. On the contrary, "the reformers lost their heads, or at least the freedom to reside safely in China," he wrote, "but won the argument."⁴ The argument was the progressive critique of the status quo power oligarchy in the Qing court, coupled with a series of proposals aimed at the relative democratization of political control within the state. While Kang could by no means be called a populist or a supporter of democracy in the banal sense of the term today, he concentrated his efforts against the small leadership circles that effectively delegitimized the political role of all others living under the Qing empire's rule. Although reformers such as Kang and Liang held official titles for less than half a year, "the direction" of their thinking altered the space of politics, orienting them towards a version of decentralized rule that "was a profound challenge to the status quo."⁵ A somewhat unintended consequence of such work was "to enlarge the space of politics" from a traditional Chinese state centered upon kings and sages to "a new space for a Chinese identity to emerge ... independent of the dynasty."⁶

However, it is important to stress that, beneath the abstract implications for the interplay between sovereign and popular rule set into motion by the reformers, Kang also promoted a set of specific legislative reforms that were considered conservative by the standards of political activism only a few years later. In other words, Kang may be credited for launching the first or at least loudest shot in a protracted battle involving questions of sovereign, state and popular rule, but he was far less radical than the activists and scholars that emerged in the twentieth century. At the peak of his influence while serving the Guangxu Emperor, he clearly defended the Emperor's right to rule in a system described (with terms borrowed from Meiji Japanese and European political theory) as a constitutional monarchy with a parliament to check the abuses of

³ See *Rethinking the 1898 Reform Period: Political and Cultural Change in Late Qing China* (hereafter *Rethinking 1898*), ed. Rebecca Karl and Peter Zarrow, (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002). The introduction and Peter Zarrow's first chapter are especially concerned with the contemporary historiographical and popular understandings of the *Wuxu* reforms.

⁴ Peter Zarrow, "The Reform Movement, the Monarchy, and Political Modernity" in *Rethinking 1898*, 19.

⁵ Zarrow, 31.

⁶ Zarrow, 45.

imbalanced power. Similar to the gradual phasing out of monarchical and imperial authority in latter-day England and Japan, the new Qing Emperor would retain its title and status but would be subject to the laws agreed upon by officials and would be represented as part of, rather than separate from, the people themselves. And perhaps influenced by a theory of federalism made famous by the American revolution and still invoked today in areas around the world besieged by so-called "ethnic strife," Kang emphasized that the Emperor and the state form take priority over the particular differences between its citizens. In other words, he wanted to avoid the cleavage between Manchu identity against an ethnically heterogeneous demand for self-rule that became increasingly audible over the last century. As has been well documented, Kang was raised on a classical education and never hesitated to connect state-centered theories such as New Text Confucianism and Legalism with present-day problems. What differentiated Kang from and eventually encouraged a split between himself and his former students was his unwillingness to further demote or even discard altogether the emperor's role in future political organizations.⁷

Had Kang not left the Forbidden City several days before the Empress Dowager Cixi seized control on September 19, 1898, he would likely have been executed immediately. Nonetheless, his conviction in the necessity of a stable government and the preservation of the emperor system in China guided his activities while living in exile for the next decade. He fled on a British vessel to Hong Kong and then traveled to Japan, Canada, Panama, Singapore and British India to help organize and consolidate various Societies to Protect the Emperor (保皇會) and to establish Confucian temples, promoting Confucius as the sage (聖人) of system reform and the Guangxu Emperor as a holy ruler (聖主).⁸ While in British India, he stayed at a government office in Darjeeling, just south of Tibet, and traveled throughout the land for an undetermined amount of time, perhaps up to eighteen months.⁹ In his subsequent writings, Kang's observations about British India simply buttressed his ideas about the need for constitutionalism and a strong, imperial government. Starting in 1901, increasingly more writings published for Chinese audiences, both abroad and domestically, described India as the worst possible scenario for the Chinese people and the Qing empire. It was an almost unanimous

⁷ Zarrow, 24-33.

⁸ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1990), 230. Tang Zhijun (湯志均), *The Sentiments of Reform and Revolution in China* (改良與革命的中國情懷) (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press (臺灣商務印書館), 1991), 76-77.

⁹ I have not been able to devote much time into further investigating the details of Kang's visit. This information was culled from Shimada Kenji, *Pioneer of the Chinese Revolution: Zhang Binglin and Confucianism*, trans. Joshua A. Fogel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 77, and Lin Chengjie, "Friendship-in-need between Chinese and Indian people in Modern Times," in *In the Footsteps of Xuanzang: Tan Yun-shan and India*, eds. Tan Chung, et al. (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1999), 153.

position at the time, as "[r]eformers and radicals alike shared the anxiety that China *not follow in the footsteps of India*."¹⁰ The position was expressed through several styles of writing, such as exposition, opinion and fiction. And they were embedded within a larger genre that warned against the Qing following the fate of other fallen nations (亡國), which has been well documented by Rebecca Karl.¹¹ And it is precisely within this widely circulating trope of India-as-worst-case-scenario where we can contextualize a pair of essays Kang published in the spring of 1902.

Kang's immediate concern was to reprimand two of his students, Liang Qichao and Ou Qujia, both of whom had become increasingly willing to dispense with the imperial system in the years since the 1898 reforms. If we believe Zarrow's depiction of the political consequences of the 100-day period, then both Liang and Ou were merely extending the logical direction of the ideas advanced by the reformist movement itself. Of the two, Ou was more moderate, and like Kang he still envisioned a place for a monarch to lead the reformed empire. His main contribution was his distinction between king and ruler, the former complacent and disconnected from the people and the latter actively uniting the national body. At the expense of the emperor, he placed more responsibility onto the people. While commenting on the crisis and confusion of the Qing, Ou wrote that if "the king had lost power ... the solution lay not in some attempt to revive long-lost institutions but in creating new ones."¹² Liang was even more radical. According to Tang Xiaobing, Liang was a cosmopolitan nationalist who dreamed of generating for the Chinese people a new political form in synch with a global space of cosmopolitanism made possible by the emergent consciousness of "nationalism as a universal ideal" located throughout Europe and the Americas.¹³ Liang's nationalism was at odds with his teacher, but, strangely, his criticisms of Kang were nearly mirrored in Kang's rejoinder to Liang. Both saw the other as impractical. For Liang, Kang's ultimate goal of a Confucian-inspired *datong* (大同), translated variously as "Great Commonality," "Utopian Society," or "One World," was too unlikely and out of touch with contemporary events. Liang wrote to Kang in India: "*Today is a crucial time* for advancing nationalism, without which no nation-state can be built. I as your student will do my

¹⁰ Shimada, 77.

¹¹ Rebecca Karl, *Staging the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). In particular, see pages 159-168 on the question of knowledge about India entering the consciousness of Chinese intellectuals.

¹² Zarrow, 42-43.

¹³ Tang Xiaobing, *Global Space and the nationalist discourse of modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 75.

best to promote nationalism and will never give it up."¹⁴ While not refuting the ideal of *datong*, Liang felt nationalism was a "*historical necessity*, one stage in the development toward that ultimate goal."¹⁵ Similarly, what irritated Kang most was that both Ou and Liang's political recommendations veered towards revolution, the epitome of impracticality. Vesting power with the people, rather than the emperor, would unleash the "cruelty and bloodshed of revolution," which could only be avoided through the establishment of a constitution. In 1902, Kang called Liang and Ou confused revolutionaries, and he sent dozens of letters to Liang rebuking him for his criticisms and for "turning his back on justice."¹⁶ At the same time, he wrote two public letters, published as *Master of the South Seas' recent views on government* (南海先生辨革命書). The first essay was addressed to various Chinese workers in the Americas and recommended constitutionalism against revolution. The second essay directly addressed Liang and British India, entitled "Essay for Fellow Scholar Liang Qichao and others discussing the Destruction of India due to its Fragmentation" (與同學諸子梁啟超等論印度王國由於各省自立書). This is the essay I wish to analyze more closely.

KANG YOUWEI: CHINA'S MOST FAMOUS TOPOGRAPHER

Although he does not name Liang or Ou in the text, Kang began his letter by referring to the general trend of Chinese intellectuals who have read too many foreign books and have subsequently lost their common sense for world history:

How can there emerge such words sympathizing for the slave people of lost nations? Alas! How can one produce such anger at the dying out of lost nations? The inability to logically understand these trends is because, unlike in the past when scholars understood the world situation, today officials and thinkers read too many European and American books and therefore have French and American logic deeply lodged in their brains Alas! The scholars and officials' mistaken reliance on French and American writers and their subsequent absurd ideas are caused by nothing but the new European and American books and not taking into consideration the situation of Asia.¹⁷

¹⁴ Liang quoted in Tang Xiaobing, 75-76. Italics added.

¹⁵ Tang Xiaobing, 76. Italics added.

¹⁶ Kang quoted in Tang Zhijun, 77.

¹⁷ Kang Youwei, "Essay for Fellow Scholar Liang Qichao and others discussing the Destruction of India due to its Fragmentation" (與同學諸子梁啟超等論印度王國由於各省自立書) in *Kang Youwei's collected Political Writings* (康有為政論集) ed. Tang Zhijun (Beijing : China Publishing House (中華書局), 1981), 495. Hereafter, all citations from this text will be marked parenthetically in the text.

The main characteristic of Kang's essay I wish to emphasize is the degree to which Kang's analysis is *spatial*, so much so that his analysis of temporality is almost non-existent. He believed a people's model government was contingent upon the spatial resources they were given, and he dismissed considerations of timeliness and modernity, demonstrated well in the contrast between his promotion of a timeless *datong* versus Liang's historically-embedded global nationalist position. For example, despite the invocation of Asia (亞洲) and the self-differentiation from European and American (歐,美) circumstances, Kang did not advance a culturally essentialist theory of international politics premised upon the internal, temporal differences between Asian and European experiences. Unlike the anti-Manchu position held by many others, especially his former student Zhang Taiyan, Kang continued to maintain that any concept of ethnicity or difference should come secondary to the state form. Government discussions necessarily remained abstracted from the actual experiences of the people themselves and their history, except in a rigid and narrow sense. And while I certainly do not endorse an extreme notion of cultural essence – I will make comments about Zhang's project later – we can still see that Kang's analysis was so devoid of sensitivity to historical particularities that it devolved into spatial determinism. This was made evident in the reasoning he puts forth for *why* the Qing cannot compare with the European and American: "As for the Americas, Holland, Belize, Spain, Portugal and the closely located Romania, Montenegro, Siberia, Bulgaria and Egypt, who have achieved independence, they are separated by a great distance and many seas." Or, he continued, "they are part of the same continent's geopolitical balance of powers (均勢), or they were only recently conquered, or their religions are dissimilar, and every nation supports each other (495)."

For Kang, Asia was uniquely Asian *solely because of its geographical situation*. The "topographical circumstances (地勢情事)" of other nations, he argued, "are totally different from ours (495)." With the promotion of space and topography as the primary factor determining the course of events throughout time, considerations of social and cultural relations became secondary and homogenized. Kang reduced the multiple temporalities of the past and present, of peoples living in diverse and unevenly situated regions, into a non-temporality: if *datong* was good enough for the time of Confucius or the legal scholars, then it is good enough for eternity. Except for his vague and unattainable dream, he had no political program for effectively changing the injustices of the status quo. And left without considerations of time and the

accumulation of history into the present, Kang was left only with the tools of a purely spatial analysis with regard to the world situation.

Of course, we should also remember that Kang was still rooted in a specific intellectual tradition, citing New Text Confucianism and the Legalists and blanketly projecting them around the globe. He was deaf to his own cultural situatedness as a Confucian scholar, transmuting themes from a variety of ancient texts, each of which were embedded in diverse historical circumstances, and united them into a vision of a great universality applicable equally to everyone. Here it is worth remembering what Naoki Sakai wrote about the ontological trap of universalism: "what we normally call universalism is a particularism thinking itself as universalism; it is doubtful whether universalism could ever exist otherwise."¹⁸ Kang can hardly be faulted as uniquely ethnocentric for the time in which he was writing (much less for today), but I include this point as a helpful reminder that even though Kang presented his arguments as dispassionate and somehow *above* the urgency of his nationalist contemporaries, his underlying agenda could still be located in a historically specific moment. What the language of his timeless analysis really concealed was the fact that after 1898, it would seem, his training and background appeared less and less relevant, or *timely*, for the questions and tasks at hand.

As for the rest of the essay, the remainder simultaneously reinforced his hostility towards nationalist revolution with an embrace of topographical analysis. He argued that if Liang and his friends tried to apply American and European independence movements to the Qing situation, then they would "invite nonsensical talk and rash advocacy, brewing giant disasters, losing our nation and killing our people (495)." Kang then presented his own framework of space-based comparison through ten characteristics that must be met in order for another land to be compared with his own country. They were: first, being located in Asia; second, encompassing a surface area of several thousand *li*; third, with half the shore meeting the sea; fourth, where the masses are numerous; fifth, where the education and culture are extremely deep; sixth, where the civilization is extremely old; seventh, where the laws, statutes and customs are similar; eighth, where the people's nature is soft and gentle, to the extent that peoples from the north (the Mughals into India, the Manchus into China) invaded the central areas; ninth, where the lands were subsequently unified by the northern people; and tenth, where the rule is autocratic. "If you want a place with all these ten similarities," Kang declared, "in reality, in this world there is no

¹⁸ Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 157.

place like that, but fortunately *there is* a nation that is similar enough and has already experienced our current situation." Such a place could be considered China's "mirror, our front car (前車) and likewise would be enough to test and prove our beliefs." This nation which was extremely similar to China was of course "the land at the center of the world: India (495-496)."

Despite the reference to the Chinese and Indian soft nature and the periodic mention of specific historical events, readers would be hard pressed to claim that the crux of Kang's argument was anything other than geographical determination. His next move was to insert himself as a cultural translator or go-between, building arguments based upon his direct experiences throughout British India. "Everyone knows about India's loss," he claimed, "but the reasons for its loss and how it arrived at its modern, slavish baseness are not discussed in Chinese books. Thus, it is absurd to cite India as evidence without having examined it closely." Kang said he had lived in India for many years and had both studied and translated books on its recent history. As a result he could understand the reasons for its fall, which he summarized sardonically:

My four million compatriots, if you wish to become a fallen nation of slaves, then quickly support the fight for independence in all provinces (各省) like the Indian people have done. But if my compatriots, you do not wish to become a fallen nation or an exterminated race (滅種), then you should deem useless India's fight for independence in all its provinces (496).

Kang then decried that the six thousand-year old civilization, with six thousand *li* of fertile land and two hundred thousand educated peoples became slaves in a span of several decades. The *li* of land spanning Mount Sumeru (須彌山), a mountain central to Buddhist cosmology, and the Ganges and Indus rivers were all bestowed onto others overnight: all because of India's fragmented organization that granted relative independence to each of its provinces (496). Kang's contention assumed that only two types of political bodies could succeed: small bodies that could defend themselves with natural barriers and easily assembled unity (Japan, Italy) or large bodies which required especially centralized governments to ward off invaders (what the Indians lacked in the Mughals and what the Chinese found in the Qing). Comparability thus pivoted around the question of land size and subsequent vulnerability to attack.

Kang used this formula to attack those who said China was more comparable to the Europeans than to India: "Those who know nothing about India ... consider China's land to be so great, the people so many, the education and culture so deep, the arts full of so much spirit, the

literature so beautiful, the commerce so thriving, the talent so great, the fields so large that it can never stoop to the level of India." However, those same people who continued to argue that "even though China has been separated into two parts, it can still be compared to England, France, Prussia, Italy, Austria and Japan and can become totally independent" were really giving voice to an "incredible exaggeration (謬言)." He produced a laundry list of India and China's similarities in terms of total land size, number of provinces and the relative sizes of each province and concluded: "how is it not the case that we are following India's lead? (496-497)."

Not only was Kang unwilling to include arguments about history and time, he was insistently presentist in his responses to scholars who praised China and India's past. By presentist I mean Kang was concerned only with immediate problems, which has the effect of discounting broad historical considerations. "Everyone praises the Chinese, India, Persia and Turkey as the great nations of Asia," he said, but if one looked at Japan, an island nation that arose later in history, it has learned to thrive as a "strong and powerful nation." Whereas Japan now had allied itself with the British, signing the first version of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in January of the same year, the Indian people were not even allowed to speak on the same level as the British and were forced to bow and submit to them. In focusing on the differences between Japan and India, Kang emphasized that *rather than* history and tradition, the present ability to accumulate power should become the top priority of a people and their government. Japan was represented as the Europeanized Asian other to China and India's prototypically large, Asian landmasses. As we will see with Zhang, the question of Japan and its comparability always shadowed discussions of China, India and the question of Asia at this historical moment. Japan's ability to seemingly leap ahead of and set itself apart from the rest of Asia was always a contradiction that needed to be accounted for in any theory of Asia's place in the world. "Alas!" claimed Kang, "if you examine the reasons for the respective unification and division of Japan and India, as well as their respective decisions whether or not to undergo revolution, you would be shocked (498)."

Contra India, which Kang also compared to Poland and Turkey,¹⁹ he promoted the model of Otto von Bismarck's Germany or Giuseppe Garibaldi's Italy, both of which had been formally unified as nation-states in 1871. Similarly, Persia was exemplary for uniting its people and resisting colonialism despite constituting half the amount of land of India. Each country

¹⁹ For more on the comparison with Poland and Turkey, see Karl, *Staging*, 33-38 and 38-44, respectively.

demonstrated the necessity of pouring state resources into centralized control and military power. He reasoned that had India not sought revolution or independence and instead mobilized the imperial will of the Mughal court, it would have survived the onslaught of the British:

Take the case of the wars of company officials Sir Charles Elliot and of Robert Clive and of the skill and talent of the diplomats Harry Smith Parke and Warren Hastings. Elliot and Parke were unfortunate in encountering China's [*Zhina*] unwillingness to declare independence. Clive and Hastings, however, were fortunate enough to be met with the Indian demand for independence (498).

Charles Elliot and Harry Smith Parke were British military leaders and diplomats who managed the British side in the First Opium War of 1839 to 1842, which ended in a treaty that ceded several ports to the British. By Kang's logic, the Qing's ability to compromise – and not clamor for total autonomy – had kept them afloat since. By contrast, Robert Clive and Warren Hastings were instrumental in the British conquest of Bengal in 1757 and the subsequent management of the Company's holdings in India. The specialists' understanding today is that Clive created a conspiracy with local bankers and then baited the *nawab*, or provincial governor in the Mughal system, of Bengal into a battle in which the British troops soundly defeated the Bengali force.²⁰ According to Kang, however, while England had been reaping profit from trade, they "had no intention to take India, but only because of the various internal battles within the empire, they took advantage of the opportunity to seize it (498)." His extreme apologism should be understood less as a serious attempt at capturing history than as a lesson for the pressing concerns of the Qing Empire and Chinese literati. Again invoking the metaphor of railroads, Kang warned against following India's track (軌), which would be like "knowing a liquor is poisoned but drinking it anyway, knowing a wall is broken with collapsing edges but trying to stand it upright nonetheless, or fearing that your death will come too late and thereby seeking to kill yourself quickly (499)."

Kang next extended his topographic reasoning to explain why European countries were capable of building such powerful militaries. "All those small countries," he wrote, "are in daily competition. They could be defeated promptly, therefore even though the land size is small, they emphasize military affairs, their spirit and mind is full of vigor (氣), and they dare not relax." The states were thus too difficult to annex. Instead of military wars, they battled in trade and with ideas (學戰); of the entire world, "only Europe's thousands year-old nations can sustain this

²⁰ Barbara D., Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf, *A concise history of India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 50-51.

(499)." If the central states of China were to follow suit, then with borders that were not fixed, with national power not yet established, and with the people's hearts unstable, then the Hobbesian chaos and competition would never end. "The Chinese people[s ability to survive as decentralized and independent provinces] could not even surpass the decentralized Indian vassal state, so isn't it absurd to compare them with the thousands year-old European states? (499)."

Here Kang clearly demonstrated the logical consequences of his space-based argumentation: that the divergent paths of India, with China following closely, and Europe were determined by land size, and hence their peoples were fundamentally interchangeable. In testing out his different scenarios *as if* the people of these respective places – India, China, Europe – would behave similarly if placed in different environments, Kang assumed a commensurability between subjects that rendered subjectivity itself into homogeneously-formed social types or empty vessels receiving external factors from their environments. By Kang's logic, people generally would behave the same way if the variable of topography were neutralized. If the success or failure of a people depended upon topography, then their destiny had always been fixed. Such argumentation, of course, has never disappeared, and it begins to sound remarkably similar to recent publications by the so-called California school of Chinese historians who have tried to revive an old debate about why Europe succeeded and China did not – a question, undoubtedly, raised and debated in Kang's time as well.²¹ Perhaps unsurprisingly, the very argument advanced by Kang – and countless others since then – resurfaced only a few years ago in the 2003 Afterword to the popular world history text *Guns, Germs and Steel*. The author, Jared Diamond, cited sociologist Jack Goldstone, a key member of the informal California School circle, and extended Diamond's own self-described scientific approach to modern history by concluding:

My comparison of the histories of China, the Indian subcontinent, and Europe ... suggested an answer to [the question of what form of organization of human groups is best] ... I inferred that competition between different political entities spurred innovation in geographically fragmented Europe, and that the lack of such competition held innovation back in unified China. Would that mean that a higher degree of political fragmentation than Europe's would be even better? Probably not: India was geographically even more fragmented than Europe, but less innovative technologically. This suggested to me the Optimal Fragmentation Principle: innovation proceeds most rapidly in a society with some optimal intermediate degree of fragmentation: a too-unified society as at a disadvantage, and so is a too-fragmented society.²²

²¹ For more on the California School, see Andre Gunder Frank, "The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60:1 (2001), 180-182.

²² Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, 2003 ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2003), 434.

I will not comment on the glaring weaknesses of Diamond's principle – namely the reliance upon a winners' version of history or the blind adherence to neoliberal, pro-competition economic values – and simply point out the striking resemblance to Kang's own conclusions which were derived from the consideration of land (space) as the primary factor determining history.²³ Ultimately, both Kang's and Diamond's analyses were absolutely unconcerned with *how people think*, since the question of thinking became determined by geography in the last instance. Different ways of conceptualizing history were closed off by this "intellectual and historical trap."²⁴

To end the essay, Kang returned to his recommendation of abandoning India's path and changing course to follow Japan's reform. As far as I can tell, Kang gave no explicit reason for why Japan was comparable to China's situation except for the broad principle that every nation should strive towards constitutionalism and stability, along with the recent exchanges between Meiji reformers in Tokyo and the reform movement in Beijing and Shanghai. Or perhaps he implicitly extended his geography argument to argue that even though Japan was small like England and Spain, since it was not *surrounded* with competition like the Western European powers, it had fallen behind and hence was vulnerable to foreign invasion unless it stuck to the path of reform. Such a reading would be consistent with Kang's description of Japan's recent history: the late Tokugawa government (1600-1868 CE) had lagged behind the Europeans, but the Japanese people today thrived precisely because the military officials overthrew the *Bakufu* (幕府), or military ruler, and installed the Meiji Emperor, whose officials reformed the new nation. Accordingly for Kang, the Chinese should have attacked the conservative loyalists who ended the *Wuxu* reforms, toppled the fake government, and established a new constitution-based one (500).

Kang thus creates a three-sided comparison between the conservative Manchus (although he was not against the Qing as a whole), the Mughals in India and the Tokugawa in Japan as three governments that stagnated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and should have been held accountable for the vulnerability of Asia to the Europeans. He wrote "I fear that like the Indians, once we topple the Mongols and establish independence, we will quickly lose it to the

²³ Perhaps the most temporally sensitive comment one can make about such ideas is the fact that they have continually and repetitively arisen, over and over, unaware of their own untimeliness. As South Asian and world historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam wrote in criticism: "If the Orient exists only as a mirror to be held up to prove Europe 'who is the fairest of them all,' then that task has already been accomplished several times over the past two centuries, and one can only wonder why *such intellectual tedium has to be endured again and again.*" Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions: Making Polities in Early Modern South India* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 260.

²⁴ Karl, *Staging* 199.

strong English ... If our nation has the same impulse [towards independence and revolution, like the Mughals], then we quickly will follow in India's path! (501)." Kang also compared the Indian attitude of revolution and independence to the disaster of the *yihetuan* (義和團), or Boxer, rebellion. He was angry at the official Ronglu (榮祿) for criminalizing the fighters and helping the foreign powers, but he was also angry at the fighters themselves. Elsewhere, he wrote that the Boxer (拳匪) situation made him angry and his blood boil, and he placed the blame squarely upon the Empress Dowager Cixi and the officials Duanwang (端王), Qingwang (慶王), Ronglu and Gangyi (剛毅) for condoning the rebels' behavior.²⁵ Further, if in the future the Chinese fight for independence and are attacked by foreign powers (generating a comparison between the Conquest of Bengal in 1757 and the *yihetuan* uprisings), then minor officials will happily become traitors, "take advantage of their power over other clans, cruelly oppress their compatriots, and make the acquisition of gold their main task, just like the translators in Beijing in 1900 (502)." Kang referred to the minor Chinese officials who aided the foreign troops in looting Beijing palaces and residences after the conclusion of the *yihetuan* uprisings, one of the most deadly and embarrassing events in recent world history. It was a spectacle described by James Hevia thusly: "a loot fever gripped the armies and Euroamerican civilian population in Beijing, and a wild orgy of plunder ensued."²⁶ But Kang laid the blame for the foreign attacks onto the shoulders of the *yihetuan* fighters themselves and the Qing officials who initially supported them. "If my compatriots become angry and use iron weapons to attack, then we can already see what will happen with the case of India," he wrote. "The manner in which the Japanese pity our country's people is the same as the way in which I pitied the Indians (502)." In the end, while there were those who fought for independence (自立) around the world, if one promoted such a struggle in Asia, then one *invited* violence and disaster. Kang's essay ended with a plea to break the comparison with India and to realign the national direction towards Japan, comparable in its position as an Asian nation and in its possibilities for reform through constitutionalism and imperial restoration (復辟).

ZHANG TAIYAN

²⁵ Quoted in Tang Zhijun, 73.

²⁶ James Hevia, *English Lessons* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 209. For more on the *yihetuan* fallout generally, see the entire Chapter 7, 195-240. A slightly different but more thorough meditation on the phenomenon of looting can be found in Hevia's essay "Looting Beijing: 1860, 1900" in *Tokens of Exchange*, ed. Lydia Liu (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 192-213.

FROM SHANGHAI TO TOKYO AND BACK (AND BACK)

Over the course of one decade, Zhang Taiyan underwent a reversal from serving as Kang Youwei's student and a supporter of reform to become Kang's adversary and a vicious revolutionary critic of the conservative tendencies of his peers. In 1896, he joined Kang's Society for the Encouragement of Learning (強學會), a response to the humiliation of the conclusion to the 1895 Sino-Japanese War, and he joined Liang Qichao's new Shanghai-based *Shiwubao* (時務報). At the age of 28, Zhang was still a political novice, and his pieces for the *Shiwubao* were "purely reformist in nature."²⁷ Specifically, Zhang called for the Qing government to model the Meiji reforms and ally with the Meiji government against the Europeans: "China will rely on Japan, and Japan will rely on China We can hold off the distant West." Such a statement anticipates Zhang's later writings on allying with India, but Zhang would also greatly depart from this position as well. At some point, Zhang underwent a series of revelations about his teacher and colleagues, which has been documented episodically by several specialists on Zhang. While I hesitate to provide a definitive narrative for this putative awakening, I will list a few events that seem not insignificant.

To begin with, Zhang's relationship with his fellow reformers was ambivalent even before the 1898 reforms. He disliked the New Text Confucianism of Kang's students, and conflicts often arose between himself and his fellow journalists. In a foreshadowing of the verbal fireworks to come, Zhang and Kang Youwei engaged in a drunken fistfight when Kang visited the Shanghai branch of the *Shiwubao*.²⁸ Suffice it to say, Zhang left the paper soon afterwards and never came close to rejoining his former colleagues. He was not a part of the *Wuxu* Reforms. One could say that in the early moments, he was initially attracted by the critique of state power that the eventual reformers represented, but like Ou and Liang, he split from a strict adherence to Kang's writings and radicalized the direction of Kang's critique. Later, as with others associated with the calls for change in the late 1890s, Zhang spent the summer of 1900 conducting a good deal of soul searching after the failure of his former colleagues' 1898 reforms and with the confusing events of the *yihetuan* uprising concluding in Tianjin and Beijing. While in Shanghai, Zhang attended a series of meetings organized by one of the exiled Kang's followers, Tang

²⁷ Shimada, 49. Shimada gives a solid treatment of this time in Zhang's life, affiliated with Kang and Liang, on pages 48-57.

²⁸ Seungjoo Yoon, "Literati-Journalists of the *Chinese Progress* (*Shiwu Bao*)," in *Rethinking 1898*, 66.

Caichang (唐才常). The meetings were titled the National Parliament (國會), or the Parliament of the Central States of China (中國議會). Zhang was infuriated by the program, which closely followed Kang's agenda in recommending the preservation of a monarchical state. At Zhang later recounted: "On the one hand, they want to reject the Manchus but on the other hand they want to serve the emperor (勤王). This is truly a large contradiction. To announce that I separate myself from this order, I will cut off my queue! (割辮與絕)."²⁹

Zhang's theatrically, self-narrated instantaneous revelation may appear too simplistic in light of the complexity of his philosophical writings, and in 1982 historian Luo Baoshan argued that Zhang's famed encounter with the *Zhongguo Huiyi* needed to be contextualized alongside his earlier activities and prior interest in revolution. In 1899, he had traveled with Liang Qichao to Tokyo and met with the Cantonese revolutionaries Sun Yat-sen and Chen Shaobai (陳少白). While the meeting did not spark an instant and mutual appreciation, Luo argued, Sun's "full-blooded will" (浴血之意) had a strong influence on Zhang, even if their views departed.³⁰ Zhang had always felt strongly about the illegitimacy of the Qing emperor, whom he called the "guest emperor" (客帝), and after meeting Sun and Chen, his bold opinions burst through into his writing. The time spent in Shanghai at the *Zhongguo Huiyi* came at the later stages of this turn, and the goals of his declaration above were *not merely* to attack the contradiction of opposing the Manchus while serving the emperor *but also* to serve notice that in the future he would always oppose the presence of any foreigners inside his nation.³¹

Luo's explanation dovetails well with the overall historical trajectory that culminated in the event two years later that forever linked Zhang with Kang in Chinese intellectual history. In response to the open letter Kang had written to Liang in 1902, Zhang wrote a dense refutation simply titled "Letter opposing Kang Youwei's views on Revolution" (駁康有為論革命書). In the essay, Zhang's contempt for the Manchu rulers emerged very clearly. Even if the Manchus' rule had become naturalized and ingrained into the habits of the Han people, it was still foreign and hence unnatural: "After being forced to be a particular way for a long time, one becomes

²⁹ Zhang, quoted in Tang Zhijun, 74.

³⁰ Zhang, quoted in Luo, 61.

³¹ Luo Baoshan (駱寶善), "Some newly-discovered articles of Zhang Binglin throwing light on his political change (關於章炳麟政治立場轉變的幾篇逸文)" in *Historical Research* (歷史研究) 1982, number 5, 60-62.

accustomed to it, but this is certainly no way to determine right and wrong."³² Further, he attacked Kang's constitutional system for giving legislative positions to other groups – Mongolians and Tibetans – and for denying the Han people adequate political rights. And, echoing Liang's comments above, and in anticipation of future revolutionary activities to come, Zhang criticized Kang's notion of *datong* for being an outdated alibi for the current Manchu occupation: "You have admitted that the *datong* and universal principles are not practical in *our times*. Rather, since ours is certainly *the age of nationalism*, your confounding together Manchus and Han is like mixing fragrances and stinks in the same bowl."³³

I will not further detail the essay's arguments, for it is a well-worn topic in studies of Zhang. Only two key points concern me for now. The first is Zhang's head-on confrontation with Kang's comparison of China with India. In a sharp contrast with the approach he assumed later in Tokyo, Zhang fully accepted the terms of comparability that Kang set forth. That is, Zhang refuted his former teacher through an analysis of topography and of the ways in which spatial relationships determine the behavior of a national people.

He began by arguing that the Indian people were especially susceptible to British occupation after their experiences with the Mongols and then Mughals. "By the time the Mughals unified the land, the Indian people had already pledged their allegiances to a different people (異種)," he reasoned. "To be owned by the Mughals and then to be owned by the British, what difference did it make to them?" However, unlike the Han under Manchu rule, the Indians had been conditioned to accept impermanence from living in their hot climate. "Don't you know in the tropics, people do not go cold or hungry, therefore people become lazy, and things easily go rotten. They are weaker than what you [Kang] saw." As a result, the theory of non-ownership could only arise in the Indian people with their "Brahmin" (Hindu) and Buddhist teachings. They "see everything (萬物) as impermanent and unable to be held ... Whether or not land is lost or whether or not a people flourish or fail, these have never been a deep concern to them." Zhang tried to go one step further than Kang's social scientific theory by claiming that his own observations about India had "all been proven beyond a doubt by recent sociologists."³⁴

³² Zhang Taiyan, "Letter opposing Kang Youwei's views on Revolution," trans. Peter Zarrow, in *Sources of Chinese Tradition, Volume 2: From 1600 Through the Twentieth Century vol. 2*, eds. Wm. Theodore de Bary and Richard Lufano (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 311.

³³ Zhang, Letter, trans. Zarrow 311.

³⁴ Zhang, Letter, trans. Zarrow, 311.

Further, Zhang used the land size argument to defend the possibility of revolt for the central states of China (中國). However, unlike Kang, he placed a dual emphasis upon the spirit and sentiments of the people. "If you wish to strengthen your own people, then do not rely upon literature and art but rather only focus on the people's spirit." In the central states, he continued, "regarding topography (地勢) and sentiment (人情), they are rarely fragmented or scattered and are generally strongly held. Our virtue is far greater than the Indian people's." He concluded by saying that "if our will is firmer than the Indian people's, then our successes will definitely exceed theirs."³⁵

Zhang's speculation on India at this early date is useful as a contrast with his attitude towards India years later. While he accepted Kang's comparison between the Mughal and Qing empires, as purportedly foreign rulers who prepared the way for British invasion, he did not identify with the Indian people as fellow colonized peoples. Such a mode of thought would require another mediating category, such as the historicity of Asia.

This mediation would arrive as an indirect result of the jail time Zhang spent as a result of his writings to Kang, which constitutes the second noteworthy feature of the open letter. In his essay, Zhang had used the Emperor's taboo personal name and then called him a little clown (小丑),³⁶ which led to a three-year arrest from 1903 to 1906.³⁷ According to Shimada, Zhang used his prison time to focus on studying Buddhist writings, which generated a feeling of affinity with the land of Buddhism's origin, India.³⁸ Straight from prison, Zhang left for Tokyo to reunite with Sun and his Revolutionary Alliance (同盟會) and his friend Liu Shiwei. With Liu, he edited the organization's periodical *Min Bao*, where he published a series of sophisticated views about the relationship between China (he used the neologism 支那), India and Japan in a world of fallen nations and invading countries. Over this period, he began to place greater emphasis upon Asia as a central organizing category in his thinking. The path to Zhang's new interpretation of the significance of India, Asia and the world is complicated, but the historiography seems to agree that those years in prison and his subsequent decision to leave for Tokyo were pivotal.

THE TURN FROM JAPAN TOWARDS INDIA: COMPARATIVE CONTINENTALISM

³⁵ Zhang, original text, 761-762, class copy.

³⁶ Or, as Joshua Fogel translated for Shimada Kenji, a "despicable little ignorant wretch." Shimada, 18.

³⁷ Zarrow in de Bary, 309.

³⁸ Shimada, 19.

After he left prison, Zhang recorded an encounter with some overseas Indian students in Tokyo in April 1907 which consolidated his feelings of sympathy and alliance with the Indian students.³⁹ Zhang and the Indian students both attended a service at a women's college commemorating the founder of the Maratha Empire in the seventeenth century Shivaji Bhosle.

³⁹ An English translation is readily available in Shimada, 78-82.

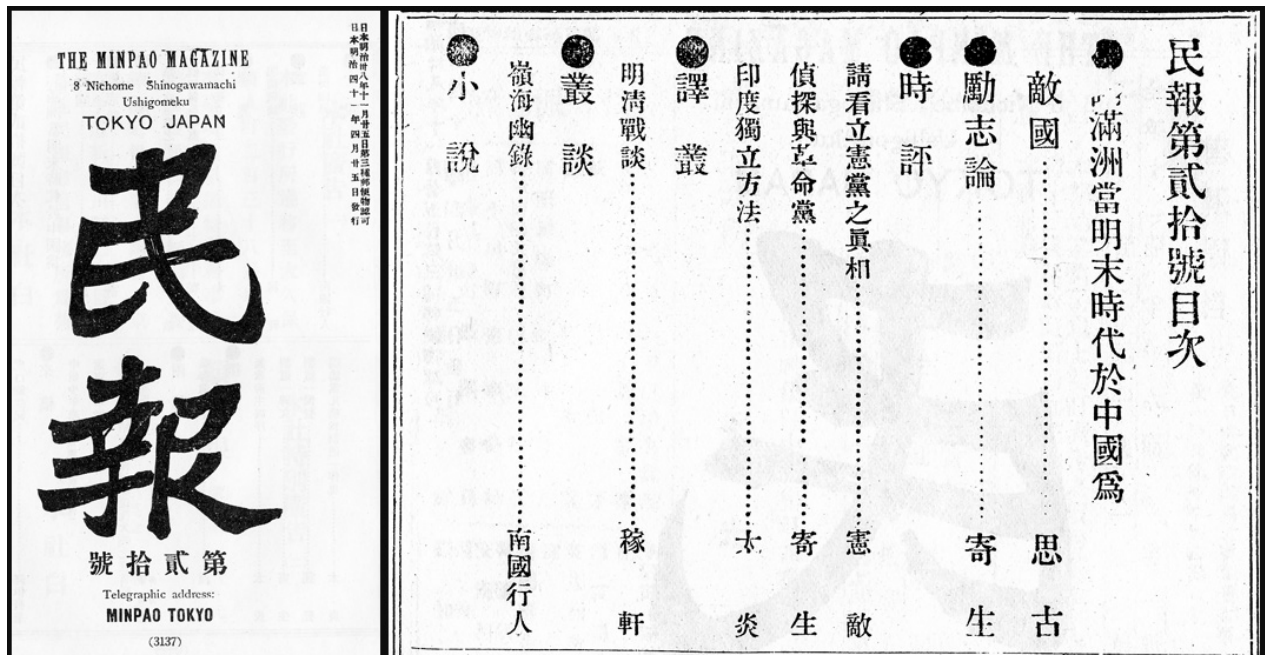


Figure 1. The cover and table of contents to the twentieth issue of *Min Bao*, in which Zhang wrote a wide-ranging set of articles about Indian independence and the implications for Chinese nationalism. They were found underneath the section titled "Methods for Indian Independence."

According to the students, Shivaji "arose among the populace, overthrew the Mughal empire, and brought independence to the Indian people." Zhang extended the comparison of India and China to the struggle against the Qing by the Han people of his time (and the Ming loyalists of the past) and the struggle against the British by the Indian people. Zhang and his friend "Mr. A"⁴⁰ began to discuss the possibility of a pan-Asian alliance that linked Japan with China and India. Mr. A told Zhang: "Are not our three countries like a folding fan? India is the paper; China is the bamboo frame; and Japan is the pivot linking these two to the handle."⁴¹

But although Zhang was once a great admirer of the Meiji order and had earlier written about his vision for a Japan-China partnership to fend off European expansion, he was already skeptical of Mr. A's dream. His skepticism could be encapsulated in an anecdote featuring a speech given by the retired military general and former Meiji Prime Minister Ôkuma Shigenobu (大隈重信) who Zhang previously admired for his important service as a reformer. When Zhang witnessed Ôkuma's speech, however, he was struck by Ôkuma's allegiance to England and his condescending attitude towards China and India. He was shocked that Ôkuma was so obeisant

⁴⁰ None of the Indian students' names can be traced back to records of actual students in Tokyo. The custom is to simply use Zhang's own system of Chinese transliteration. This is Fogel's translation in Shimada. I could not acquire the original version in *Min Bao* in time for this paper.

⁴¹ Zhang in Shimada, 79-80.

towards the British officials in the audience and that his superficial words of advice for the Indian people amounted to an attitude of resignation. In a series of essays he wrote for the twentieth issue of *Min Bao* in April 1908, which were dedicated to the theme of an Indian-Chinese alliance under the title "Methods for Indian Independence" (印度獨立方法) and which were published one year after attending the Shivaji memorial, Zhang described with more clarity and venom his reasons for turning away from Japan. Again he wrote about Ôkuma, who had recently delivered a second speech about India, China and Japan.

During the speech Ôkuma, whom Zhang now derisively called "the cripple" (無趾: literally "toeless") because of an injury he had sustained that forced him to walk irregularly, announced: "Of the nations of Asian civilization today, I consider Japan to be the greatest. Next is China. As for the people of Babylon and India, even though their cultures could be admired in bygone days, now they cannot even be compared."⁴² The Chinese students in the audience cheered at Ôkuma's proposed hierarchy, but Zhang was unimpressed and proceeded to describe a conversation he later shared with his Indian friend known as Mr. Dai (帶氏). Dai sneered, "today's speech only revealed how those belligerent Japanese look down upon others. They really consider themselves to be the dragon and hegemon of the East." Further, "that cripple also despises China. He considers the nearly ten thousand students Chinese students studying at Waseda University (早稻田大学) [which Ôkuma founded] to be a flaw (寶) in Japan's noble reputation. But the Japanese wish to create an alliance with those Chinese students in order to stretch their power to the central lands of China. Therefore, he is not afraid to yield to you. He intends to flatter." Dai cited as evidence for Japan's hostility an incident where a Japanese ship full of arms – the *Tatsu Maru* (辰丸) – was seized by officials in Canton, followed by the Japanese government forcing the ship's release through belligerent threats. But Zhang was most convinced of the Japanese government's deception when Dai explained to him the recent renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Originally signed in 1902, the alliance had been revised three years later with new conditions aimed at the maintenance of India. Under the new revision, Japan now recognized England's "right to take such measures in the proximity of that frontier as she may find necessary for safeguarding her Indian possessions."⁴³ Therefore, according to Dai,

⁴² Zhang, "The Indian people's views on Japan (印度人之觀日本)," *Min Bao* 20 (1908), *Min Bao* volume six, (Taipei: China Kuomintang Central Committee Party History Materials Compilation Committee (中國國民黨中央委員會黨史史料編纂委員會), 1968), 32. All future notes from *Min Bao* will refer to this publication information.

⁴³ Alliance Text, Article IV.

Ôkuma slandered the Indian people because "his greatest fear was that Indian people could recover their lost land (光復) and embroil Japan and England into war."⁴⁴ Zhang concluded that the Japanese government had hidden behind "the white people in order to humiliate their own kind (悔同類)."⁴⁵ Unlike Kang, who had used the original 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance as proof of Japan's status as the number one Asian power, Zhang turned the tables on the Meiji government by arguing that they had risen to power by pandering to the European imperialists and sacrificing their Asian brethren.

By now we can already discern some possible directions for understanding Zhang's framework of comparability and non-comparability. In his essays on Japan and India, he simultaneously decoupled China from Japan while uniting it with India, a reversal of position from his earlier stance while working for *Shiwubao*. However, what remained consistent for him was the *civilizational ideal of Asia* that he tried to achieve through political alliance. While previously Japan-China, his new vision became India-China. Japan was not simply an enemy of China's and India's; they were traitors to their "own kind," which somewhat disqualified them from the possibility of a future Asian resistance. More than fifty years ago, scholar Ding Zeliang pointed out that Zhang's wording "still accepted the influence of Japanese imperialism's language of 'Asia together,' 'Sino-Japanese mutual support' and 'same language, same race (同文同種).'"⁴⁶

The concept Asia, of course, was not an unproblematic term. It entered the Chinese and Japanese languages simultaneously with the term "Europe," sometime in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁴⁷ According to Karl, the first edition of Wei Yuan's *Haiguo Tuzhi* (海國圖志) did not use Asia or continents to classify lands. But by the third edition, Wei's work already incorporated the idea that Asia existed parallel to the European continent. Originally a Greek term which meant "those lands to [Greece's] east," the idea of Asia could only exist as a mirror to Europe, which lied to Greece's west.⁴⁸ Although the boundaries for both so-called landmasses have literally shifted greatly since their initial versions, the very concepts of Europe and Asia

⁴⁴ Zhang, Views, 33.

⁴⁵ Zhang, Views, 34.

⁴⁶ Ding Zeliang (丁則良), "Zhang Binglin and the Struggle for National Liberation in India (章炳麟與印度民族解放鬥爭)" in *Historical Research* (歷史研究) 1957, number 1, 30.

⁴⁷ Again, I did not have time to look further into this, but I am basing this argument upon a claim Karl makes in her article "Creating Asia." As evidence, she cited John W. Witek, "Understanding the Chinese: A comparison of Matteo Ricci and the French Jesuit Mathematicians Sent by Louis XIV," in Charles E. Ronan and Bonnie B.C. Oh, eds., *East meets West: The Jesuits in China, 1582-1773* (Chicago, 1988).

⁴⁸ Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen, *The Myth of Continents* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1997), 22-23.

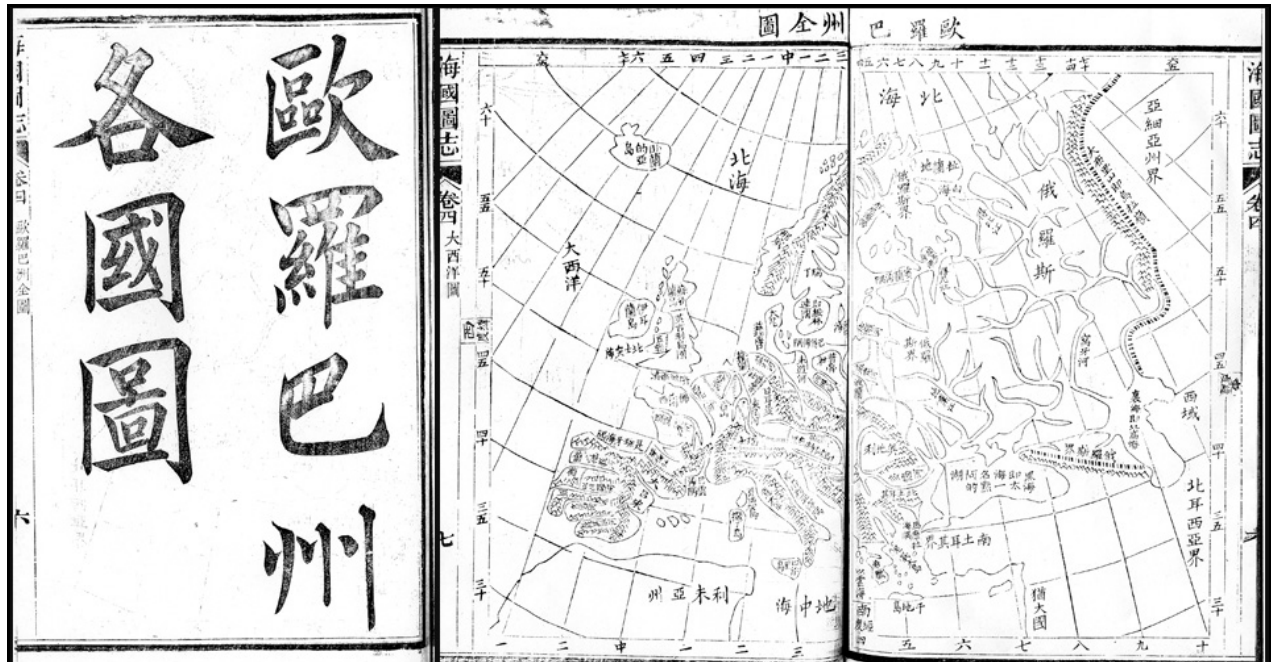
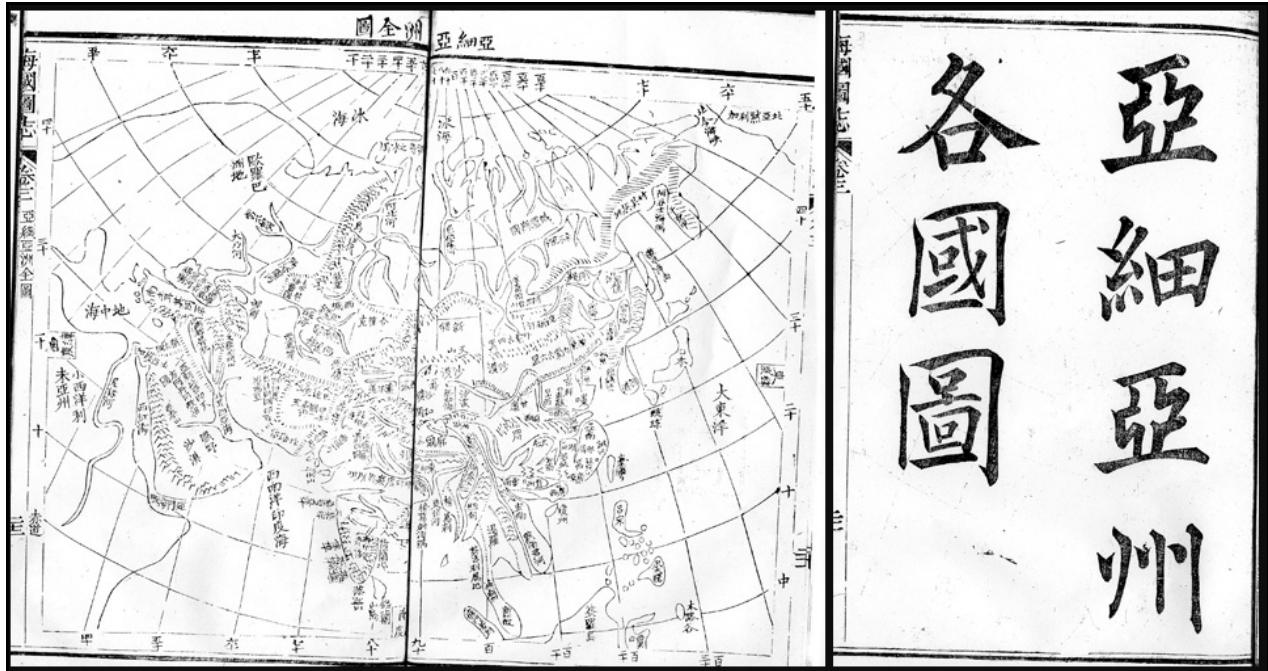


Figure 2 (also opposite). Images from the third edition of Wei Yuan's *Haiguo Tuzhi*, which had incorporated the idea that Europe and Asia were comparable units of analysis as continental bodies.

have always been held up as mirrors to one another; they were always comparable as continents but contrasted in terms of character and morality. Such oppositional thinking extended from topographical traits into personality and civilizational ones. Perhaps what is interesting about Zhang's appropriation of the idea Asia, however, is that he does not allow the idea of Europe to preemptively subjugate the relative position of Asia. While *fully accepting* the imperial terms of binary thinking, Zhang attempted to invert their positions and to generate an Asia that, while parallel to Europe, was superior.

Zhang's constant attempt to think through the form of comparability, even as the specific comparisons themselves were fine tuned, introduces us to the concept of doubling that accompanied the rise of global nationalism and capitalism. By doubling, I mean a process in which Chinese nationalists, and subjects in world outside Euro-America generally, saw themselves as part of their own nation while simultaneously holding onto the idea that their nation was *comparable* to others in the worldwide family of nations. In his important research on Chinese anarchists, Arif Dirlik wrote long ago that "[n]ationalism as it emerged in China ... presupposed the recognition of the claims of that world, not that it would be closed off."⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Arif Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 53.



Implicit in Dirlik's statement but not clearly articulated was the attendant idea that in order to think of China as a nation in the world, Chinese nationalists needed to constantly compare China to other nations. As Benedict Anderson wrote in a collection of essays on his years researching Southeast Asia, it became impossible "to experience Berlin without once thinking of Manila, or Manila without thinking Berlin. Here indeed is the origin of *nationalism, which lives by making comparisons*."⁵⁰ Nationalism thus has been less about one original nation spawning a series of fakes and copies – a style of argument attributed to Anderson's other works⁵¹ – but rather more about the simultaneity of thinking one's own nation at the same time one must think about other, comparable nations.

What Anderson's observation seemed to gloss over, however, was that the experience of doubling and comparison was distinct in the case of intellectuals living outside of the metropole. Here we must keep in mind the salient point made by Harry D. Harootunian included in the epigraph at the outset of this essay: that the onslaught of global capitalism and the effacement of points of reference to the past meant that many people, such as Asians and Africans, were forced to live through systems of knowledge that originated elsewhere. Such people were always haunted by the simultaneous co-presence of that knowledge halfway around the world (the

⁵⁰ Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons* (New York: Verso, 1998), 229. Italics added.

⁵¹ See Partha Chatterjee's essay "Anderson's Utopia" in *Grounds of Comparison*, eds. Jonathan Culler and Cheah (New York: Routledge, 2003), 161-170.

European nation), as well as the co-presence of the suppressed past effaced by capitalist processes.⁵² In other words, at the same time that intellectuals like Zhang saw themselves as national peoples belonging to a larger continental entity, they were forced to understand those categories in relation to other nations and continents around the world, ultimately forcing a relentless desire for comparison and the feeling that the nation was inadequate to its own representation (if two nations differ slightly, how can one speak of a prototypical nation, and how could one decide which nation was the original and which was the copy?). The crucial difference between the intellectual in Berlin and the intellectual in Manila in Anderson's example, therefore, was that "the colonized intelligentsia ... are *possessed by comparison*," which "stems from the disquieting knowledge of material forces at work in the wider world as it disrupts the non-reflective intimate relationship we have with the social surroundings in which we find ourselves immersed."⁵³ This conundrum accurately describes the conditions of both Kang and Zhang.

My point is that Zhang's notion of Asianism against Europe, founded upon the continent as its primary unit, was premised upon nationalism and its own elementary unit, the nation. As he made comparisons between China and India, thereby building the foundation for an Asian continental unity, he simultaneously created a parallel to the European continent, whose own nations could be spoken about in sweeping terms and were considered as similar to each other as India and China were. Heuristically we could lay out this structure of comparison as follows:

CHINA:INDIA :: FRANCE:ENGLAND
ASIA : EUROPE

Of course, this movement of double comparison could be found in Kang Youwei's text as well (by comparing land masses of like nations, Kang simultaneously creates two generalizable units that could be classified as continents), but Zhang's own grounds for comparison differed widely from his former teacher's.

⁵² Elsewhere, Harootunian explicated Watsuji's "double life" thusly: "Japan's 'modern life' constituted a doubling and thereby a reworking through the logic of historical repetition of the modernizing process that undoubtedly was occurring in places like Brazil, India, and China ... [Which was] the jarring coexistence of several pasts and the present in the now of everydayness, often in a relationship of unevenness." *Overcome by Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), xvii.

⁵³ Pheng Cheah, "Grounds of Comparison," in *Grounds of Comparison*, 12. Italics added.

THE HISTORY OF NATIONAL ESSENCE AND THE NATIONAL ESSENCE OF HISTORY

In sharp contrast to a formulation which emphasizes space and de-emphasized temporal considerations in favor of a timeless vision of topographical determinism, Zhang prioritized temporality and history, especially in his notion of national essence (國粹). This is not to argue that Zhang ignored space, as if that were possible, but that he emphasized history as *the* pivotal concept for the nation. In his conversation with Dai in "The Indian people's views on Japan (印度人之觀日本)," Zhang belittled the Japanese and Europeans for their lack of historical richness. All of the great civilizational inventions throughout the world had been derived either from China or India, according to them. The two peoples had the most national essence, manifest in the specific historical claims Zhang made. He made three general claims about the superiority of Indian and Chinese inventions over the Japanese: religion, script and technology.

First, according to Dai, "even though the Buddhist literature and art of Japanese culture was taken from Chinese Buddhism, really it originally entered from India." He also wrote that "whereas the Indian people's texts on morality are memorized, recited and written about by many people, the Japanese people have barely one book written in *kana* (仮名) cherished by people around the world."⁵⁴ Second, in order for the Japanese to even understand such literature, they had to rely upon *Wani* (王仁), a mythical descendant of a Chinese emperor who came to Japan in the eighth century and transmitted knowledge about reading Chinese characters. Finally, he included a discussion of various technologies that arrived in Japan only by way of China and India, such as printing, silk textiles, and gunpowder. For example, according to Zhang and Dai:

As far as the purportedly high level of Japanese culture, all of their knowledge about creating sugar and seating must rely upon manuals which explain methods for production. But originally, the knowledge arrived in Japan only after they had been transmitted from India to the central states of China. And as far as tables and chairs, the Chinese have already practiced this for thousands of years. And although even the Chinese farmer families build and sit on chairs, in Japanese households you can only sit on the ground (席地). When you lie on your back without a bed (偃臥無床), it is almost as if there is no difference between high and low class.⁵⁵

Besides using history to differentiate the Japanese from India and China, Zhang also revived historical stories regarding the long civilizational connections between Indian Buddhists and the Han people. In his essay titled "The Indian people's discussion of National Essence (印度

⁵⁴ Zhang, Views, 34.

⁵⁵ Zhang, Views, 33-34.

人之論國粹)," he recounted a story claiming that the Indian people were descendants of a minority group to the west of the Han people in ancient times. "The Sakya (釋迦) people were originally called the *Sai* people (塞種). They entered India and became a great people ... Their enlightened teacher, Buddha, was named Gautama Sakya (喬答摩釋迦)."⁵⁶ Unfortunately, the rich cultural exchange between the Buddhist people and the Han people had fizzled in recent years, but it needed to be revived for the survival of Asia. In another essay entitled "Methods for a Chinese-Indian Alliance (支那印度聯合之法)," Zhang recounted the history of the relationship over the years:

There are only two great Asian nations: the Han scholars in the East and the Buddhist scholars in the West...The world of the Han owe a great debt to the exchanges across the *Congling* mountains (蔥嶺山, known as the Pamir Mountains in Central Asia). After the Western and Eastern Jin Dynasties, sea trade expanded. During the time of Xuanzhen Emperor (玄奘) during the Tang dynasty, some policies provoked trouble but were never extreme. During the Ming, relations gradually became hardened and blocked (硬塞) without any travelers. Today, it has been more than five hundred years since contact.⁵⁷

Zhang then recounted a mythical story about a Buddhist temple in Shandong, Zhang's hometown. According to his friend, a messenger from India was sent during the Qianlong era to deliver as tribute (貢) a jewel with both cool and warm properties (溫涼玉). It was over two *chi* long, four *cun* thick and eight *cun* wide. It had three colors: green, white and blue. "If you touch it, one end is warm, and one end is cool." Recently, however, a Gurka messenger again came to pay tribute to the court, but the Qing met him with extreme arrogance (倨). When the messenger entered,

The governor-general dispensed the honors of a foreign ceremony. He displayed a row of one hundred officials. The governor-general's seat was four *chi* tall, and the messenger was forced to sit at the bottom He then ordered his followers to bend over and serve as a table. Then emerged one cow shin (牛脛) and one sheep shin. He ordered the messenger to eat it while it was fresh, but the messenger could not stomach it. Momentarily, he was invited to watch some actors perform seven types of martial arts and to capture some wild animals. The messenger just did not understand.⁵⁸

This was a history told at the expense of the Manchus. Zhang's point was that the Qing were barbaric, insecure and incapable rulers, and hence one should support actions to revive the pre-Qing connections between the Indians and the Han people. But Zhang's goal was not simply

⁵⁶ Zhang, "The Indian people's discussion of National Essence (印度人之論國粹)," *Min Bao* 20, 35.

⁵⁷ Zhang, "Methods for a Chinese-Indian Alliance (支那印度聯合之法)," *Min Bao* 20, 37.

⁵⁸ Zhang, Alliance, 38.

to revel in nostalgia for the past but to highlight the consequences of historicity for the present. This took the form of a theory of national essence. In his essay on national essence, he wrote that while he was at his Indian friend's residence, they discussed the centrality of history in national essence. "A people's independence must first take the search for national essence as its greatest priority (主); national essence must take history as its greatest priority."⁵⁹ Without knowing one's history, according to Dai, then one cannot arrive at understanding; "you will be ignorant and naïve and belong to no one (童昏莫屬)." This is because the nation as an idea, for Zhang, fundamentally laid in a people's mental self-awakening (自覺心), which set humans apart from animals. "When I heard my Buddhist friend say this," Zhang wrote, "I knew that the Han and the Fan (梵) (Buddhist) peoples shared the same feelings, and I was secretly overwhelmed with joy (竊沾沾自欣幸)."⁶⁰

Zhang tied the individual's self-awakening with national essence and national independence struggles, but his overall formulation differed greatly from traditional theories of blind nationalism or subsumption into statist or national organizations. Wang Hui has explained that Zhang thought through an "individual/nation duality" rather than "one of individual/society/nation."⁶¹ Wang cites passages from Zhang's *National Essence Studies Journal* (國粹學報) and his later works to argue that, for Zhang, national essence was a fight for the autonomy of individual Han Chinese against the idea of a foreign-ruled nation that had been imposed onto them by the Manchus. Nationalism to Zhang meant employing religion (referring to Buddhism) to arouse faith and improve the nation's morality and to use national essence to "improve patriotic fervor." Ultimately, national essence meant that Han people would "cherish our Han people's history."⁶² What set Zhang apart from other theories of nationalism was its repudiation of social or governmental space as the site of essence. Essence laid in the relationship an individual nurtured between itself and its own people's history. The imposition of larger social forms inevitably became a false freedom, such as the "falsity of the nation."⁶³ Thus, Zhang's argument, Wang writes, was premised upon negativity; specifically, a negation of all suffocating moral, social and political regulations that suppressed individual freedom. Zhang

⁵⁹ Zhang, *Essence*, 35.

⁶⁰ Zhang, *Essence*, 35.

⁶¹ Wang, 239.

⁶² Wang, 242.

⁶³ Wang, 245.

"not only opposed the nation but was *asocial*."⁶⁴ The affirmation of asociality affirmed that individuals would awake from slumber themselves "not because of the nation, society or other people." Thus they did not need to "acknowledge laws, responsibilities or duties."⁶⁵

Here we find clues into Zhang's attitude towards the Manchus, which although vicious and sometimes repugnant, was more complicated than a simplistic racism. Zhang did not hate the Manchu people as a people but simply as non-Han who were occupying the land of the Han. While of course it is questionable for Zhang to simply assert that a given land belongs to a certain group of people in advance, the logical extension of his argument was that if the Manchus "returned" north, then he would express no ill will towards them. Further, because his notion of nationalism was negative and non-statist rather than positive, his agenda was not about founding a new nation upon the elimination of minorities; it was about the elimination of power structures that hurt the individual. His was effectively an intersubjective critique (how individuals can block other individuals' freedom) that operated at the level of race. Therefore, the problem of thinking Zhang's anti-Manchism also becomes a problem for thinking about how race and nationalism have been tied together throughout the world in the modern era. I don't wish to dismiss the contradictions or the darker sides of Zhang's theories but simply to re-frame them as questions about how racism was thought by every other intellectual of the same era.⁶⁶

The individualistic and asocial dimension to Zhang's thought could also be found in the India essays, as he explained to skeptics that anarchism and national essence were in fact less harmful than the alternatives because of their rootedness in individual nature:

When a wild raccoon is born, it makes the same noises and same movements as a human. In the beginning, there is no difference. But when you judge their behavior and conduct (行事), then you can see they are not the same. Regarding national essence, animals likewise cannot learn the limits of proper conduct by judging from the lessons of defeated entities other than themselves (別泯絕分際勢固不能). The reason why the human race is unique from birds and beast is *only* their ability to comprehend the significance of the past. If national essence was completely lost, then you could not even know about events from one hundred years ago. What difference would there be between humans, dogs, and cattle? Individuals who do not have self-awakening immediately will be oppressed and squeezed out (陵轢) by other individuals. Without the self-awakening of individuals as part of a national people (民族), they will be immediately oppressed by other peoples. If we lose our instinct for self-preservation, then those who assail the theory of national essence will truly force our people to be occupied by different races (異種).⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Wang, 245-246, italics added.

⁶⁵ Wang, 246.

⁶⁶ For a more nuanced and detailed reading of Zhang's relationship with the Manchus, see Pamela Crossley, *Orphan Warriors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 160-192.

⁶⁷ Zhang, *Essence*, 36.

Herein lies the connection between Zhang's promotion of studying history as national essence, and his political endorsement of independence movements. He supported Indian independence movements as a model for the Han Chinese to follow in dealing with the Manchus, because he thought that through independence, individuals could understand their own culture as part of a broader, national culture. And through such an understanding of history, they could achieve self-awakening. Following Wang's argument, we can argue that Zhang fought for the conditions of possibility for learning history and self-identifying with a national people, but he never supported the idea that such education should move from top to bottom, from state or social organization to the individual. Such a statement inevitably carried an implicit criticism of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao and their promotion of learning societies and national organizations.⁶⁸ Another sharp distinction between Zhang and Kang can be located in their respective attitudes towards future action. Along with his radical opposition to Kang's reformism, Zhang needed to formulate a theory for *why* one could ever expect a future world that had improved upon the present circumstances of widespread foreign occupation and rule. He asserted a connection between the past to the future that, unlike Kang, sought to use the past as an attack upon the present rather than an alibi for the maintenance of the status quo.

Returning to his essay comparing Japan with India, we see that Zhang maintained that because of the shallowness of Japan and Europe's shallow history, they could not sustain their power indefinitely. Such "arrogant people's faces become thick, but we cannot simply judge a nation's level of culture solely by their current strengths and successes."⁶⁹ European people may flatter themselves for the time being, but in the long run even the uneducated Japanese understood that China had contributed more valuable items to the world. As for the Japanese, the Russo-Japanese war exposed their shallow culture. Before the war, both sides "did not intend to kill in excess. But then the Japanese were so proud and brazen, when they met the nation bordering the sea [Korea] and the Eastern Liaoning Province, the Japanese were ill mannered and cruel. The only things that could calm their arrogance were military weapons."⁷⁰

By contrast, the Indian people, according to Zhang, were serious and stern due to their religion, and they did not slander other people; they were the opposite of the arrogant Japanese. Zhang believed the Indian people had already shown signs that their deep national essence

⁶⁸ Wang, 245.

⁶⁹ Zhang, Views, 34.

⁷⁰ Zhang, Views, 35.

translated into an ability to flourish in the future, unlike the imperialists. Indian people "are the most forgiving and respectful people in the world," he wrote. He admired their vegetarian diet and their progressively egalitarian social structure. "In the old days, Indian people had a four-tier class system [the caste system] and the custom of burning widows [*sati*]. But in modern times they have cast out those customs," he wrote. Once the Indian people achieved science and learning, they could easily shed the unseemly aspects of their tradition. "Who can say that the Buddhist people are limiting themselves?" he asked. By contrast, the imperialist Europeans and Japanese sought to enhance national essence through recent accomplishments, but their peoples' will had already been exhausted and had become deficient and lax. "If one were to enhance their national essence by seeking *justice*, then they would not invade other people and employ them like coolies and treat them like pigs." It was not simply the case that such imperial powers needed to worry about external threats; rather the "thieves and robbers" of the world hurt themselves by destroying the books which speak about the past and the future (跼蹐之書, literally "books of the sole and of the tiptoes").⁷¹ Zhang of course also drew the comparison back to his own people, speaking of the traditional teachings that prioritized agriculture over commerce (重農輕商) and cherishing far-away lands in order to resist invaders (懷遠禦寇), concluding, "the reasons for why my country will surpass the white people are definite."⁷² What remains left to be discussed is how Zhang envisioned the bridge between the wretched conditions of his day with a future that redeemed those people with the greatest national essence.

SOME THOUGHTS ON TEMPORALITY, OR, WHY ZHANG TAIYAN WAS THE QUINTESSENTIAL MODERNIST

To conclude, I want to consider the implications of Zhang's theoretical sensitivity to time. In summarizing the above essay on national essence, he wrote that if only the Indian people "gained independence through one war, then they would already surpass the level of British culture, *but they would not necessarily surpass the level of culture of their own past.*"⁷³ This line demonstrates vividly that for Zhang, the task to be undertaken was not simply seen in terms of a rivalry with the rest of the nations of the world – that is, spatially – but also in terms of how the

⁷¹ Zhang, *Essence*, 37.

⁷² Zhang, *Essence*, 36.

⁷³ Zhang, *Views*, 34. Italics added.

past and the future weighed upon one's existence in a particular cultural configuration. In this sense, Zhang's double comparative scheme of nations and continents (China is like India, Asia is like Europe) already anticipated in the early twentieth century what Rey Chow has recently described a critical trend towards "alternative paradigm[s] of comparison." Such critics attempt to look at literature comparatively from the standpoint of a "specific cultural framework," eschewing the false universality of Eurocentric cosmopolitanism. Such "identitarian formations of non-Western modernity" which are "predicated on comparison," Chow argues, always operate "*biculturally* or *multiculturally*, even when [they appear] predominantly occupied with itself."⁷⁴ Therefore, the "apparently monolingual, monocultural, or mononational investigations of India, Nigeria, Spanish America, modern Greece, or Japan ... should be understood as full-fledged comparative projects."⁷⁵ One could scarcely find a better description for Zhang's essays.

Chow's point, however, is not to celebrate such projects on their own terms but to point out that "the post-European culture [such as postcolonial South Asia, Africa and Latin America] is caught between this 'always already' present that is Europe, on the one hand, and the histories and traditions it must now live as its past, on the other." In other words, the rhetorical strategy of retrieving a historical past that has been effaced by capitalism and imperialism is not *anti*-modern but actually entirely modern to its core. Post-European scholarship fully accepts the idea that time can be periodized as "registering a break not only from one chronologically defined period to another, but in *the quality* of historical time itself."⁷⁶ A return to the past as something qualitatively superior to the present only makes sense if one accepts the very modern idea that different times have different qualities, rather than serving as neutral markers of change. Elsewhere, Harootunian has explained the similarities between contemporary post-colonial scholars (similar to Chow's post-Europeans) and the Chinese and Japanese of the 1920s and 30s by arguing that both parties' search for a "sanctuary of enduring and unchanging value" in the past, away from the contemporary colonization of everyday life by the commodity form, was a logic that "was simply *the other side* of the commodity form."⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Rey Chow, "The Old/New Question of Comparison in Literary Studies: a Post-European Perspective," *ELH*, 71.2 (2004), 301-302. Italics original.

⁷⁵ Chow, 302.

⁷⁶ Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time* (New York: Verso, 1995), 16. The first chapter to Osborne's book lays out, very skillfully, the theory of modernity and how concepts that attempt to *succeed* modernity remain caught within modernity's own logic.

⁷⁷ Harootunian, "Ghostly Comparisons: Anderson's Telescope," in *Grounds of Comparison*, 180. Italics added. For an extended analysis of how Zhang's argument were, in fact, mediations on reification and the commodity form, see Viren Murthy's unpublished dissertation "The myriad things stem from confusion: Nationalism, ontology and resistance in the philosophy of Zhang Taiyan."

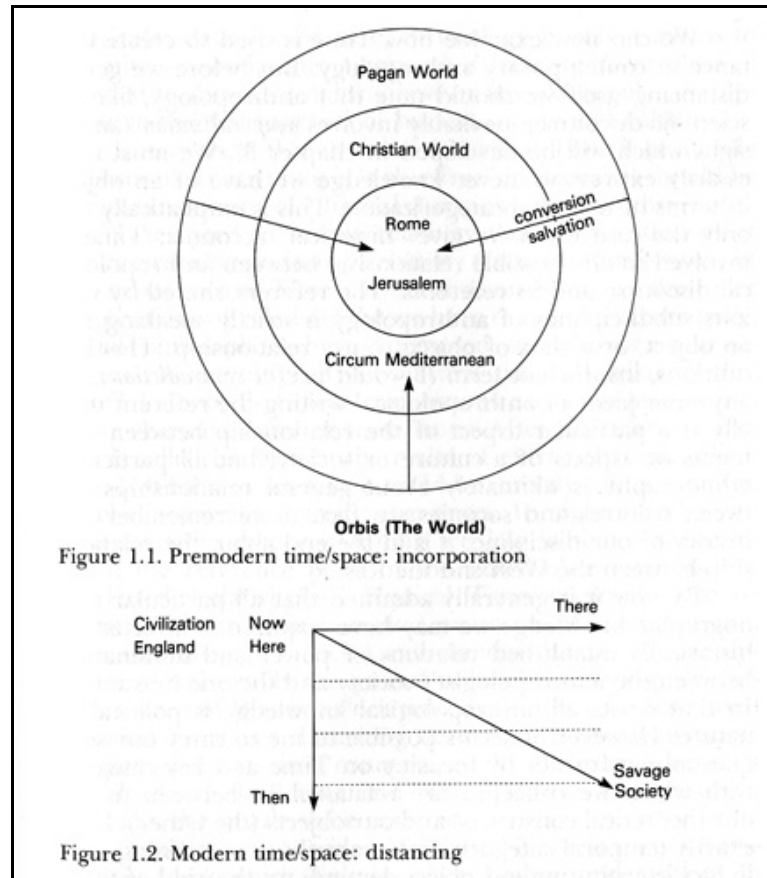


Figure 3. Diagrams from Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other*, which demonstrate how comparison has urged scholars to place their objects of comparison inside a greater conceptualization of time as a whole.⁷⁸

Therefore, if modernity is thought of as a temporalizing logic – as opposed to particular phenomenon like a particular trading activity – then Zhang Taiyan's seeming nostalgia for prior history becomes less puzzling in relation to his advocacy for progressive and revolutionary politics. Both were part of a conception of time that seeks to chart a continual movement from past to future and to chart the relative qualities of each moment. The rise of comparative discourse was founded upon the temporalizing idea that one can interpret "how far" a particular civilization had developed in its relation to others. As Johannes Fabian famously wrote, "[t]here would be no *raison d'être* for the comparative method if it was not the classification of entities or traits which ... can be used to establish taxonomies and developmental sequences."⁷⁹ Here it is useful to point out how a so-called purely spatial analysis such as Kang's and Diamond's has temporal implications as well. As Fabian showed, a geopolitical model of the world creates a

⁷⁸ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 27.

⁷⁹ Fabian, 26-27.

classification strategy that condemns the places of the world dubbed underdeveloped as forever and timelessly culturally backwards by comparison to the forward-looking developed world. It is unsurprising that this geopolitical theory of frozen time was advanced greatly by modern sociology's system of typology, which still persists in modern discourses of Protestant and Asian values, given Zhang's own comment above that Indian subjugation had been verified "beyond a doubt by recent sociologists." Such are the dangers of insensitivity to time.

Fabian's mildly amusing diagrams also demonstrate the manner in which modern time also figures each of its moments as connected to a larger structure. Simply put, modernity thinks of itself as a totality.⁸⁰ The totality is an idealized version of world history, and it is always open to reinterpretation because there are moments from the past, present and future which we do not yet know but which can always become incorporated into history. Comparison constitutes the building blocks of the totality, because it seeks to relate non-identical identities with one another. Again I wish to highlight the idea that any attempt to explain two non-identical things through recourse to a grounds of comparison implicitly generates a larger theory of how those grounds can explain all things. The recourse to topography as grounds for comparing India and China led Kang Youwei to generalize about the effects of topography everywhere; and the usage of history as a comparative method for Zhang ultimately provided him the tools to theorize the history of all other nations as well. Once the grounds of comparability are stretched too far, however, we encounter the "incomparable," as seen in Ôkuma's comments on India (they are too much unlike the Japanese and Chinese in terms of current power), which can be strategically countered with new grounds of comparison, such as Zhang's response (that Indians and Chinese are similar and are superior to the Japanese in terms of national essence). The fact that such comparisons are always implicitly responding to the idea that their objects are beyond comparison has led Peter Osborne to comment that "incomparability is the life of comparison."⁸¹

But what are the consequences of thinking in terms of totalities? In order to think a totality, one must not only have an idea about the past and the present – where we have been and where we are – but also an idea of where we are going. As Osborne writes, historically-anchored speculation about the future derives its practical foundations "from the eschatological concept of

⁸⁰ A fascinating, deeply philosophical discussion on this can be found in Peter Osborne, "On Comparability: Kant and the Possibility of Comparative Studies," in *boundary 2*, 32:2 (2005).

⁸¹ Peter Osborne, *Comparability*, 16.

fulfillment (justice)."⁸² An individual's judgments about the next step become rooted in a grander vision of the direction of time and history itself. For Kang, since his analysis viewed history and change as fixed and predetermined, his political recommendations amounted to relative conservatism. And in proper fashion, Zhang's comparisons between China and India, which grounded themselves in the notion of national essence and redemption, concluded with descriptions of the task to be undertaken in the future.

There are countless examples of the futurally-oriented nature of his prose. I have already mentioned how Zhang believed national essence would avenge the suffering of the Chinese and Indians and prove to be the undoing of the Japanese and Europeans. Further, when speaking of labor strikes in India, Zhang wrote: "originally the Indian people divided themselves into castes, but now they are equal classes. The scholars and the masses likewise share a deep alliance. People are gaining employment, the national people cooperate, and although there are two factions, the important thing is that everyone places independence as their main goal."⁸³ In thinking about a Sino-Indian pact to counter European expansion, he wrote: "Today if one wishes to preserve the Han lands, then likewise one must also support India so that we can become a western-facing screen (西方屏蔽) that will restrain Western people from traveling through the south."⁸⁴ Further, when speaking with his Indian friends, Zhang included admiration for their plans to rectify injustice in the future. One friend told him, "one weak point for our country has always been building law [political system]. Our philosophy has great spirit, our artists have transmitted their skills to today Unfortunately, our history is incomplete and fragmentary.... Therefore, recently, Indian students studying overseas in Japan have edited histories of past events. They have a five-year plan for completing a comprehensive history of India."⁸⁵ And when speaking about national essence with his friend Dai, Zhang concluded: "Alas. The other day, I again thought about Mr. Dai, who said: 'Today, for Asia, planning for independence is the top priority. The quality of life for the average person is a slight second. And the broad and abstract goal that is shared with all others is to extinguish government and law. This is the last priority.'"⁸⁶ Finally, as a crowning summary for the ways in which he and Kang departed in theory and in politics, Zhang took another jab at his former teacher, six years after

⁸² Osborne, *Philosophy in Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 14.

⁸³ Zhang, "The Means of Indian Independence (獨立法)," *Min Bao* 20, 32.

⁸⁴ Zhang, *Alliance*, 38.

⁸⁵ Zhang, "The Dream of an Indian Restoration (印度中興之望)," 100. Translation help from Shimada, 63.

⁸⁶ Zhang, *Essence*, 37.

his open letter: "to seek a *datong* 100 years later but without any plans for the next morning, this is not realizing the true task before us (務).⁸⁷

In short, it comes as no surprise that in hindsight, Zhang's most lasting influence has come not necessarily from a particular topic he wrote about, such as Buddhism, anti-Manchuism, anti-reformism, Daoism and Pan-Asianism, but rather from his idiosyncratically negative pessimism about the present that motivated an openness towards the future that was lacking in the writings of his contemporaries. He was a contradictory figure. His writings on comparisons with India were deeply embedded in many of his other ideas, as he sought to unify several different strands of seemingly inconsistent theories, even if the extent and depth of their connections were extremely uneven. I have tried to show that the consistent element to all of these projects, which was integral to his comparative writings on India and the world, was his deeply modern sense of time that constantly negated the present in hopes of reviving, in the future, a qualitatively better time, partially from the past. Perhaps this is why Zhang's most famous student Lu Xun wrote in praise of his former teacher, four months after Zhang's death and just ten days before his own:

[When I was in Japan], I loved to read *Min Bao*, but it wasn't because of Master Zhang's archaic and abstruse writing or his difficult explanations. Sometimes he would explain Buddhist laws, sometimes he would discuss "the evolution of all things together (俱分進化)" as part of his ongoing fights with Liang Qichao, Wu Zihui (吳稚暉) and Lan Gongwu (藍公武) ... He truly had an air of invincibility, and it made other people's spirits flourish. I often traveled to listen to him speak during this period, but again it was not because he was a scholar but rather because he was an educated revolutionary. So much so that even today, I can evoke his appearance and voice as if he were standing before my eyes. But as for his actual scholarship, I can't even recall a single line.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Zhang, *Essence*, 37. Other examples of Zhang's political activity include the *yazhou heqinhui* and the series of essays written in *Tianyi* by his close friend and ally Liu Shipei. Details for both of these can be found in Karl, *Staging* and Dirlik.

⁸⁸ Lu Xun, "A few matters concerning Master Zhang Taiyan" (關於太炎先生二三事) (10/9/1936), <http://www.cul-studies.com/Article/essay/200506/2335.html>

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