

**“The Turks are the most similar to us”:
Chinese intellectuals’ conceptions of the Ottoman movements
1843-1913**

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Abstract

This thesis examines Chinese intellectuals' conceptions of the Ottoman reform movements from 1843 to 1913, especially the different interpretations of the Young Turk movement. In 1908, Kang Youwei, a famous Chinese reformer, arrived in Istanbul and witnessed the victory of the Young Turk Revolution. Since then, Ottoman movements became significant cases for Kang and his generation to reflect on the imperial crisis of Qing China which failed to establish a constitutional monarchy. After the Qing's demise in 1912, Kang's focus switched to the restoration of the Qing Monarchy. As he attempted to achieve this goal by transforming Confucianism into a state religion, he regarded the Hamidian religious approach as a model to ensure people's loyalty to the ruler. The transition of Kang's interpretations and his debates with both conservatives and revolutionaries revealed the complexity of "imperial formations". To overcome the convention of making Europe the only model in the studies of modernization, this research aims to contribute to a new interpretation of the Ottoman Empire's role in the constitutional movement and revolution of another non-European empire.

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Introduction

On June 29th, 1908, Kang Youwei, the exiled Chinese leader of the 1898 Wuxu Reform¹, arrived in Istanbul by ship via the Black Sea. After a long journey in western European countries seeking reform models, what he experienced there was unexpected and incredible. It was the first time he visited the Ottoman Empire which became a hot topic in China only after the 1877 Russo-Turkish War. Although the poverty and “backwardness” he had seen in Istanbul did not surprise him, he was immediately shocked by witnessing the victory of the Young Turk Revolution. According to *Tu Jue Youji* [The Turk Travelogue] written by Kang, on the way to Istanbul, he already heard crowd cheers from those who read the newspapers of the day. All the streets were covered by crescent moon flags, drumbeats, and dancing masses. When he learned that people were celebrating the restoration of the 1876 constitution, he felt jealous because the Qing court was still delaying the establishment of a constitution. Hence, he depicted this event as the most surprising thing he had ever seen because the Young Turks only took three days to achieve the constitution.

Later, Kang met the members of the Young Turks and was impressed by the fact that they were able to change the authoritarian sultan’s mind by using the army’s power. To emphasize the significance of the Ottoman movements, Kang later forged a petition to the throne, *Tu Jue Xueruo Ji* [The Decline of the Turks], which highlights the similarities between the Ottoman Empire and the Qing.² Since then, the Young Turk Movement not only became a model for this Chinese royalist

¹ The Wuxu Reform (June 11- September 22, 1898), also known as the Hundred Days of Reform, was permitted by the Guangxu Emperor and designed to establish a constitutional monarchy by political institutional reform. In this campaign, Kang played a role as the advisor of the emperor and the leader of the movement. However, this reform movement only lasted 103 days because of the powerful conservatives in the Qing court.

² As these two works by Kang have been translated into English by Giray Fidan, in this thesis I will use the English titles.

who strove to save the Qing empire, but also a turning point that made the Ottoman political reform a significant topic for the contemporary Chinese intellectuals.

In many aspects, the Ottoman Empire was the most comparable case for the Qing Dynasty regarding modernization reform process. While the Ottomans embarked on the Tanzimat reforms as a response to European threat in 1839, the Qing encountered the powerful British Empire in the Opium War (1840-1842). Since then, both the Qing government and the Chinese intellectuals had gradually adapted modernization ideology from the West. Just as the Ottomans tried to combine the western political system with Islamic ideology, the Self-Strengthening Movement (1861-1895) initiated by the Qing government strove to copy the European models in technological, industrial and military reforms but maintain the Confucian political system. Nevertheless, China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) announced the failure of the Self-Strengthening Movement. Given the acknowledgment of Japan's success in constitutional monarchy reform, Kang and his generation realized that political reform was critical for the Qing. Thus they disseminated the ideas and won the support of the Guangxu Emperor, which paved way to the Wuxu Reform. Similar to the fate of the First Constitutional Era in the Ottoman Empire, this reform movement failed soon because the Empress Dowager controlled the Qing court and restored her authority. Nevertheless, the failure of Kang's reform, which resulted in his exile for more than ten years, gave him a chance to visit the Ottoman Empire.

Kang was not the only Chinese intellectual who was inspired by the Young Turk movement. The most interesting impact of this event was that the Chinese Republicans also benefited from its political legacy. While Kang depicted the Young Turk movement as a constitutional reform, Sun Yat-sen, the leader of the 1911 Xinhai Revolution who intended to overthrow the monarchy, regarded the event as a revolution targeting the throne. The debates between Sun and Kang regarding

the definition of the Young Turks reveals how different interpretations of the Ottoman issue could be used as propaganda of movements. Moreover, after the demise of the Qing Dynasty, the change of Kang's interpretation became even more significant. As Kang attempted to restore the Qing Monarchy by transforming Confucianism into a national religion, he regarded the Hamidian regime as a model even though he lacked systematic studies on Islam. Thus he also revised his writing on the Young Turk movement. Given the Young Turks and the Chinese Republicans shared the same political value which derived from the French Revolution, his attitude towards the Young Turks changed from praise to criticism. This transition of a royalist's mind reflects the complexity of "imperial formations".³

This thesis is about the encounter of the two "Sick Men" who shared a common will to survive when surrounded by the Great Powers. To overcome the convention of making Europe the only model in the studies of modernization, this thesis looks at the two worlds which used to be strangers to each other in order to show the importance of imperial comparison beyond Europe in the modernization era. By analyzing Chinese intellectuals' conceptions of the Ottoman reform movement, it attempts to contribute to a new interpretation of the Ottomans' role in the modernization process and political movements of another non-European empire.

On Historiography

Studies on the interactions between the Ottoman Empire and the Qing Dynasty in this period mostly focus on the Chinese Muslim uprisings against the Qing regime in Xinjiang. Especially the

³ Ann Laura Stoler, "Considerations on Imperial Comparisons," In *Empire Speaks Out: Languages of Rationalization and Self-Description in the Russian Empire*, ed. Ilya Gerasimov et al. (Leiden: Brill Academic Pub, 2009), 33-54.

rebellion leader Yaqub Beg in Kashgar, who got the title of Amir by the Ottoman sultan, was frequently discussed in English literature. These materials focus on either the imperial games on the Russo-Chinese border or the origins of nationalism in Central Asian Muslim community. For example, *The Great Game, 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia* (2013) by Evgeny Sergeev, and *Uyghur Nation: Reform and Revolution on the Russia-China Frontier* (2016) by David Brophy, both pay attention to how Chinese Muslims were engaged in the Russo-Turkish competition in Central Asia.

Regarding the Islamic cultural communication between two sides in the nineteenth century, Turkish scholars are interested in the impact of Sultan Abdulhamid II's Pan-Islamist policy on Chinese Muslims. In Turkish scholarship, *Osmanlıdan Günümüze Türk-Çin İlişkileri* (2007) written by Barış Adıbelli spends chapters to compare the similar problems of the two empires weakened by the Great Powers since the mid-nineteenth century. It mentions that Abdulhamid was interested in the Muslim troops of the 1900 Boxer Rebellion in Beijing. He used to consider taking advantage of this chaos and manage some religious activities there. From the Turkish side, this work shows the Ottomans' influence in the Muslim community all around the world.

Notwithstanding the significance of religious entanglement between the two multi-ethnic empires in the modernization period, most of these studies seldom focus on modernization reform progress. Over the last two decades, Chinese scholars rediscovered Kang's writings on the Young Turk Revolution. In 1995, Shanghai People's Publishing House published *Lie Guo Youji: Kang Youwei Yigao* [Manuscripts: Travelogue in Various Countries] which shows the non-published original version of *The Turk Travelogue*. Based on this manuscript, Dai Dongyang analyzes the differences between the original version and the published one to show Kang's attitude change

towards the Young Turks.⁴ In Zhang Yongle's monograph *Wanguo Jingzheng: Kang Youwei yu weiyena tixi de shuaibian* [International competition: Kang Youwei and the Decay of the Congress of Vienna](2017), new interpretations of Kang's travelogues provide a conscious comparison between Europe and the Ottoman Empire, in which Kang explains why the Ottoman reform can be one of the most available models to Chinese royalists. Inspired by the Chinese research trend, Turkish scholar Giray Fidan translated *The Turk Travelogue* and *The Decline of the Turks* into English for international audience for the first time.⁵ However, because these works were written in classical Chinese language, there are some flaws in the translation which will be revised in this thesis.

Moreover, recent Chinese scholarship draws a larger picture of the Modern Chinese interpretations on the Ottoman issue. Wu Weifeng's MA dissertation *Jindai zhongguoren de Tuerqi guan (1842-1930)* [The Modern Chinese Views of Turkey, 1842-1930](2011) provides a timeline of Chinese writings on the impressive events in the Ottoman-Turkey.⁶ Basing on these discoveries, Chen Peng rethinks the historiography of Chinese writings on the Ottoman Empire in his studies of Chinese conceptions of the Ottoman-Turkey. He argues that the first time the Ottomans became a hot topic in China was not during the 1894-1895 Sino-Japanese war, but 20 years earlier (i.e. during the 1877 Russo-Turkish war).⁷ The sources discovered by these scholars will be introduced and translated in my thesis from a perspective of imperial comparison.

⁴ See, Dai Dongyang, "Kang Youwei *Tu Jue Youji* de gaoben chayi jiqi chengyin," *Modern Chinese History Studies* 2 (2000): 223-236.

⁵ See, Giray Fidan, "*The Turk Travelogue: Kang Youwei's Journey to the Ottoman Empire*," *Bilig* 76 (2016): 227-242. Also see Giray Fidan, "Chinese Intellectual Kang You Wei and Ottoman Modernization," *European Journal of Social Sciences* 28, no. 2 (2012): 196-199.

⁶ See, Wu Weifeng, "*Jindai zhongguoren de Tuerqi guan (1842-1930)*" (M.A diss., Peking University, 2011).

⁷ See, Chen Peng, "Jindai zhongguoren de Tuerqi renshi," [Re-examining the Modern Chinese Understanding of Turkey], *Modern Chinese History Studies* 1 (2018):55-72.

On Sources

Regarding the limitation of time span, this thesis will focus on sources between 1843 and 1913, in which period the Ottoman reform and movement were significant for the contemporary Chinese in term of imperial comparison. Although there was some indirect connection between the two empires in the eighteenth century, it was only until the Qing's defeat in the Opium War that Chinese intellectuals began to study various knowledge of the other countries including the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the year 1843 was a starting point when Chinese intellectuals consciously began to learn about the knowledge of Ottoman Empire. The reason why this research ends in 1913 is that *The Turk Travelogue*, which is the most important source revealing the self-comparison between the two empires, was published in this year. After 1913, the Ottoman Empire was rarely mentioned in Kang's writings. Given that my thesis is based on a imperial perspective, Kang's writing can be seen as the final struggle for the survival of the Qing Empire after the demise of the monarchy in 1912. Therefore, sources later than 1913 are excluded here because they were beyond my research scope. The following sources are the most important I resent in the thesis:

Taixi Xinshi Gaiyao, one of the most important books shaping the modern Chinese conception of the Ottoman Empire in the era of reform. It was a translation of Robert Mackenzie's *The Nineteenth Century*. The translator Richard Timothy, a British missionary who translated this work into Chinese, had a great impact on China's modernization campaign.

The Decline of the Turks, Kang's petition to the emperor using the failure of the Ottoman reform movement as a warning. It reveals how similar the Qing and the Ottoman Empire were from an imperialist perspective.

Manuscripts: Travelogue in Various Countries, Kang's detailed portraits of the countries based on consciously imperial comparisons. It includes the original version of *The Turk Travelogue*.

Other related sources such as Kang's letters, autobiography, and political essays mentioning the Ottoman Empire.

Bu Ren, Kang's journal established in 1913, which published the revised version of *The Turk Travelogue*. This version reveals the shift of his interpretation of the Young Turk movement. Other modern newspapers and journals such as *Chong Shing Yit Pao*, *Shun Pao*, are recovered to show the debates between revolutionaries and royalists on the interpretations of the Young Turk Movement. Additionally, more articles written by other Chinese intellectuals such as journalist, diplomats, reformers, and revolutionaries will be utilized in order to show the context and limitation of Kang's argument.

(Except those sources whose translators are indicated in the footnotes, all the others are translated by myself.)

On Methodology

Ann Laura Stoler asserts that "empire" is "not an epithet but a useful analytic designation of particular forms of political, culture, and economic domination and organization".⁸ To achieve such a breakthrough, she puts forward the term "imperial formations", which highlights the active and contingent realignments of empires rather than their common or particular destinies. To avoid regarding Europe as the only model of empire, which convention would underrate the diversity of imperial forms, Stoler also suggests paying attention to the turn to looking at quintessential empires beyond Europe and comparing those empires which were indirectly connected. In this way, comparative studies between the modernizing reforms of the Ottomans and China will be a good case. The perspective of "imperial formations" emphasizes the "states of becoming, macro polities in

⁸ Ann Laura Stoler, "Considerations on Imperial Comparisons", 34.

states of solution”,⁹ which is useful for my analysis of Kang’s thinking and practice of constitutional monarchy reform. Following the methodological concerns of Stoler, this thesis will focus on the imperial self-comparison as a historical phenomenon and seek the unknown interaction in my future argument instead of applying bystander’s theory to put my objects into the convention of “westernization”.

In respect of sources, this thesis will use Victor Taki’s comparative method as a model of discovery and writing structure. In his essay *Orientalism on the margins: The Ottoman Empire under Russian eyes*, he combines the Russian conceptions of the Ottomans with the transition of modernization process and international relations in the Russian Empire. By analyzing politicians’ writings, he finds that the Russian ambivalence of Orientalist discourse compared with the European conception was reflection of their failure to become part of the “West”. And Russian conceptions of the Ottoman Empire not only revealed a critical attitude toward the “West” but also functioned as a mirror for Russia itself.¹⁰ This approach will provide guidance on the analysis of the thoughts of Kang and his generation, who had trained themselves using a Western perspective to criticize their countries and thus also reflected a complex attitude toward the Ottomans. Since Orientalism inevitably influenced the self-comparison between the two empires, it is significant to study the origins of the limitation of Chinese intellectuals’ knowledge of the world, which might affect the Chinese views on the Ottoman Empire.

⁹ Ibid., 40.

¹⁰ Victor Taki, “Orientalism on the Margins: The Ottoman Empire under Russian Eyes,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no. 2 (2011): 351.

Chapter I - The meeting of the two “Sick Men”:Russia as the Common Threat

To understand the significance of the Young Turk movement in the Chinese conceptions of the Ottoman reform, it is necessary to reexamine Chinese perceptions of the Ottoman Empire in the preceding decades. In the nineteenth century, the transformation of Chinese intellectuals’ writings on this empire is fundamentally divided into three stages:

Firstly, in the 1840s, when Chinese people began to open their eyes to the rest of the world, the Ottoman Empire was just one of the “western countries” but not a successful case for them from which to learn. Secondly, it was not until the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) when the Qing territory also faced the threat of Russian invasion that the Ottoman issue developed into a hot topic in China. At that time, Chinese intellectuals began to observe the Ottoman Empire looking for parallel with the Qing China’s domestic and international affairs. However, they mainly focused on international position and diplomatic strategies of a declining empire but paid less attention to the political reforms there. Finally, after the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), voices of reformers could no longer be ignored, because China had been defeated by a country that successfully implemented modernization reforms. At that time, Kang and those who later became the leaders and supporters of the Wuxu Reform, consciously followed the Ottomans’ example and wrote petitions to warn the Qing emperor about the dangers of ignoring political reform.

In this period, the Ottoman Empire was depicted as a distant empire as despotic as the Qing while the Chinese reformers were paying more attention to the reform models of Japan, Russia, and Western powerful countries such as Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary. Only after

the victory of the Young Turk Revolution did Chinese intellectuals realize that the Ottoman Empire was also a model for a non-European empire like China. The aim of the chapter is to demonstrate the reason why the Ottoman reforms before the Young Turk movement did not attract Chinese reformers' attention.

The Qing's early conception of the Ottomans

Before the mid-nineteenth century, the Chinese worldview was a simple Sino–barbarian dichotomy, which emphasized the superiority of Chinese culture while other foreign countries were presumed as barbarian or uncivilized tribes. This worldview was finally challenged by the conflict with Britain during the Opium War (1840-1842). When the Imperial Commissioner Lin Zexu arrived in Guangzhou in 1839 to suppress opium trade under the order of the Qing emperor, neither Lin nor his emperor had any basic knowledge about the Western enemy and the whole outside world. At that time, Lin did not even know “whether Turkey belongs to America” or “whether they are the same country”.¹¹ At that moment, it was imaginable that most of the Chinese intellectuals felt unfamiliar with this distant empire.

In fact, Central Asia was the only connection between the Ottoman Empire and China, political, economic, and religious activities passing by this region had contributed information to shape the early image of the Ottomans. As Onuma Takahiro and Matthew W. Mosca discover, the earliest name of the Ottomans recorded by the Qing intellectuals was “Khungghar”.¹² Studies showed that

¹¹ Chen Shenlin, “Yapian zhanzheng qianhou zhongguoren dui meiguo de liaojie he jieshao——jianlun qingdai biguan zhengce de pochuan he kai yan kan shijie sichao de boxing,” *Essays on Lin Zexu and the Opium War* (Guangzhou: Sun Yat-Sen University Press, 1990), 282-283, quoted by Pan Guangzhe, *Wanqing Shiren de Xixue Yuedu Shi* (1833-1898) (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 2014), 52.

¹² See, Onuma Takahiro, “Kongga'er guo'xiaokao: 18 zhi 19 shiji Ou-Ya dongbu Aosiman chao renshi zhi yiduan.” *Minzu Shi Yanjiu* 8 (2008):154-158. Also see, Matthew W Mosca, “Empire and the Circulation of Frontier Intelligence: Qing Conceptions of the Ottomans.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* (2010):147-207.

since the eighteenth century, the Qing emperor had heard about this regime from intellectuals who traveled across the western frontier. One of the most important records was *Xiyu Wenjian Lu* [The Travel Notes of the Western Region] written by a Manchu named Qi-Shi-Yi in 1777. Learning the information probably from Torghud¹³ or other nomadic people he met in Xinjiang, Qi-Shi-Yi depicted Khungghar as the largest Muslim state which had rites “just like China, absolutely incomparable to the bestial behavior of the various nations of the Western Regions”.¹⁴ And the capital “Wulumu” [Rum] was a city “extremely vast” that it would take over ninety days to travel from its north to its south.¹⁵ Moreover, this book stressed Khungghar’s military power by depicting its wars with Russia. And some Torghud people told the author that “upon the western frontier of Khungghar they have many more subject states, which pay annual tribute just as Russia does”.¹⁶

Studies also show the Qing emperor’s personal interest in Khungghar as it was a respectful rival in the imperial competition of the Central Asia. According to the Munchu-language archives quoted by Takahiro, between 1757 and 1759, the Qianglong emperor was informed by dignitaries from Kazakhs and Khokand that the Qing and Khungghar were the two great empires in their worldview: geographically, the one ruling the east was the Qing and the other one dominating the west was Khungghar.¹⁷ In 1768, the Qianlong emperor even wrote a geographic essay describing the world as composed of three “great countries”, namely China, India, and Khungghar.¹⁸ These sources implicate that at least in the mid-eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was regarded as

¹³ According to Qi-Shi-Yi’s record, a Torghud troop was sent by the Cayan Khan (Russian tsar) to fight against Khungghar. As defeated, in 1771, this group fled and pledged allegiance to China. Translated and quoted by Matthew W Mosca, “Empire and the Circulation of Frontier Intelligence,” 169.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 169-170.

¹⁷ Takahiro, *Kongga’er guo’xiaokao*, 154-155.

¹⁸ Yuzhi Wenji, *Second Compilation, SKQS*, vol.1301,21.2b-5a, translated and cited by Matthew W Mosca, “Empire and the Circulation of Frontier Intelligence,” 170.

a mysterious but fearsome empire. Although the Qing court had limited connection with the outside world, the ruler found it impossible to ignore the reputation of the Ottomans.

The influence of missionaries

What finally shaped the popular conception of the Ottoman Empire in China was the world knowledge introduced by missionaries. After its defeat in the Opium War (1840-1842), China signed unequal treaties with Britain, France, and other European countries to open ports for foreign trade and missionary activities, which led to the dissemination of Western works translated by missionaries into China. On the one hand, the missionaries' introduction of the world history, geography, politics, and culture helped Chinese intellectuals realize the advantage of modernization. On the other hand, as their activities and translation works were under the veil of Christianity, they made the modern Chinese conception of the Ottomans (and even of China) affected by Orientalism. During this time, two remarkable monographs written by Chinese scholars in fact drew on the Western sources they received from missionaries.

One was *Hai Guo Tu Zhi* [Illustrated gazetteer of the maritime countries] (1843)¹⁹, an influential geographic work reshaping the world view of Chinese people. The author Wei Yuan's writing was based on the Western newspapers and books in foreign language which were sent by Lin Zexu during the Opium War. Another one was *Ying Huan Zhi Lue* [Concise treatise on the maritime circuit] (1849) by Xu Jiyu, it was one of the most important geographic books at that time. It mentioned ten terms used as the names of the Ottoman Empire in Chinese historiography

¹⁹ This book put forward the famous slogan "learning the superior techniques of the barbarians to control the barbarians". This opinion had a great impact on the Self-strengthening Movement initiated by the Qing government, of which the slogan was "Chinese learning for fundamentals, Western learning for practical application". See Immanuel C.Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 334-335.

including Khungghar.²⁰ Then this book determined the official name of this country: Turkey, which is pronounced as “Tu Er Qi” in Chinese. Since then, this term became the official name of the Ottoman Empire and even of Republic of Turkey.²¹ Both Wei’s and Xu’s works have chapters about the Ottoman Empire regarding with its geographical position, national history, political system, and religion. However, both works only create a impression of a distant country whose people were barbarous, brutal, violent, backward, and corrupt. Regarding the history of Khungghar recorded by Qi-Shi-Yi, both works reject that this empire was a great country, and the victory of its wars against Russia were incorrect to them.²² Indeed, most of the Chinese intellectuals might have never met an Ottoman person in their life, while all the information about this country mostly came from Christian authors. As a result, given that the purpose of their writings was to introduce the secret of the Western power, the Ottoman Empire was less important among all the countries they presented.

To most of the Chinese who advocated modernization, the Ottoman case served as a example in their propaganda of reform. This impression was deeply influenced by missionaries. Hence, it is worth to mentioning a Chinese textbook of world politics read by both the emperor and intellectuals all around the country, namely *Taixi Xinshi Gaiyao*[A New History of the West](1895). It is a Chinese version of Robert Mackenzie’s *The Nineteenth Century: A History*. The translator was Timothy Richard [Chinese name: Li Timotai], a prominent British missionary in the late Qing history whose ideas inspired a whole generation of reformers. He was an advisor of many Qing high-rank officials and the teacher of Kang. Moreover, he even participated in the promotion of the Wuxu Reform and played a crucial role in this movement. Although Mackenzie’s work was

²⁰ Xu Jiyu, *Ying Huan Zhi Lue* (Shanghai:Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House, 2001),173.

²¹ Therefore, in this thesis, given that the Ottoman Empire was mentioned as “Tu Er Qi” in most of the historical texts I present, I have to use “Turkey” instead of “the Ottoman Empire” in my translation.

²² Matthew W Mosca, “Empire and the Circulation of Frontier Intelligence,” 195-196.

not a welcomed historical book in Britain due to its narrow Progressivism, Richard was able to make it a dominant reading in China by distorting Mackenzie's thought to make it fit the Chinese context.

In *Taixi Xinshi Gaiyao*, a chapter of "Turkey" formed the most popular image of the Ottomans Empire and the Russo-Turkish war. Compared with Mackenzie's original writing, some strategies in Richard's translation served the propaganda of his ideas. Firstly, as a response to the official name of the Ottoman Empire determined by Xu, he asserted that the Ottoman people came from the ethnic group "Tu Jue". Its name was mistakenly translated as "Turkey", which came from English language, was resulted from the author's ignorance of ancient Chinese history.²³ Tu Jue was the Chinese term of "Turk" or "Turkic", it was first recorded in *Tangshu* [The Book of the Tang Dynasty] in the Tang Dynasty. It reminded Chinese audience of the nomads' excellent performances in the battlefield as well as their indifference to organizing a civilized government.²⁴ As Kang was deeply influenced by *Taixi Xinshi Gaiyao*, he replaced the term "Turkey" with "Turk" in his writings in 1908 and thus distinguished his interpretation of the Ottomans from others'. By seeing the Ottomans as the heir of Tu Jue, Kang showed his belief that Chinese and Turks belong to the same race which was struggling for independence and survival under the siege of the Great Powers. Moreover, he asserted that both Chinese and Turks had got the same illness and suffered the same humiliation in a lower racial hierarchy, which perspective was very convincing at his time.²⁵

²³ Li Timotai, *Taixi Xinshi Gaiyao*. ed. Cai Lekang (Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian Press, 2002), 351.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 351-352.

²⁵ Dai Dongyang, "Kang Youwei *Tu Jue Youji* de gaoben chayi jiqi chengyin," 224.

Secondly, Richard depicted the defeat of the Ottoman Empire as an unavoidable result according to a mysterious prediction written on a stone and carried by a traveler in Constantinople eight hundred years ago. This prediction said: “Russia will gain Constantinople.”²⁶ Richard then provided a further explanation that it was not because of the ambition of the Russian emperors, but because of the tyranny of the Ottoman rulers, that determined the defeat of the Ottomans.²⁷ Thus, this prediction represented the will of God, which was similar to the case how a Chinese emperor gained the mandate of heaven. This type of story-telling was typical in ancient Chinese historical writings, so it was very impressive for the Chinese emperor.

Finally, as a British missionary, Richard criticized the British policy of protecting the Ottoman Empire with a bias against the Muslims. As he put it, this policy not only harmed the Turkish people but also affected the world since the most unjustifiable nation (the Ottoman Empire) existed. He even pointed out that the British government suffered a lot from this policy and regretted paying too much to save the Ottoman Empire,²⁸ although there is not evident whether this is true from the text. As the following analysis will show, these ideas had an impact on the perception of the Ottoman Empire in China.

Russia as the common enemy in the 1870s

It was in the late 1870s that the Ottoman Empire became the focus of world news in China for the first time. According to the journal database of the Late Qing’s and the Republic of China’s, the number of reports and articles about the Ottoman Empire peaked in 1876-1879, when the Russo-

²⁶ Li Timotai, *Taixi Xinshi Gaiyao*, 358-359.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 359-360.

Turkish war attracted the world's attention.²⁹ In this period, both intellectuals in public and the Qing government closely followed the development of this war. *Wan Kuo Kung Pao* [A Review of the Times], one of the most famous newspapers established in Shanghai, introduced special columns such as "Turkish State Affairs" and "Russo-Turkish War" to make readers more familiar with the Ottoman Empire. Subsequently, these columns became the most valuable sources of information on this war for many high-ranking officials in the Qing government. One of the readers was the famous general Li Hongzhang, who was known to have sent news from this newspaper to report to the emperor.³⁰

In fact, the Crimean War (1853-1856) between the Ottomans and Russia was also reported twice to the Qing emperor and recorded in some scholarly works, but the scope of the news dissemination was not as wide as the Russo-Turkish War's in 1876-1879.³¹ Not because Chinese people had already known enough about the Ottoman Empire. Instead, their real concern was the territorial conflict between the Qing Empire and Russia.

Meanwhile, in 1876-1877, the most important event for Chinese people was the Qing reconquest of Xinjiang province, the Muslim borderland in the northwestern part of the Qing Empire. From the 1860s, Xinjiang was partitioned first by spreading revolts and then some rebel regimes. The lasting one of these regimes was the emirate of Yaquub Beg in Kashgar, which received support from the Ottoman Empire.³² Yaquub Beg got the title of Amir by the Ottoman sultan, which might be one reason for China's rising interest in the Ottoman issue. However, Russia is closer to China

²⁹ Chen Peng, "Jindai zhongguoren de tuerqi guan de zai renshi," [Re-examining the Modern Chinese Understanding of Turkey], *Modern Chinese History Studies* 1 (2018):57.

³⁰ *Ibid.*,60.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

³² David Brophy. *Uyghur Nation* (London: Harvard University Press, 2016),6-7.

in terms of geographical position, and therefore was the greatest threat of all. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Russia had already seized some northwestern territories of China by forcing the Qing government to sign an unfair commercial treaty. In 1871, taking the advantage of the turmoil, the Russian army invaded Ili, a northernmost region of Xinjiang, and claimed that Ili was under Russian jurisdiction since then. Even after Yaqub Beg was defeated and most of the province was reconquered by the Qing military leader Zuo Zongtang in 1877, the Russian occupation of Ili did not end until 1881.

To Zuo Zongtang, the Ottoman Empire was not a crucial enemy because of the long-distance from Xinjiang. Furthermore, “Turkey was close to disintegration after the Russo-Turkish war”³³ so it was deemed to be powerless to invade China. Nevertheless, Chinese intellectuals realized that the influence of the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War on China’s international affairs was undeniable. On the one hand, the Qing reconquest of Xinjiang benefited from the war as it weakened Russia’s military power. On the other hand, given that most of the Western powers were involved in the competition of seizing Ottoman territory and thus had little time to care about the Far East, China was thought to be temporarily safe. A review of *Shun Pao* [Shanghai News], another popular newspaper in Shanghai, pointed out that the survival of Turkey is supposedly unrelated to China, however, European internal conflicts triggered by this war gave China a chance to breathe and defend itself.³⁴ In contrast with their fear of Russia, Chinese intellectuals inside and outside the government were quite sympathetic to the Ottoman Empire, which had suffered similar losses of territories and experienced the same dilemma of being surrounded by powerful enemies.

³³ Bai Shouyi, *Hui Min Qiyi* (Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House, 2000), 346-347.

³⁴ “The chaos and loss of Turkey,” *Shenbao* 7 (1876), 1.

Also in the 1870s, Chinese intellectuals became more connected to international affairs and gained more chance to learn about Ottoman internal politics. Since 1876, the Qing government began to send ambassadors to Western countries. Guo Songtao was one of the first Qing ambassadors, who had an opportunity to meet the diplomat of the Ottoman Empire during his stay in Britain (1875-1878). Guo's diary in 1877 mentioned that he had a conversation with an Ottoman ambassador, who tended to seek an alliance with China against Russia.³⁵ Once Guo discussed the European developed technology with three other ambassadors from Japan, Iran, and the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish ambassador told him:

Fifty years ago, the Ottoman people knew almost nothing. Since electricity has become widely used, our state started to follow the world trend, then we learned about machine manufacturing, academy, military, railway, and politics, That is why we are able to fight the Russians. Without the effort of self-strengthening for more than a twenty-years, we might have surrendered. Today what Russia desires most are just China and the Ottoman Empire. Hope you always keep the word "Russia" in mind and never forget it.³⁶

This warning shocked the Chinese diplomat and thus he developed his interest in the Ottoman issue. Furthermore, Guo frequently talked about the ongoing Russo-Turkish war with the British diplomat Thomas Francis Wade, who was also a sinologist. Wade criticized the Ottoman government for the failure to implement modernization reform. He thought that the fact that the corrupt government only copied the Western political and military system without modernizing their mind. The Ottoman modernization reform did not benefit the ordinary people, which situation, according to Wade's observation, was similar to the Qing. Wade thus used the Ottoman case to suggest the Chinese official that China should give priority to political reform rather than importing Western

³⁵ Guo Songtao, *Guo Songtao Siji 3* (Changsha: Hunan People Press, 1982),147.

³⁶ *Ibid.*,248.

weapons.³⁷ This criticism reflected the British view of the Self-Strengthening Movement initiated by the Qing government since 1861.

In 1878, after the end of the Russo-Turkish war, Wade even asserted that Ili would undoubtedly be taken by Russia because “what Russia desires are the Ottoman Empire in the west and China in the east. Nothing can stop it”.³⁸ Thus, according to Wade, the Ottoman Empire and the Qing China faced the same threat of Russia. This experience abroad deeply affected the Qing government’s view of the Ottoman Empire, which drew their attention to its strategy of survival.

The Survival Strategy of the Ottomans

As China’s defeat in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) declared the failure of the Self-Strengthening Movement, public discussion about the Russo-Turkish war transferred the focus to the survival strategy of the Ottoman Empire in the imperial competition of the Great Powers. Its strategy was to make alliance with Britain and other Western European countries in order to protect China from the threat of Russia. This opinion arose in some Chinese scholars’ reviews in the 1870s.

Wang Tao, a forerunner of China’s reform, suggested an alliance of China with Britain and Japan, as that might make Russia be besieged by two sides.³⁹ He was one of the earliest scholars who use the ancient Chinese history in the Warring States period (5th century BC-221 BC) as a metaphor for the current European situation. This approach aimed to use the most impressive ancient stories to educate the Chinese government about the current relationships between European

³⁷ Ibid., 336-337.

³⁸ Ibid., 647.

³⁹ Wang Tao, *Tao Yuan Wen Lu Wai Bian* (Shenyang: Liaoning people press, 1994),168.

powers in order to make use of their competition game. In Warring States period, competitions between the Seven Warring States prevented any of them growing too strong and thus maintained a balance in the game, although this game was ended by the Qin's conquest of the other six states. The six states reminded Wang of the Western countries in Europe (i.e. Britain, France, Italy, Prussia, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire). And Russia was like the Qin state, the most ambitious one. In this case, the Ottoman Empire was a barrier for the Russian Empire to conquer Western Europe. Meanwhile, the Western European countries were striving to protect the Ottoman Empire in order to keep a balance in the game.⁴⁰

This metaphor later was widely used in Chinese scholars' articles which highlighted the threat of Russia. Another case was Xue Fucheng, a prominent diplomat and advocate of reform who was an ambassador in Britain. In 1890, he met a Turkish ambassador there and asked him about the current situation in the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish official introduced him the agricultural and economic development, the territorial loss in the Balkans after the Congress of Berlin, the huge debt owned by the Ottomans to Britain, and the loss of control over Egypt. Moreover, the Turkish official believed that even though the Ottoman Empire was powerful in military, it had finally lost in the game because of the weak government and the intervention of Britain and France. He then pointed out the similar dilemma of China and suggested a treaty between the two empires against Russia. Additionally, the Turkish official hoped that China could establish diplomatic relation with the Ottoman Empire so that both empires would no longer have to fear Russia.⁴¹

After this conversation, according to Xue's diary, he bought a map of the Ottoman Empire which showed the historical change of its territory and read books about the Ottoman history as

⁴⁰ Ibid., 172-174.

⁴¹ Xue Fucheng, *Xue Fucheng Riji* (Changchun: Jilin Wenshi Press, 2004), 540-541.

well as the world history.⁴² By depicting the key position of the Ottoman territory as a buffer zone between Britain and Russia, Xue pointed out that commercial interest was one of the motivations of Western Europe's intervention in other regions. And that economic interest was the reason why the Ottoman Empire was still alive.⁴³ Hence, like Wang Tao, Xue compared the world politics with the Chinese history of the Spring and Autumn period (771BC - 476 BC) and the Warring States period: While China was like the Zhou state in the Spring and Autumn period, who preferred morality rather than military, the Ottoman Empire was like the Song state in the Warring States period, whose fate of being partitioned by all the other states was inevitable due to its perfect location.⁴⁴ Therefore, the history of the Ottoman Empire helped Xue understand more about the Western powers' ambition in China's affairs.

A few years later, Xue's concern was confirmed. In 1897, Germany occupied the Jiaozhou Bay in Qingdao and made it a colony from 1898 to 1914. Then in 1898, the Qing government signed the Convention for the Lease of the Liaotung Peninsula with Russia, resulting in the expansion of Russian military power in this region. These events led to the rise of Chinese intellectuals' resentment towards the Qing government. However, at that time Kang was still dreaming of seeking Britain's protection. Before the treaty between Russia and China was signed, Kang wrote a petition to the emperor titled *Policy of Associating Britain*. In this petition, he proposed associating with Britain and Japan to resist the invasion of Russia and Germany. The Ottoman Empire, again, was regarded as the case with the best possible outcome:

Turkey could have survived for a hundred years just because they made alliance with Britain in order to protect itself...Britain has forty colonies and no one could defeat it, the only thing it was worried about was Russia...If not, why did Britain sacrifice so many soldiers to save such

⁴² Ibid., 544-545.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 679.

a stubborn Islamic state? Because it was protecting itself rather than helping Turkey [...] Today, Russia tends to cooperate with Germany and France, which will put Britain in danger. So the focus of Britain's strategy against Russia is moving to the Far East, and thus the British will transfer their attention from Turkey to China. If Britain could have striven to protect Turkey, it will strive to protect China as well.⁴⁵

Close to the time of the formal agreement of the treaty between Russia and China, Kang even wrote another petition to suggest conspiring with the British army to attack Russia: "In 1876, when the Russian army approached Istanbul, Turkey was close to defeat. However, Britain conspired with the military power of Germany, France, Austria, and Italy to force Russians to retreat."⁴⁶ Even after the treaty was signed, he still insisted on the policy of seeking Britain's support. To resist the Russian force, he even suggested sharing the Lushun Port to the six Western countries, so that Russia could not monopolize on the commercial interests in China's territory.⁴⁷

Although Kang's proposal came from the model of the Ottomans, it might result in a larger loss of China's autonomy. These petitions were written before the Wuxu Reform. They showed how the leader of the reform was affected by the popular interpretation of the Ottoman issue. After the failure of the Wu Reform, Liang Qichao, another co-leader of this reform, gave a reflection on the policy of making alliance with Britain. He realized that this strategy was useless in China. As he put it, on the one hand, the British did not really care about the internal affairs of China as much as of the Ottomans. They only cared about British commercial interests. "So, if protecting China fit the British benefit, they will protect it, but if partitioning China is good for their benefit, they will also partition it."⁴⁸ On the other hand, he noticed the differences between the Ottoman case and China's reality. "The military power of Turkey is strong enough to resist Russia [...] and its

⁴⁵ Kang Youwei, *Kang Youwei Quanji.4* (Beijing: Chinese Renmin University Press, 2007), 8-9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

⁴⁸ Liang Qichao, *Liang Qichao Quanji* (Beijing: Beijing Press, 1999), 289.

location is closer to Europe, so any change that happens in Turkey will affect the whole of Europe[...]Today, the Manchu government's ability to prevent foreign invasion and China's relationship with Europe is different [from Turkey's case][...]”⁴⁹ Liang's comparison between the realities of the Ottoman Empire and the Qing revealed that although the Ottoman case served as a lesson of survival strategy, the distant empire was still unfamiliar to most of the Chinese intellectuals.

The Chinese writings on the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) can be regarded as a reflection of the transition history of China's reform, while the situations of these two empires became comparable in some aspect. As this was the first time the Ottoman Empire entered the horizon of China's public in terms of international affairs so that it became a popular example in the discussion about China's politics. What can be learned from these writings is that most of the information received by Chinese intellectuals was a criticism of the Ottoman modernization reform. It was only until 1908, when the successful constitutional movement occurred in the Ottoman regime and shocked the world, that the Ottoman Empire became a reform model for Chinese intellectuals.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 294.

Chapter II – Reform or Revolution: Debates on the Young Turk Movement

Having limited knowledge of the Ottoman reform, Kang became one of the earliest Chinese intellectuals to visit the empire. As a prominent reformer, he did not expect that the Ottoman movement would be a possible model before this visit. Because of the impression of the Ottoman Empire as a “Sick Man” in Europe, he probably had more interest in the imperial historical heritage of Constantinople. However, this travel refreshed his understanding of the Ottoman internal politics. The first day he arrived in Istanbul, he witnessed the restoration of the Ottoman constitution and the celebration of the masses. This experience shocked him because the Ottoman Empire was the most similar to the Qing China in his eyes. Why the Turks could achieve a constitution while the Chinese could not? With these questions, he began an investigation in Istanbul and recorded the experience in his travelogue, which became the most important source for the contemporary Chinese to understand the parallel empire at a common crisis moment.

Kang’s travelogue in Istanbul is useful for us to rethink the Hamidian period in Ottoman history. Not only because he experienced the decline of Sultan Abdülhamid II’s autocracy, but also because his studies on the Ottoman reform revealed a common legitimacy crisis of monarchy in both the Ottomans and the Qing China. Moreover, the debates between Kang and Sun (royalists and revolutionaries) focus on the definition of the Young Turk movement: Whether it was a constitutional reform or a revolution? The analysis of their arguments will not only show how the Chinese intellectuals applied different elements of the Young Turk Movement to support their political propaganda, but also reveal the common imperialist-nationalist conflict in the reform

movements of both empires. This chapter will answer a question: What role did the Ottoman reform play in the interpretation of imperial crisis and imperial formations in another non-European empire?

Kang as a reformer in the Late Qing

In the history of China's reform movements, Kang might be the most dominant and controversial figure at the end of the nineteenth century. Like many contemporary Ottoman reformers, Kang played a role as the bridge between the old time and the new era by being both a traditional thinker and a modernization reformer. What made him significant was his attempt to create a Confucian justification for institutional reforms. While the Qing government rejected institutional reform in order to protect the Confucian culture which ensured the stability of the imperial order, Kang redefined the Confucian thought to fit the needs of modernization reform. He abandoned the traditional thinking that the Western system was foreign to the Chinese tradition so only military and technological methods were useful for the Chinese reform. Instead, he found the motivation for reform inside Confucianism. By depicting Confucius (551BC-479BC) as a reform supporter, he found a way to locate Confucianism in the era of reform and strove to solve the conflict between tradition and modern political thought all his life.⁵⁰

As a scion of a distinguished gentry-official family, Kang gained good training within the traditional education system in his early years. Being a traditional Chinese scholar, the goal of his life should have been passing the civil service examinations and being recruited by the Qing government. However, being born in the Guangdong province, which had been the birthplace of the

⁵⁰ Wm. Theodore de Bary et al., *Sources of Chinese Tradition 2* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 68.

First Opium War (1840-1842) and the Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864), Kang witnessed the rapid change of the world and thus it was impossible for him to avoid the common dilemma of his generation: the traditional Confucian teaching could not help them save the country. Questions about the old scholastic system stirred his curiosity about the world outside China. Although he had never succeeded in the civil service examinations, he developed an interest in the books introduced and translated by missionaries. During his visits to Hong Kong in 1879 and to Shanghai in 1882-1883, he began to look for Western books and adapted the idea of progress. Thus, his notion of reform was subsequently a combination of Confucianism and western political thought. By the mid-1880s, he began to formulate two important works, *Da Tong Shu* (The Book of Great Unity) and *Kongzi Gaizhi Kao* (Confucius as a Reformer). In these works, he believed that the Confucian classics were forged, and Confucius himself was, in fact, a reformer. At the same time, he established his own school to attract young talents, who later helped him organize reform movements and spread his ideas.⁵¹

After China's defeat in April 1895, Meiji Japan became the model of Kang's reform. He organized the famous Gongche Shangshu movement with his student Liang Qichao in spring, in which they kept writing petitions to urge the Qing court to create a constitutional monarchy reform.⁵² Meanwhile, they established the Qiangxuehui (Society for National Strengthening) and published newspapers to propagate reform, but it was not until 1897 that the Guangxu Emperor asked Kang to take charge of the reform process. The reform took place in 1898, the year of Wuxu, so it was called Wuxu Reform. Under Kang's intellectual guidance, the young emperor issued a

⁵¹ Ibid., 60-67.

⁵² This event was marked as the first modern political movement in China according to Chinese official historiography. Apparently Kang organized more than one thousand scholars to sign the petition to the emperor and then protested against the Treaty of Shimonoseki after Chinese defeat in the Sino-Japanese War. It was also regarded as the beginning of Kang's reform movement.

stream of reform policies including education, recruitment of officials, bureaucratic function, commerce, industry, modern banking, etc. The core policy of this reform was to open a national assembly. The whole plan was so ambitious and radical that the conservative court felt threatened, especially when the reform attempted to reorganize the old bureaucracy to serve the modernization process. Moreover, when Kang planned a coup to assassinate the Empress Dowager Cixi who was the real ruler of the Qing court, the whole movement fell into danger. As a result, the emperor was under house arrest, while some reformers were sentenced to death and some like Kang escaped to become exiles. The reform only lasted 103 days and many of Kang's plans had not taken effect yet.⁵³

Soon after Kang began his journey in exile, he established an association in Canada to unite overseas Chinese to save the emperor and his unfinished reform, i.e. Baohuang Hui (the Chinese Empire Reform Association, or the Society to Protect the Emperor). It became the most influential political organization in the Chinese community all around the world. Most of the members were rich businessmen and celebrities who believed in Kang's political thought; their generous donations contributed to Kang's travel fees and his reform career. Later, this association spread to more than 200 cities, including 58 branches in the US.⁵⁴ In 1900, Kang tried to organize an uprising called "Qin Wang" [raising righteous troops to save the emperor] Movement. However, his army was recruited from some secret societies inside and outside China. Because they lacked military experience, this movement failed before they reached the battlefield.⁵⁵ The failure of the 1900 coup

⁵³ Immanuel C.Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 423-457.

⁵⁴ Qin Suhan, "Wuxu zhengbian hou kang liang zai haiwai de huodong pingsu," [A Brief Review on Kang and Liang's Activity Abroad after the Reform Movement of 1898] *Journal of Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University* no.11 (2008): 116.

⁵⁵ Sang Bin, "Gengzi baohuanghui de qinwang mouluie jiqi shibai," *Historical Studies* no.1 (1993) :88-99.

made him despair of the military mobilization ability of Baohuanghui, so he had to focus on overseas activities. Since then Kang never dared to think about organizing any military action himself before he witnessed the power of the Young Turks in 1908.

Before 1904, British protection secured Kang's escape from the Qing court. However, the Qing court's preparation of constitutional reform changed the British government's attitude towards the Qing regime. The deportation order sent by the British government prevented Kang from freely mobilizing a large number of Chinese in the British colonies, thus he had to travel to various countries in Europe to investigate their political institutions and seek for reform inspiration.⁵⁶ This was his life before his first visit to the Ottoman Empire.

Although it is hard to know from what specific sources Kang gained the knowledge of the Ottoman Empire, the impact of the most popular publications by missionaries were impossible to ignore at that time. In an interview of *China Mail* in Hong Kong in 1898, after the Wuxu reform failed which made him a hero, Kang revealed the reason of his shift to reformist ideas: "I owe my convention [to reform] chiefly to the writings of two missionaries, the Reverend Timothy Richard and the Reverend Doctor Young J. Allen."⁵⁷ This message could be seen as an indication that Kang's perception of the Ottomans derived from international news in *Wan Kuo Kung Pao* and the introduction of Turkey in *Taixi Xinshi Gaiyao*, which showed a picture of a "Sick Man of Europe."

The Turk as "the most similar to China"

⁵⁶ See, Li Hairong, "Yingguo zhengfu dui Kang Youwei liuwang taidu zhi kaoshi" [The British Government's Attitude towards Kang Youwei in Exile and the Rise and Fall of Baohuanghui] *Historical Review* no.1(2019): 89-100.

⁵⁷ Cyrus H. Peake, *Nationalism and Education in Modern China* (New York, 1932), 15, quoted in Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 426.

In June 1908, after a visit to Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania (the three regions the Ottoman had lost), Kang went to Istanbul by a ship through the Black Sea. According to the *The Turk Travelogue*, Kang's first impression of the city was "decay". When he saw the ancient military bases and villages from a distance, the scenery of mountains looked so bad to him that the stereotype of a declining empire had been confirmed at the first glance. As a celebrity who had experienced the taste of modern civilization around America and Europe, he already realized the disadvantage of the Ottoman Empire compared with the Western Europe when he was approaching Istanbul.

On the sea, he was fascinated by the amazing nature and took some paragraphs to describe the city as "Constantinople". Given the favorable geographical position and conditions, to Kang, "Constantinople" was the best place to establish a capital on the earth, because it was the only capital which crossed two seas and two continents: "[...] it is exactly the metropolis to control and handle both Europe and Asia, even Rome could not compete with it, not to mention today's Paris, London, Vienna, and Berlin!"⁵⁸ He felt sorry for the city because it was decaying at the hands of Turks, in his imagination, if Napoleon or Bismarck could conquer this place, the Western Europe would be unified into a single empire.⁵⁹ At this moment, what he saw only reminded him of what he had read about this country.

However, on the road entering the city, he immediately felt ashamed because the filthy environment was just like Beijing he escaped ten years before. Comparison between the Qing China and the Ottoman Empire became an approach for him to understand the reality of imperial crisis. He depicted this encounter as "a dream back to the motherland".⁶⁰ Experiencing the embarrassing

⁵⁸ Kang Youwei, *Lie Guo Youji: Kang Youwei Yigao* (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Press, 1995), 537.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 538.

feeling of familiarity, he admitted that Europeans and Americans were correct when they compared China to the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, he heard about the corruption of the Ottoman government which led to the heavy taxes and the misappropriation of infrastructural funding. Beijing's government also caused the same problem. Therefore, he asserted that the common reason why these two empires were despised was the poor political institutions. Under this condition, even though the rulers were enlightened, the powerful bureaucracy made modernization reform impossible. This conclusion revealed his reflection on the main cause of the Wuxu Reform's demise.⁶¹

In a report to the emperor, called *The Decline of the Turks*, Kang emphasizes the Ottoman Empire's similarities to the Qing China: the backwardness of economic, technological, and living conditions; the oppressed, poorly-educated people who had no idea about the new developments of the world; democratic knowledge and constitutionality were absent; British, Russian, French, Austrian, Italian ambassadors who controlled their fiscal systems and intervened in domestic issues; revolts and revolutions threatened the rule of the monarch. In conclusion, he points out:

The Turk and China have been derided by Western Europe as the sick men of the east for a long time, which means that they are wondering about which one's demise will come sooner. Today, China's situation is the same as the Turk's situation, China's sickness is the same as the Turk's sickness[...]this can be an appropriate example for our emperor, we must implement new laws and a constitution; by that way our sick man will step on his feet, (by not making the same mistakes) we can be different from the Turks.⁶²

Besides the similar problems, he criticizes Abdülhamid II, who abolished the constitution and strengthened his individual authority:

In this period, thanks to the genius Wise Grand Vizier Midhat Pasha, a constitution was implemented, reforms have taken place, diplomatic relationships with foreign countries were established, the state's crisis was overcome, and the people of the country were prosperous. As he promised, he managed to strengthen the army, in 20 years' time he improved the country to the same level as France and Germany and thus it was reaching the level of Austria

⁶¹ Ibid., 538-539.

⁶² Kang Youwei, *Kang Youwei Quanji*, 312, translated by Giray Fidan with slight corrections of myself.

and Italy. But then the sultan of the Turks sent Midhat Pasha to exile, abolished the constitution and returned to the old order.⁶³

These words can be regarded as an indication that Kang saw himself as the Midhat Pasha of China. And the fates of the reform projects were quite the same. According to Kang himself, this report was handed over to the emperor in 1898 during the Wuxu Reform, but now it is believed to have been written during his exile after the failure of the reform. In fact, the travel to the Ottoman Empire in 1908 inspired him and provided him with a new model from a non-European state, which he thought was “the most similar to China.”⁶⁴

Indeed, the more he learned from the difficulties and achievements of the Ottoman reforms, the more he gave weight to the comparison between the Ottoman example and the Chinese reform. Once he went to some school and found there were “no philosophy or theology course”, “Turks do not seem to understand why Europeans are stronger”.⁶⁵ In fact, studies on the Hamidian education reveal that not just European philosophy but even the lives of European philosophers were removed from textbooks while religious materials increased in order to protect the interests of the Sublime State.⁶⁶ These phenomena were similar to the modernization education in Qing China where the government strove to imitate Western technology but maintain the priority of tradition.

Nevertheless, during his journey, the Ottoman Empire showed two advantages in Kang’s perspective. The following sections will uncover how Kang interpreted the key of the Young Turks’ success, and how he absorbed Abdülhamid’s political ideas in his future political practice.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.,311.

⁶⁵ Kang Youwei, *Lie Guo Youji*, 540.

⁶⁶ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), 95.

The army's warning as a strategy in Kang's eyes

“When Turks open their mouth, they would start to praise their army [...] Turkish land forces are very famous, as I see, they are not well-disciplined, but the commanders are indeed tough.”⁶⁷ In *The Turk Travelogue*, Kang described how the victory of the Young Turk Revolution benefited from the army's force on a large scale. There is still no study showing what actual source Kang used to study the 1908 Young Turk Movement, but the political attitude and autonomy of the Turkish army immediately reshaped his image of the Ottoman Empire:

I was told that a low ranking military official Niyazi Bey [An eighth rank soldiers, equal to Japanese Zhong Jue] first with the soldiers gathered from ten different cities of Manastir province revolted and swore an oath to declare the Constitution. Sultan [Abdülhamid II] got very angry and sent eight thousand soldiers against them, but these soldiers also joined the rebels and sent a cable to Sultan writing that Niyazi Bey is not a traitor who only demands the declaration of the constitution and the opening of parliament [...] The Sultan sent twenty thousand soldiers against them, but they also joined the rebels. The Sultan was in shock. At that time, eighty thousand soldiers sent a cable to Sultan and demanded the declaration of the constitution. [Then] Sultan sent a troop of best soldiers of the army the Arab and Macedonian forces against the rebels. However, they also joined the rebels and demanded the declaration of the constitution and the opening of the parliament. At this point, the sultan was helpless. He called the generals and asked them the reasons for the developments. They all bent down respectively and told the Sultan: “Every country has a constitution, only Turkey first declared and then abolished it, so people are not satisfied. The ideas of soldiers have changed; we as your servants are helpless as well, please think of the disastrous ends of France's Louis the sixteenth and England's Charles the First and make a decision.”⁶⁸

Later, Kang met one member of the Young Turk Party.⁶⁹ He told Kang that, after Mithat Pasha was exiled, many of the Young Turk members were forced to go abroad spreading their political assertions, just like Kang was doing at that time. According to the storyteller, this victorious moment was indeed the achievement of 30 years' struggle: “The sultan's power was limitless, we

⁶⁷ Kang Youwei, *Lie Guo Youji*, 539, translated by translated by Giray Fidan with slight corrections of myself.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 563.

⁶⁹ As Kang recorded, the person he met was “Sanyi Bey”, the son of a former Minister of Foreign Affairs, his surname was called “Sanyi” from Chinese pronunciation. Due to time limitation, the name of this person in Turkish could not be confirmed. *Ibid.*

only could save our country by declaring the constitution and opening the parliament, but we did not have a military force. We encouraged our party members to unite with soldiers, and to getting to know them was not the real obstacle [...]”⁷⁰ They made Kang realize the weakness of his reform: although he had got the support of the emperor, he did not seek the army’s support. The failure of the 1900 Qin Wang Movement was just because of the lack of military talents, as he relied on unprofessional troops organized by intellectuals and secret societies. Moreover, during his exile, he could only wait for the change of the government’s attitude, but he never thought of persuading the Qing army to challenge the authority of the Qing court.

In 1910, Kang took a risk to write to Sun Baoqi, a high-rank official in the Qing government who used to be an ambassador in Germany, introducing the army’s warning [in Chinese term “bin jian”, means to use military power to force the ruler to change his mind and accept the army leader’s advice] organized by the Young Turks and suggesting Sun to copy the same action. In this letter, he even considered the possibility of borrowing the Western invaders’ army to force the Qing government, which might put the Qing China’s autonomy in danger. In 1911, before the Xinhai Revolution, he sent another letter to a general of the Qing government and emphasized the importance of the Young Turks’ model again, suggesting the approach of bin jian.⁷¹ These letters revealed the great change of Kang’s political thought after his Turkey journey. Nevertheless, he did not publicly express his attempt to plan another coup. Instead, standing on the position of a traditional intellectual and a royalist, he feared more about the influence of the Young Turks in China. This was because the new generation, Sun Yat-sen and his nationalist movement, had shaken the old empire as the Young Turks did.

⁷⁰ Kang Youwei, *Lie Guo Youji*, 563, translated by translated by Giray Fidan with slight corrections of myself.

⁷¹ Shanghai Cultural Relics Management Commission, *Kang Youwei yu Baohuanghui* (Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 1982), 364-366. Also see, Dai Dongyang, “Kang Youwei’s *The Turk Travelogue* and the differences between the published and non-published parts,” 227-228.

The complexity and ambiguity of the Young Turk movement

The establishment of the Ottoman constitution was not as fast as Kang and his generation thought. In fact, the Young Turk Revolution was the continuation of the 1876 constitutional movement. As M. Sukru Hanioglu points out, the definition of the Young Turk activities as a “constitutional movement” is somewhat problematic. It was just because the achievement of this movement was the restoration of the 1876 constitution. In fact, the thinking of the Young Turk intellectuals of the succeeding generation had little connection with the notion of a constitution.⁷² As Hanioglu puts it: “Except for its value as a ‘modern’ symbol and a mechanism for preventing the Great Powers’ intervention, ‘parliament,’ as well as ‘representative government,’ meant little to the Young Turks.”⁷³ However, to some extent, it was still questionable to identify this movement as a revolution because it did not thoroughly transform the existing political system, although the Young Turk movement showed the common opposition toward Sultan Abdülhamid II and dethroned him. The participants of this movement came from different groups which had conflicting interests and political ideas. Although influenced by the French Revolution, constitutionalism was rather a tool for self-strengthening than a political ideology. So it could be translated into different political languages among these participants.⁷⁴

The ambiguity in the definition of the Young Turk Movement left much room for diverse interpretations. In China, on the royalist side, Kang and his followers admired the Young Turks’ achievement in promoting constitutional reform, but at the same time, they feared the influence of

⁷² M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press on Demand, 1995), 28.

⁷³ *Ibid*,31.

⁷⁴ Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011),19-20.

the French Revolution from an imperial perspective. On the Republican side, the Young Turks' military opposition toward the throne became a revolutionary icon for the Republicans who were under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen. The debates about the definition of the Young Turk movement revealed the rising competition between royalists and revolutionaries in the Late Qing period. Nevertheless, it was a warning to both sides that even the Ottoman Empire, which was supposed to be as backward as China, had succeeded in the reform movement.

Debates between reformists and revolutionaries

The Young Turk movement exploded at the time of a turning point in the Qing history. As the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) made the Meiji reform the most convincing case of constitutional monarchy's advantage, the Qing court sent five ministers to travel abroad for the investigation and preparation of constitutional reform. However, the Qing court declared in 1906 that they had to wait for a constitution for ten years. As a result, a tremendous petition movement for opening a congress spread from Shanghai to all the country in 1907, 18 provinces, 8 organization for calling constitutional reform, and more than 150 thousand people were involved.⁷⁵ This petition movement aimed to urge the government to accelerate the preparation of congress and constitution. The news from Istanbul left the Chinese feeling much more isolated. While Kang was traveling and investigating the reason for the Ottomans' success in Istanbul, the dissemination of the news inside and outside China was impossible to stop. Many influential newspapers had immediately translated the reports from foreign media for the Chinese audience. Reactions were diverse. On the official side, diplomats were the most anxious. Wu Tingfang, the Chinese ambassador in the

⁷⁵ Hou Yijie, *Ershi Shiji Chu Zhongguo Zhengzhi Gaige Fengchao* (Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2009), 190-198.

US, had sent a telegram to urge the Qing government to organize Congress and establish a constitution. He warned them that if the Ottoman Empire had done it but China still failed to keep up with this global wave, there would be no place for China to stand in the world.⁷⁶

Most of the newspapers in China regarded the Young Turk movement as a constitutional reform instead of revolution. On June 28th, *Shun Pao* reported the news and ended it with shame: “From now on, China is the only despotic country in the world.”⁷⁷ On August 17th, *Ta Kung Pao* also released an editorial on the topic of the Ottoman constitutional movement. The author supposed that in the last month, the most influential and welcomed event in the world was the restoration of the Ottoman constitution: “From now on, the descendants of Muḥammad can proudly stand among the Western countries and get rid of the disgrace of the past.”⁷⁸ However, this was probably not good news for China in the author’s opinion. As the Ottoman Empire had restored the constitution, the Great Powers such as Russia would no longer find any excuse to intervene in its internal politics. Therefore, they would turn their eyes to Qing China and focus more on Chinese territory. As a result, “the advanced Turkish people would laugh at the backward Chinese and gossip: Look at the country which used to be in the same shoes yesterday; now it is holding its breath and waiting for its demise.”⁷⁹ Under such a concern, the author criticized the Chinese revolutionaries of Sun’s camp for their propaganda of anti-Manchuism. For the reformists, Sun’s nationalist revolution was based on racial difference, very similar to the independence movement of Macedonia that will lead to the disintegration of the empire.⁸⁰ This contradictory attitude towards

⁷⁶ Guo Tingyi, *Jindai Zhongguo Shishi Rizhi* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1987), 1348.

⁷⁷ “Tuerqi yi kai guohui yi” *Shun Pao*, no. 12746, 1908.

⁷⁸ “Lun Tuerqi lixian,” *Ta Kung Pao*, August 17, 1908.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

revolution showed the mixed feeling of most reformists as it was strongly believed that revolution would lead to China's partition.

That was why reformists outside China were very concerned with the revolutionary activities of Sun's movement. Compared with revolutionaries, reformists were mostly royalists. Since 1907, *The Union Times* in Singapore, a royalist newspaper belonging to Kang's colleagues began a long debate with a local Chinese revolutionary newspaper *Chong Shing Yit Pao*. In editorials, the royalists asserted that revolution should never be done in China because it would undoubtedly lead to the partition of China. As a refutation of *The Union Times's* stigmatization, on September 12th, 1908, *Chong Shing Yit Pao* released Sun's response, in which the Young Turk movement became a model of nationalist revolution.

Turkey is named the Sick Man of the Near East. The lands of other races it used to conquer, had been taken by the Great Powers for decades [...] thus, Turkey's territories on the European continent have been totally taken away. Only Macedonia is left, though, it was still being intervened by the Great Powers, who sent administrators and policemen there [...] It was the Young Turks who rose up in the intervened places, captured the generals of the sultan, and made the armies convert to the revolution. At that time, those countries [of the Great Powers] did not intervene on the excuse of revolution. Instead, they stopped intervention and sat on their hands. When the sultan compromised and the revolution succeeded, these countries withdrew their forces and policemen to leave freedom for the revolutionaries. Now they even congratulated the Turkish people and praised them for their endeavour [...] Now, the partition problem of the Sick Man of the Near East, Turkey, has been solved by the revolution [...] will the result of China [if also succeeds in the revolution] be different from this case?⁸¹

In this article, Sun also expressed support for the writings of Wang Jingwei, a nationalist intellectual who had also contributed serial editorials to *Chong Shing Yit Pao* to denounce the royalists. It is worthy of mention that Wang already used the 1876 Ottoman constitution as a case to criticize the Late Qing reform in 1906. When the Qing government proclaimed to prepare for the constitution, Wang supposed that it was impossible for the Qing court to give up their privileges

⁸¹ Sun Yat-sen, *Sun Zhongshan Quanjì 1*, (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1981), 380-382.

in institutional reform. The failure of the first Ottoman constitutional movement was a convincing case; as Wang put it, the country had a constitution but no civil rights. It established the constitution but remained an authoritarian regime.⁸² Like the Ottoman Empire, unless the authoritarian Manchu monarchy was overthrown, the constitution would not be enforced.

Hearing the news of the Young Turk Revolution, in September 1908, Wang serialized an essay titled “Evidence showed that revolution will end partition” in *Chong Shing Yit Pao*. This time, he emphasized the reactions of Europe and Russia. Although no battle took place, the sultan was forced to restore the constitution under military pressure, which had a positive impact on the Great Powers’ policies toward the Ottomans. Appreciating the achievement of the Young Turk movement, according to Wang, these countries declared neutrality. Even Russia, the most aggressive empire, had promised to stop intervening in Ottoman politics as soon as the sultan approved the constitution. Thanks to the revolutionaries, Wang asserted, both authoritarian rule and the Great Powers’ intervention were removed immediately.

What lesson could China learn from this event? Here Wang shared a similar conclusion with Kang but from an opposite perspective. While Kang only saw the advantage of mobilizing the army, Wang saw armed uprising as the inevitable way to a better future of China. According to his analysis, the Turkish revolutionaries knew how unwilling the sultan was to deal with the demand for reform. Therefore, only when threatened by force did the sultan give up resistance to the people’s will. Regarding the Chinese reformists’ fear of partition, he believed that this worry made no sense but only revealed the backward mind of Chinese intellectuals. It was significant to notice that the Ottoman people, who suffered more from partition than China, were already awakened to fight for their rights. In Wang’s opinion, those Chinese people who never thought of resisting

⁸² Wang Jingwei, “Xiwang manzhou lixian zhe li ting zhu,” *Min Bao*, no.3, April 5th, 1906.

against the Manchus were in fact poisoned by the conservative thought lasting for a thousand years. That was why the royalists feared revolution and led the people to beg the Manchu ruler for reform. Given that the most crucial difference between the two empires, that was the awakening of the people, Wang highlighted the significance of revolution for China.⁸³

Another interpretation of the Young Turk movement was that the ethnic structure of the Ottomans made it easier to formulate a constitution than in China. Hu Hanmin, another leading figure in the revolutionary camp, reminded the reformists that the fundamental difference between the constitutional movements of the Ottoman Empire and the Qing was the unequal situation of the majority. Hu believed that, in the Ottoman Empire, the sultan and the majority of the subjects were all Turks, and the actors of the revolution were also Turks. Sharing the same ethnic interest, it was easy to negotiate a constitution. In China, however, Han Chinese were the majority while the regime belonged to Manchus. Since it was not the Manchus but the Han Chinese who demanded a constitution, the model of the Ottoman constitutional movement was impossible to be copied in China. Thus, Hu argued that the independent movement of Greece was much more comparable with the Chinese case: Although the Ottomans declared the restoration of the constitution, the Greeks still resisted the rule of the Turks because they belonged to a more advanced civilization. Thus, he called the Han Chinese to follow the Greeks and get rid of the backward Manchu.⁸⁴

Although the debate in 1908 was initiated by royalists, the result eventually was beneficial for Sun's camp because the voice of royalists had been dominant among the overseas Chinese community for a long time. By eloquently refuting the royalist critique of anti-monarchy revolution, the Republicans successfully propagated democratic thought in the public sphere and absorbed

⁸³ Wang Jingwei, *Wang Jingwei Quanji* (Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House, 1918), 175.

⁸⁴ Hu Hanmin, *Hu Hanmin Wenji* (Taipei: Zhongguo Guomindang Zhongyang Dangshi Weiyuanhui, 1978), 574.

more and more Chinese intellectuals to their side. Since then, the royalist reformers could no longer compete against the Republican revolutionaries.⁸⁵ During this process, the Young Turk case played an important role in displaying both the nationalist and imperialist discourses, which showed the split of Chinese intelligentsia regarding the attitude toward the Manchu regime.

The split of the Chinese intelligentsia

To understand why the Young Turk Revolution had different meanings to the two intellectual groups who both hoped to save the state, it is also necessary to take the lives of Sun and Kang as comparative cases. The fundamental difference between them was their conceptions of ideal political institution. Like many Confucian intellectuals, Kang believed in top-down reform on the model of Japan's constitutional monarchy. However, Sun preferred armed uprising to overthrow the rule of the Manchus and established a democratic republic on the US model. Regarding political principles, the slogan of Kang's association Baohuanghui was "protect the country, protect the race, protect the religion", which means to preserve the Qing Empire's territory, the Chinese race, and the Confucian teaching. Sun's revolutionary organization, Tongmenghui [Chinese Revolutionary Alliance] (established in 1905), had a different goal "expel the Manchus, revive China, establish a Republic, equally distribute the land", in which anti-Manchuism came first. Also, the Three Principles of the People developed by Sun, which were "nationalism, democracy, the people's welfare", were regarded as the motto of the revolutionary activities. Their different concerns determined their different views of the Ottoman issue.

⁸⁵ Since the debate between *Chong Shing Yit Pao* and *The Union Times*, more newspapers in Southeast Asia and North America joined in the debate competition. The battles lasted from 1907 to 1910. During this period, the number of revolutionary newspapers developed rapidly. In 1905, there were only more than 10, but on the eve of the 1911 revolution, there were already more than 60. See, Gui Qipeng and Zhao Xiaolan, "Xinhai gaming qianxi gemingpai baokan yu baohuangpai baokan de liangci da lunzhan," *Publishing Journal*. no.1(2003):61.

However, the opposition between Sun and Kang was not sharp in the late nineteenth century, because both of their political movements faced obstruction from the conservatives of the Qing court. As both born in the Guangdong province, there were some similarities in their intellectual lives. In their youth, both Sun and Kang were deeply influenced by the Western learnings introduced by missionaries. But Sun felt less burden from Chinese traditional thought because he got well-trained in Western education in his early years. Due to the financial support of his older brother who operated a business in Honolulu, at the age of 13, he got a chance to study there in a church school, where he learned the English language, British history, mathematics, science, and Christianity all taught in English. In 1894, Sun wrote a petition to the Qing Viceroy Li Hongzhang, one of the leading figures in the Self-Strengthening Movement, to present his suggestions of modernization reform and seek a position in the government. Unfortunately, unlike Kang's famous Gongche Shangshu Movement, there was no response. Since then Sun lost faith in the Qing government and turned to the anti-Manchu revolutionary camp.

Regarding the similar attitude toward the Qing court, studies showed that Kang even planned a coup to eliminate his opponents in order to replaced them as he was not accepted as a member of the government yet. This conspiracy was soon noticed by the Empress Dowager Cixi, resulting in the demise of his reform movement.⁸⁶ In 1894, before establishing the Revive China Society for the preparation of revolution, Sun had attempted to cooperate with Kang and his cadre because Kang had a reputation among Chinese intellectuals. To his disappointment, Kang could only accept him as a student, which exposed his arrogance.⁸⁷ After the failure of the first Guangzhou Uprising in October 1895, Sun fled to Japan via Hong Kong and started a life in exile. Even in

⁸⁶ See, Zhao Liren, "Wuxu bianfa shiqi xingzhonghui yu weixinpai de hezuo yu fenqi——jianlun kang youwei zaoqi zhi fanqing huodong," *Modern China* 16 (2006): 193-224.

⁸⁷ Feng Ziyou, *Geming Yishi* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1981), 47.

1900, a royalist such as Kang was not yet a considerable opponent to Sun. Although Kang always disdained Sun's anti-monarchy revolutionary assertion, their activities abroad still shared the same target, that is the Qing regime.⁸⁸ The same situation of being exiled actors was the reason why the Young Turk Revolution was regarded as a model by both of them.

Only in 1901 did the revolutionaries realize that they had to proclaim opposition against the royalists. Suffering from the intervention of the Eight-Nation Alliance, the Qing court eventually realized the serious situation of their regime and embarked on the New Policies under the pressure of reformists. This change made the royalists even more hostile to the revolutionaries. They were worried that the overthrow of the Qing rule would cause the disintegration of the empire. Therefore, they held the last hope that the opening of parliament would reduce the propaganda pressure from domestic revolutionaries. But as the Late Qing reform was inefficient, more and more intellectuals, were frustrated and even became offended by the Manchus' attempt to maintain their privileges. This group grew fast as Sun's anti-Manchu propaganda gradually prevailed. They would never believe that the alien rulers would protect their rights. At that time, there was a common belief that reform and revolution were two opposite terms. Moreover, both the reformists (or royalists) and the revolutionaries agreed that "reform" was equal to "constitutional monarchy", and "revolution" was the exclusive term of "democratic republic".⁸⁹ This stereotype of the two major camps, however, should be reexamined in the study of individuals such as Kang.

Kang's conception of "revolution" from an imperial perspective

⁸⁸ Sang Bin, "Gengzi baohuanghui de qinwang moulue jiqi shibai," 222.

⁸⁹ Su Menglin and Le Wei, "Jindai zhongguo yunyong geming yiyi de lishi tanyuan", 218.

Coming back to Kang's political life, it is crucial to know how his Confucian view of revolution affected his perception of "revolution", as well as how modern political thought shaped his further interpretation of the world revolutions. As a matter of fact, Kang's definition of the term "revolution" was not always consistent because the modern Chinese reception of modern political terminology was still evolving. He constantly adjusted the meaning of "revolution" according to the current political situation. A piece of significant evidence in Chinese scholarship is that Kang did not use "revolution" in the period of the Wuxu Reform. Apparently, a collection of Kang's reports and petitions to the throne was published in 1911 and later was regarded as the most important sources to study Kang's political ideas before and during the Wuxu Reform. However, some scholars found out that some petitions and reports did not exist in the Qing court archives. Three texts among them were written in a different political language compared with others. These three included *The Decline of the Turks* and another report on the history of the French Revolution. All of them contained the term "revolution", which does not exist in the other texts. This evidence reveals that Kang had not presented them to the emperor but forged them as his petitions to the throne during the Reform; in fact, he completed them after the Reform.⁹⁰

Nevertheless, at least three principles were consistent in his writings and activities: First, to rescue the emperor; second, to oppose anti-Manchu propaganda; last, but the most important, to establish a constitution. Under these three principles, his interpretation of "revolution" was based on Confucian knowledge. In this way, he gradually filled the gap between "modern revolution" and the traditional Chinese view of "revolution". Moreover, his audience was not only the Republicans who were against the monarchy but also the conservatives in the Qing court who opposed

⁹⁰ Chen Jianhua, "Ke xiang tianchao zhi men de shijie geming——Kang Youwei yu 'wuxu bianfa' dui 'geming' de shiyong," *Journal of University of Jinan (Social Science Edition)* 27 no.1(2017): 85.

the reform. That was why there were some contradictions in his attitude towards revolution, especially on the topic of the French Revolution. This event was one of the fundamental sources for him and his generation to understand modern revolutions. Given that the French Revolution was the revolutionary textbook for the Young Turks, it was inevitable that Kang's interpretation of the Young Turk movement could not get rid of the French shadow.

The real beginning of Kang's use of "revolution" in modern meaning was his Qin Wang Movement.⁹¹ In 1900, when the Qing officials condemned Kang's agitation for armed insurrection against the court, he took the French Revolution as an example to refute his enemy's opinion. Why did the French people revolt against autocracy? Because they wanted freedom and political rights. "If the French revolutionaries would like to endure being suppressed rather than to shed blood, the French people today would still be the slaves of ruler and aristocracy."⁹² In his opinion, thanks to the revolutionaries' sacrifice and constitution which ensured the rights of the people, France was able to develop a strong civilization in the world. Comparing China with France, he warned the Qing government that China had fallen into the same situation as Egypt, India, and Turkey.⁹³ In this case, he tried to use the French Revolution to legitimate the Qin Wang Movement.

During that period, Sun admired Kang's reputation among the overseas Chinese and thus sent him a message to seek cooperation again. To show the determination to unity, Sun even informed Kang that if he could discard the royalist prejudice, dedicate himself to revolutionary faith, Sun would elect him as a leader. Despite that they shared a common conception of the French Revolution's value at that time, Kang decisively refused Sun's invitation and was not even willing to meet

⁹¹ Sang Bin, "Gengzi baohuanghui de qinwang mouluie jiqi shibai," *Historical Studies* no.1 (1993): 88-99.

⁹² Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei Quanjì* 5, 329.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 329-330.

him.⁹⁴ To Kang, revolution was only a means to save his emperor from the siege of treacherous court officials. Unlike Sun, who believed that people could only gain political rights by overthrowing the Qing monarchy, Kang preferred to serve an enlightened emperor who would eventually ensure his subjects' political rights.

Kang's hesitation revealed that his position was still based on the Confucian view of "revolution". The term "ge ming" [revolution] was borrowed from Meiji Japan. Its original meaning in Japanese was the armed uprising led by royalists aiming to overthrow the rule of the Shogun and establish a constitutional monarchy. But this term actually derived from a Chinese word existing since the Classic *Zhouyi*. In this work, "ge ming" referred to the Tang Wu revolution, the model of dynastic change through overthrowing the tyrannical ruler and replacing him.⁹⁵ Originally, it had nothing to do with fundamental changes in the social system, but it represented a good change for the country and the people as the previous tyranny was eliminated. However, in the value system of Confucianism, regicide was one of the most serious crimes.

How to justify a revolution for good? Then the most popular meaning of this word used by Confucian intellectuals was developed by Zhu Xi (1130-1200), the most influential Neo-Confucian scholar in history. To meet the moral standards of Confucianism, "Tang Wu Revolution" only targeted the unethical ruler. According to the teaching of Confucius, an ideal ruler should reign with Renyi [benevolence and benevolence], because the legitimacy of his regime comes from the support of his subjects. Thus, if he harmed the country, he will be replaced also under the will of

⁹⁴ Feng Ziyu. *Geming Yishi*, 74.

⁹⁵ The term "Tang WU Revolution" derived from two famous historical events in Ancient Chinese history, the first one is the uprisings led by Tang of Shang which overthrew the Xia Dynasty and replaced it with the Shang regime; Another one is the wars initiated by King Wu of Zhou towards the King Zhou of Shang, which ended the Shang Dynasty.

God. Therefore, to murder a virtuous monarch was “regicide”, but to kill or overthrow a tyrant was “revolution”.⁹⁶

The dilemma of Kang’s Qin Wang Movement was that he could not apply the case of Tang Wu Revolution as a metaphor. Given the propaganda of rescuing the emperor, the uprising target of his “revolution” was not the emperor but the enemies in the Qing court. Only the survival of the Qing monarchy could secure the emperor’s throne. Therefore, on the one hand, Kang needed to apply the modern meaning of revolution to replace the traditional one to serve his revolutionary agitation. On the other hand, he had to carefully keep a distance from the anti-monarchy ideology of Sun’s camp. After 1900, he had to tone down the revolutionary rhetoric not only because of the failure of the Qin Wang Movement. The most hopeful change for him was the Qing court’s intention of restarting the constitutional reform.⁹⁷

As discussed, Kang and Sun showed different attitudes toward the reign of Manchus in their conception of modern revolution. As for Sun, the history of the Qing Dynasty was the Han history of being oppressed by aliens, the political revolution he expected was bounded with racial interest. Given that the Manchus were concerned more about their political privileges rather than the loss of China’s land, they were supposed to be the origin of the inefficiency of modernization reform. Therefore, only when the Han people recaptured their country from the Manchus, did they have a chance to complete political reform. In other words, the political revolution had to be a nationalist revolution. For Kang, the meaning of “revolution” should be limited as political institutional change within the framework of the monarchy empire. As the Qing China was a multiethnic empire

⁹⁶ Zhu Xi, *Sishu Zhangju Jizhu* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1983), 221, quoted in Su Menglin and Le Wei, “Jindai zhongguo yun-yong geming yiyi de lishi tanyuan”, 216.

⁹⁷ Su Menglin and Le Wei, “Jindai zhongguo yun-yong geming yiyi de lishi tanyuan”, 217.

ruling not only the Han people but also Mongolians and Tibetans, the integrity of the empire was also the typical concern of the royalists from the perspective of imperialism.⁹⁸

Thus, after 1902, the focus of Kang's writing on the French Revolution turned to the critique of anti-Manchuism. Although the Guangxu Emperor still could not regain his power, he was always the spiritual support of Kang's activities. To oppose anti-Manchuist propaganda, he argued that the Qing's humiliation after the intervention of the Great Powers was mainly caused by the Empress Dowager Cixi and her conservative supporters in the court. The emperor who lost his freedom for dedicating himself to the reform should be blamed for nothing. So there was no need for anti-Manchuist revolution unless the emperor passes away.⁹⁹ In 1905, he wrote another essay about the French Revolution, in which he condemned the French masses for executing their king. This time he depicted the revolution as a regicide and the French people as insurgents.¹⁰⁰ Although this writing was an effort to persuade the revolutionaries to look back to the Confucian definition of revolution, it already failed to keep up with the Chinese intellectual trend. Unfortunately, four months after his visit to Istanbul in 1908, the Guangxu Emperor was murdered by poison. Since then, his interpretation of revolution lost meaning, and the constitutional reform Kang promoted could no longer be persuasive compared with republicanism.

Regarding the order of social progress in human history, Kang insisted that constitutional monarchy was inevitable. According to Kang's explanation, Confucius predicted that all the human societies would experience the Three Ages: Juluan Shi (the Age of Disorder), Shengping Shi (the Age of Order), and Taiping Shi (the Age of Great Peace). By integrating this worldview into the historical evolution theory, he asserted that the contemporary political institutions were the three

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.,218.

¹⁰⁰ Kang Youwei, *Faguo Dageming Ji* (Changsha: Yuelu Shushe Press, 1985),302, quoted in Su Menglin and Le Wei, "Jindai zhongguo yunyong geming yiyi de lishi tanyuan", 218.

categories corresponding to these different periods: Russia and the Ottoman Empire were the representatives of the [autocratic] monarchy. Japan and England represented the more advanced form, the constitutional monarchy. Then the last one was democracy on the model of France and the US, which was too far away from China's current reality so that Kang did not expect reformers to treat it as a political ideal. The next step, according to his project, was to transform the country from the Age of Disorder to the Age of Order, that was, from [autocratic] monarchy to constitutional monarchy. In other words, as Qing China was still in the stage of the Ottoman Empire, to follow the example of Japan was much more realistic than to dream of representative democracy.¹⁰¹

As the revolutionaries led by Sun overthrew the Qing monarchy, once again, Kang adjusted his political theory to fit the new situation. By overcoming the stereotype of the binary oppositions between reform and revolution, he emphasized the common motivation, that was making the country communal.¹⁰² As he put it, revolution does not necessarily give birth to a democratic republic, it can also build a constitutional monarchy. Here the French Revolution once again became a positive example, because eventually, the French elected Louis XVIII and then Napoleon as new monarchs. Thus, the history of the French Revolution confirmed that what was most important was not whether the monarchy exists, but whether the state belongs to the people. Moreover, given that constitutional monarchy is designed to limit the actual political power of the monarch, it already contains the element of anti-monarchy. While the monarch could only be a spiritual symbol of the empire, on the one hand, this institution ensures the political rights of the people, on the

¹⁰¹ Kung-chuan Hsiao, *A Modern China and a New World: K'Ang Yu-Wei, Reformer and Utopian, 1858-1927* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1975), 41-96.

¹⁰² Kang, Youwei, *Kang Youwei Quanji* 9, 229-231.

other hand, the faith to the emperor will benefit the unify of the subjects throughout the multiethnic empire.¹⁰³

In fact, his attempt to draw the public attention back to the unfinished mission of constitutional reform was reasonable, as he was not the only traditional intellectual against the Republicans. The new regime was as unstable as those established after the French Revolution, and it was challenged by short-lived restoration monarchs in 1915 and 1917. As Kang's competition with the Republicans continued, his focus on the Ottoman reform had changed from constitutional movement to imperial survival.

Chinese Republicans as the echo of the Young Turks

In 1913, Kang's life in exile finally came to an end. As the Qing Dynasty was overthrown, Kang organized to establish the Kongjiaohui [Confucian Religion Association], attempting to transform Confucianism into a national religion, namely Kongjiao [Religion of Confucius]. In this way, he expected to rebuild people's faith in Confucianism, which was the basic ideology of Chinese imperial rule. Soon after he went back to China and settled down in Shanghai, he founded the journal *Buren* for advocating monarchy restoration and Confucian religion and was ready to play a leading role in the anti-republican movement. In this new situation, he came up with a new perspective in the interpretation of the Ottoman reform movement. In other words, as an imperialist and royalist, he changed his perspective from constitutional reform to religious reform, making the Ottomans another useful evidence to support his plan.

¹⁰³ Gan Chunsong, "'Xujun Gonghe': Yi jiu yi yi nian zhihou Kang Youwei duiyu guojia zhengzhi tizhi de gouxiang," *Dongwu Xueshu* no.2 (2015): 7-10.

In 1913, a new revision of *The Turk Travelogue* was published accompanied by a preface, mainly revealing his criticism towards the Young Turks for the overthrow of Sultan Abdülhamid II. In the preface, he wrote with grief and indignation: “Those who learn no statecraft but only rebel out of the anger towards the disadvantages of the old system, are those who harm the country. And it was impossible for them to not make their country fall.”¹⁰⁴ He summarized his meeting with the Young Turks, who told him that their constitutional movement was on the model of France. During this meeting, as Kang mentioned, he heard that the aim of their constitutional movement was to remove all the discipline of the old political system in order to gain equality and freedom. Here he added his conversation with the Young Turks and his criticism of their response, which did not exist in the original text:

I warned them that those countries which had established constitution were just ruled by law, which means both the up and down classes must follow the law. It does not mean that no discipline will lead to equality and freedom. They despised my words and showed disagreement. When I left, Sun Baoqi, who was the ambassador in Germany, asked me about this visit. I told him, the Turks were in danger. Equality and freedom were only the life-saving medicine in the period of the French Revolution, which could only be taken for once to strengthen people's spirit but could not be used as daily meals. The old political system has existed for thousands of years, it is the sustenance of the people on which the survival of the country depends. Although the old law and discipline have some flaws, they can only be corrected gradually. If they are all removed immediately [...] the country will fall into chaos. The Young Turks had traveled in France for a long time, they sabotaged the country by the name of “revolution”, but they had never learned how to manage politics or finance. They envy the tradition of Europe and the US, but they do not examine its historical cause well.[...] Once threatened the sultan with military and deprived him of his power, they abandoned all the old law system and moral discipline.[...]However, the effective cannot take place in the Ottoman Empire as soon as in Europe and the US.[...] A few months later, I heard that the Young Turks would overthrow the sultan, and their authoritarian rule is even worse than in the past.[...] The political tradition and the people in our country are very similar to the Ottomans’, I fear that one day we will follow the step of the Young Turks.[...]¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Kang Youwei. “Tu Jue Youji huibian.” *Bu Ren* 3 (1914): 26.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

This denouncement of the Young Turks was a critique of the new regime in China. Kang believed that any political institutional design could never be separated with the culture and the social reality in its country, otherwise, it would soon collapse. Completely copying political ideology from the West was one of the Republicans' problem that he frequently criticized, in which he found an echo from the Young Turks. In 1912, as the Republic of China was born, Confucianism was regarded as a royalist ideology so that it was supposed to have a conflict with the value of the Republic. The ministry of education, therefore, decided to forbid reading Classics in school. This was the first time that Confucianism lost the status as an official ideology in China for two thousand years. This change was unacceptable for traditional intellectuals.

Once again, Kang became the leader of this group. Planning to go back to China, he sent a secret letter to his student, Chen Huanzhang, to establish the Kongjiaohui [Confucian Association] in Shanghai. In 1913, *Journal of Kongjiaohui* edited by Chen Huanzhang was founded in Shanghai, together with *Buren* to advocate the religious movement of Confucianism. As soon as *Buren* was founded, he published the new version of *The Turk Travelogue*. Soon, branches of Kongjiaohui bloomed all around the country.¹⁰⁶ In the same year, when the Congress was discussing the formulation of the Republican constitution, Chen, Liang, and other scholars sent a petition to the representatives to demand a constitutional position of Confucianism as the state religion. To the Republicans' surprise, this demand got wide support from local administrative chiefs of more than ten provinces.¹⁰⁷ They believed that Confucianism remained the irreplaceable function in the moral education of Chinese people in order to prevent social disorder. In other words, although the Republic was established, it still lacked new spiritual sources to reshape the identity of a new nation.

¹⁰⁶ Han Xing, "Qingmo minchu kongjiao huodong jiqi zhenglun," *Religious Studies* no.2 (2003):92-93.

¹⁰⁷ Gan Chunsong, "Kang Youwei he kongjiaohui: Minguo chunian rujia fuxing nuli jiqi cuozhe," *Seeking Truth* 29, no.4 (2002):110.

Moreover, some ambitious warlords such as Yuan Shikai attempted to make use of the Confucianism revival movement to seize the power of the new regime. The social crisis of the new regime left room for the monarchy restoration movement.

The impact of Hamidian regime on religious reform

The Turk Travelogue written in 1908 ends with the depiction of the Whirling Dervishes. Although Kang did not show a systematic study on Islam and the religious issues of the Ottoman Empire, he recorded the ritual in detail and showed respect to the prayers. This writing did not seem to show any political purpose in his manuscript. However, in the revised version in 1913, some paragraphs were added to discuss the significance of theocracy at the end. In this version, he praised the union of politics and religions in the Ottoman Empire and regarded this system as the basis of the empire's power. Because of their faith in Islam, Kang asserted, the Turks were able to build such a great empire across Europe, Asia, and Africa.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, he even argued that the Quran is the origin of Turkey's constitution and laws, "just like our country's constitution must derive from the Confucian Classics".¹⁰⁹ Meanwhile, the Quran's philosophy and moral values were taught in the school system, and thus religion became the foundation of the country. In his opinion, unity between politics and religion was the reason why the Ottoman Empire was stable and its system was difficult to be replaced.¹¹⁰

One of the Hamidian regime's characteristics in Ottoman history was the emphasis on Islamic faith. As Selim Deringil put it, in this era, the legitimacy crisis of the Ottoman Empire culminated

¹⁰⁸ Kang Youwei, "Tu Jue Youji huibian," 43.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 42.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

in its relations with the world and with its subjects.¹¹¹ Challenged by the changing world conditions and the rise of nationalism, Abdülhamid had to reinforce imperial ideology by creating the cult of the sultan and the Ottoman family. By using Islamic language, the symbolization of the Sultan's image and power was practiced in daily life to forge "a link of sacrality directly with the people, inconvenient intermediaries like political parties and parliaments could be avoided."¹¹² In the second half of the nineteenth century, a systematic program of education was established and extended to the primary school level. In this education system, the indoctrination of Islamic morals including the loyalty to the Sublime State and to the quasi-sacred person of the sultan was designed to respond to the emerging popular conception of national identity.¹¹³ To create a common Ottoman political identity for all its citizens in order to unite them against the West, as Kemal Karpat asserts, Islam could be used as populist propaganda means to mobilize the masses in defense of the Ottoman state.¹¹⁴

Why was the Hamidian regime so inspiring to Kang's interpretation of national religion? What Kang might not have known that Abdülhamid was the "most Europeanized sultan", in Karpat's words, whose modernization reforms "affected the inner fabric of the Ottoman society far more profoundly than the Tanzimat reforms".¹¹⁵ However, Abdülhamid hoped the reform would not change the Muslims' identity, faith, and respect for Islamic civilization. Similar to the belief of Confucianism in Qing China, which regards the emperor as the sacred ruler and legitimizes his power with the will of God, Abdülhamid also believed in "the indivisibility of authority, in the

¹¹¹ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 8-9.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 17.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 93-111.

¹¹⁴ Kemal H Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 9-10.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

divine origin of his royal prerogatives, and in his historical mission to assure the survival of the state.”¹¹⁶ Unlike his predecessors, he legitimized his reign by the title of "Caliphate" and used absolutism and pan-Islamism to consolidate his power.¹¹⁷

That might be why the Hamidian religious atmosphere impressed Kang without indoctrinating him. In the revision of *The Turk Travelogue*, he analyzes how religious leaders shared the responsibility of the state affairs with the sultan and the chief justice.¹¹⁸ By emphasizing the important role of the religious chiefs in political practice, Kang showed his ambition to participate in politics as a religious leader in a new empire established by the Religion of Confucius. However, this project could never succeed in restoring the monarchy and people’s belief in tradition. There is also no evidence that shows his religious enthusiasm for Islam. Thus, the Hamidian religious model was only a political method of using religious resources for him. Nevertheless, these writings reveal the legacy of Abdülhamid’s Islamism beyond the Ottoman territory.

However, the Hamidian case was not the first model for Kang. His interest in religion stemmed from his obsession with Buddhism in his youth and developed in reading Western books translated by missionaries.¹¹⁹ What he had learned from the history of Western Christianity was the great influence of religion on modernization reform. On the one hand, Kang thought that religion was the origin of the Western countries’ power. In other words, the Great Powers were strong because their religions were prosperous. On the other hand, he witnessed how Christianity was used as a means by the Great Powers to intervene in the politics of China.¹²⁰ And this was a com-

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 16.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Kang Youwei, “Tu Jue Youji huibian,” 42.

¹¹⁹ Gan Chunsong, “Kang Youwei he kongjiaohui,” 112.

¹²⁰ Sun Xiangzhong, “Weixin bianfa zhong Kang Youwei de chuangjiao nuli jiqi yingxiang,” *Journal of Historical Science*, no.10 (2002): 54.

mon threat to the tradition and autonomy in both China and the Ottomans. Thus, he chose to enhance the status of Confucianism in order to resist the influence of the Western religion, just as Abdülhamid had done.

During the Wuxu Reform in 1898, Kang proposed to define Confucianism as the state religion and to establish the Confucian association, but the emperor did not accept his advice due to the opposition from Confucian conservatives. In 1904, his visit to Italy further strengthened his determination to make Confucianism a religion. Inspired by the function of Christianity in shaping and preserving national identity in the West, his impression of the Ottoman Empire was also shaped by religion. To Kang, there should be no conflict between the faith in religion and the faith in freedom. Not only because of many precedents abroad but also because of the inclusiveness of Confucianism.¹²¹ In other words, he found similar cases in the Western countries and the Ottomans as well, and he expected that as long as Confucianism developed in a new world, it would absorb modern political thought to meet the needs of the new country.

However, his failure at Confucian religion making was determined by the nature of Confucianism. In two thousand years, the institutional design of Confucianism was never religious, it was the civil service examination which put Confucianism in the center of the education and made the Confucian Classics necessary for Chinese intellectuals to study. As Hsiao Kung-chuan summarizes, in the imperial era, the center position of Confucianism mainly due to the government's support rather than its own power.¹²² Despite Kang's effort to rebuild the Chinese people's faith to the emperor by establishing a Confucian religion, without a strong monarchy who could promote religious reform by the approach of Abdülhamid. As Confucianism was more a governing means

¹²¹ Gan Chunsong, "Kang Youwei he kongjiaohui," 111.

¹²² Kung-chuan Hsiao, *A Modern China and a New World: K'Ang Yu-Wei, Reformer and Utopian, 1858-1927* (Nanjing: Jiangsu Renmin Press, 1997), 115-116, quoted in Gan Chunsong, "Kang Youwei he kongjiaohui," 113-114.

rather than a religious thought, in the Republic of China it could not be as influential as Islam in the Ottoman reforms.

In this chapter, a self-comparison between the Qing China and the Ottoman Empire in a Chinese reformer sheds light on the common problem of these two non-European empires in the era of modernization. In the age of nationalist movement, a royalist of a multi-ethnic empire had to find a solution to answer two questions: How to implement reform when facing the imperial legitimacy crisis? How to prevent the collapse of the empire when facing the rise of nationalism? Therefore, two aspects of the Ottoman reform model were emphasized in Kang's writings: the army was mobilized to force the conservative sultan to restore the constitution, and the sultan's effort to maintain Islamic faith to defend the empire. The transfer of attention between these two aspects not only showed two different stages of Kang's reformist thought to save his empire but also marked the most important failure and strength of Abdülhamid's reign. When Kang was concerned about his uncompleted constitutional monarchy reform, he dreamed of the assistance of an army as powerful as the Turks to help him fight the conservatives in the Qing court. But after the collapse of the Qing Empire, Kang strove to restore the monarchy with religious campaign. Kang turned to learn from the Hamidian reform in order to see how Abdülhamid united the Muslim community to maintain the faith to the throne. Although Kang had no chance to practice these political ideas inspired by the Ottoman experience, his story made the Ottoman Empire a meaningful reform model in a broader horizon in the modernization era.

Conclusion

From a “stranger” in the west to the most similar empire in the world, the Ottoman Empire served as a mirror of China for the Qing intellectuals to observe their country’s appearance in the world. The encounter of the two “declining” empires in the era of modernization, however, was not a coincidence. On the one hand, they faced some common problems: the crisis of imperial legitimacy, humiliated defeats in wars, intervention of the Great Powers, ethnic conflicts and the danger of disintegration, etc. On the other hand, they shared the common will to survive and self-strengthen. Having desire for reform model, both empires’ intellectuals turned their eyes to the other countries. By shedding light to the Ottoman reform’s impact on China, this thesis strives to overcome the overstatement of European models in the studies of modernization movements. Moreover, as the constitutional movement was a global wave spread from Meiji Japan to the Ottoman Empire, the Qing China, and other countries since the mid-nineteenth century, it is important to see not only Japan’s influence but also self-comparison and interaction between other countries.

In fact, self-comparison between the empires in which constitutional movements took place was reciprocal. Not only the Chinese found that the Ottoman Empire and China had the same sickness at that time. When the Chinese feared that China would fail in the modernization reform and follow the step of the Ottomans, the Ottoman also showed interest in the modernization process in China. In 1906, when the Qing court finally started the preparation of a constitution, the Ottomans also noticed the similarities of the two countries: “Like the Chinese we are a nation that has also fallen far behind in the highroad of civilization, and like the Chinese we have received

many a beating, and suffered Europe's injustice and domineering."¹²³ Given that both "Sick Men" felt isolated and anxious in a world dominated by the Great Powers, a reform achievement in another similar empire was an inspiring discovery for both of them. This thesis aims to reveal not only how significant the Ottoman case was in the Qing intellectuals' conceptions of modernization, but also why self-comparison as a historical phenomenon was important to the study of imperial formations.

At different stages of imperial formations in the Qing Dynasty, intellectuals' conceptions of the Ottoman Empire reflected different political issues which were critical to the contemporary Chinese. In the eighteenth century, the heyday of the Qing Empire, the Ottoman Empire was a parallel power on the west of Central Asia. Yet, this image was not based on direct interaction as the Qing Chinese had little communication with the outside world. As soon as the Chinese intellectuals were disillusioned with their empire after witnessing the power of European countries, they had to rebuild their world view by reading books written by Europeans. However, the knowledge gained through this approach only offered an Orientalist bias towards the Ottomans. Worrying about the decline of the empire as well as the threat of the Great Powers, the Qing Chinese developed an interest in the Ottoman issue and found it a good example for persuading the Qing court to implement constitutional reform. But at this stage, the Chinese intellectuals paid more attention to the international relations of the Ottoman Empire. As the Ottomans had conflicts with the European for centuries, it was crucial for the Chinese to learn how the Ottoman Empire survived by making use of the imperial game between Russia and European countries. Therefore,

¹²³ Şura-yı Ümmet 29, 28 May 1903/1 Rebiyülevvel 1321, "Çin'den İbret Alalım," 3-4, quoted in Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 77.

before the Young Turks shocked the world in 1908, Chinese people had little interest in the internal politics of the Ottoman Empire.

This is the reason why Kang's experience in the Ottoman Empire is significant to study. Firstly, he was an important witness of the Young Turk movement. He lived a life in exile and thus got the chance to investigate the modern political system in Europe and the US. This experience shaped his perspective of imperial comparison before his first visit to Istanbul, where he found that the Ottoman condition and movement were the most comparable to the Qing's.

Secondly, the imperial perspective Kang represented on the topic of the Young Turks and of the Hamidian regime was distinguished from the Republican revolutionaries'. This perspective was similar to many Ottoman intellectuals' during the Young Turk movement: Kang preferred a constitutional monarchy rather than a democratic system directly copied from Europe, and a top-down reform rather than a revolution; he disagreed with anti-Manchuist movement, because he regarded the Qing as a multi-ethnic empire in which nationalism would cause disintegration; he used Confucianism as a propaganda means but also strove to maintain its status as an official ideology in order to preserve the cultural identity, which was similar to the Ottomans' attitude towards Islam. In short, Kang's writings show the common difficulties of constitutional reform in both empires.

Thirdly, Kang had debates with both conservatives and revolutionaries at different stages, which showed diverse sides of Ottoman movements through the contradiction of his writing on the Young Turks. On the one hand, he used the Ottoman Empire as a model to refute the Qing conservatives' rejection of reform, on the other hand, he condemned the Young Turks because they resembled the radical Republicans who overthrew the Qing monarchy.

Finally, after the collapse of the Qing Dynasty, Kang found that Islam in the Hamidian period resembled Confucianism in imperial China in terms of being an official ideology to stabilize the empire. His emphasis on religion's role in Ottoman politics showed a focus shift from political reform to religious reform. Kang's counterrevolution perspective, no matter how unrealistic it was, revealed the influence of Hamidian regime in the Muslim world.

In conclusion, this thesis contributes a new comparative perspective to understand the interaction between the Ottoman Empire and the Qing Dynasty in the era of modernization. Still, there are some gaps to fill in this field. For example, Kang's networks and activities in Istanbul, which might have been recorded by the Ottoman people he met there. It is unclear whether these kinds of Turkish sources exist. Moreover, further research on this topic also requires more materials about the interaction between the two empires by other ethnic groups. Muslim intellectuals in the northwest of China, which are not included in my thesis, were also deeply influenced by the Ottoman reform in the nineteenth century. The role they played in the Qing modernization process needs to be reexamined in the future. As imperial comparison is developing into a multi-dimensional research field, this research is supposed to be a window for new discoveries. Nevertheless, the conversation between the two distant empires presented in this thesis should be seen as a clue for the future research. In other words, this thesis aims to broaden the scope of the Ottoman Studies and contribute various sources for reexamining the historical role of the Ottoman Empire in the future.

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