

# Chapter 24

## The Transformation of History in China and Japan

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We begin our chapter with the dilemma that Romila Thapar observes in reference to early India,<sup>1</sup> that non-Western places in their confrontation with the West had no history. In China and Japan, too, those people most interested in bringing ideas and institutions of the West to their country had to confront their past which was not history. For example, in a rather famous quote, Erwin Baelz in 1876 repeated a statement of a Japanese acquaintance: 'We have no history. Our history begins today.'<sup>2</sup> This, of course, does not mean that there was no past or writings about the past on the continent or the archipelago. In both places the recording of the past occupied a central position.

China's and Japan's traditions of historiography were closely connected, with China initially exerting a formative influence on Japan. In China, concepts of the ideal socio-political order centred on the ruling clan and the worship of its ancestors.<sup>3</sup> The legitimacy of the ruling clan, rationalized as the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming*), depended on whether or not it succeeded in actualizing the ideal order through sacred rituals and moral example. The Mandate of Heaven thus provided legitimacy for the ruling clan, but also the rationale for a change of dynasty. It stood for the conviction that men can and do deviate from the ideal order, and that the gap between what is and what ought to be is part of the human condition. To bridge this gap through establishing and maintaining a polity as close as possible to the ideal order was the mission of the ruling clan and the political elite, and it was the task of the historiographer to keep a record of these attempts for posterity. It is whence he derived his eminently powerful

<sup>1</sup> Romila Thapar, 'Historical Traditions in Early India: c.1000 BC to c. AD 600', in Andrew Feldherr and Grant Hardy (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 1: *Beginnings to AD 600* (Oxford, 2011), 533–76.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in George Macklin Wilson, 'Time and History in Japan', *American Historical Review*, 85 (1980), 570.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin I. Schwartz, 'History in Chinese Culture: Some Comparative Reflections', *History and Theory*, 35:4 (1996), 23–33. See also On-cho Ng and Q. Edward Wang, *Mirroring the Past: The Writing and Use of History in Imperial China* (Honolulu, 2005).

position. This position was further reinforced by the fact that in Chinese culture the ideal order was not perceived as made accessible through an act of divine revelation, but was possible to measure through history. History thus acquired a central status as providing access to heavenly truth.<sup>4</sup> This centrality of the recording of history in Chinese culture translated into the institutionalization of historiography within the imperial bureaucracy, a process that culminated during the Tang Dynasty in the establishment of the History Office (*shiguan*).<sup>5</sup> On the archipelago officials connected to the bureaucracy also compiled histories. The Six National Histories or *Rikkokushi*, covering the mythical beginning up to 887, were ordered by the emperor.<sup>6</sup> These texts were accepted as authoritative accounts until the late nineteenth century.

The historiographer (*shi*) thus fulfilled two complementary functions, closely linked but not without internal tension: he recorded history in a historiographical mode leaving behind a record of the past as truthful as possible, yet he also manifested the ideal order by expressing praise and blame (*baobian*). In having the power to laud or to condemn, the historiographer found himself in an exposed political position, sometimes risking his life in fulfilling what Yves Chevrier calls his historiographical duty.<sup>7</sup>

As is evident in the previous volumes of *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, pre-modern historiography in both places did change considerably over the centuries, but its central ethical and political status stands out throughout most of these periods. It would be a mistake to see the Western imperialist intrusion in the mid-nineteenth century as the catalyst for change. Chinese traditional historiography had already experienced subtle but, in hindsight, important changes. During the early Qing period the development of Han Studies (*Hanxue*) or evidential scholarship (*kaozheng*) led to an unprecedented scrutiny of the classics with the help of sophisticated methods of textual research. Whether this development represented the beginning of the emancipation of historiography from the classics (*jing*) and hence has to be interpreted as a first step towards modern science,<sup>8</sup> or whether it was just another approach to uncovering the ideal polity of the Golden Age in the classics through the means of critical textual scholarship, is contested.<sup>9</sup> However, the emphasis of Han Studies scholars on

<sup>4</sup> Masayuki Sato, 'The Archetype of History in the Confucian Ecumene', *History and Theory*, 46 (2007), 218–32.

<sup>5</sup> Denis C. Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History under the T'ang* (Cambridge, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> These texts are the *Nihon shoki* (beginning to 679), *Shoku nihongi* (679–791), *Nihon kōki* (792–832), *Shoku nihon kōki* (832–50), *Nihon buntoku tennō jitsuroku* (850–8), and *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* (858–88).

<sup>7</sup> Yves Chevrier, 'La servante-maitresse: condition de la référence à l'histoire dans l'espace intellectuel chinois', *Extrême-Orient, extrême-occident* (1987), 117–44.

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984).

<sup>9</sup> Michael Quirin, 'Scholarship, Value, Method, and Hermeneutics in Kaozheng: Some Reflections on Cui Shu (1740–1816) and the Confucian Classics', *History and Theory*, 35:4 (1996), 34–53.

methods of critical textual research became an important point of reference for Chinese historians of the twentieth century searching for predecessors of modern scientific history in the Chinese past.<sup>10</sup>

In Tokugawa Japan a similar method (*kōshō*) also spread within the neo-Confucian scholarship and was critical in the gradual separation of the past from the ethical ideals located in the ancient Chinese sages. Two schools that were critical in the emergence of a modern history were *kōgaku* (ancient learning) and *kokugaku* (nativist learning). For example, Ogyū Sorai argued that institutions and ethics based on those ideals were created by humans, and they were not the creation of the sages. As important as this separation was for the rise of a past separate from ancient China, we cannot go too far. The horizon of expectations was still in the past; Ogyū remained a Sinophile. In the eighteenth century, the school of nativist learning built upon Ogyū's inversion of the historical to increase this separation. Motoori Norinaga turned to ancient texts of the archipelago, especially the *Kojiki* [Record of Ancient Matters] (completed AD 712), the earliest extant account. The significance of his work was to shift the origin from an ethical idea located in ancient China, to the first people of the archipelago itself, of Japan. A third set of scholars, primarily scholars associated with Mito, a collateral domain of the Tokugawa, began to compile a history of Japan, the *Dai Nihon shi* [Great History of Japan], in the seventeenth century. In a way, the *Dai Nihon shi* completed the break from the ethical ideal of the sages; its goal was to demonstrate ethical behaviour of subjects towards the imperial line. Here, we have the beginning of a new subject, the idea of a Japan. Yet this history still followed the format of traditional Chinese histories.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the encounter with the imperialist West triggered developments that went far beyond the changes of the early Qing and Tokugawa eras. The traders, missionaries, whalers, and naval officers brought a different notion of 'civilization'. It was backed by a technology that claimed better science and technology, as well as governments claiming a new system of intercourse, called international law. The elite in both societies were simultaneously attracted and repulsed by this 'West'. These non-Asians also brought a different understanding of the relation between past and present, the 'universal history' popular in Europe at the time. Japanese intellectuals embraced these ideas before Chinese scholars. Nevertheless they confronted a similar dilemma. First, they needed to decide whether to adopt the ideas of progress and enlightenment, and if so, which parts, if they are separable. Second, even if they accepted such ideas, they were confronted with the emplotment of their culture as backward and the need to shed their past as anachronistic. Third, they then faced a contradiction in this process as they also needed to retain that now

<sup>10</sup> For a famous example see Fu Sinian, 'Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo gongzuo zhi zhiqu', *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan*, 1:1 (1928), reprinted in *Fu Sinian quanji*, 7 vols. (Taipei, 1980), iv, 263–6.

seemingly backward past in order to formulate a nation, the unit of participation in the international system.

Interestingly, it is a process that is filled with contradictory demands: in order to participate in the so-called universal system, they had to write a national history within that universalistic framework, rather than to have their history express that universalistic ideal.

## JAPAN

Today, the Meiji *ishin* (1868) marks the end of the Tokugawa era and the emergence of modern Japan.<sup>11</sup> It would be a mistake, however, to mark the beginning of a modern historiography from this date. As the discussion of the *Dai Nihon shi* suggests, it took decades, even centuries, for intellectuals to reconceive their understanding of the past. (The final version of that project was published in 1906.) The new leaders did recognize the necessity of some kind of history to legitimize their ascent to power. In 1869 they issued an Imperial Rescript that began: 'Historiography is a for ever immortal state ritual and a wonderful act of our ancestors.'<sup>12</sup> This edict was shortly followed by the creation of the Office for the Collection of Historical Materials and Compilation of a National History whose charge it was to compile a chronology from when the *Rikkokushi* stopped, thereby connecting the new state with the old imperium, as if continuous.<sup>13</sup> From this straightforward beginning, intellectuals unpacked the many competing demands as well as contradictions that exist within the idea of a single, world or universal history, the need to create a history of the nation, and the competing groups of that history.

The desire for a history written according to the universal laws popular in Europe was strong. The idea of progress and development was seductive, achieving it quite difficult. Moreover, during the 1870s and 1880s, geological and archaeological discoveries, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, and Herbert Spencer's adaption of evolution to society pushed intellectuals to shift their horizon from an ideal ethical past to a progressively better future. François Guizot's *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe* [*History of Civilization in Europe*] (1828) and Henry Thomas Buckle's *History of Civilization in England* (1857–61) were particularly influential histories that seemed to provide a road map. Two early accounts

<sup>11</sup> *Ishin* is often translated as restoration though renewal is likely more accurate. For a fine discussion on the problem of translating the word *ishin* as restoration see Tetsuo Najita, 'Japan's Industrial Revolution in Historical Perspective', in Masao Miyoshi and H. D. Harootunian (eds.), *Japan in the World* (Durham, NC, 1993), 13–20.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Margaret Mehl, *History and the State in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (New York, 1998), 1.

<sup>13</sup> This office was built upon a document collection begun by Hanawa Hokiichi in 1793 with the patronage of the shogunate.

that drew inspiration from these histories to bring Japan into the universal realm were *Bunmeiron no Gairyaku* [*An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*] (1875) by Fukuzawa Yukichi and *Nihon kaika shoshi* [Brief History of Civilization in Japan] (1877–82) by Taguchi Ukichi. These enlightenment (*bunmei*) historians have generally been depicted as liberal intellectuals who introduced the ideas of the West. Fukuzawa's very influential *Bunmeiron no Gairyaku* is less a history of Japan than an argument that the archipelago join the universal march of progress, which entailed turning it into a unified and 'civilized' Japan. Taguchi was the first to attempt to locate Japan's past within the fixed principle (*ittei no ri*) that was believed to guide human progress. Both were focused on formulating the history of a Japan, the nation, but their narratives, instead, indicate the dilemma of enlightenment ideas on a world stage. For example, in order to place Japan on that path of progress, Taguchi argued that Japan deviated from it around the sixth century. Similarly, Fukuzawa wrote that 'throughout the whole twenty-five centuries or so of Japanese history, the government has been continually doing the same thing; it is like reading the same book over and over again'.<sup>14</sup> There were important differences in their work; the most notable here is that Taguchi sought to locate the subject of his history in the activities of the people of Japan, not its political unfolding. In order to synchronize Japan into this enlightenment history, these two scholars dismissed all of the recorded past. This is the dilemma mentioned above, that Japan had no history and that for a non-Western place to become a part of this universal history, it must deny its own past. Significantly, neither wrote a history of Japan again; moreover, other *bunmei* historians, such as Miyake Yonekichi and Naka Michiyo, tried but did not finish their histories. It was not until the 1890s that such a history was written.

The dilemma of needing to distance the past to become modern, and to narrate that past to become a unit of the modern, necessitated a more complex configuration than merely transitioning from old to new. At this point, standard historiographical accounts juxtapose *bunmei* historians, like Fukuzawa and Taguchi, against a more conservative tradition, the empirical, *kōshō* (textual criticism) scholars, who, from their classical training in neo-Confucianism, focused on data and facts, but were 'uninspiring, without an axe to grind or the passion of political commitment'.<sup>15</sup> Yet at that time numerous intellectuals and politicians quickly realized that the old still had utility.

Certainly during these early decades much 'old' was thrown out, destroyed, or sold to make room for the 'new'. Yet interest in the past and its preservation was high: in the fifth month of 1871 the government issued an edict lamenting the denigration of old things; in 1872 it commissioned a survey of historic sites;

<sup>14</sup> Fukuzawa Yukichi, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, trans. David A. Dilworth and G. Cameron Hurst (Tokyo, 1973), 142.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Duus, 'Whig History, Japanese Style: The Min'yusha Historians and the Meiji Restoration', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 33 (1974), 419–20.

during the 1880s the government passed laws to preserve artefacts; compilations such as the *Kyūji shimonroku* [Record of Investigation of Old Things] and the *Edo kyūji kō* [Remembrances of Old Things from Edo] were published; and in 1882 scholars at Tokyo University established the *Kōten kōkyūjo* (Centre for Investigation of Ancient Texts) (now Kokugakuin University).

There are undoubtedly antiquarian and romantic interests in such work. Yet we must also recognize that preservation of some past is a necessary component of modernity, not simply a conservative reaction against it. There is an interesting contradistinction in the transformation of the archipelago into Japan (or indeed of non-Western places into nation-states). The absence of history and the presence of what we characterize as a timeless tradition becomes evidence of Japanese backwardness; yet in the need to synchronize with the liberal-capitalist international realm they must both separate from that knowledge system to show progress and embrace it to establish the nation. An interesting transmutation of pasts occurs. Scholars still needed to sort out which past to preserve (and how), which to forget, and which to turn into history.

A modern history of Japan emerged from this archival project, to formulate a usable past. Thomas Richards writes of the archive as a way of organizing knowledge: 'The archive was not a building, nor even a collection of texts, but the collectively imagined junction of all that was known or knowable, a fantastic representation of an epistemological master plan, a virtual focal point for the heterogeneous local knowledge of metropolis and empire.'<sup>16</sup> Today, we often forget that evidence and data are part of this transformation of history.<sup>17</sup> Like the problems of the *bunmei* historians, the archive is more than a collection of materials.

The principal organization for the archiving of material of the past began as the Office for the Collection of Historical Materials and the Compilation of a National History.<sup>18</sup> This archival project had a simple, seemingly straightforward goal, to collect all that was written from throughout the archipelago to serve as the content of the new place, Japan. But at this point the new collective singular still did not have a structure. To demonstrate how far the initial office was from a modern history, the specific topics of this office were the fourteenth-century split of the imperial court into Northern and Southern Courts, the Tokugawa era, the *ishin* itself, and local topographies. By 1881, these topics were combined into a Chinese-style chronology—written in Chinese—of Japan from 1392 to 1867, the *Dai Nihon hennen shi* [Chronological History of Great Japan], which

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archives: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London, 1993), 11.

<sup>17</sup> Constantin Fasolt, *The Limits of History* (Chicago, 2004), 12–15.

<sup>18</sup> Until it was reorganized into the Historiographical Institute in 1895, this office changed many times. For simplicity of the narrative, we will call it the Office of Historiography, a name it used several times. For a good history of this institute see Mehl, *History and the State in Nineteenth-Century Japan*.

was never completed.<sup>19</sup> In short, even in this 'new' effort to write about the past, early work was similar to past chronologies, taking up where they left off.

One necessary transformation was the shift of data from place to time. Initially, this archive had an office of history and an office of topography. Topographical information, *chishigaku*, had been an important source of data for local administrators during the Tokugawa era. These topographies were organized to provide relevant information of the past, socio-economic conditions, information and data about production, and descriptions of the local people. The initial plan was to prepare a multi-volume work (similar to the *Dai nihon hennen shi*), *Dai nihon chishi* [Topography of Great Japan]. But this form of information became decreasingly relevant and was eventually supplanted by history and statistics when the office of topography was disbanded and eventually merged into the Office of Historiography. Its data were shorn from their local context and newly categorized according to time. Local information was no longer significant through the frame of the locale, but increasingly as data for the nation-state, Japan.

Similarly, the meaning of the past also changed. A series of essays written in 1879, 1884, and 1886 by the director of the Office of Historiography, Shigeno Yasutsugu, show this transformation.<sup>20</sup> In his first essay, Shigeno made a rather common call to transform history, not unlike the *bunmei* historians, by advocating the adoption of historical methods from the West while criticizing existing historical methods, particularly the Chinese chronological style. Shigeno argued that the historiographers of the latter were too limited to individuals and the particular, and none wrote about Japan itself, especially its political and economic changes. He cited Augustus Mounsey's *The Satsuma Rebellion* (1879) as an example worth following. Shigeno's tone changed in his next two essays. He criticized authoritative accounts such as the *Taiheiki* [Chronicle of Great Peace] (mid-fourteenth century) and the *Dai Nihon shi* as distortions, embellishments, and fabrications. Armed with more data and using the authority of dates, he carefully compared different accounts of heroes and deeds, finding discrepancies in dates and events. Based on these 'inaccuracies', he questioned the veracity of the supposedly noble deeds of figures such as Kusunoki Masashige and the very existence of Kojima Takanori, the loyal retainer of Emperor Go-Daigo. For his painstaking work, he became known as Professor Obliterator (*massatsu hakase*). His colleague Kume Kunitake, the historian of the Iwakura mission that toured the United States and Europe between 1871 and 1873, was also relentless. Passages and accounts in all formerly authoritative histories—early chronicles such as the *Kojiki* and *Rikkokushi*, and later accounts and tales such as the *Taiheiki*, *Genpei*

<sup>19</sup> The *Dai nihon hennen shi* was terminated when the Office of Historiography was closed down in 1893.

<sup>20</sup> These essays are 'Kokushi hensan no hōhō o ronzu', 'Sejō rufu no shiden oku jijutsu o ayamaru', and 'Shi no hanashi'. They are available in Tanaka Akira and Miyachi Masato (eds.), *Rekishi ninshiki* (Tokyo, 1991), 213–21, 339–55.

*seisuiiki* [Record of the Rise and Fall of the Minamoto and Taira] (1247–9), *Heike monogatari* [Tale of the Heike] (c. mid-thirteenth century), and the *Dai Nihon shi*—were declared inaccurate, incomplete, distortions, and fabrications. Kume even called these narratives childlike. Other historians, such as Naka Michiyo, professor of Chinese history at the Imperial University of Tokyo between 1896 and 1904 (Naka should also be categorized as a *bunmei* historian in his early career), proposed a revised chronology of the first emperors recorded in the *Nihon shoki* [Chronicles of Japan] (completed 720). In this essay, revised in 1897, he argued that the accounts of the first eighteen emperors were unreliable and approximately 600 years should be removed.<sup>21</sup>

This brief account shows that the search for history involved a significant reconfiguration of the past to the point where hitherto authoritative accounts were now dismissed as falsehoods (or, more politely, myths). In these cases the past was increasingly separated from the present by being reclassified as historical data, myth, superstition, or make-believe. The relocation of the past into data for a narrative of Japan's development altered the utility of information from the past as a historiological duty to the past as an archive of data. The purpose of the archive and chronology was less to eradicate than to stabilize the past of a Japan into an archive, in the sense that Richards discusses, that could be synchronized to the international order.

The institutionalization of history began during the mid-1880s, again indicating the uncertainty and contestation of the past. In 1883 scholars from the University of Tokyo and the Historiographical Institute founded the first history association in Meiji Japan, Shigaku kyōkai, and published the journal *Shigaku kyōkai zasshi* [Journal of the History Society]. Two of the central figures were Konakamura Kiyonori and Naitō Chisō, professors of the department of Japanese and Chinese literature (*wakan bungaku*), which was responsible for the instruction on the past. These scholars, from the school of national learning (*kokugaku*), lamented the absence of a history of Japan, especially of one written in Japanese rather than Chinese. Konakamura recognized the importance of the notion of progress and recent changes, and argued that history was important to foster patriotism, to understand government and citizenship, and to establish the nation's own history (rather than to have it written by foreigners or in a foreign language). He differed in his belief in some historiological duty, that the stability necessary to anchor that change must be located in the values found in the classics. The Shigaku kyōkai disbanded in 1885, but many of its goals would play a central role in the institutionalization of history as *rekishi*.<sup>22</sup>

In 1885 the department of Japanese and Chinese literature (*wakan bungaku*) was split into departments of Japanese literature and Chinese literature, separating

<sup>21</sup> Naka Michiyo, 'Joseinenki kō', *Shigaku zasshi*, 8 (1897), 747–78, 884–910, 997–1021, 1206–31.

<sup>22</sup> Both *shigaku* and *rekishi* translate in English as history. *Rekishi* is akin to *Geschichte*, while *shigaku* would be between *historie* and *Geschichte*.

the past of Japan from China. The professors responsible for Japanese history, literature, and the classics were Konakamura, Naitō, and Mozume Takami. In 1886 the university was reorganized into the Imperial University of Tokyo, and in the following year the history department (*shigakka*) was founded and a young German historian (a distant student of Leopold von Ranke), Rudolph Riess, hired. In 1888 the Office of Historiography was transferred to the university and its researchers, Kume, Shigeno, and Hoshino Hisashi, were appointed professors of Japanese history. In 1889 the department of Japanese history (*kokushi*) was formally established and the department of Japanese literature changed its name to the department of national literature (*kokubungaku*), while the department of Chinese literature became the department of Chinese studies (*kangaku*). Also in 1889 another historical association, the Japanese Historical Association (Shigakkai), was founded, with Shigeno as the first president.

These reforms confirmed the careful archival work of the historiography office and were bolstered by the 'scientific' methodology of Western history (via Ranke) learned through Riess. In a memo advocating the formation of the department of Japanese history (*kokushi gakka*), Watanabe Kōki, the president of the new university, confirmed its role in support of the state as the main topic of history,

Recently, we have realized that politics, law, and economics are subject to the climate (*fūdo*) and people (*jinsei*) of each land and each country. In order to clarify the relation of time and space, we will enthusiastically follow the research methods that establish the foundation of the history of that space, and in this way transform the methods of historical investigation. Today in order to understand social phenomena of a particular time and space, we will collect books, handicrafts, and other artefacts of those times; dissect and analyze them; discern their qualities; and research these things at a library just as science uses laboratories. Then for the first time we will have a scientific method of inquiry into history. Finally, we can refer all matters—political, legal, economic—for academic testing and decide accordingly.<sup>23</sup>

This was the moment when a modern historiographical method and understanding was institutionalized. History became the careful, mechanical methodology, one that advocated the dissection, analysis, and chaining of data—immutable data from a dead past—into chronological narratives of the political and economic development of Japan (the collective singular). Importantly, *kōshōgaku* underwent a considerable transmutation, from careful textual exegesis to understand the true intent within texts to an obsession with verifiable data. Thus when historians such as Ienaga Saburō argued that these historians overlooked 'the fundamental spirit of historical consciousness', it is because this resolution occluded that fundamental spirit through the mechanistic methodologies that accepted the union between history and nation-state.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Tokyo teikoku daigaku gojūnenshi* (Tokyo, 1932), 1297.

<sup>24</sup> Ienaga Saburō, *Nihon no kindai shigaku* (Tokyo, 1957), 85.

In the emergence of national literature (*kokubungaku*), principals such as Konakamura and Naitō agreed, on the one hand, that the purpose of history was to recount the past mechanistically, 'using accurate facts, to investigate the cause and effect of change and clarify the vestiges of our country's ebb and flow'.<sup>25</sup> They argued, on the other hand, that the role of national literature was to reintegrate the sensate—the human, the ideas, sensibility, and imagination—that had been denigrated by mechanistic forms of knowledge: 'Literature stores within a kind of originary spirit; even more, it is that which influences politics, religion, feelings, and customs.'<sup>26</sup> In an early text seeking to explain the field, Haga Yaichi and Tachibana Sensaburō asked: 'How can we bring forth and develop an everlasting literature that has such value? It is only by returning to the origins of literature, where we see how the character of our race has acted and developed in accordance with the direction of the world and the laws of nature.'<sup>27</sup> This is a fascinating statement that exhibits the complementarity of this field of national literature. The language is that of a return to, and preservation of, an essential Japan. But the framework is that of the abstract laws of modern society: the laws of nature, synchronization with a world history, and the primacy of the era in a narrative of development. In short, *kokubungaku* reconfigured the media that transmitted what should be known into a new discipline that ceded accuracy and objectivity for a different kind of truth, the sensibilities, ethics, and ideals of the nation. *Kokubungaku* and *kokushi*, literature and history, developed in support of each other. What began earlier as a contestation resolved in a mutual coexistence, indeed, mutual dependence. History became possible because literature (as well as other disciplines such as art history) provides conceptual grounding for political categories; both disciplines stabilize the nation and its timeless characteristics, the sensibility and spirit, while history absolves those fields from examining the specificity of the political actors who operate within those essential characteristics. Stated differently, national literature slows down time to establish the conceptual places of the nation; history uses chronology as if it is the only temporality to give those spaces activity, that is, progress.

Interestingly, this interdependence became institutionalized without the scholars most responsible for the division and resolution. In 1891 Shigeno resigned from his professorship to become director of the Office of Historiography; in 1892 Kume was fired; and in 1893 the Office of Historiography was abolished. Also in 1891, Konakamura resigned from his professorship in *kokubungaku*, and Naitō was fired.<sup>28</sup> The institutionalization of this newly reconfigured past is evident in the reopening of the former Office of Historiography as the Historiographical Institute

<sup>25</sup> Mikami Sanji and Takatsu Kuwasaburō, *Nihon bungakushi* (1890; Tokyo, 1982), 22.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Haga Yaichi and Tachibana Sensaburō, *Kokubungaku dokuhon shoron*, in *Ochiai Naobumi, Ueda Kazutoshi, Haga Yaichi, Fujioka Sakutarō shū*, ed. Hisamatsu Senichi (Tokyo, 1989), 199.

<sup>28</sup> *Tokyo teikoku daigaku gojūnenishi*, 1318–22.

in 1895. In the legislation to reopen the archive the Diet stipulated that its members come from *kokubungaku*, not history. Hoshino, Tanaka Yoshinari, and Mikami Sanji were named editors of the compilation of historical documents, its principal task. Hoshino became the nominal director, but because of ill health, Mikami served as de facto director until 1899 when he became director and served until 1919.

Mikami was a central figure in the institutionalization of history. In addition to the directorship, he was professor of history at the Imperial University until 1926. The Diet directive, as well as his rise, demonstrates the way that the sacred or modern myth was central to the historical project, but was obscured by notions of objectivity.<sup>29</sup> Mikami, a specialist on Tokugawa history, was a student of Riess and Tsuboi Kumezō; yet before graduate study, he worked with Konakamura and Naitō. He claimed that he was most influenced by Naitō, making his authorship of *Nihon bungakushi* [History of Japanese Literature] (1890) a formative moment in his career, not an early aberration. In 1938 Hugh Borton recognized a shift in research among Japanese historians in the Taisho period (1912–26) (the generation after Mikami) from politics to culture.<sup>30</sup> His colleagues and successors, such as Kuroita Katsumi, Tsuji Zennosuke, and Hiraizumi Kiyoshi, continued this emphasis, ensuring the close connection between the state and orthodox history.

Typically, historiographies of this modern history of Japan have tended to exonerate these academic historians, praising their methodological rigour and downplaying their history as apolitical, despite the clear connection to the imperium. Kuroita, Tsuji, and Hiraizumi strengthened the linkage—Kuroita was on the commission that authored *Kokutai no honji* [The Essence of being Japanese] (1937). Others, such as Naka, recognized the conflict between accurate history and history as the basis of the belief system of the nation and chose to compartmentalize each. The reputation of methodological rigour, however, is shallow; in an anecdote of a meeting between Mikami and then graduate student Inoue Kiyoshi, one of the most influential of Japanese historians during the late 1930s and post-war period, Inoue 'was offended and outraged, concluding that the eminent professor wanted to teach lies to the Japanese people'.<sup>31</sup>

The point is not to disparage these historians; instead, it is to argue for the co-constitution of the disciplines where disciplinary methodologies, here chronology and empiricism, have concealed the connection between history and national belief. This division troubled a number of historians during the pre-war period and continues to trouble Japan (and we believe other nation-states) today.

<sup>29</sup> Michael C. Brownstein, 'From Kokugaku to Kokubungaku: Canon-Formation in the Meiji Period', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 47:2 (1987), 435–60.

<sup>30</sup> Hugh Borton, 'A Survey of Japanese Historiography', *American Historical Review*, 43:3 (1938), 489–99.

<sup>31</sup> John S. Brownlee, *Japanese Historians and the National Myths, 1600–1945* (Vancouver, 1997), 145.

Before we discuss the debates that emerged as a result of this fragmentation of the past, we shall turn to an international dilemma created by this new idea of history.

The organization of the past into history 'proved' the eternal status of Japan as a nation and demonstrated progress and civilization. But, internationally, it hides a contradiction that is especially vexing for non-Western places, even today. That is, the past is necessary to write a modern, that is linear, narrative of change up to the present, but, at the same time, that same past (the 'traditional' and 'primitive') relegates those places to perpetual positions of lack, so they are always behind the West.

A major attempt to solve this contradiction occurred through the study of Asian history. From the 1890s intellectuals began to shift the study of the continent from the Chinese classics (*kangaku*) to a developmental narrative (*tōyōshigaku*) that laid out the ways that Japan was connected to, yet beyond, the continent, in a similar vein to the European construct of the Orient.<sup>32</sup> One of the earliest major statements emerged in 1891 when Inoue Tetsujirō, professor of philosophy at the Imperial University of Tokyo, published a series of essays on the importance of an oriental history (*tōyōshigaku*). Here he accepted the division between the Orient and the Occident, but was troubled by the condescension he experienced while in Europe. He argued that the study of oriental history was necessary for two reasons: the first was to inform Europeans about Japan; the second was to enable Japan to know itself.<sup>33</sup> At this early moment in the development of a historical consciousness, Asia (especially China) was becoming Japan's past. This effort to write a 'world' (that is, Eurasian) history that showed that Japan, too, was like Europe, gained historical depth during the next decade as Shiratori Kurakichi at the Imperial University of Tokyo fostered the field called *tōyōshi*, and Naitō Konan countered with *shinagaku* at the Imperial University at Kyoto. Shiratori formulated his North-South dualism, and Naitō organized progress in terms of shifting cultural centres. For Shiratori, China advanced from the ancient to the medieval where it continued (or more accurately stagnated), and Naitō's *shinagaku* described an advance to modernity around the late Tang and Sung dynasties, followed by steady decline to the twentieth century. Both argued that the vital centre was in contemporary Japan.

What is relevant about this history is that intellectuals recognized the limitations or contradictions within history as developed in the West and transmitted to Japan. Yet in resolving the contradictions, Japanese intellectuals wrote a history that resolved the problem for themselves; they established a narrative that demonstrated a development in Asia with Japan at the pinnacle. They did not recognize (or chose to ignore) the way that they created a parallel hierarchy within their *tōyō*. Their China or Asia was not the same as the places they described. For

<sup>32</sup> We are of course, referring to Edward Said's classic, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978). For Japan's formulation of its Orient see Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley, 1993).

<sup>33</sup> 'Tōyōshigaku no kachi', *Shigaku zasshi*, 3 (1892), 10.

example, Joshua Fogel describes Naitō's dismay about the reform movement around the May Fourth incident: 'the Chinese had turned on him not only as a Japanese, but on *his* Chinese culture, too'.<sup>34</sup> This rendering of Asia into an Orient of Japan rationalized Japan's leadership (imperialism) in Asia, but it separated them further from the places the experts (historians) claimed to know, just as the Japanese claimed that their position as part of the Orient, the 'not yet', was inaccurate.

Thus far we have focused on the emergence of the principal, academic discipline of history. These historians made claims to know and describe the past accurately, using science and the prestige of the university; in their hands, history was a critical tool to unify the heterogeneous places of the archipelago, to define Japan and Japanese. But despite their claim to speak for the whole, their history centred around the state, and the nation as defined by the state. Moreover, as the renewed Historiographical Institute, as well as the history department led by Mikami, suggests, history hewed closely to the ancient myths.

To continue along this path of dealing with the problematic past, the segmentation of the past into history and literature did not address the place where history and myth combine as 'crucial issues in the history of the community'.<sup>35</sup> The specific place where myth and history overlapped was in the centrality of the imperial idea to the new government. The state used the imperial system (from Emperor Jimmu) as the present, conflating the contemporary with myth and history. This connection was evident in the early desires for the new history to continue from the *Rikkokushi*. The government also worked hard to bring this imperium to the public: the Meiji *ishin* celebrated a 'return' to rule by emperors; it synchronized era name with reign as if it were 'traditional'; it reordered the counting of years beginning with the accession of Jimmu (in this way 1869, or Meiji 2, became 2529); when it adopted the Gregorian calendar and changed time reckoning to the twenty-four-hour clock, it changed holidays from being connections to the lunar and agricultural cycles to commemorations of former and present emperors; and it sent the Meiji emperor on a number of progresses to all parts of the land so that the people could 'see' and know the emperor. Like the drift of history much later from the Taisho period, the line between history and what Jean Comaroff calls the 'ritualized commemorations of the past' was blurred, at best.<sup>36</sup>

The claim of being a nation has made this history public and applicable to all its members. The 1890s witnessed a rise of public interest in the past, a 'history

<sup>34</sup> Joshua Fogel, *Politics and Sinology: The Case of Naitō Konan (1866-1934)* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), 273 (italics in the original).

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Mali, *Mythistory: The Making of a Modern Historiography* (Chicago, 2003), 4.

<sup>36</sup> Jean Comaroff, 'The End of History, Again? Pursuing the Past in the Postcolony', in Ania Loomba et al. (eds.), *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* (Durham, NC, 2005), 125-44.

boom'.<sup>37</sup> Public discussion of the past, both recent and old, proliferated. For example, two public intellectuals who tried to counter the growing hegemony of the university over history were Miyake Setsurei and Yamaji Aizan. Miyake did not write historical monographs, but instead essays that argued that history should be located in the masses. In his famous 1890 essay, 'Shinzenbi nihonjin' (Japanese: Truth, Goodness, Beauty) and the companion essay 'Giakushū nihonjin' (Japanese: Lies, Evil, Vulgarity),<sup>38</sup> he argued that Japan and Japanese culture should be seen as an accumulation of time-spaces within the archipelago; it was the accumulation of habits and sensibilities of a people in interaction with sites and objects. Yamaji, too, was not an academic historian; he wrote for important journals such as *Kokumin no Tomo*, *Chūō Kōron*, and *Taiyō*, and later in his career wrote historical biographies of great Japanese men. Yamaji argued that the history written by university historians was a dead history (*shinda rekishi*) that established a national identity that was a mask for power—it glorified the imperial system, emphasized ethics of submission, and directly served the state. Instead, he put forward that '[h]istory is not talk about the past. It is talk about the living present'.<sup>39</sup> In a statement of 1897 that recalls Fukuzawa's lament but illustrates the very different historical foundation in just twenty years, Yamaji wrote: 'Two thousand five hundred years of Japanese history is a record of hell in which the sacrifice of people's lives and blood for the government should make one shudder.'<sup>40</sup>

Such alternatives clearly show the centrality of history to the public and efforts to transform history into a history of Japanese, rather than a history for Japanese. Yet a different aspect of that public role is the emergence of iconic pasts as a part of these public rituals, rather than the veracity of the past. Early hints of this contestation could be seen in the work of Shigeno, and earned him the nickname Dr Obliterator. In 1891 Kume published an essay in *Shigaku zasshi* that argued that Shinto was not a religion but an accumulation of rituals for the worship of heaven which could be found in many other cultures throughout the world.<sup>41</sup> Kume was accused of besmirching the imperial institution after the essay was reprinted in the popular journal *Shikai*. Ultimately, political pressure led to Kume's resignation from the department of history at the Imperial University in 1892 and to the closing of the Office of Historiography in 1893.

<sup>37</sup> Margaret Mehl, 'The Mid-Meiji "History Boom": Professionalization of Historical Scholarship and Growing Pains of an Emerging Academic Discipline', *Japan Forum*, 10 (1998), 67–83.

<sup>38</sup> These essays are available in Miyake Setsurei (ed.), *Miyake Setsurei shū, Gendai nihon bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo, 1931), p. v.

<sup>39</sup> Yamaji Aizan, 'Rekishi no hanashi', *Kokumin shimbun*, 29 April 1894, in *Meiji bunka zenshū* (Tokyo, 1965), xxxv. 264.

<sup>40</sup> Id., 'Nihon no rekishi ni okeru jinken hattatsu no konseki', *Kokumin no tomo*, 9, 16, 23 January 1897, *ibid.*, 314.

<sup>41</sup> Kume Kunitake, 'Shinto wa saiten no kozoku', *Shigaku zasshi* 2.23–25 (October–December, 1891).

Though pasts that gained iconic status were present throughout the Meiji era, this was one of the early incidents that limited the extent to which historians contested popular ideas, especially those concerning the imperial household. The reaction to Kume's essay contrasts with Naka's revised chronology (published in 1897), a potentially devastating argument that the imperium did not date back to Emperor Jimmu (now known to be a mythical figure) and that the record of the first eighteen emperors was unreliable. Yoshida Tōgō attempted to explain the difference. He wrote: '*Nihon shoki* chronology is a public one for general use by all imperial subjects. The revised [Naka] chronology is a private one to be used for reference purpose only.'<sup>42</sup> One could use this statement to suggest the separation of historians from the public. Indeed, this is the standard interpretation, where these positivistic historians are described as apolitical and 'without an axe to grind', an interpretation that overlooks the centrality of history in describing the becoming and future of the nation-state.<sup>43</sup> There are two other noteworthy incidents that also occurred during periods of heightened public concern about the imperium. First, in 1911, Kida Teikichi, a graduate of the Imperial University and employee at the Ministry of Education, revised his 1904 textbook, which continued the previous edition's narrative that the imperial line split into Northern and Southern Courts during the fourteenth century. This event potentially contradicted the claim of an unbroken imperial rule since Jimmu, but more germane, it followed the Great Treason Incident in which twenty-four individuals were convicted of conspiracy to assassinate the emperor. Second, in 1940, Tsuda Sōkichi, a historian at Waseda University, was accused of *lèse-majesté* for his 1913 monograph in which he argued that the first thirteen emperors were invented to bolster the Yamato clan claim to its suzerainty over rival clans.<sup>44</sup> Tsuda argued that Japan was not unified until the fifth century AD, not 660 BC when Jimmu is claimed to have begun his rule. He was convicted of *lèse-majesté* in 1942.

The defence of these historians was that they were merely reiterating the facts. But this distinction depends on a belief that historical narrative itself is not political. It overlooks the successful merging of modern history with these new myths, in what recent historians have called the emperor system. Similar issues continue to operate in Japan today.

The final major development of the pre-war period was the introduction of the ideas of Marx and Marxism into history. Early twentieth-century Japan provided a rich field for systematic ideas that sought redress to exploitation and rising inequality. The focus on the institutions of the state and nation-building, rather than on the people, was paralleled by the emphasis on industrial development rather than on the well-being of citizens. From the 1890s a number of activists, politicians, and intellectuals sought to address these social problems, especially

<sup>42</sup> John Young, *The Location of Yamatai: A Case Study in Japanese Historiography* (Baltimore, 1958), 95.

<sup>43</sup> Duus, 'Whig History, Japanese Style', 419–20.

<sup>44</sup> Tsuda Sōkichi, *Shindaishi no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1913).



the rising poverty and growing slums. Conditions did not improve, however, and during the 1910s economists began introducing Marxist ideas into their analyses; in 1922 the Japanese Communist Party was founded (and immediately outlawed). In the second half of the 1920s two schools of Marxist history, the Lecture school (*kōza-ha*) and the Farmer-Labourer school (*rōnō-ha*) emerged. The *kōza-ha*, led by scholars such as Noro Eitarō, Hani Gorō, Yamada Moritarō, and Hirano Yoshitarō, followed the platform of the Communist International. They argued that the Meiji *ishin* was an aborted revolution where feudal remnants (the emperor, samurai, and landlords) allied with progressive forces to create a peculiar 'absolutist' state. The *rōnō-ha*, led by scholars such as Ōuchi Hyōe and Tsuchiya Takao, argued that the *ishin* was a successful, bourgeois revolution. In the *kōza-ha*, the predominant interpretation, the problem was located in feudal remnants, while in the *rōnō-ha* interpretation it was located in monopoly capitalism. Like their orthodox counterparts, these historians operated within a linear and materialistic view of history and marshalled detailed empirical research to sustain their arguments; indeed, there are many similarities between the *kōza-ha* and the US-led modernization theory which came to dominate from the 1960s. Both interpretations made economics a central component of modern history, solidified the significance of common people (though primarily as labourers and farmers) in history, and exposed the Meiji *ishin* as an originary moment in the history of modern Japan. Marxist historians dominated historical scholarship in Japan in the first decades after the Second World War.

## CHINA

Around the time of the first Opium War (1839–42), the geographic horizon of Chinese historiographers expanded beyond its original confines to include the geography of the West through publications such as Wei Yuan's *Haiguo tuzhi* [Illustrated Gazetteer on the Maritime Kingdoms] (1843). Subsequently, Western concepts of science, progress, and linear, abstract time began to have an impact on Chinese thought.<sup>45</sup> Historiography (*shixue*), which traditionally was closely linked to the study of the classics (*jingxue*), now underwent a process of professionalization and institutionalization along the lines of the modern West. Departing from a close connection between cognitive, normative, and political aspects, which as such were not always clearly differentiated, historiography turned into the academic discipline of history, standing next to and separate from philosophy and politics. As an academic discipline, it was expected to focus on

<sup>45</sup> On the reception of linear time in China see Wang Fansen, 'Jindai Zhongguo de xianxing lishiguan—yi shehui jinhualun wei zhongxin de taolun', *Xin shixue*, 19:2 (2008), 1–46; and Luke S. K. Kwong, 'The Rise of the Linear Perspective on History and Time in Late Qing China c.1860–1911', *Past and Present*, 173 (2001), 157–90.

questions of methodology, objective truth claims based on verifiable evidence, issues of new forms and genres of professional publication, and new tasks in education.

In this process the challenges and new tasks Chinese historians were facing were manifold. In the context of Western views of history based on notions of universal teleological progress and centred on the nation as the subject of history, Chinese historians had to develop an understanding of Chinese history as national and as part of progressive world history, thus integrating China as an equal member into the new world of nation-states. This had to be achieved by avoiding the pitfalls of progressivist history which, for late-developing countries, entailed the risk of being locked in a state of eternal backwardness, always chasing the advanced West but never being able to catch up with it.

Although this new vision of national, progressive history necessitated a break with traditional views of history and historiography, Chinese historians nevertheless had to safeguard some sort of historical continuity in order to provide a basis for Chinese identity, to foster national consciousness, and thus make a contribution to building a modern Chinese nation-state.

Tensions similar to those between adopting a new view of history and having to safeguard continuity became manifest on the meta-level of theories and methods of historical research and the tasks assigned to historians. New concepts of writing history and the organization of the academic discipline of history had to be devised in line with the new understanding of history. At the same time, the position of the historian still bore the imprint of the traditional centrality of Chinese historiography, putting him and the new discipline under great pressure to meet and fulfil the new challenges and tasks. Many modern Chinese historians were torn between conflicting commitments to modern, disinterested historical research and the responsibility to save the Chinese nation.

Around the beginning of the twentieth century first signs of a progressivist and teleological understanding of history became manifest in the writings of Kang Youwei, one of the intellectual leaders of the reform movement of 1898.<sup>46</sup> He propagated a view of history based on late Qing New Text Confucianism. Old Text Confucianism, long the dominant school, saw Confucius as an historian who recorded the facts of the past. In contrast, the school of New Text Confucianism stood for an understanding of Confucius as a prophet who expressed in the classics, in subtle words, his blueprint for an ideal future society. In his famous book *Datongshu* [The Great Commonwealth] (1935) Kang Youwei propagated a theory of universal historical development in three epochs leading from a stage of Great Chaos, through a stage of Rising Peace to the goal of history, the final stage of Great Peace. He projected a uniform process towards an ideal, nearly utopian global society, levelling the differences between the West

<sup>46</sup> Hsiao Kung-chuan, *A Modern China and a New World: K'ang Yu-wei, Reformer and Utopian, 1958–1927* (Seattle and London, 1975).

and China, locating the blueprint for the future ideal society in ancient Chinese texts, and thereby integrating China into a global historical scheme and reclaiming leadership for China.

In the aftermath of this reform movement in 1898 many Chinese reform-minded intellectuals left China to study in Japan. From then until around the First World War, they were influenced by the most advanced Japanese intellectual trends and adopted new views of, and approaches to, history that had shaped Japanese historiography since the 1880s. Liang Qichao, a prolific writer and leading modern Chinese journalist and intellectual, exerted the most profound impact on the development of Chinese writing of history.<sup>47</sup> Under the influence of evolutionary concepts of history, he and many others, such as Xia Cengyou and Liu Yizheng,<sup>48</sup> adopted the Western tripartite periodization of ancient, medieval, and modern history, envisaging history as a process with nation-states as its subject. China thus became one among many nations, joining a global world of competing nation-states in which it had to fight for survival and hence prove itself.

In his seminal work, *Xin shixue* [New Historiography] (1902), Liang portrayed history as progressive and governed by laws of causality accessible to human understanding; this enabled Liang to incorporate China into the universal course of history and hence to anticipate the future, providing him and his contemporaries with clear guidelines for political action. However, before long the downside of this progressivist view became clear. Incorporating China into a universal and deterministic course of history created manifold problems. If all nations were proceeding along the same, more or less deterministic historical lines, some more advanced, some lagging behind, and if this course of history was governed by universally uniform causality, how then could China ever overcome its backwardness and catch up? Wasn't it condemned to eternal backwardness? Besides, the national identity of a China that now had become part of a universal process of history was hard to pin down. References to national heroes representing this universal course of history were not sufficient to provide a ground for a particular Chinese identity.<sup>49</sup> The questions as to what constituted Chineseness and what political form the new nation should adopt were difficult to answer.<sup>50</sup>

In line with his new view of history, Liang criticized traditional Chinese historiography as focusing too much on the imperial court and the ruling family, and being unable to write more than a record of imperial words and deeds, a sort of

<sup>47</sup> Chang Hao, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971); and Joseph R. Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953).

<sup>48</sup> Tze-ki Hon, 'Cultural Identity and Local Self-Government: A Study of Liu Yizheng's *History of Chinese Culture*', *Modern China*, 30:4 (2004), 506-42.

<sup>49</sup> Tang Xiaobing, *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: The Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao* (Stanford, 1996).

<sup>50</sup> Axel Schneider, *Wahrheit und Geschichte: Zwei chinesische Historiker auf der Suche nach einer modernen Identität für China* (Wiesbaden, 1997).

imperial genealogy but not a modern national history. The traditional writing of history thus could not instigate feelings of national pride in the populace. Along with many intellectuals of that period, Liang advocated a new national history based on universal ideas such as citizenship, popular sovereignty, and constitutional monarchy, rather than on criteria of a particular race or culture.<sup>51</sup> In other words, he envisaged the Chinese nation as racially inclusive, defined by politics and the inherited territory of the Qing dynasty; in essence, Liang's vision of the Chinese nation was predominantly that of a state-nation.

During the first years of the twentieth century Zhang Taiyan, a contemporary of Liang Qichao, presented a radically different approach, one influenced by Old Text Confucianism.<sup>52</sup> Around the time that Liang published his *Xin shixue*, Zhang saw history not as a universally uniform process governed by causality and progress, but as a realm of human activity that could not be subsumed under universal laws, a process that was characterized by contingent events and was ultimately unique. History was distinctive for each nation, and could not be researched by applying universal laws or be integrated into world historical schemes.<sup>53</sup> The study of history, in contrast to the study of social sciences, therefore, could not provide clear guidelines for future political action.<sup>54</sup>

Rather than applying general schemes of universal historical development, Zhang demanded to use the evidential methodology of the early Qing Han Studies and apply it to history. Yet, in doing so, he went far beyond the aims of the Han Studies. Quite an iconoclast, his aim was not to restore the classics to their original state, but to historicize them thoroughly, treating them as sources for history rather than as sources of normativity, and he broadened the scope of Chinese culture beyond orthodox Confucianism so as to include hitherto heterodox trends as, for example, the Masters of the Zhou Dynasty.

However, Zhang underwent a fundamental shift just a few years later. He was one of the first Chinese historians who radically doubted the modern Western views of linear, progressive history. Under the influence of Yogacāra Buddhism, he relied on the notion of 'suchness' or 'true thusness' (Chinese: *zhēnrú*; Sanskrit: *tathatā*). 'Thusness' indicates the absolute 'reality', which transcends the multitude of forms in the phenomenal world. All phenomena are viewed as empty and thus without substance, movement, or evolution. From this perspective, history as a karmic process is characterized by suffering caused by deluded impulses and afflictions, and has to be overcome. In 1906 Zhang thus ultimately negated history.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China*.

<sup>52</sup> Wang Young-tsu, *Search for Modern Nationalism: Zhang Binglin and Revolutionary China, 1869-1936* (Hong Kong, 1989).

<sup>53</sup> Zhang Taiyan, *Yinduren zhi lun guocui* (1908), reprinted in *Zhang Taiyan quanji*, 6 vols. (Shanghai, 1982-86), iv, 366-7.

<sup>54</sup> Id., *Zhongguo tongshi luelie* (1902), reprinted *ibid.*, iii, 328-32.

<sup>55</sup> Viren Murthy, 'The Myriad Things Stem from Confusion: Nationalism, Ontology and Resistance in the Philosophy of Zhang Taiyan', Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2007.

Based on this understanding of the nature of history, Zhang Taiyan's Chinese nation was defined by racial traits and rooted in its particular, historically grown culture. Zhang opposed the Qing dynasty and accused the Manchus of having suppressed the Chinese nation, eliminated the memory of its history, and thus deprived it of its vitality. For some, the nation of revolution resembled much more the traditional concept of a change of Mandate of Heaven as he was asking for the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty and the restoration of the Ming Dynasty, that is a Han Chinese dynasty.<sup>56</sup>

Parallel to these early systematic engagements with, and refutations of, Western theories of history and historiography, the first modern histories of China were written. Mostly adaptations from Japanese publications, these textbooks were the first attempts at a general history of China, written in a new style and structurally modelled along the lines of the typical Western tripartite periodization. Liu Yizheng's *Lidai shilüe* [A Brief Historical Account of Different Periods] of 1902, which was an adaptation of Naka Michiyo's *Shina tsūshi* [A General History of China] of 1899, and Xia Cengyou's *Zhongxue Zhongguo lishi jiaokeshu* [History Textbook for Middle Schools] of 1906–7,<sup>57</sup> were both widely used as textbooks at the new schools and in history departments at the modern universities in China which were established in the wake of the reform movement of 1898.

During and immediately after the First World War, domestic and international, academic and political developments triggered a new phase of change in Chinese concepts and practice of historiography. The discovery of new historical sources, the New Culture Movement in China (from c.1915 until 1922/3), with its increasing reception of recent Western ideas, the partial disillusionment with the West as a consequence of the First World War, and the growing importance of the social question in the wake of the revolutionary movements of the 1920s, transformed the historiographical landscape profoundly.

Since the late nineteenth century many new types of textual and material sources had been discovered and thus new avenues of research had been opened. The reception of the discipline of archaeology further strengthened these developments in the 1920s and led to far-reaching reinterpretations, especially in the field of ancient Chinese history.<sup>58</sup> New written sources included material such as oracle bone inscriptions dating back to the Shang dynasty (eighteenth–eleventh century BC); bamboo and wooden slips, mostly from the Han dynasty; the script rolls from Dunhuang; and the materials from the Ming and Qing inner cabinet, as well as many historical sources in the languages of north and central Asian people which had hitherto gone unnoticed. These new materials enabled Chinese

<sup>56</sup> Wang Fansen, *Zhang Taiyan de sixiang ji qi dui ruxue chuantong de chongji* (Taipei, 1985).

<sup>57</sup> Xia Cengyou's, *Zhongxue Zhongguo lishi jiaokeshu* was later published as *Zhongguo gudaishi* (Shanghai, 1933).

<sup>58</sup> Philip L. Kohl, 'Nationalism and Archaeology: On the Constructions of Nations and the Reconstructions of the Remote Past', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 27 (1998), 223–46.

historians to take up important questions such as the issue of the exact chronology of the kings of the Yin-Shang dynasty, deciphered by the famous Wang Guowei on the basis of oracle bone inscriptions,<sup>59</sup> or the reconstruction of the geographic movement of the Yin capitals by Fu Sinian.<sup>60</sup>

Encouraged by the previous generation of critical historians such as Zhang Taiyan, and the iconoclasm of the May Fourth Movement, young historians started to question Chinese history, as it had hitherto been understood, to an unprecedented extent. This movement under the leadership of Gu Jiegang, which soon came to be known as the School of the Doubters of Antiquity, deconstructed the inherited vision of China's ancient history as a fabrication.<sup>61</sup> Claiming that later historiographers had faked documents, Gu developed his theory of ancient history in layers, arguing that tier after tier of faked history had been piled up. Later generations of historiographers added new, seemingly older versions of history to previous fabrications to serve their master's political needs, thus leading to a constant extension of Chinese history into an ever more remote past. By deconstructing these falsifications, the doubters of antiquity continued the work of their predecessors in demythologizing the once highly normative Golden Age that for two millennia had served as the historical point of reference for the political and social ideals of state Confucianism.

Although immediately criticized for irresponsible use of sources and for building his theory largely based on conjectures, Gu soon went beyond the level of a textual critique of historical sources. He developed his theory by linking it to the political interests of the social groups involved, arguing that it was the scholar-officials who defended their and the court's interests. In line with this anti-elitist view of history, Gu became one of the founders of ethnographic studies of folk culture, collecting, for instance, songs of the common people. His Chinese nation was to be rooted in history, as had been the case with many of his predecessors; however, it was a very different history, as Gu largely referred to the masses and the positive influence of barbarian tribes that, time and again, had conquered China and made important contributions to its history. Although not a communist, Gu nevertheless sympathized with leftist historians and remained on the mainland after the communist takeover in 1949.<sup>62</sup>

Originally iconoclastic comrades-in-arms of the May Fourth Movement, Hu Shi and his student Fu Sinian departed ways with Gu Jiegang, putting more

<sup>59</sup> Joey Bonner, *Wang Kuo-wei: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), 177–90.

<sup>60</sup> Fu Sinian, 'Yixia dongxi shuo', *Waipian* 1, qingzhu Cai Yuanpei xiansheng liushiwu sui lunwenji (1935), 1093–134. For Fu Sinian see Wang Fan-sen, *Fu Su-nien: A Life in Chinese History and Politics* (Cambridge, 2000); and Schneider, *Wahrheit und Geschichte*.

<sup>61</sup> Lawrence A. Schneider, *Ku Chieh-kang and China's New History: Nationalism and the Quest for Alternative Traditions* (Berkeley, 1971); and for these articles see Gu Jiegang, *Gushibian*, 7 vols. (Shanghai, 1926–40).

<sup>62</sup> Ursula Richter, *Zweifel am Altertum: Gu Jiegang und die Diskussion über Chinas alte Geschichte als Konsequenz der 'Neuen Kulturbewegung' ca. 1915–1923* (Frankfurt, 1992).

emphasis on the correct scientific methodology of historical research, demanding that historians should stay aloof from politics to safeguard their independence and objectivity. Hu Shi's National Studies Movement (*zhengli guogu*) set out to re-evaluate China's past with the help of modern scientific methods.<sup>63</sup> As a student of John Dewey, Hu Shi adopted the genetic method to study how things developed historically. Preferring the experimental method over other tenets of Dewey's pragmatism, such as the emphasis on the relativity and historicity of truth claims, Hu Shi related the methodology of modern historical research to the evidential scholarship (*kaozhengxue*) of the early Qing period and insisted that historians dare to formulate bold hypotheses and then carefully search for evidence. He himself applied the genetic method to the study of the history of Chinese philosophy, excluding large parts of what had hitherto been considered essential elements of early Chinese philosophy because of the absence of reliable evidence.<sup>64</sup>

One of Hu Shi's students, Fu Sinian, who became a very influential historian and academic administrator, propagated an approach to historical studies that is known as the School of Historical Material. This school dominated Chinese historiography on the mainland until 1949 and on Taiwan until the early 1970s. Fu was influenced by positivism and posited a theory of history that limited research to the collection and quantitative analysis of historical sources.<sup>65</sup> He opposed any kind of philosophical speculation or interpretative conclusion, and insisted on a research approach that focused purely on historical sources. Deriving this methodology from Western examples such as the German historical scholarship of Ranke or Heinrich von Treitschke,<sup>66</sup> from Henry Thomas Buckle's geographic-climatic approach to history, and from early Qing evidential scholarship, Fu demanded that the historian let the sources speak for themselves, which later earned him the reputation of being the Chinese Ranke.<sup>67</sup> Inheriting Zhang Taiyan's ideals, Fu strongly opposed any connection between scholarship and politics.

For Fu Sinian, as for Hu Shi, objective science and democracy represented the right values and the trends of the time. Only by adopting both could China hope to modernize and become an equal member of the family of nations. Yet, Fu and Hu were both nevertheless ardent nationalists, as can be seen from Fu's repeated

<sup>63</sup> Hu Shi, 'Yanjii guogu de fangfa', *Dongfang zazhi*, 18:16 (1921); and id., 'Zhengli guogu yu "dagui"', *Xiandai pinglun*, 119 (1927), 13-15.

<sup>64</sup> Id., *Zhongguo zhaxueshi dagang* (Shanghai, 1919).

<sup>65</sup> Fu Sinian, *Xingming guxun bianzheng* (1940), reprinted in *Fu Sinian quanji*, ii, 491-736.

<sup>66</sup> Id., 'Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo gongzuo zhi zhiqiu', *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan*, 1:1 (1928); and id., "'Shiliao yu shixue" fakanci' (1945), in *Fu Sinian quanji*, iv, 1402-4.

<sup>67</sup> Two monographs were especially important for the reception of Western theories of history: Ernst Bernheim, *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode und der Geschichtsphilosophie* (Leipzig, 1908); and Charles Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos, *Introduction aux études historiques* (Paris, 1898). On Buckle's influence see Li Xiaolian, *Xifang shixue zai Zhongguo de chuanbo, 1882-1949* (Shanghai, 2007), ch. 2.

engagement in nationalist politics, despite his call for objectivity. The tension between the new ideals and the inherited centrality of the historian manifested itself on the occasion of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. Wanting to refute Japanese claims to legitimate rule over Manchuria, the nationalist Fu Sinian hastily edited a history of Manchuria in which he set out to prove that this area had been part of the Chinese Empire for centuries.<sup>68</sup> However, he immediately came under attack for relying on spurious sources and for jumping to conclusions on the basis of thin evidence.<sup>69</sup> He had been carried away by his nationalist feelings. The project had to be terminated prematurely and Fu never again ventured into larger historiographical projects.

Fu also played an important role in the further institutionalization and professionalization of historical research during the 1920s and 1930s. In 1928 he became the founding director of the Institute for History and Philology of the Academia Sinica, a national research institution modelled along the lines of French and German examples. In this position he oversaw the groundbreaking excavations of the Yin capital near Anyang that proved the historicity of the Shang dynasty, and initiated many other archaeological and historiographical projects.

During the 1920s many academic journals were founded and, in addition to existing departments of history, research institutes for Chinese history and culture were established at many universities such as at Beijing University, Tsinghua University, and Sun Yatsen University. Increasingly, historians with modern training returned to China from Japan, the United States, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, and the output of research articles and graduate students reached impressive proportions during the 1930s.

Yet, these developments did not lead to a uniform historiographical field. In the wake of the May Fourth Movement and in the context of growing Chinese disillusionment with Western powers during and after the First World War, historiographical trends with a 'conservative' and a leftist orientation gained ground and influenced the writing of history after the 1920s.

Between 1922 and the early 1940s several historians started to write histories of China that relied on varying aspects of China's traditional culture to define the core of the Chinese nation. Liu Yizheng published the first instalment of his *Zhongguo wenhuashi* [History of Chinese Culture] in 1926, Qian Mu published his *Guoshi dagang* [Outline of Chinese History] in 1940, followed by Chen Yinque and his publications on the history of the Sui and Tang dynasties.<sup>70</sup> All three differed in the way they referred to aspects of China's traditional culture. Liu Yizheng broadened the scope of Confucian culture to include other aspects

<sup>68</sup> Fu Sinian, *Dongbei shigang* (Beijing, 1932).

<sup>69</sup> Miao Fenglin, 'Ping Fu Sinian jun dongbei shigang juanshou', *Zhongyang daxue wenyi congkan*, 1:2 (1934), 131-63.

<sup>70</sup> Chen Yinque, *Sui Tang zhidu yuanyuan luelungao* (place unknown, 1942); and id., *Tangdai zhengzhishi shulungao* (n.p., 1943).

and made it the product of the creativity of the Chinese people rather than just of a few sages; Qian Mu relied heavily on orthodox Confucianism to circumscribe the Chinese nation; while Chen Yinke related to the Confucian social ethics of the Three Bonds and Five Relationships to identify the spirit of the Chinese nation.

None of the three can be called conservative in the sense of wanting to conserve or even restore a bygone socio-political order. All were aware that China had changed and aimed at defining the Chinese nation in terms different from the mainstream modernizers who primarily focused on political (modern, in some cases also democratic nation-state) and territorial aspects (i.e. boundaries of the Qing dynasty). And all three emphasized the particularity of Chinese history and culture as the basis for a modern Chinese national identity, and subsequently developed hermeneutic methodologies of historical research that resembled in some aspects the theory and methodology of European historicism of the late nineteenth century.<sup>71</sup> Positing a shared human nature (Liu Yizheng) or the need for empathetic understanding and shared existential experiences (Chen Yinke), these historians attempted to rescue cherished elements of Chinese traditional culture and integrate them into their vision of the Chinese nation, present and future.

Tormented by a desire to protect some elements of traditional culture and the imminent threat of their destruction by the progressive march of history, some of these historians were also the first to develop a fundamental critique of the modern Western progressivist view of linear history. Already at the beginning of the twentieth century, Zhang Taiyan, based on Yogācāra Buddhist tenets, had expressed a thorough critique of linear history debunking it as illusionary. Historians could hardly work with that. In the 1920s Liang Qichao, influenced by neo-Kantianism and Buddhism, rejected his earlier views and propagated a view of history denying determinism and limiting progress to the development of a world of free and equal nations. In all other areas of human activity he doubted progress and causality, and emphasized instead free will.<sup>72</sup> However, he was still a nationalist firmly committed to building a strong and modern nation-state with its particular Chinese culture.

It was Liu Yizheng's critique of progressivism that went far beyond the reconfiguration of history into a non-progressive, non-linear history of particular cultures and nations, as was the case with Liang Qichao. He went back to traditional Confucian sources and the *Yijing* [Classic of Changes], not only questioning the modern Western notion of history as a linear, progressive process but even under-

<sup>71</sup> For Chen's methodological statements see his 'Feng Youlan Zhongguo zhexueshi shangce shencha baogao' (1930), in *Chen Yinke xiansheng wenji*, 5 vols. (Taipei, 1982), ii. 247–9, 250–2. For Qian Mu see his *Guoshi dagang* (Changsha, 1940). For Liu Yizheng see his *Guoshi yaoyi* (Shanghai, 1948).

<sup>72</sup> Liang Qichao, 'Zhongguo lishi yanjiufa bubian' (1926–27), in *Yinbingshi zhuanji*, 10 vols. (Taipei, 1972), i. 1–176.

mining its very nature as an impersonal process determining—or at least confining—the fate of mankind. He replaced modern history understood as a collective singular (History) with the pre-modern notion of history as the manifestation of a moral cosmic order. The realization of this order in actual human society belonged to the tasks to which the historian had to make a contribution through a process of self-cultivation and appropriate recording of history.<sup>73</sup> Liu was a rare and marginal case of fundamental opposition against the modern view of history; however, his book influenced later Chinese engagement with Western philosophy of history, especially that of G. W. F. Hegel.

The Marxists represented a third strand of views of history and historiography during that period. Marxist views of history were received in China during the New Culture Movement, without at that time having a relevant impact on political action. It was only during the 1920s, in the wake of the first cooperation between the Nationalists and the Communists, and the acceleration of the revolution during the Northern Expedition, that Marxist views of history started to acquire more political relevance. Society and the masses, as categories of historical analysis, acquired a new urgency when questions of the correct path to revolution became more pressing.<sup>74</sup>

Initially, the Marxist view of history in five stages, each characterized by a different mode of production, was adopted and applied rather rigidly to Chinese history. Marxist historians attempted to fit Chinese history into the universal scheme as expressed by historical materialism, which stipulated that history is driven by the development of the forces of production and characterized by a causal, linear progress towards the next mode of production. This view empowered Chinese Marxists since it provided a comprehensive understanding of history (covering economy, society, politics, and ideology) that seemed to allow them to recognize the revolutionary potential of the current phase of development and to anticipate the future. Marxist historians thus worked with an explicit aim to serve politics by means of the theory of history they expounded.

The concrete application of this view to China was carried out during the debate on China's social history, starting in the mid-1920s. Leading the Marxist interpretation was Guo Moruo, who conducted research on ancient Chinese history with the aim of identifying the correct phase of historical development that China underwent during high antiquity. In his *Zhongguo gudai shehui yanjiu* [Research on China's Ancient Society] (1930), he wanted to prove that the society of the Shang and early Zhou period was one of slave-holders and followed by the

<sup>73</sup> See Liu Yizheng, *Guoshi yaoyi* (Shanghai, 1948). For an analysis of Liu's historiography see Axel Schneider, 'Nation, History and Ethics: The Choices of Post-Imperial Chinese Historiography', in Brian Moloughney and Peter Zarrow (eds.), *Transforming History: The Making of a Modern Academic Discipline in Twentieth-Century China* (Hong Kong, forthcoming).

<sup>74</sup> Arif Dirlik, *Revolution and History: the Origins of Marxist Historiography in China, 1919–1937* (Berkeley, 1978).

feudalistic late Zhou period. Criticized for misreading the sources, he had to revise this interpretation, now stipulating that the beginning of feudalism in China had to be identified with the early Han dynasty. A rather trivial shift at first glance, these interpretative details were important as they had implications for the continuing debate on the nature of current Chinese society. While Stalin insisted that China was still in the feudal phase and hence first had to undergo a phase of United Front policy to fight imperialism, Leon Trotsky argued that China was a society already in the capitalist stage and in need of a communist revolution by overthrowing the bourgeoisie.

Less deterministic in their understanding of Chinese history but equally influenced by Marxist ideas and categories, were historians who were associated with the left wing of the Nationalists. Tao Xisheng, in his *Zhongguo shehui zhi shi de fenxi* [Analysis of the History of Chinese Society] (1929), and others were more flexible in their understanding of Chinese history and saw it as deviating significantly from the Marxist orthodoxy's five stages of history. Rather than arguing for a rigidly class-based analysis, they saw Chinese society, past and present, as a mixture of different modes of production and characterized by complicated alliances of different social forces. They interpreted Chinese society of their own time as a coalition of trade capital, landowners, and scholar-officials, which had formed an alliance with imperialism. It was—from a Marxist point of view—this odd alliance that they believed should become the target of Nationalist revolution.<sup>75</sup>

The differences between orthodox Marxists and these leftist historians also became manifest in their respective views of the role of theory and the historian. Guo represented a rather deterministic model of historical development and assigned to the historian the principal task of bringing about social change via his anticipatory capacities, based on the correct theory and thorough research of the past. Tao, in contrast, stood much more for an understanding of Marxist theory as a source of interpretative and methodological inspiration and was much less willing to subordinate China's particular history to abstract models that, from his point of view, obviously did not fit.

However, before long the issue of the sinicization of Marxism—that is, its adaption to particular Chinese historical, social, and political conditions—was of central concern to Mao Zedong, who intended to establish himself not only as leader of the Chinese Communist Revolution, but also wanted to rebuff Soviet claims to theoretical leadership and political dominance. Fan Wenlan's influential *Zhongguo jindaishi* [History of Modern China], published in its authoritative 1949 version but written mostly during the early 1940s, was part of this process of sinicization driven by theoretical concerns over the applicability of universal

<sup>75</sup> Tao Xisheng, *Zhongguo shehui yu Zhongguo geming* (Shanghai, 1931).

Marxist theory to China and the political interests of a revolutionary party aiming to grasp power.<sup>76</sup>

With the successful Communist Revolution of 1949 the historiographical landscape of China again changed fundamentally. Most of the figureheads of liberal and positivist historiography left the mainland for either the United States or Taiwan decades before their mainland colleagues came under the direct influence of recent Western historical scholarship. Marxist historians continued the debates on the relationship between universal Marxist theory and particular Chinese history, most of the time directly involved in, and victims of, the political struggles of the first three decades of the People's Republic of China. The camp of culturally more conservative historians and the leftists associated with the left wing of the Nationalists became scattered. Some stayed on the mainland to find themselves suffering during the Cultural Revolution; others left sooner or later for Hong Kong, Taiwan, or the West.<sup>77</sup>

### TIMELINE/KEY DATES

#### China

- 1839–42 Opium Wars
- 1895 First Sino-Japanese War
- 1898 100 Day Reforms
- 1900 Boxer Uprising
- 1905 Revolutionary Alliance established, precursor of the Nationalists
- 1911 Revolution of 1911
- 1919 May Fourth Incident
- 1921 Establishment of the Chinese Communist Party
- 1924–7 First Cooperation between the Nationalists and the Chinese Communists
- 1927/8 Northern Expedition
- 1931 Mukden Incident
- 1937–45 Second Sino-Japanese War

#### Japan

- 1868 Meiji *ishin*
- 1881–4 Freedom and Popular Rights Movement
- 1889 Promulgation of the Meiji Constitution

<sup>76</sup> Li Huaiyin, 'Between Tradition and Revolution: Fan Wenlan and the Origins of the Marxist Historiography of Modern China', *Modern China*, 36:3 (2010), 269–301.

<sup>77</sup> See Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, 'Chinese Historical Writing Since 1949', in Axel Schneider and Daniel Woolf (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 5: *Historical Writing Since 1945* (Oxford, 2011), 615–36.

- 1904–5 Russo-Japanese War  
 1910 Korea annexed  
 1912 Taisho era begins  
 1922 Japan Communist Party founded (and immediately outlawed)  
 1925 Universal Manhood Suffrage  
 1925 Peace Preservation Law  
 1926 Showa era begins  
 1932 Manchukuo founded

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