

On the Transformation  
of Historical Thinking in Modern China  
中國近代歷史思考方式的轉化

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**Keywords:** Historical Thinking, Historical Narration, Historiography

**關鍵詞：**歷史思考方式、歷史敘述、史學史

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## Abstract

The change in historical thinking from Zhang Xuecheng to Qian Mu is asserted in this paper as shift from an exemplary to a genetic one. This change is rooted in the radical social changes that the people experienced around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Taking the approach of a conceptual history, I try to reconstruct a process, how the conceptual elements of the traditional exemplary historical thinking lost their validity and at the same time the genetic historical concepts emerged.

## 摘要

現實生活中對方向感與意義的需求，章學誠與錢穆兩人都認為它該由歷史敘述中獲得回應。就價值內容而言，他們毫無疑問都同樣依附在儒家傳統上。然而，在方式上，兩人的歷史思考卻截然不同。章學誠在他對中國史學作品的評論裡強調：史家要藉著完備的史料以及他靈活不拘的敘事方式，將各時代及各事件中隱含的義理呈現出來，作為世人行為的指導。而錢穆將國史敘述成為一個發展的脈絡，並呈現其中推動這個發展的力量與方向，給國人在人類史上一個特殊的地位以及說明它前進的可能。本文嘗試重建這兩個思考方式從十九世紀初到二十世紀初逐步變化的過程，其中特別強調近代中國這個由鑒戒式到演化式歷史思考的變遷是自發的。

## 1. Exemplary Historical Thinking<sup>1</sup> and Plural Semantics

Wang Zuhui 汪祖輝, advisor during the Qing Qianlong period (1735-1799), once said that those responsible for governmental organisation ought to read more history books, because "whenever you need to plan something and cannot come to a solution, for instance solve an unsettled case at court or decide the verdict in a major crime, history never [= in not a single case] leaves you unprepared" 凡意計不到之處，剖大疑、決大獄，史無不備。<sup>2</sup> When Yan Ruyu 嚴如煜 (1759-1826) released his *Summary Record on Ocean Defense* 洋防輯要 during the Ming Jiaqing period, he emphasised that the military records from predecessors, which provided numerous accounts of how to deal with maritime vagrants, were "a forest of all gains and losses" 皆得失之林也。In order to learn important lessons, he advised later generations: "Look at established history and you cannot make mistakes" 鑑於成憲，其罔有衍。<sup>3</sup> During Ming and Qing dynasty, historical works were regarded as a treasure bowl: filled with countless examples which provided officials with guidance for their work, and gave the average person direction to their life. These ordinary examples show two things: firstly, people believed that history functioned as an admonisher, but more importantly, in both examples history was perceived as plural. If we look at words or phrases from before mid-19th century concerned with historical written records, we discover that the concept of history was almost always presented with a plural meaning. And again, these words or phrases all directly or indirectly carried a practical lesson. History books were often called *Collections of Stories from the Past* 掌故叢編<sup>4</sup> and those stories were seen as *precedents* 判例。They

1 The concept of exemplary historical thinking comes from Jörn Rüsen. Jörn Rüsen, *Zeit und Sinn: Strategien historischen Denkens* (Frankfurt: a.M., 1990), pp. 153-230.

2 Wang Zuhui 汪祖輝, *Opinions on Learning Government, Part 2 學治臆說 卷下*, [Qing] Long Zhuang Testament ed. [清] 龍莊遺書本 (Taipei: Huawen Shuju 華文書局, 1970, copy of 1889 ed. 影印光緒十五年本), p. 16.

3 Yan Ruyu 嚴如煜, *Summary Record on Ocean Defense 洋防輯要*, Jiaqing nian ed. 嘉慶年刊本, preface (Taipei: Taiwan Student Books Company, 臺灣學生書局, 1975).

4 Miao Quanji 繆全吉 very appropriately translated 'stories of the past' 掌故 as 'customary law'

were also sometimes called *Forests of Historical Matters* 史事之林. The study of historical works was equaled to "gaining extensive knowledge of past words and deeds" 多識前言往行.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the highest principle related to the right conduct, the 'Dao' 道, was believed to be "scattered in between these events" 散在事為之間.<sup>6</sup>

History provided a collection of precedents, which could be used either to face daily life or to deal with public affairs. In Zhang Xuecheng's works, written at the beginning of the 19th century, this widespread and common exemplary historical thinking presented itself in a systematic and theoretically founded way.

## 2. The Theory of Exemplary Historical Thinking— Zhang Xuecheng

Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738-1801) continued the academic tradition of historical research emphasised by the Zhedong School 浙東學術. As part of a maturation process, at one time he found himself confronted with the question of the meaning of life. He started worrying: was his devotion to historical research nothing more than a purposeless plaything, which kept him occupied with irrelevant fragments? Was it only the textual criticism and interpretation of the Confucian classics 經學 that gave one's life value and made one realize the universal truth 真理? Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724-1777), a Neo-Confucian scholar, had put him under incomparable mental pressure. Zhang Xuecheng felt challenged by

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習慣法. Miao Quanji 繆全吉, "A Statecraft Ideological Exploration of Zhang Xuecheng's Determination for a 'History' Branch" 章學誠議立志(乘)科的經世思想探索, in *Proceedings of the Conference on the Theory of Statecraft in Modern China 近世中國經世思想研討會論文集* (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica 中央研究院近代史研究所, 1984), pp. 157-175.

5 Song Shenzong's Preface to *Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* 宋神宗資治通鑑序, *Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* 資治通鑑 (Tainan 臺南: Cuiwentang 粹文堂, 1975), p. 33.

6 Hu Sansheng's preface to the *New and Annotated Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* 胡三省新註資治通鑑序, *Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* 資治通鑑, p. 28.

Dai Zhen and after a time of constant debating he became convinced that '*the six canonical books are all history*' 六經皆史. With this belief he left his existential crisis behind and developed his theory of historical knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

In the tradition of Confucian studies it was generally believed that the Six Canonical books 六經, composed by Confucius himself, were the materialised 'Dao' 道. Zhang Xuecheng stressed that the Six Canonical Books presented facets of the 'Dao' that had emerged during a particular period, but—concerning the message of the 'Dao' supposedly inherent in events that had taken place after Confucius' death—this message could not be a part of human relations, institutions or business affairs from after the period of the Six Canonical Books. Zhang Xuecheng's belief that 'the Six Canonical Books are all history' liberated the Six Canonical Books from their divine and absolute position and gave them a place in ancient history, where they possessed historical importance; they were *temporalised* 時間化. As a result, the barrier that had once separated the study of Confucian writings and historiography was broken and historiographical research no longer merely served the purpose of interpreting examples from the doctrines of the Confucian classics. The Neo-Confucian tradition of regarding '*historiography as a maidservant for the Confucian classics*' 史學，經學之婢女 was completely abandoned in favour of Zhang Xuecheng's belief that 'the Six Canonical Books are all history'. However, I should emphasise that Zhang Xuecheng still believed that the Six Canonical Books possessed a sublime position and that it was the duty of historiography to supply the people with examples in order to understand the 'Dao'. This responsibility had not only not disappeared, but it had instead become even greater and more urgent.

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7 Compare Yu Yingshi 余英時, *On Dai Zheng and Zhang Xuecheng—A Study on the History of Academic Thought in Mid-Qing Dynasty* 論戴震與章學誠——清代中期學術思想史研究 (Hong Kong 香港: Longmen Shudian 龍門書店, 1976).

### (1) Zhang Xuecheng's Comments on the History of Historiography

The Six Canonical Books deserved their sublime position, because, for one thing, they had recorded events from times of peace and prosperity: the three dynasties Xia, Shang and Zhou, which were often considered the golden age of ancient times. The idea behind this so-called 'time of peace and prosperity' 治世 or 'golden age' was: "if Dao is realised in all affairs, this is called good governing" 道行於事謂之治. Consequently, the records of the Confucian classics were the ones best in accord with the human relations, institutions and etiquette of the three dynasties; they revealed distinct features of the 'Dao'. Another pivotal reason for the sublime position of the Six Canonical Books lies in the way how Confucius committed the era's accomplishments and their meaning to writing: his style was agile, his judgment fair and his writing reduced. The sublime position of the Six Canonical Books therefore did not lie in the fact that they exclusively contained doctrines of the 'Dao', but in the fact that they served as distinguished historiographical pieces of work. Their composition was what gave them their superiority. To Zhang Xuecheng, Confucius' style and writing only reinforced the adequacy of historical examples, i.e. were they right or wrong, good or bad, worthy or unworthy etc.? In the biographies of the *Records of the Grand Historian* 史記, Sima Qian 司馬遷 writes that when Confucius compiled the *Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋, his warnings were always accurate. For Zhang Xuecheng, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* can undoubtedly be considered the paragon of all historical works.<sup>8</sup>

In his magnum opus *Comprehensive Discussions of Literary Writings and Historiography* 文史通義, Zhang Xuecheng commented on the styles of different

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8 Zhang Xuecheng agreed with Sima Qian's praise of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋. In *The Biography of Confucius* 孔子世家 in *The Records of the Grand Historian* 史記, Sima Qian wrote: "Above, the *Spring and Autumn* makes clear the Way of the Three Kings, and below it discusses the regulation of human affairs. It distinguishes what is suspicious and doubtful, clarifies right and wrong, and settles points which are uncertain. It calls good good and bad bad, honors the worthy, and condemns the unworthy. It preserves states which are lost and restores the perishing family. It brings to light what was neglected and restores what was abandoned. In it are embodied the most important elements of the Kingly Way" (transl. by Burton Watson, 1958).

historiographical works. In his commentary characteristics of his historical thinking become quite obvious. In his book, Zhang Xuecheng innovatively placed his idea of how to set up records somewhere in between "history that happened" 發生的歷史 and "history that was told" 撰述的歷史. The work of creating records, especially of every place nationwide, meant that one had to set up and preserve large quantities of historical material; this he called "documentation" 記注.<sup>9</sup> He believed that this process of "documentation" needed a strict and regulated form and a comprehensive system. He used the expression "fair and square and intelligent" 方以智 to describe the nature of this work. In contrast, while creating a piece of work that gave meaning to historical incidents, one ought "not to confine oneself to establish rules" 不拘成法 and "not to use a standard pattern" 不為常格. Here, the principle was to be "round and witty" 圓而神. Zhang Xuecheng believed that Confucius' Six Canonical Books provided a great source for learning and obtaining these writing principles. His comment on the *Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* 資治通鑑, a work representative of the chronological style 編年體 in traditional historiographical writings, was: the examples are unpolished and verbose.<sup>10</sup> His criticism of the biographical style 紀傳體 of the official dynastic histories was: all historians after Sima Qian seemed to cling obstinately to the style of writing used in his *Records of the Grand Historian* 史記 and have disregarded Sima Qian's intention, which had been to illustrate meaning and significance via the use of distinct classifications. He even went a step further and said that the biographical style 紀傳體 in these official dynastic histories had sunk to an embarrassing position somewhere between mere recording of historical material and work composition. They were neither as thorough and systematic in their documentation as they ought to be, nor was their presentation of essential principles as simple and

9 Zhang Xuecheng, "On the Teachings of the Documents I" 書教上, *Comprehensive Discussions of Literary Writings and Historiography* 文史通義 (Taipei: Huashi Chubanshe 華世出版社, 1980), p. 9.

10 Zhang Xuecheng, "Discussing the Editing of History Books during Song-Dynasty with Shao Eryun" 與邵二雲論修宋史書, *Comprehensive Discussions of Literary Writings and Historiography* 文史通義, pp. 315-317.

distinct as historical writing ought to be.<sup>11</sup> In the event-based style 紀事本末體 in the Chinese historiography came closest to the development concept. Zhang Xuecheng praised its superior narrative technique, however just because it: "avoided overlaps" 免重複, "used a wide variety of examples" 均類例, "facilitated the classification of facts 便銓配", "balanced rights and wrongs" 平是非, "ended contradictions" 去牴牾 and "gave detailed accounts of neighboring countries" 詳鄰國之事.<sup>12</sup> Obviously his historical thinking was led by the wish to arrange and simplify the meaning of plural examples. Although this style, which presented events in a order from beginning to end, was useful to relate the change process of an event along a main axis, this was not a point that interested him. He never grew tired of saying that the ideal composition ought to have "few words which increase the clarity of an event, simple examples which increase the density of their meaning" 文省而事益加明, 例簡而義益加精 – and the Six Canonical Books were a manifestation of these characteristics. Consequently, Zhang Xuecheng demanded from scholars that they grasped the fundamental principle from the composition of the Six Canonical Books: to show 'Dao' in all its facets. In his words: "the highest purpose of the Six Canonical Books must be understood and applied in frequent writing to show the great Da" 貴約六經之旨, 而隨時撰述以究大道也.

Zhang Xuecheng left his crisis over the meaning of life behind and decided against the idea that "the Dao exhausts itself in the Six Canonical Books" 道盡在六經. He let historical incidents confront the 'Dao' directly. Furthermore, he believed that later events contained new facets of the 'Dao'. Therefore, he had to show later generations how to create records that were even larger in number and yet systematic; and he also had to show how an effective style of historical writing could transform those document into the meaningful stories. Without

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11 Zhang Xuecheng, "On the Teachings of the Documents I" 書教上, *Comprehensive Discussions of Literary Writings and Historiography* 文史通義, pp. 13-14.

12 Zhang Xuecheng, "Shi Tong" 釋通, *Comprehensive Discussions of Literary Writings and Historiography* 文史通義, p. 133.



doubt, his historical awareness was unprecedentedly strong and of a groundbreaking nature. But his historical thinking was still plural and exemplary.

## (2) Objectivity Theory and Agency

When Zhang Xuecheng debated over the relationship between a historian and a historical corpus, he continued a line of thought already expressed by Tang dynasty historian Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661-721). Liu Zhiji had emphasized that apart from the importance to obtain extensive historical data 學 and to possess the ability to organise and express one's writing 才, a historian had to be able using dashing arguments 擊斷 on the rights and wrongs 是非 of historical events 識. And the latter was even more important. Furthermore, he said that the most important task for a historian should be the ability to "[...] write down the good and the bad and to cause arrogant rulers and evil subjects to know fear. This belongs to the highest abilities of a historian." 善惡必書，使驕君賊臣知懼，此無可加者也。<sup>13</sup> This ability—to give meaning to historical events—he called "historical insight" 史識—the ability to understand history. Liu Zhiji's innovative concept of "historical insight" undoubtedly shows his exemplary historical thinking. Zhang Xuecheng, a thousand years after Liu Zhiji and influenced by Neo-Confucian thoughts, expanded Liu Zhiji's concept of "historical insight". He believed that the morality of the historian had to be at the core of this "historical insight". This morality he called "historian's moral integrity" 史德。<sup>14</sup> He stressed that the two elements—"historical insight" and "a historian's moral integrity"—were actually two sides of one coin: "One who possesses historical insight must already have a historian's moral integrity" 能具史識者必具史德。<sup>15</sup> The additions Zhang Xuecheng made to the concept of "historical insight" are significant, as I

13 In *The History of Later Tang Dynasty—Biography of Liu Zixuan* 新唐書—劉子玄傳, Liu Zhiji (styled Liu Zixuan 劉子玄) elaborates on the skills of a good historian.

14 Achim Mittag explores the origin of the concept "moral integrity". Achim Mittag, What Makes a Good Historian: Zhang Xuecheng's Postulate of "Moral Integrity" (Shi De 史德). In *Historical Truth, Historical Criticism and Ideology* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 365-397.

15 Zhang Xuecheng, "On Historian's Moral Integrity", *Comprehensive Discussions of Literary Writings and Historiography* 文史通義, p. 147.

understand, for two reasons: firstly, by means of "historian's moral integrity", he explained the method of objectivity concerning historical knowledge. Secondly, his idea of "historian's moral integrity" enables him to explain the interrelatedness of historical knowledge and agency in people's real life. These are, again, two sides of the same coin.

If a historian was objective, i.e. if the meaning he attached to a historical incident was able to present the 'Dao' correctly, depended for Zhang Xuecheng on how the historian treated himself as a human being, in other words, how he treated his naturally equipped emotions 情 and temperaments 氣. To be objective, they should be made to conform to reason and be in accordance with human nature. This he called the nourishment 養 of the "moral constitution of the heart-and-mind" 心術; and nourishment could only be achieved by gradual accumulation. Zhang Xuecheng said: "moral constitution of the heart-and-mind [...] should be nourished a little every day" 心術〔……〕故貴平日有所養也。<sup>16</sup> And here lies the main difference to the Neo-Confucian School: morality and nourishment of the moral constitution of the heart-and-mind could not be achieved by speculation, nor by interpretation and textual criticism of the Six Canonical Books. Nourishment of the moral constitution of the heart, he believed, could only be acquired through practical work. That is to say, a person could only acquire and develop it by studying history: "one has to study history in order to accumulate morality" 讀史以蓄德. Historical impartiality, for Zhang Xuecheng, was established in a circular process: study historical examples, understand the universal truth of 'Dao', after a period of accumulation once more return to the interpretation of history, and furthermore, ensure the objectivity of historical writing. Similarly, the ability to act in daily life was also established in this circular process. In the chapter "On Learning" 學習 in his book *Comprehensive Discussions of Literary Writings and Historiography*, Zhang Xuecheng stresses that examples from history books help us to learn, but that we

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16 Zhang Xuecheng, "On Historian's Moral Integrity", *Comprehensive Discussions of Literary Writings and Historiography* 文史通義, p. 148.

are unable to apply any example directly, because external circumstances and we ourselves are in a continuous state of flux. Reading examples from history helps us to accumulate abilities of imitation, but, he says, "[...] read the Book of Songs and the Book of Documents aloud in order to use their repertoire of examples, and do not apply them directly" 詩書誦讀所以求效法之資，而非即可為效法也。In reality, both agency and the ability of impartial historical knowledge derive their origin from the same procedure, they are accumulated through the understanding of 'Dao'. I stress the concept of "accumulation" 蓄, because its action implies reading one historical example after the other.

In his theory on historical knowledge as well as in the practicable part, Zhang Xuecheng extended Liu Zhiji's concept of "historical insight". His theory was extremely systematic, but he never left the pattern of exemplary historical thinking. The concept of "a historian's moral integrity" merged completely with the concept of assessing historical examples— "historical insight". It was only with Liu Xianxin 劉咸炘, (1896-1932) who came 120 years after Zhang Xuecheng and who took the notion of "historical insight" and re-interpreted it as "observing trends in history" 觀史蹟之風勢 and who stressed that a historian had to be able to grasp the underlying fabric in the historical development 發展脈絡,<sup>17</sup> and with his contemporary Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929), who believed that "historical insight" was nothing else but "capability of observation" 觀察能力, namely to "look at a matter and examine thoroughly its source and further development" 看一件事情，把來源去脈都要觀察清楚 and who took the concept of "a historian's moral integrity" 史德—which now only involved the question whether historical material was authentic—and separated it from the concept of "historical insight", so that now these two concepts had become independent from one another<sup>18</sup> that people turned their back on exemplary

17 Liu Xianxin 劉咸炘, *An Introduction Into Historical Research* 治史緒論 (Chengdu: Shangyou Shudun 尚友書墩, 1928), p. 12.

18 Liang Qichao adopts the idea of the four specialties of a historian 史家四長—four essential abilities—discussed by Liu Zhiji as well as Zhang Xuecheng, in Liang Qichao 梁啟超, *Chinese History Research Methodology* 中國歷史研究法 (Taipei: Zhonghua Shuju, 1977), Appendix

historical thinking. But China only experienced these changes after a period of unprecedented upheaval.

### **3. The Loss of Historical Significance and the Emergence of a New Historical Thinking**

In traditional China people never doubted the significance of historical incidents. The late-Ming historian Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613-1682) stressed this by saying: "[...] texts which should never disappear from between heaven and earth, I say, are: the ones that elucidate the Dao, the ones that record political events, those which investigate the people's hidden wishes, those which take delight in talking about people's virtuousness; these texts are beneficial for the country and for the future; one article more means one more article to profit from" 文之不可絕於天地之間者，曰：明道也，紀政事也，查民隱也，樂道人之善也，若此者有益天下，有益將來，多一篇多一篇之益也。<sup>19</sup> This optimistic view that historical writing had an applicatory function changed rapidly during the later stage of the 19th century. When China and the Western world came into intensive contact at the end of the 19th century, for Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 (1823-1901), chancellor during the late Qing dynasty, the resulting change was no longer "a ball moving on a plate" 丸之走盤: incidents no longer collided horizontally, vertically, obliquely or straightly inside of one eternal frame of values. Li Hongzhang felt that the change experienced by himself and his contemporaries had burst the entire frame: the belief that "Heaven does not change and the Dao likewise does not change" 天不變道亦不變 wavered, the concept of China as the "land under heaven" 天下 was challenged by a new world view. Modern scholars believed that during the final years of the Qing dynasty the "implementation of Confucian values through

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pp. 13-28.

19 See article headed "Writing must be profitable for the whole world" 文須有益於天下 in Gu Yanwu, *Record of Daily Study* 日知錄 Vol. 19.

statecraft" 經世思想 had arrived at an end.<sup>20</sup> at times of conflict between China and the West, the values that history books on the traditional Classics contained had lost their practical function. The plight that intellectual circles from late Qing and early Republic found themselves in has also been described as a full-on "crisis of meaning" 意義的危機.<sup>21</sup>

### (1) Kang Youwei's Philosophisation of History—The Concept of a Holistic History Emerges

The drastic changes of the era had the effect that people started to question whether the examples from history books and the universal truths they were supposed to contain could still be used to deal with any problems whatsoever. Liao Ping 廖平 (1851-1932) who had fallen in love with the European-American concept of a "flourishing political and legal system, which enacted laws at any time" 政法昌明，因時立法 on the one hand stressed the urgency with which a change in real politics and society was needed, but at the same time he also wanted to preserve the Confucian elements of his identity. Historical works could not resolve this contradiction, because in his words "all relics connected to historical matters are like sacrificial offerings or useless dregs of wine" 凡屬史事陳跡，芻狗糟粕。<sup>22</sup> When he was 38 years old, he proposed a means to solve this predicament. In his article "Knowing Confucius" 知聖篇，he interpreted Confucius as a prophet who understood that the essence of the 'Eternal Dao' 常道 was nothing but 'change' 變. With this interpretation his two hopes—longing for political change and conserving Confucian identity—had been harmoniously combined in one stroke. During the 15th and 16th year of the Guangxu 光緒

20 See Liu Guangjing 劉廣京, preface to *The Thesis Collection From the Conference on Statecraft Ideology in Early Modern China* 缺中文書名 (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 缺出版年). See Footnote 4, p. 13.

21 Zhang Hao 張灝, "New Confucianism and the Intellectual Crisis of Contemporary China," in *The Limits of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, Charlotte Furth (ed.) (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1976).

22 Liao Ping, "Ten Disadvantages of the Old Saying 'Regard Classics as History'" 舊說以經為史之弊十條, *Siyiguan Miscellany* 四益館雜著. See also Qian Mu 錢穆, *The Chinese Intellectual History in the Last Three Hundred Years, Part II* 中國近三百年學術史, p. 653.

reign(1875-1908), Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927) came into contact with "Knowing Confucius", which Liao Ping had only just finished writing. In the following year he published his *A Study of the 'New Text' Forgeries* 新學偽經考 and went on to write *A Study of the Reforms of Confucius* 孔子改制考. In these books, Kang Youwei again used his own words to present Liao Ping's ideas, but at the same time he intended to popularize them even further. This rather unusual phenomenon—the rapid succession of book publication and writing—indicates, firstly, that Kang Youwei clearly had the same identity conflict as Liao Ping, wishing for change in real politics and society on the one hand and being a Confucian on the other, and secondly that Liao Ping's interpretation of Confucius had suddenly solved this conflict.<sup>23</sup> Kang Youwei, leader of the Royal Reformist Party 保皇改革派, shared Liao Ping's opinion, who saw Confucius as an ancient reformer. In his view, Confucius had composed the Six Canonical Books, because he had wanted to establish a historical basis for his own political reform. Kang Youwei interpreted Confucius and the Six Canonical Books in this way precisely to give his Reformist Party a divine justification.

With regard to historical understanding, the descriptions of his student Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929) were extremely accurate. According to Liang Qichao's observations, Kang Youwei—after the doubts in his heart had dissipated after a flash of insight—had immediately opposed his earlier attitude. He had officially negated the historical significance of Chinese history after the Han dynasty,<sup>24</sup> whereas in his early years he had taught that it "provided anecdotes on government and disorder" 講治亂掌故. In Kang Youwei's words, post Han-Confucians were not familiar with the true historical face of Confucius' reforms and initiatives, because of Liu Xin's 劉歆 (50 BCE-23 CE) incorrect versions and interpretations of the Six Canonical Books.<sup>25</sup> About traditional Confucians he

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23 See Qian Mu, *The Chinese Intellectual History in the Last Three Hundred Years, Part II* 中國近三百年學術史 (Taipei: Lianjing, 1998), p. 852.

24 Liang Qichao, "Biography of Mr. Kang from Nanhai" 南海康先生傳, in *Collected Works from Yinbing Studio - Vol. 6* 飲冰室合集 (Taipei: Zhonghua Shuju, 1960), p. 69.

25 Wang Rongzu 汪榮祖, "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Political Reform: A Study of Kang

said that "for two thousand years (now) they have revered forged scriptures as a sacred code of law" 閱兩千年，咸奉偽經為聖法. Ever since the Han Dynasty, he believed, Confucians had followed ethical norms formulated in a false version of the Six Canonical Books, but they had not learned of Confucius' reforming vigor. For those 2,000 years between the Han Dynasty and his epoch, Chinese history had been led astray from the correct reading of Confucius' holy path, and was thus stuck within static rules which were always repeating. Kang Youwei was quite immodestly convinced of his own historically important task. He believed that this traditional history of procrastination and backwardness had been waiting for his personal appearance; that he could re-manifest the divine principle of "reform" 變革 and furthermore that he would put the Chinese history back on track. He said: "These holy ideas of reform, flaming in the nighttime, surely must have been waiting for someone special?" 豈聖制赫闇，有所待耶？<sup>26</sup> He sent his *Study of the Reforms of Confucius* 孔子改制考 (1898) to Emperor Guangxu 光緒, while at the same time leading reforms for the set-up of a constitution as well as reforms of traffic, education and practices in industry and commerce. In his opinion—the opinion of one who continued the Gongyang School's 公羊學派 interpretation of the canonical book *Spring and Autumn* 春秋, he believed that the development of world history had a fixed procedure. Supposedly, three main stages of world historical development existed, namely basic chaos 據亂世, promotion 升平世 and paradise 太平世; and each of these stages was again subdivided into three modes. At that time each and every nation had a fixed development stage in this system, and the China of the past 2,000 years—in his opinion—was still at the very low development stage of basic chaos 據亂世.<sup>27</sup> But a constitutional monarchy and practical economic innovations could promote China from the first to the second stage.

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Youwei's Use of Gongyang Confucianism," in *Classics and Interpretations: The Hermeneutic Traditions in Chinese Culture* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publisher, 2000), pp. 383-407.

26 See Qian Mu, *The Chinese Intellectual History in the Last Three Hundred Years, Part II*, p. 847.

27 Based on Xu Guansan's formulations; Xu Guansan 許冠三, "Kang Nanhai's Concept of Three

Kang Youwei's philosophy of history included past and future and also all the space in the entire world. His system was a-historical, but as the first philosopher of history in modern China, he moulded the Chinese history into one entity during a process of philosophisation. The Chinese history became one entity and was thereby singularised. This transformation towards a holistic Chinese history was linked to a negative understanding of history—but there also emerged the hope for a better future. In contrast to the period before these radical changes, where history had been seen as a cornucopia of examples, Kang Youwei's *A Study of the Reforms of Confucius* 孔子改制考, which was extremely controversial and influential, undoubtedly marked a huge changing point with regard to historical thinking. His understanding of history changed throughout his lifetime. In his early years, he perceived history as a means of "providing anecdotes on government and disorder" 講治亂掌故. Later then he viewed national history as one entity. This development reflects the changing perception of history of that time: from plural form to singular.

## (2) "Impure" Exemplary Historical Thinking

Liang Qichao was a fellow townsman and pupil of Kang Youwei. Shortly after China had lost the Sino-Japanese war in 1895, he followed Kang Youwei and presented his first petition to the Guangxu emperor. In 1898 they collaborated in carrying out political reforms, but their fate only lasted for 103 days. In 1896, he established his first magazine in Shanghai, *Chinese Progress* 時務報; when he took charge as editor in chief, he proclaimed that he would reform the Chinese *Zeitgeist*. In the preface to *Chinese Progress* he stressed the necessity for political reforms and used examples from changes of political institutions in every dynasty in order to support his claim: at the beginning of the Tang dynasty (618-907), household registers, the military system and the tax system had

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Phases of Development" 康南海的三世進化觀, in Zhang Hao 張灝 et al., *Contemporary Chinese Thinkers: Late-Qing Ideology* 近代中國思想人物論：晚清思想 (Taipei: Shibao Wenhua 時報文化, 1982), pp. 535-575.



arrived at an impasse, which had left the people no other choice but to reform and establish a new system; Emperor Han Wendi (203-157 BCE) had had no other choice but to change the harsh punishments from pre-Han dynasty into light flogging; the migration policy also had had to be altered during the reign of emperor Sui Wendi (541-604) etc. Similar arguments had already been made by Kang Youwei when he addressed a petition for reform to the Guangxu emperor.<sup>28</sup> They both did not analyse the reasons behind these historical reforms, but merely pointed out that throughout history countless reforms had been made in order to adapt to new conditions. It becomes clear from their treatises that their historical thinking is exemplary. When we look at *A Study of the Reforms of Confucius* 孔子改制考 and take his way of thinking a step further, we have to realize that Kang Youwei sees Confucius as an historical example charged with positive meaning, but also as his personal role model. The exemplary historical thinking presented in *A Study of the Reforms of Confucius* is rather extreme. This is most obvious in the implicit religious nature: Confucius is seen as the sole precedent throughout history and the significance of this precedent had been discovered by no less a figure than Kang Youwei himself, who aspired to follow in his footsteps.

Kang Youwei's and Liang Qichao's historical thinking was different in two particulars: firstly, if they perceived Chinese history generally as negative, then why did they use historical examples as positive evidence? And secondly, they continued using traditional historical discourse, which was exemplary, only to promote the transformation of tradition.

As we have seen, in classical Chinese discourse exemplary historical thinking was construed out of differing beliefs: the absoluteness of 'Dao', the universality of human nature, the significance of historical incidents for real life, the relatedness of virtues and a historical truth, the plural character of history etc.

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28 Kang Youwei, *A Record of Mr. Nanhai Submitting His Memorials Four Times* 南海先生四上書記 (Shanghai: Shenji Shuzhuang 慎記書莊, 1987), p. 7.

At the same time these beliefs had a logical consistency, as was shown by Zhang Xuecheng's historical theory. But the historical thinking of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao had clearly deflected from this traditional path. Their notion "change is a heavenly law" 變者天道也 differed widely from the basic assumption of exemplary historical thinking that "Heaven does not change and the Dao likewise does not change" 天不變道亦不變.<sup>29</sup> In the light of traditional exemplary historical thinking which had a logical consistency and presented pure characteristics, the historical thinking of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao at the end of the 19th century was distinctly impure. I believe that their impure exemplary historical thinking is a significant indicator for the disintegration of this typical exemplary historical thinking in modern China.

### **(3) An Anti-critique of the May Fourth Movement and of Tradition Criticism**

The political reforms in China at the turn of the 20th century had failed. Immediately afterwards the Boxer Rebellion took place and another ten years later, the Qing dynasty was overthrown by the Revolutionary Party. In the twenty years that followed the publication of Kang Youwei's "A Study of the Reforms of Confucius", tradition criticism was abandoned in favour of cultural criticism, which peaked during the May Fourth Movement. In 1918, Lu Xun 魯迅 employed the fictional character of a madman to voice his thoughts: "I started leafing through a history book. There were no dates in this history, but someone had scrawled the words 'Benevolence, Righteousness and Morality' across every single page" 我翻開歷史一查，這歷史沒有年代，歪歪斜斜地每頁寫著「仁義道德」幾個字。<sup>30</sup> The message that Lu Xun was trying to pass on to the reader was this: Chinese history is one whole entity and it contains a singular, crucial

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29 "Change is a heavenly law" 變者天道也 and "Change is a universal truth" 變者天下之公理也 both taken from preface and postscript of Kang Youwei, "Submitting the Preface of the 'History of Political Reform of the Russian Peter the Great'" 進呈俄羅斯大使彼得政變記序 (1898), in *Collected Works of Kang Nanhai: Vol. 5 康南海文集*, 卷五 (Shanghai: Gonghe Bianyiju 共和編譯局, 1914), p. 18.

30 Lu Xun, "Diary of a Madman" 狂人日記, in *New Youth 新青年*, 4, 2 (1918).

factor of the Confucian ethics. Lin Yusheng's 林毓生 research operated with this ideology and he claimed that tradition critics of this time were reductionist and used the Confucian code of ethics as their sole factor of criticism. He emphasised that the tradition criticism of the May Fourth Movement was totalistic.<sup>31</sup> Borrowing his argument, we can say that the form with which this tradition criticism presented itself during the crisis of meaning in pre-1949 China, strengthened the view of history as one whole entity. Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀, leading figure in the May Fourth Movement and one of the founders of the Communist Party of China, used the "New Youth" periodical 新青年 to defend the value of democracy and science—Mr. De 德先生 and Mr. Sai 賽先生. He also criticised that everything in history moved along an axis of Confucian thinking: "We must support Mr. De and have no other option but to fight against the Confucian code of ethics, its rites, its concept of moral integrity, old ethics and old politics. We must support Mr. Sai and have no other option but to fight against old art and old religion. We must support Mr. De and we must support Mr. Sai, and we have no other option but to fight against national cultural heritage and old literature".<sup>32</sup> The dichotomy of "new" 新 and "old" 舊 which Chen Duxiu employed during his criticism, was quite popular during that time. The entire Chinese history was characterized as "old" 舊. The difference between "new" 新 and "old" 舊 was not just one of value, but also of time. These terms did not only stand for the future and past of the Chinese society, but more importantly for the discrepancy between Confucian China and the Western culture.

In connection with the New Culture Movement 新文化運動 represented by the Peking University and the overall criticism of tradition, Liang Shuming 梁漱

31 Lin Yusheng, "Radical Iconoclasm in the May Fourth Period and the Future of Chinese Liberalism", in *Reflections on the May Fourth Movement: A Symposium*, Benjamin Schwartz (ed.) (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 23-58.

32 In *New Youth*, 6, 1 (1919). "要擁護那德先生，便不得不反對禮教、禮法、貞節、舊倫理、舊政治。要擁護那賽先生，便不得不反對那舊藝術、舊宗教。要擁護德先生又要擁護賽先生，便不得不反對國粹和舊文學".

溟 published "*Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*" 東西文化及其哲學 in 1921.<sup>33</sup> His reply to the methods of tradition criticism was: he called into question if there was only one universal way of improving one's way of life. He a priori believed that humanity had the choice between three ways of living, three "paths" 路向: Chinese culture, Indian culture and European culture. The fundamental essence of Chinese culture was "balance between personal wishes, self-being and adjustment" 以意欲自為調和持中; and it ought to have a similar relation towards Indian and Western culture. Although history had changed into one whole entity around the time of Kang Youwei, there still was no noun to represent this entity. As we have seen, subsuming Chinese history under a single term meant using expressions like "in the two thousand years that followed Liu Xin" 劉歆以下兩千年, "old ethics", "old politics" 舊倫理、舊政治 etc. Liang Shuming's "*Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*" brought out the concept of "Chinese culture" 中國文化,<sup>34</sup> and its emergence undoubtedly marks a milestone in the changes that have taken place over the course of the last hundred years and that have altered the Chinese historical thinking.

In 1922, the *Critical Review* 學衡雜誌 was founded. The magazine centered around Nanjing University professors and its main aim was to offer anti-criticism to those within the May Fourth Rebellion that were criticising Confucian tradition.<sup>35</sup> The publication of *Critical Review* led to an intellectual north-south confrontation. Authors from *Critical Review* frequently used the term "Chinese

33 See Chen Ruoshui 陳弱水, "Liang Shuming and Eastern and Western Cultures and Philosophies" 梁漱溟與'東西文化及其哲學', in Fu Yueshi 傅樂詩 et al., *Contemporary Chinese Thinkers: Conservatism* 近代中國思想人物論：保守主義 (Taipei: Shibao Wenhua, 1982), pp. 311-321.

34 Lu Xun did not use the term "Chinese culture" 中國文化 until six years later (1927); see Zhou Cezong, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), Chinese transl. by Yang Mofu 楊默夫, *Wusi Yundong shi* 五四運動史 (Taipei: Longtian 龍田, 1981), p. 449.

35 See Shen Songqiao 沈松橋, "The Critical Review Group and the Anti-New Culture Movement During the May Fourth Period" 學衡派與五四時期的反新文化運動, in *National Taiwan University Chinese Literature and History*, Series 68 國立臺灣大學文史叢刊 (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 1981).

culture". They clearly accepted Liang Shuming's fundamental view of a pluralistic global culture. In his article "On Criticism of the New Culture Movement 論新文化運動", Wu Mi 吳宓, one of the magazine's founders, explained the term "Chinese culture" by relating Confucianism to Buddhism. Li Sichun 李思純 also used Liang Shuming's 梁漱溟 concept of "Chinese culture". And his article "Discussing Culture" 論文化 adopts the same view of a pluralistic global culture. Lu Maode 陸懋德 wrote two papers on ancient history, which he considered part of "Chinese cultural history" 中國文化史. From 1925 onwards, Liu Yizheng 柳詒徵, founder and preface writer of the Critical Review, published a series of articles which covered two thousand years of Chinese history. He also called them "Chinese Cultural History" 中國文化史.

In its preface he explains the motivation behind "Chinese Cultural History": "What is Chinese culture? Where is Chinese culture? In how far is it different from Indian and European culture? These were exactly the kind of questions on which the readers were supposed to focus their attention and I wrote this book precisely to answer them". Liu Yizheng differs from the philosopher Liang Shuming: for him Chinese culture no longer possessed a timeless and particular essence. He used examples from history to explain what he considered to be three different periods of development: in the first period "tribes and established nations had constituted independent cultures", in the second period "cultural elements from India had been adopted, which had resulted in a phase of conflict and amalgamation inside our country"; and in the third period "Western academic thinking on religion and politics had been imported". A single constant lifeline 命脈 runs through all three phases: "the lifeline of our national evolution and nation building". He used the biological and metaphorical concept of a "lifeline" 命脈, which undoubtedly proves that he regarded history as a single organism. In his opinion, "ethics and moral" or "rule by virtue" were part of this "lifeline" 命脈. With regards to value orientation, Liu Yizheng 柳詒徵 clearly followed traditional Confucian ethics. But Confucian ethics were no longer static norms,

but possessed a positive connotation: the strength necessary for continuation and development.

#### 4. Evolutionary Historical Thinking: Qian Mu's Outline of National History

In 1928, Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895-1990) was working as a teacher in Suzhou Middle School 蘇州中學, less than 200 km away from Nanjing Central University. Three years later he was recommended by Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 for a teaching position at the History Department of Peking University. At one point he wanted to teach a course on the *History of Political Systems in China*, but he was refused. The Republic of China had replaced Qing dynasty, autocratic monarchy had ended and knowledge of traditional political systems was no longer needed, so the reasons given by the faculty.<sup>36</sup> At Peking University, Qian Mu had infrequent contact with one of the leaders of the New Culture Movement, Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962), who was at that time head of the Liberal Arts Department. But just as before, their contact had not resonated positively.<sup>37</sup> With this fundamental experience in mind, we easily understand why he said in retrospect: "In 1931, I was also allowed to teach at Peking University, but in my general opinions I felt much more closely connected to the group around the *Critical Review*".<sup>38</sup>

In the context of historical thinking, I believe that this intellectual affinity with the *Critical Review* can further be explained by looking at two aspects.

36 By making this general remark that the refusal had come from inside the faculty "系裡", he avoided naming Fu Sinian 傅斯年. Qian Mu, "Commemorative Double Issue for Parents and Friends in Celebration of His 80th Birthday" 八十億雙親師友雜憶合刊, in *The Complete Works of Mr. Qian Binsi* 錢賓四先生全集 (Taipei: Lianjing, 1994), p. 173.

37 Ibid., p.171.

38 On Qian Mu's approval of Liu Yizheng's Chinese Cultural History 中國文化史, see Luo Shishi 羅時實, "Mr. Liu Yimou and his friends from the Critical Review" 柳翼謀先生及其學衡諸友, In: Shanghai Miscellany, 中外雜誌, vol.7, no.6 (1970) pp.13-17. Luo cited in the article Qian Mu's words: "民國二十年余亦得進入北京大學史學系任教,但余之大體意見與'學衡'派較接近." p.13.

Firstly, the group affirmed the ethical values of the Confucian tradition; this point is self-explanatory. One common feature was that they both used a dynamic concept of historical development to explain traditional Confucian ethics. They internalised evolutionary thinking, which had previously been stressed by their counterparty—tradition critics. Qian Mu also used the concept of a *Lifeline of national history* 國史命脈, introduced by Liu Yizheng, but even more often he used the term 'Spirit 精神'. In his introduction, he says: "History is in a constant state of change in which there is a clear progress. Regarding its propulsive motion, we called it 'national spirit' ; it is the source of [all] national life."<sup>39</sup> The term 'spirit 精神' not only contains the meaning of 'power', but also stands for a particular uniqueness and *directionality* in Confucian ethics.

Secondly, they both continued the traditional Confucian conviction of *Implementation of Confucian Values through Statecraft* 經世思想. They believed that historical knowledge was inextricably linked with real life and that historical knowledge must have a practical function. They challenged 'science' as the ideal, which was a line pursued by Hu Shi and Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896-1950), who stressed that historical science and real politics ought to be separated. Qian Mu and the group around the *Critical Review* argued the contrary point of view.<sup>40</sup> In the 1930s, Qian Mu made a conscious move away from *research* 研究 and towards *composition* 撰述, thereby putting his belief into concrete action: the belief that one had to let the practical significance of historical knowledge unfold. Naturally, the usefulness of historical knowledge was no longer characterised by searching for lessons and wisdom within individual examples. For Liu Yizheng and Qian Mu, the practical usefulness of historical knowledge lay in the acknowledgment of historical compatriots. In *Outline of National History* 國史大綱, Qian Mu emphasised that his fellow countrymen should have

39 自其推動向前而言，是謂民族精神，為其民族生命之泉源。Qian Mu, *Outline of National History* 國史大綱, in *The Complete Works of Mr. Qian Binsi* 錢賓四先生全集, preface, p. 33.

40 "Commemorative Double Issue for Parents and Friends in Celebration of His 80th Birthday," pp. 218-221.

'tender' 溫情 and 'respectful' 敬意 feelings towards their own past.<sup>41</sup> On the one hand, this statement shows bluntly that Qian Mu's compatriots urgently needed historical identity. On the other hand, he strongly believed that historical knowledge could help people understand where the 'spirit' 精神 and power behind national developments lay. When he started his *Outline of National History*, he had set himself high standards: "[...] the key task of researching national history is to look for and obtain the location of its unique spirit from deep within the nation and its people" 治國史的第一要務，在能於國家民族之內部自身，求得其獨特精神之所在, and "[...] to locate the unique personality of a nation and its people" 求得國家民族獨特個性.<sup>42</sup>

In *Outline of National History*, as the result of his statecraft ideology and of his demand for a historical identity, Qian Mu interpreted national history as evolutionary. The new method he proposed (for giving historical events a meaning) was intrinsic, authentic and innovative. In his historical interpretation, Qian Mu was undoubtedly inspired by Liu Yizheng. But it was Qian Mu who developed an interpretation of national history as evolutionary, and on the basis of traditional material and a traditional style of historiography. With regard to this transformation, Qian Mu's *Outline of National History* is irreplaceable in its representativeness. At the same time, the singular and holistic character of national history and the strength of its development were also elaborated in his book. In the following, I will use Qian Mu's method of arguing in order to explain how evolutionary historical thinking was manifested in *Outline of National History*. Furthermore I will demonstrate how he used old material and an old style of writing to imbue history with a new meaning.

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41 Qian Mu notes that affection towards collective history is the foundation of historical identity and a prerequisite for reading *Outline of National History*. Qian Mu, *Outline of National History*, p. 19.

42 Ibid., p. 32.



### (1) The Driving Force Behind the Development of National History

Without a doubt, the course on *The History of Political Systems in China*—which he taught not in the History Department, but in the Department of Political Science at Peking University—can be considered the proverbial backbone of Qian Mu's *Outline of National History*.<sup>43</sup> Changes in the political systems and the accompanying changes in political order run like a common thread through the whole book, but the role they play is a passive one: they are the object and thereby the explained. Qian Mu uses academic thinking 學術思想 as a means to explain these social changes. For example, he uses the political unification of China during Qin dynasty (221-207 BCE) as an important historical occurrence. In the chapter "The emergence of the first unified government and its destruction", he emphasises that pre-Qin academic thought had already sown the seeds for the country's unification. After Han dynasty had been established, it prospered until its decay, which he attributes to the undulating influence of Huang-Lao Daoism, the Legalist School of the Warring States Period and Confucian academic thought. At the same time, academic thinking was also a precursor for the rise in power of Tang dynasty. Up to his discussion of the two political reforms in Song dynasty and without exception, he describes at great length "the new dawn of academic thinking". In *Outline of National History*, it becomes very clear that Qian Mu has given academic thinking the role of the explainer, with which he explains political order and institutional development.

Obviously, academic thinking contains many different orientations and Qian Mu makes precise distinctions. What he wants to show is that the political system of China always pursues a path of 'reason' 合理. This so-called reasonable direction of development means: firstly, a unified stable regime, which wants to protect its people, and secondly, institutionalisation of political participation for

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43 The narrative of Qian Mu's *Outline of National History* is based on a course on *The Comprehensive History of China* which he taught at Peking University in between the years 1933 and 1937. Basic historical facts were taken from *The Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* 資治通鑑, *A Continuation of the Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* 續資治通鑑, *Comprehensive Mirror of the Ming* 明通鑑 etc.

ordinary people. Therefore, the criteria with which academic trends could be distinguished: were their thoughts on political unity or their concept of 'propriety' 禮 and the group concept mutually compatible? Were the concepts from these academic trends 'humane' 仁 towards individuals, especially towards the lowest rung of society? He believed that the Daoist School sought to liberate the individual which would "[...] result in the disappearance of the community"; the Mohist School "[...] stressed the assembly of big communities [...] but this had the disadvantage, that individuals were again of low significance"; the Legalist School paid special attention to the monarch's methods of governing and did not value the individual either. This led him to the conclusion that it had undoubtedly been Confucian academic thinking that had guided Chinese history into a sensible direction. In his interpretation of history in *Outline of National History*, he analyses the relationship between various kinds of ideological forces on the one hand and changes in the system and political order on the other hand: after Qin dynasty, the Han immediately reunited China and under the influence of early Confucian thinking, they moved towards a *literati government* 文人政府. When nomadic tribes entered China from the north, non-Han people and Han Chinese started to mix; and many states opposed the ensuing political chaos. Under the extremely difficult conditions of the Northern Dynasties, Confucianism continued and was not only not interrupted, but even continuously renewed until it finally matured under the political scope of the great Tang Empire. A fair examination system was established, which selected the most talented among the people to participate in politics. Initiated by the people, a system for official disciplinary punishment was established, where high officials and even the emperor could be impeached. Around one thousand years after Buddhism had entered China during Han dynasty, Zen Buddhist Teaching of the Heart Sutra 大群心教 which was suitable for the masses, was harmonized with the group-oriented Confucianism. At the same time, certain elements promoted by Buddhist teachings were also integrated into Confucianism, for example 'the cultivation of one's individual nature' and 'showing respect for individual

subjectivity' ; and their integration strengthened the force with which history moved into the direction of reasonable politics.

In *Outline of National History*, Qian Mu has subdivided Chinese history into two layers: a layer of ideological context that lies directly below political order and institutional transition. Ideological context promotes historical development, but it also gives it uniqueness. He says: "The place where change occurs, that is exactly the place where the historical spirit lies" 變之所在即其歷史精神之所在.<sup>44</sup> When described with traditional terminology, the essence of this network is the central Confucian idea of 'humaneness' 仁 and 'propriety' 禮; using modern words it could be called 'political awareness'. Qian Mu believed that this 'political awareness' gave the direction for Chinese historical development and that it stimulated the strength of development. With regard to political awareness, its developmental context and its influence on politics and society were not merely a part of history, but could give his fellow countrymen direction and strength necessary in the real world.

## (2) A Qualitative Change in Style

The style adopted by Qian Mu in his *Outline of National History* was the 'string and mesh style' 綱目體 typically used for traditional exemplary historiographical works. Its founder Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) believed that the chronological style 編年體 used by Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086) in *The Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* 資治通鑑, written down on 294 scrolls and recording historical events spanning over 1,362 years, was too cumbersome and unsuitable for presenting "The Way of Heaven" 天道 and "The Way of Man" 人道, which is why he condensed these 294 scrolls of material into 59 scrolls. At the same time he established a legitimate ancestral line of the royal house, which he used as a timeline and as an axis for moral judgment. He used large-scale characters to indicate the ancestral line and important events. These

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44 Qian Mu, *Outline of National History*, p. 34.

words, charged with praising or censuring meaning, formed the main narrative—the so-called "string" 綱. Furthermore he used small-styled font to indicate additional narrative: two rows placed under the "string" 綱 formed the "mesh" 目. During a time of prosperity for the Neo-Confucian Rationalistic School, Zhu Xi produced his *String and Mesh of the Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government* 通鑑綱目, 59 scrolls written in 'string and mesh style' 綱目體. He wanted to distinguish clearly between norms of conduct 綱常 and ethics 倫理, but the main aim of his work was to bestow historical incidents from the *Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* still more clearly with a moral sense; the study of history was subordinated and now even more effectively served the Neo-Confucian cause.

Qian Mu's *Outline of National History* copied the 'string and mesh style' from Zhu Xi, but he filled this old shell with a completely new historical thinking. For one thing, the "string" no longer explicitly or implicitly judged individual historical events, and at the same time, the individual "strings" were no longer connected by a legitimate ancestral line, but a causal one. In the "string" of *Outline of National History*, the words that most frequently appear serve as causal conjunctions: 'consequently' 因此, 'since then' 自此, 'as a result' 於是, 'thereupon' 遂, 'the reason being' 原因是 etc. For example, he says, "Ultimately, the regressive politics pursued by the Mongols could not succeed, *which is why* they resulted in one hundred years of social upheaval".<sup>45</sup> "[...] *Consequently*, the eunuchs gradually started to become overbearing and domineering",<sup>46</sup> "[...] a time was reached where the Imperial Hanlin Academy could no longer cultivate the talented people, [...] and *therefore* you could no longer ask for the selection of talents by national examination".<sup>47</sup> "String" words only account for one fifth of the entire volume, but they have a larger font size and "mesh" words are shifted one row down, both of which highlights the logical

45 Ibid., p. 742. "蒙古人的倒退政治，到底不能成功，因此社會變亂百出。"

46 Ibid., p. 758. "因此宦官逐漸驕橫跋扈。"

47 Ibid., p. 781. "及翰林院不能培養人才，〔……〕而選舉遂不可問。"

and causal character of the entire book. *Outline of National History* stresses the narrative character of history as a whole via the effective use of conjunctions. At the time the 'string and mesh style' was created, it was used for the type of historical narrative that contained exemplary historical thinking. But Qian Mu completely transformed the style's original characteristics.

Qian Mu's *Outline of National History* fundamentally changed the characteristics of string and mesh style. This can be further observed by looking at his use of historical material. In the same way as Zhu Xi had based his moral lessons on the materials from *The Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government*, Qian Mu's *Outline of National History* focused on the interpretation of the given facts. He adopted the historical narrations of traditional history books, but established causal link between separate events, thereby endowing them with meaning in a development context. One example would be the phenomena described in Zhao Yi's 趙翼 (1727-1814) *On the Generous Salary of Song Officials*, part of his *Reading Notes of Twenty-two Historical Books* 廿二史劄記, in which he had noted down knowledge he had acquired by reading the official dynastic histories. Zhao Yi had simply stressed this as a lesson in "one thing that we should not copy from the Song system"; but in *Outline of National History*, Qian Mu established the causal link that the financial difficulties caused by excessive personnel and hefty salaries had resulted in a process of political reforms. Apart from *The Reading Notes of Twenty-two Historical Books* 廿二史劄記, Qian Mu also often used historical phenomena from two further sources: Gu Yanwu's 顧炎武 (1613-1682) *Record of Daily Study* 日知錄 as well as Wang Fuzhi's 王夫之 (1619-1692) *On Song Dynasty* 宋論. In *Outline of National History*, the exemplary historical descriptions from both books were placed in a development context and they were all given a certain meaning.<sup>48</sup> Qian Mu added

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48 Another characteristic of the writings in the 'string' in *Outline of National History* is that Qian Mu often uses combinations of verbs and adverbs which imply change, such as 漸漸變成 ("gradually changing"), "日盛" ("flourishing by the day"), "日繁" ("get more complicated by the day"), "萌芽" ("are sprouting"), "逐漸腐化" ("gradually decaying"), "日漸萌茁" ("growing and thriving with each day"). As a result, a sense of development is added to the historical facts.

conjunctions to the "string" and he also placed the historical descriptions into a development process; these two grammatical features changed the traditional string and mesh style into something completely new; and with Confucian ideology as the developing power, the grammatical features mentioned above and Qian Mu's historical narrative supported each other.

## 5. Closing Words

In this paper I assert that the change in historical thinking in modern China is rooted in the profound social changes that people experienced from the end of the 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century; and this change reveals itself mainly in key terms. In some cases the meaning of a term changed, in other cases neologisms were introduced, which I believe shows that a basic change in historical thinking was taking place in the context of radical societal changes. In this regard, I understand this paper as a work on conceptual history.<sup>49</sup> Guiding questions were: How does the relevancy of a term for historical thinking manifest itself? How is the meaning of a term understood with regard to historical thinking? The answer becomes apparent if one takes the typologisation of historical thinking as a starting point and distinguishes logically and carefully between 'exemplary historical thinking' and 'genetic historical thinking'. I used this differentiation as the main instrument for my concept analysis and it is heuristic basis of my entire argumentation.<sup>50</sup>

In conclusion I would like to emphasise that my deliberations over the question of a change in historical thinking in modern China stem from personal intercultural experience. One question that emerged from this experience was:

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49 The approach of this article is inspired mainly by Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt: a.M., 1979).

50 About the typologization of historical thinking see Jörn Rüsen, *Zeit und Sinn: Strategien historischen Denkens*, p. 1.

What does Chinese historical thinking actually mean?<sup>51</sup> With this paper I want to show that the change in historical thinking in modern China was not so much a specific one, but one of universal relevance—the transition from 'exemplary' to 'genetic' can be seen as a general and logical assignation for historical thinking.♦

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51 This question was first introduced to me through Du Weiyun's book. Du Weiyun 杜維運, *Discussing Chinese Historiography with Western Historians 與西方史家論中國史學* (Taipei: Shangwu Yinshuguan 商務印書館, 1966).

♦ Responsible editor: Yeh-ming Chin (金葉明)

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