



The Intellectuals in Northern China and The Abolition of the Civil

Service Examinations:

Minds and Identities

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Abstract

In order to understand the impact of the abolition of the civil service examinations, I examine the lives of Chinese intellectuals during 1895-1910. I investigate their behaviors, emotions, and living environment, and explore how intellectuals retained positions in society through various channels and compare different patterns of their psychological change. What I discover is that stratification among local elites promoted them to discover their new identities in the transition from the Qing dynasty to the Republican government: they were trying to become pure intellectuals or scholar-officials before the dramatic changes of the civil service examinations; however, during the republican times, they would explore their new life path and gradually shape their unique understanding of modernization.

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Introduction

Scholars of late Qing and modern China agree that Chinese society underwent a remarkable cultural, social, political, and economic transformation during the time period 1895 to 1910. Focusing on the modern transformation of Chinese civilization and the abolition of the imperial examination system in the late Qing dynasty, this paper discusses the historical background of the abolition of the civil service examination system, the problems intellectuals were facing, and the profound influence caused by the abolition during the turn of 19th and 20th centuries. One of the most dramatic aspects of this time period was the upheaval in the composition of Chinese elites and intellectuals, marked by the disappearance of the traditional way to realize the benefit of the social mobility that had once shaped China's social organization. With the continuing transformation of China as a modern society, intellectuals' identities were changing correspondingly. The abolition of the examination system influenced the fate of the intellectuals in various ways and brought them into new trends of social stratification. In *The Modernization of China*, Gilbert Rozman views modernization "as the process by which societies have been and are being transformed under the impact of the scientific and technological revolution."¹ Many elements of social change are commonly associated with modernization; it is reasonable that the

1 Gilbert Rozman and Thomas P. Bernstein, *The Modernization of China* (New York: Free Press, 1981), 3.

abolition of the civil service examinations, the expansion of education, and the reorganization of social stratification contributed to China's modernization. My starting point is to investigate how the different factors have influenced intellectuals, based on the investigation of the respective political, educational and economic changes in general, and personal writings in particular. In this paper, the intellectual's potential for assuming new roles is explored and discussed by emphasizing two individuals' life stories: one a scholar in Shanxi province (Liu Dapeng 刘大鹏, 1857-1942), and the other, an entrepreneurial elite in Henan province (Wang Xitong 王锡彤, 1865-1938). If we can effectively use the personal documents, compiling all phases and levels of people's views on historical events, their changes in mood, and their flow of thoughts, we can learn cultural history from a new position of breadth and depth.

For understanding the changes of identities of these intellectuals, it is necessary to understand the historical background of the abolition of the civil service examinations, which was a direct product of the New Policies of the Qing court. As the last dynasty to rule China, the Qing court implemented the New Policies that were a series of political, economic, legal, military, cultural and educational reforms. These happened in the last decade of the Qing dynasty after its defeat in the Boxer Uprising (1899-1901)². The defeat in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Boxer Uprising weakened Qing power, which made a series of reforms more urgent.

² The Boxer Uprising includes "a range of martial- arts practices that Westerners referred to as 'boxing,' as well as deep- breathing exercises and invulnerability rituals, groups composed mainly of young peasants and unemployed drifters." These people attacked primarily foreign missionaries and Chinese Christians. Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908) retained full control at court, and declared war on the foreign powers. In August 1900, a large allied Western force defeated the Boxers.

Tiedemann, R. G. "Boxer Uprising." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History*. : Oxford University Press, 2008.

<http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.lib.duke.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780195148909.001.0001/acref-9780195148909-e-126>.

When these reforms were implemented, they did not save the Qing dynasty; instead, the Confucian system gradually collapsed. The institution for preserving the Confucian system was shocked fundamentally. The abolition of the examinations, for which many candidates had prepared for decades, can be seen as the end of a historical era. Therefore, reestablishing their role and identity became an integral focus of the intellectuals' lives. Through involving themselves in academic activities and public affairs, they attempted to establish their role in modern society.

The civil service examination system was an important institution that contained a variety of functions in culture, politics, and education from 650 C.E to 1905 C.E.. Since the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the institution of the civil service examinations gradually had a fixed structure and shape. Ancient Chinese schools were places to cultivate government officials with academic training, and these institutions were a part of the educational system to regulate the mainstream culture in the society. It also maintained a method to select officials and determine the production of elites. The connection between education and politics was located in the examinations. Benjamin Elman observes that “confucian learning, literati prestige, state power, and cultural practice were all accommodated to the educational testing system to a degree that the examination system in the Ming-Qing era functioned as a measurable arbiter of elite culture, politics, and society.”³ From this perspective, “the examinations were a fundamental factor in determining cultural consensus and conditioned the forms of reasoning and rhetoric that

³ Benjamin A. Elman, “Political, Social, and Cultural Reproduction via Civil Service Examinations in Late Imperial China”, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 50 (1991): 23.

prevailed in elite society.”⁴ The exam system had an essential role in the regulation and management of villages and the countryside by the gentry class, which tried to keep the balance associated with Confucian institutions.

Passing the rigorous exams, which were based on classical literature and philosophy, conferred a highly sought-after status, and a rich literati culture in imperial China ensued.⁵ The examinations represented the focal point through which state interests, family strategies, and individual hopes and aspirations were directed. However, traditional Chinese intellectual culture, which was thought to be the undertaking of the literati, or scholar-officials, reached an impasse at the end of the Qing era, when Western knowledge was introduced in education, and the examination was abolished.

The impact of the abolition of the examinations on literati and intellectuals is an important question to explore. Confucian literati once had the kind of education suited to the fulfillment of their social and political roles. It is obvious to see how abolition of such an important institution would affect the whole society in various ways: in the establishment of a modern education system, in the initiation of modern scientific and technological undertakings, and in the formation of new types of intellectual groups. After the examination was abolished, intellectuals were forced to seek different pathways. The transformation of the intellectual's identities took them from the status of gentry to those of scholar and of various professionals.

While the literati served the interests of the gentry, the civil service examination was also a main way to implement social mobility. Any male citizen (except for during the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864) could participate the exams to occupy government offices. The exam

⁴ Ibid., 23.

system and social mobility is an important issue that has been well examined. As early as the 1940s, Fei Hsiao-Tung, Chang Chung-Li, Ch'u T'ung-tsu, Hsiao Kung-chuan, Chou Jung-te and other Chinese scholars made contributions to research on the Chinese gentry of traditional society.⁶ This topical symposium arose from the need to clarify the definition of Chinese gentry. Even though these authors have differences in defining the identity and social function of the gentry, they all emphasize the close relation between the examinations and bureaucratic politics. Wolfgang Franke's *The Reform and Abolition of the Traditional Chinese Examination System*⁷ is a comprehensive summary of the whole process of the reform and abolition of the examination system. In *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: Aspects of Social Mobility, 1368-1911*⁸, Ho Ping-ti uses statistical methods to explain the function of the examination in promoting social mobility in Ming and Qing times. Xu Hong, the translator of Ho Ping-ti's work into Chinese, talks about Ho's contribution in the study of social mobility: "It has almost exhausted the existing data that may be treated statistically and which bears on the subject through the family background of members of the elite class in that society."⁹ He uses lists of economic degree

⁶Fei Hsiao-t'ung, Margaret Park Redfield, and Jung-tê Chou, *China's gentry: essays in rural-urban relations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953); Chang Chung-Li, *The Chinese Gentry: studies on their role in nineteenth-century Chinese Society* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1955); Chang Chung-Li, *The Income of the Chinese gentry* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962); Ch'u T'ung-tsu, *Local Government in China under the Ch'ing* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1962); Hsiao Kung-chuan, *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960); Chou, Jung-te, *Zhongguo she hui de jie ceng yu liu dong: yi ge shu qu zhong shi shen shen fen de yan jiu = Social Mobility in China: research on the gentry identity in a traditional Chinese community* (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 2001)

⁷ Wolfgang Franke, *The Reform and Abolition of the Traditional Chinese Examination System* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1960)

⁸ Ho Ping-ti, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: aspects of social mobility, 1368-1911* (New York: Columbia University, 1962)

⁹ Ho Ping-ti, trans. Xu Hong. *Ming Qing she hui shi lun = The Ladder of success in imperial China: aspects of social mobility, 1368-1911*. (Taipei Shi: Lian jing chu ban shi ye gu fen you xian gong si, 2013), Preface.

holders as his primary source, which according to Chinese law, includes each candidate's ancestry for three generations. He also utilizes government statutes, certain local history, biographies, genealogies, and select works from contemporary observers. Contrarily, Elman's *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* criticizes this conclusion of considering more comprehensive information on family background and relative relationships. The civil service exams provided limited opportunities for common people and it was extremely hard for common farmers or citizens to acquire success in these exams. The social mobility the exams provided remains limited for the lower class to climb into elite circles, especially for the vast majority of farmers. Archives from the years 1500 to 1900 indicate that peasants, traders, and artisans, who made up 90 percent of the population, were not a significant part of the 2 to 3 million candidates who usually took the local biennial licensing tests.

Some American scholars choose to take "elite" to represent the gentry class in China.¹⁰ Philip Kuhn clarifies the terms "gentry" and "elite" at the beginning of his book, and then explores the local elite and bureaucratic political system since the Taiping Rebellion (1850). William Rowe and Mary Rankin discuss the features and activities of local elite in Hankou and Zhejiang respectively, explaining the local elite's expansive scope of activities. Joseph Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin provide more information on local elite and their complexity and plurality. In *Chinese Local Elite and Patterns of Dominance*, the relation between elite and local society is

¹⁰ Philip A. Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China, Militarization and Social Structure, 1796-1864* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1970); William T. Rowe, *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City, 1796-1889*. (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1984); Mary Backus Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang Province, 1865-1911* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1986); Joseph Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin, *Chinese Local Elite and Patterns of Dominance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Also see R. Keith Schoppa, *Chinese Elites and Political Change: Zhejiang Province in the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982); Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State Rural North China, 1900-1942*. (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1988).

well explored, and questions about gentry landholding and gentry rule are emphasized.

In Chinese language, “intellectual” can be defined as *zhishi fenzi* 知识分子. The term “*shi*” 士, which means intellectuals as a kind of social class, also overlaps with intellectual. Basically, intellectual means scholar—*dushuren* 读书人 (persons who focuses on reading and learning) in the Chinese context. According to Yu Ying-shih, from 1890s to 1930s, *shi* disappeared and the modern intellectual appeared instead. He also thinks that 1905 is a meaningful year that symbolizes the point at which the traditional intellectual’s future did not have institutional assurance any more. After the examinations were formally abolished, it was supposed to be replaced by school systems, marking the final establishment of the new school education system in China. The new system focused on making use of Western learning as a premise, introduced a new ideology of humanities and social sciences, and finally shocked the former education system centered on traditional Confucian ethics. It can be seen that the replacement of the examinations by new-style schools represented not only the demise of the 1300 years of the imperial election system and education system, but also shocked the ideas of traditional gentry who established themselves on the morals of Confucian ethics.

In feudal society, the literacy rate was very low among ordinary people, so scholars were quite respectable, and people paid homage to the imperial examination system. The concept of “nothing is lofty except reading books” was upheld universally at that time, and anyone who had received some private school educations would be regarded as superior; if someone could pass the imperial examination, he would gain fame and bring glory on his ancestors.¹¹ Therefore, those who read Confucian classics from childhood and possessed certain titles naturally enjoyed privilege in society (especially in the local community) based on their dominance of knowledge.

¹¹ Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, 10.

After the abolition of the examinations, the traditional path for scholars to pursue bureaucracy was cut off. Without the opportunity to participate in the examination, some intellectuals would choose to study abroad, join the army, become an entrepreneur or lead a revolution. In the May Fourth movement (1919), intellectuals further pursued democracy and science. While closely observing their behavior pattern, we see how the intellectuals at that time still took on the responsibility of concern for the nation.¹² Even after 1919, according to Michael Walzer, “student elitism was rooted, perhaps, in Leninist vanguard politics or, more likely, in pre-communist cultural traditions (Confucian, mandarin) specific to China and certain to show up in any version of Chinese democracy.”¹³ In a broader view, Chinese intellectuals brought this cultural legacy throughout the 20th century.

In late imperial times, the traditional educational system underwent different interruptions and reforms after the Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864) in the late Qing dynasty. After China lost the two Opium Wars (1839-1842; 1856-1860), the Qing court deliberately introduced Western studies into China. In 1892, after *Tongwen guan* 同文馆¹⁴ was established in Beijing, the Qing central and local governments established a series of specialized academies and military schools for adjusting the need of the Self-Strengthening Movement (1861-1895). *Zongli Yamen* 总理衙门 was the organization that, in addition to managing foreign affairs, was responsible for the new-style academies. In 1901, the founding of *Xuebu* 学部 marked the establishment of an

¹² Yu Ying-shih, *Shi yu Zhongguo wen hua* 士与中国文化 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1987)

¹³ Michael Walzer, *Thick and thin: moral argument at home and abroad* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 60.

¹⁴ *Tongwen guan* is China’s first foreign language and translation institute. It was founded in 1862 at the petition of Prince Gong (恭亲王奕訢, 1833-1898), and was also called “the Imperial Translation Training Agency of Universal Languages.” See Mu Fengliang, “A Survey of the Name Change from *Siyi Guan* to *Tongwen Guan*,” *Journal of Tsinghua University* 19 (2004): 67.

independent organization for the central government to manage national education. The leaders of the Self-Strengthening Movement were the first group of patrons for the translation of Western knowledge, because in a country like imperial China, “no translation of Western works would have been allowed without the ultimate blessings of the ruler.”¹⁵

Abolishing the civil service examinations was not the original intention of the Qing rulers. The orientation of mainstream ideas concerning modifying the examination system was always focused on advocating pragmatism, adding new subjects, and diversifying the selection criteria.¹⁶ New schools featuring Western models were built all over China. In 1903, Zhang Zhidong (张之洞, 1837-1909), Zhang Baixi (张百熙, 1847-1907), and other officials advocated for the courts to put more emphasis on academics instead of old civil service exams. *Xuebu* was meant to be a transition organization after the abolishment of the civil service exams. In late Qing, the reforms of the government were connected to the development of new education policies, but were limited by the change of political regime. Liang Qichao (梁启超, 1873-1929) saw this sensitively: “The foundation of reform is to nurture intellectuals; the foundation of producing modern intellectuals is to open schools; the establishment of schools was depending on changing the civil service exams. In sum, if we want to change all these above, we should reform the political regime/official system.”¹⁷ Liang’s theory can be seen as part of a modern trend concerning overall reforms in the late Qing, which was promoting a kind of intellectuals that can adjust to the challenge of the Western technologies. The different officials in the Qing court held

¹⁵ Michael Lackner and Natascha Vittinghoff, *Mapping Meanings the Field of New Learning in Late Qing China* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 248.

¹⁶ Guan Xiaohong, “A New Approach to the Discussion of the Reformation on the Imperial Examination in Late Qing Period,” *Journal of Historical Science* 10 (2007), 39.

¹⁷ Liang Qichao, “Lun bianfa buzhi benyuan zhihai,” (论变法不知本原之害), in *Zhongguo jindaishi ziliao congkan, The Hundred Days Reform* (中国近代史资料丛刊·戊戌变法), (Shanghai: shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1999): 525.

two separate kinds of opinions: the officials who supported the Self-Strengthening Movement did realize the importance of modern intellectuals, technologies, and understanding of international relations.

The link between educational reform and government reform was emphasized by Japan's 1905 defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War, which caused further shock in people's minds. Yuan Shikai and other powerful officials began advocating for the abolishment of civil service examinations. They emphasized the importance of establishing modern schools.¹⁸ On September 2, 1905, under the dual effect of powerful ministers and social crisis, the Qing court accepted the suggestions of Yuan Shikai and others, and promulgated an edict to stop the civil service examinations immediately. The examination system in the late Qing Dynasty could no longer satisfy the social demands of science and culture, nor could it meet the need for scientific/technological and managerial talents. Moreover, it severely hindered the development of new forms of education.

Methodology

This project is based on a case study of the diaries of two intellectuals who lived during this transitional time. In the history of reading, diaries are considered more personal than personal letters. A diary is the "Book of Myself," and intended to build and intertwine personal reading, writing and personal records. In the Qing dynasty, intellectuals were especially interested in recording their reading and personal reviews. Therefore, diaries are one of the best resources to use in order to understand the history of their thoughts and reading. One important issue that

¹⁸ Zhu, Shoupeng, and Jinglu Zhang. 1958. *Guangxu chao donghua lu*. Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 5392

arises in these diaries are their reflections on the responsibilities of the gentry at that time. Due to the end of the civil service examinations, they would no longer have their previously-recognized benefits and privileges. In their description of daily life, people could depict how their ideas changed. For Liu Dapeng and Wang Xitong who lived in the rural areas during their early lives, the changing ideas of the populace in rural society are increasingly intertwined with the decline of literati's status.

When these two people began writing their diaries, it was rare that they would show these words to their families and friends deliberately. However, they hoped their diaries could be published in the future, like that of Zeng Guofan (曾国藩 1811-1872), who was an eminent scholar-official. Their diaries were not totally private at the beginning; they hoped their voices in self-cultivation and self-reflection could be discovered by future generations.

In a word, we should view their diaries as a genre of scholar-officials' literature, which was a traditional way of recording notes of reading and personal thoughts. The writing of these diaries was mainly a kind of presence of the traditional scholar-official's cultural capital, which included highly professional education in Confucian classics, deeply immerse in history, reputation as local leaders, and personal ideal to be true intellectuals. This writing process also helped them rebuild their cultural capital after the abolition of the exams, as they hoped their persistence and attachment to Confucianism can be continued, and the roles of being local leaders can be strengthened.

Anecdotes and personal affairs that were included in personal diaries of one man should undoubtedly be classified to the scope of local or regional studies, while the exploration on a marginal figure can also be regarded as part of "micro-history." Whether regional history or micro-history, such scholarship intends to get rid of the previous "grand narration" that focuses

on the upper elite, as well as collective political and economic changes, by presenting specific and personalized "figurative" history with a sense of the nature of day-to-day social experience. In order to keep their research from appearing trivial and fragmental, the researchers of local history and case studies often introduce the perspectives and methods of studying integral history. Namely, they attempt to examine the specific cases under a holistic geographical pattern and historical framework. Therefore, for local and individual cases studied from the perspective of micro-history and day-to-day history, an approach of "universal history" or "comprehensive history," should be followed for the research. The so-called universal or comprehensive approach refers to the method of expanding the study around people by combining various social factors, such as politics, economy, society and culture. This approach considers places, events and individuals as nodes in the whole social network. Through the exploration on information "decoding" and related network, i.e., all aspects of day-to-day life stages and backgrounds, it analyzes and summarizes people's "common sense" of an era in a region, and perceives and captures the regional or even national styles and features of that era from such "common sense." Thus, universal or comprehensive history is obviously not equal to macro-history.

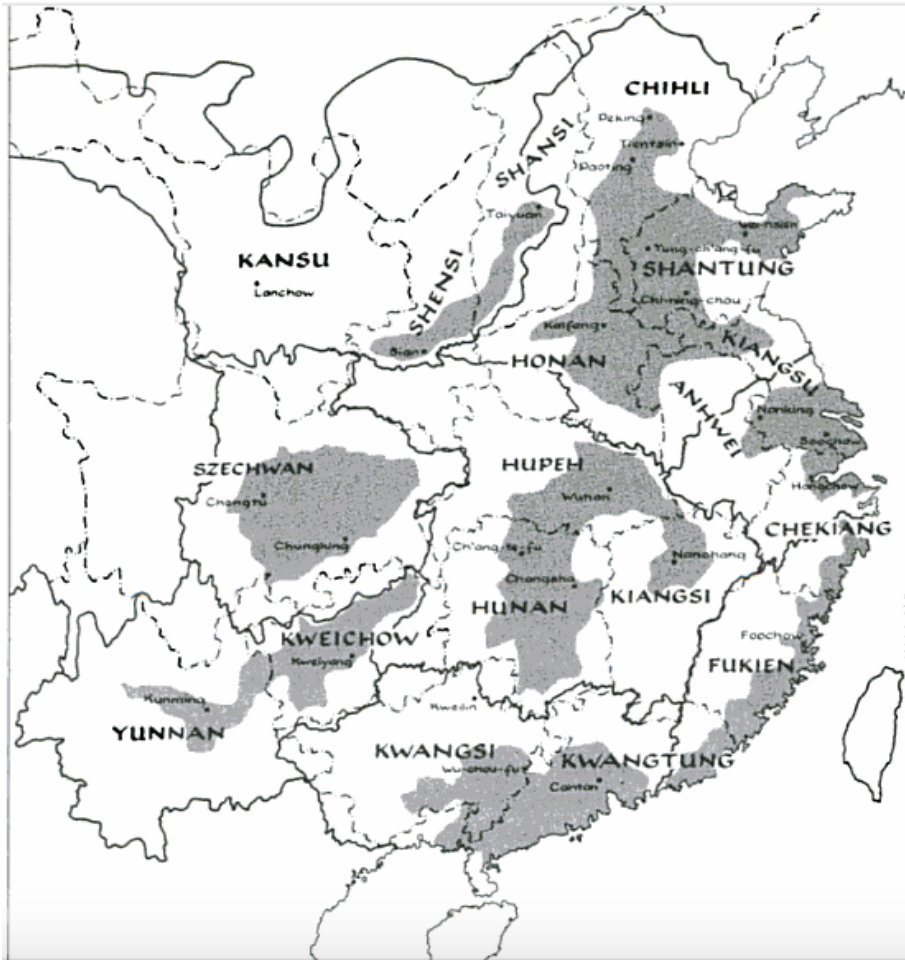
Of course, the stories of Liu Dapeng and Wang Xitong discussed above cannot solely further our understanding on the development of times or the overall landscape of local history at the macro level, but it gives us a specific and tangible picture of the social mores in regional communication and everyday life. Although Liu is only an individual, he reflects a part of the universal or comprehensive landscape, and gives us a sense of life in specific historical context. This no longer becomes an individual or local issue, but an overall and comprehensive picture. In fact, the practices of western historical research have shown that day-to-day history and micro-

history studied “according to norms” are also likely to be regarded as a variant of “universal history.”

Chapter 1—Access to Information



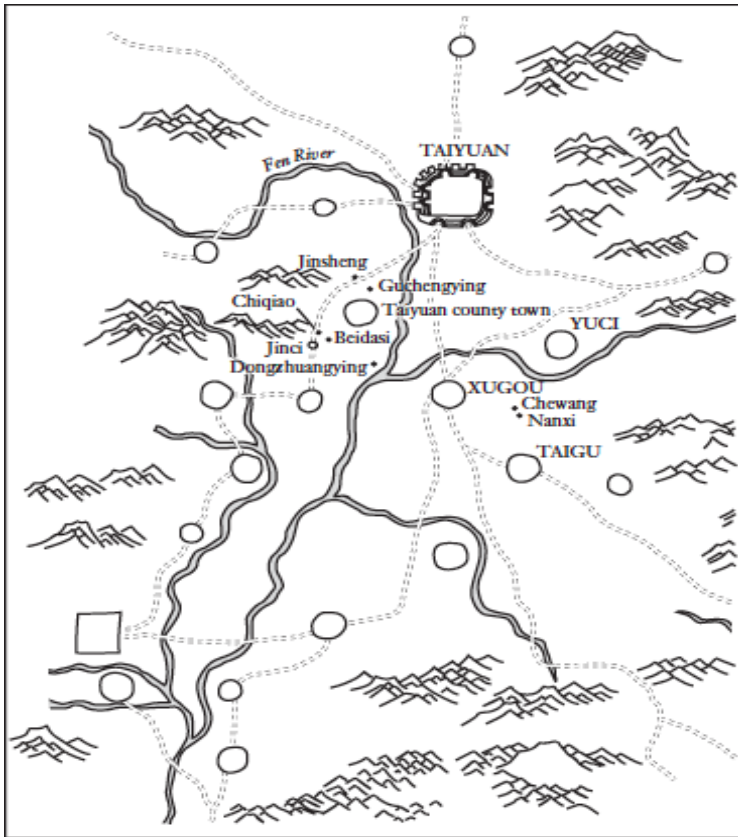
Map 1.1 Provinces of China. Source: G. William Skinner, *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, 1977).¹⁹



Map 2.2 Physiographic Macroregions in Relation to Provinces and Showing Metropolitan Cities, 1843. Source: *The City in Late Imperial China*, ed. G. William Skinner²⁰

¹⁹ Joseph Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin, *Chinese Local Elite and Patterns of Dominance*, 18.

²⁰ Zhang Xin, *Social transformation in Modern China: the state and local elites in Henan, 1900-1937* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 24.



Map 3.3 Central Shanxi. Source: ABCFM. Shansi Mission. Adapted from Shen Guifen's map of Shanxi Province, 1881.²¹

The intellectuals' access to information was essential in shaping their understanding of the political transition of China. In this chapter, I will explain their access to information at that time, which had deep connection with their social positions as gentry, their residential regions, and their points of view towards traditional culture. In other words, explaining their access to information is the first step to understanding their psychology and emotion.

One of the main characters in this paper, Liu Dapeng (1857-1942), was born in Taiyuan County, Shanxi Province. In 1894, he passed the civil service examinations at the provincial level, which strengthened his attachment to traditional concepts, but he failed three times in the

²¹ Henrietta Harrison, *The man awakened from dreams one man's life in a north China village, 1857-1942* (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), Preface.

metropolitan examination in 1895, 1898 and 1903. During the Republic of China (1912-1949), he was appointed as the president of County Parliament and other similar posts. His diary *Tuixianzhai Riji* 退想斋日记 was arranged by professors from Shanxi University and published in the 1990s. By studying Liu's life, we can depict his circumstances under different identities ranging from a Confucian scholar, dutiful son, businessman, politician, to farmer. Henrietta Harrison provides two methods in *The Man Awakened from Dreams* for studying the life of Liu Dapeng. She first elaborates on the tradition of Confucian Conception in modern China, exploring the loss of authority and how Confucianism changed in the eyes of the public and in their daily practices. Second, she explains the gradual marginalization and impoverishment of rural society in Shanxi Province during China's modernization. Several Liu's qualities and characteristics were discussed in this book. Liu's early concept of "benevolence" mainly referred to the ideals appropriate to an integral official. When the traditional way of becoming an official was blocked, he took his idea of benevolence beyond the official by becoming a spokesperson for the people to oppose government exploitation and fight for the public interest. His concept of filial piety was also based on the concept of becoming a benevolent father and filial son, which took kinship and courtesy as a link to maintain children's filial piety and parental care. Liu earned his popularity by his early-cultivated "good faith," which became Liu's crucial resource for entering into business and mediating commerce disputes when there was a lack of laws in rural society in the early years of the Republic. Liu always tried to apply for the Confucianism and focused on being a scholar-official in his hometown.

Another main character of this paper is Wang Xitong (1866-1938), who was a well-known industrialist of Henan province, not only ran industries, but was one of the main pioneers and managers of some modern enterprises. The purpose of tracking Wang Xitong's transformation

and seeking the course of his ideas lies in the fact that he holds a unique position in the modern economic history of Henan province, and even in that of China. Wang came from Ji County of Henan province. Before 1909 he was a traditional literati struggling with the civil service examination. In the thick Confucian atmosphere of Henan province he originally was very interested in the Confucian school. Even though he became an industrialist, he still longed to be a Confucian scholar. Wang Xitong's dairy *Yizhai zishu* 抑斋自述 also discusses the difficulties and identity anxiety faced by rural intellectuals as well as their resulting spiritual torture and perseverance during China's turbulent transition from a traditional society to a modern one.²² No matter in the countryside or big cities, Wang always tried to be a trusted people and local leaders.

For Liu and Wang, both of their initial career choices were strikingly similar: to be a teacher. However, society determines the change of culture and the change of culture pushes society forward. After all, the tide of social reform is unable to be checked. The people in the cultural field of Henan had also greatly changed. Wang made a “wise” choice to no longer stick to the traditional literati living method, but to become actively involved in the field of modern education. Although with an “old-fashioned attitude,” Liu Dapeng also participated in new business, passively. Wang Xitong grasped the trend of social development, gradually completing the transformation from a traditional literati to a modern intellectual. He also played a positive role in promoting modern education.

Liu Dapeng and Wang Xitong both belonged to the traditional gentry. The definition of gentry is important to understand their roles in the contemporary society. The gentry,²³ also called *shidafu* 士大夫 (scholar-official) in Chinese society, is a unique social group, which produce

²² Wang Xitong, ed. Zhen Yongfu, *Yizhai zishu* (Kaifeng Shi: Henan daxue chubanshe, 2001), Preface.

²³ Sometimes literati can mean “*shi*”, however, using gentry will cover overall connotation.

government officials who managed local livelihood.²⁴ According to Jerome Grieder, the gentry represents “scholars dwelling in their villages.”²⁵ In Gilbert Rozman’s opinion, the gentry also can be defined as “degree holders, landlords, and rich farmers, as perhaps 5 percent of the population, or perhaps 25 million persons, in the mid nineteenth century.”²⁶ According to *The Modernization of China and Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China*, Chang Chung Li’s definition of “gentry” is persons who achieved, in their own right, the lowest official status of *sheng-yuan* 生员 (district scholar) by examination, or *juan-sheng* 捐生²⁷ by purchase. In other words, the gentry comprises all holders of academic degrees, from the lowest *sheng-yuan* to the highest *jin-shi* 进士 (metropolitan graduate).

During the Qing times, the civil service examinations was still the most important method for selecting officials. For common people who engaged in the exams, they could choose between formal exams, or purchasing a degree. However, from the beginning of the 19th century to 1905, the proportion of people who actually took the exams in local officials dropped from 48.9% to 38.5%. The proportion of people who purchased degrees increased from 28.9% to 50%.

²⁴ Chang Chung-Li, *The Chinese gentry*, 25.

²⁵ Jerome Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China: a narrative history* Intellectuals (New York: Free Press, 1998), 16.

²⁶ Rozman, *The Modernization of China*, 90; Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China*, 3

²⁷ *Juanna*, 捐纳 is a method for people to purchase an occupation is government. The custom of selling offices was in order to augment imperial revenues. “By 1871 the figure had risen to 51 per cent, and it was still as high as 49 per cent in 1895.” Paul Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Wang T'ao and reform in late Ch'ing China*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 211.

Year	Exams		Purchasing		Other methods		Unknown		Overall
	(number)	(percentage)							
1801	4463	48.9	2636	28.9	1254	13.7	775	8.5	9128
1850	4152	45.5	3426	37.5	1254	13.7	300	3.3	9132
1871	3633	40.6	4168	46.6	776	8.7	372	4.1	8949
1880	3658	39.0	4775	50.9	647	6.9	297	3.2	9377
1890	3590	40.0	4379	48.8	552	6.2	446	5.0	8985
1898	3618	40.3	4484	50.0	564	6.3	302	3.4	8968
1904	3443	38.5	4475	50.0	504	5.6	532	5.9	8954

Table 1-1. Different background of Qing local officials²⁸

The increase of population and the development of economy promoted the increase of number of educated people during Ming and Qing times. According to Elman, by 1500, there were “some 30,000 licentiates (*sheng-yuan*) out of an approximate population of 65 million, a ratio of almost 1 licentiate per 2,200 persons.”²⁹ In 1700, there were “perhaps 500,000 licentiates in a total population of 150 million, or a ratio of 1 licentiate per 300 persons.”³⁰ In the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), historian Chen Baoliang calculated that the proportion of licentiates in the overall population is between 0.38%-0.46%.³¹ With the increase of examinee, the valid positions of officials were limited.

By 1850, approximately two million candidates sat for county examinations, held twice every three years. Of these, only thirty thousand (1.5 percent) achieved licentiate status. Fifteen hundred of the latter (5 percent) passed the triennial provincial examinations, and of these, only three hundred (20 percent) would pass the triennial metropolitan examinations. Each stage eliminated the vast majority of candidates, and the odds for success in all stages of the selection process was one in six thousand.³²

The increasing number of candidates, and the flourishing of *juan-sheng* impelled the upward social mobility of common people to reduce dramatically after the nineteenth century. Philip

²⁸ Zhao Lidong, “The Abolition of the Civil Service Examinations, Schools, and Gentry around 1905,” *CUHK Twenty-first Century*, no.43 (2005): 29.

²⁹ Elman, *A Cultural History of the Civil Service Examinations*, 140.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Chen, Ruoshui. *Zhongguo shi xin lun* 中国史新论 (Academia Sinica 2012), 328.

³² Elman, Benjamin. “Political, Social, and Cultural Reproduction via Civil Service Examinations in Late Imperial China”, *The Journal of Asian Studies* no.50 (1991): 14.

Kuhn disagrees with Ho Ping-ti's argument that *sheng-yuan* should be excluded from the gentry. Kuhn further works toward a broad functional definition of an "elite" segmented "according to its power and prestige on various scales of organization."³³ The group "national elite" had influence that transcended its regional origins, and connections that "reached to the apex of national political life."³⁴ The "provincial elite" had close links to the former group with more narrowly confined interests and influence. The "local elite" lacked the social prestige and powerful connections of the former groups but continued to "wield considerable power in the society of village and market town."³⁵ In a word, the borrowed tag "gentry" can be used to refer to degree holders in general; thus, both Liu Dapeng and Wang Xitong can be defined as "local elite."

The gentry constituted a privileged group that enjoyed a special position in relation to government and society. Jerome Grieder points out that the gentry stood first among the classes of the "common" people, but in point of fact "their social functions placed them in an intermediary position between the governing elite and the great majority of the governed." Their special position enabled them to receive high income from different resources. Although there were many ways to realize social mobility, being a scholar was the way that they received the most recognition and appreciation. In the late Qing, this group was still a significant social resource, who made an impression on local society by doing charitable works, building local schools and managing the moral life of villagers.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

Ancient Chinese always summarized the distinctions of social divisions of labors as four kinds of occupations or “four categories of the people” (*simin*)³⁶, which descended from gentry (*shi*) to peasant (*nong*) to artisan (*gong*) to merchant (*shang*).³⁷ Traditional scholars were put in the first place, because of their special social functions. The scholars can assist the emperor in governing the state; in the countryside, they can be local leaders for building order. According to the analysis of anthropologist Fei Hsiao-Tung, traditional scholars held social privilege, which reflected their scholarly honor and gave them legal and political privileges. In addition, they also had cultural authority.³⁸ In the ancient Chinese worldview, the order of the universe corresponded to the order of human society: the scholars therefore are a symbol of morality and reflect *daotong* 道统.³⁹ Officials provided a comprehensive and overwhelming model in matters of life style, values, and social behaviors for all persons of elite status.⁴⁰ Those who read Confucian classics from childhood and possessed certain titles naturally enjoyed an advantage in society (especially in the local community) through their dominance in orthodox knowledge. Therefore, the system of the civil service examinations could bring excellent channels for a rural person to become an official through learning. Not only that, it was a shortcut to achieve social dominance. However, with the abolition of imperial examinations and the establishment of new schools, students were allowed to read new-style textbooks, and traditional classics were not emphasized as much as in the past.

³⁶ Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: commerce and culture in Ming China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 72.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Willard J. Peterson ed., *The Cambridge history of China Vol. 9* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 362.

³⁸ Fei, *China's Gentry*, 20.

³⁹ *Daotong*, according to Fei Xiaotong, literally “dao-series””dao-succesion””dao- transmission,” in usage something like “the orthodox transmission of the dao or Way.”

⁴⁰ Rozman, *The Modernization of China*, 90

The traditional intellectual has the same interest—reading Confucian classics with an eye for beauty. In Liu Dapeng and Wang Xitong’s early ages, they paid less attention to contemporary life, and the ability to access information was limited by economic status, traffic, geological position and other conditions. In contrary, during the 1840s and 1850s, some Chinese literati including Wang Tao (王韬, 1828-1897), Li Shanlan (李善兰, 1810-1882), and other intellectuals successively joined in the London Missionary Society Press.⁴¹ Thus they became the first group of Chinese intellectuals to cooperate with foreigners. Their translation work with the missionaries enabled them to comprehend western learning gradually, and to undertake the historical mission to introduce this to China. Their efforts had great significance on the unfolding of modern Chinese history, but science and modern technology were not significant enough as a nation to improve productivity at that time. The impact was limited to gentry and intellectuals; most of common citizens did not have the opportunity to access new-style knowledge.

The information that the intellectuals acquired include academic knowledge, news, anecdotes, rumors and others. The connection of knowledge and its spread in society should be noticed in analyzing the intellectual’s acquisition of knowledge. According to Peter Berger, the philosopher Scheler emphasized and analyzed the manner in which human knowledge is ordered by society. Human knowledge is given in society as “an *a priori* to individual experience, providing the latter with its order of meaning.”⁴² This order, “although it is relative to a particular socio-historical situation, appears to the individual as the natural way of looking at the world.”⁴³

⁴¹ The London Missionary Society Press, also called Mohai shuguan 墨海书馆. See Wang Liqun, “The Rise of Chinese Intellectuals in Modern Shanghai: An Analysis of the Chinese Intellectuals Working at the London Missionary Society Press,” *Studies in Qing History* 3 (2003): 97.

⁴² Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), 20.

⁴³ Ibid.

Due to the introduction of newspapers, telegrams and other media as different mediating platforms, the public communication of the Qing era became more active. The increased access to information accommodated the biggest revolutionary change. Modernized ideas might not produce direct historical outcomes, but these ideas could be used by decision makers to produce specific strategy. The civil service exams and scholar-official title could provide intellectuals the opportunity and privilege to participate in political activities. For example, Kang Youwei (康有为, 1858-1927) acquired the trust of Guangxu Emperor (光绪帝, 1871-1908) by promoting his own ideas and paths, which illustrates how knowledge impacted the reform of society. The dawn of modern newspapers and imported books influenced the intellectuals' reading world extensively. After the first Sino-Japanese War (1895), the intellectuals realized China had been marginalized on the world stage. The atmosphere of attaching importance to western knowledge spread to China. The standard of admission leaned towards western studies, which directly impacted the scholars' choices of reading. For example, during the Hundred Days reform, Liang Qichao described that: "After the abolishment of the eight-legged essay⁴⁴, nowadays people are interested in talking about astronomy, mathematics, historical events and maps of other countries."⁴⁵ Generally, the elite preferred discussions and had easier access to information. Local scholars tended to read traditional newspapers and commentary rather than modern

44 See Benjamin A. Elman's *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 394 for background information about eight-legged essay. The eight-legged essay is a style and pattern for essay writing. According to the author, "Literature, rhetoric, and argumentation were all of a piece in the formalized eight-legged 'grid' that emerged in the 1470s, and that unity yielded a precise literary measure of the linguistic talents of thousands of men physically locked into the examination compounds and cognitively locked into the eight-legged essay." Each "leg" has different function in the overall structure. People who took the examinations also read guides for composing the essays.

⁴⁵ Liang, Qichao, *Yin bing shi zhuan ji*. (Taipei Shi: Taiwan Zhonghua shuju. 1972), 355.

thoughts. Young students liked radical context instinctively; thus, they generally appreciated the revolutionary newspapers.

In defining the different types of knowledge that Liu and Wang could get access to, Michael Mulkey makes a distinction “between popular belief and commonsense or everyday knowledge, on the one hand, and systematized, specialized knowledge, on the other hand.”⁴⁶ Grieder also points out that, “From the outset, Confucians regarded history as the central authority of their beliefs, and as the principal vehicle by which these beliefs were transmitted.”⁴⁷ It was natural for Liu and Wang to focus on Confucius classics and historical classics. History as an authority would affect the gentry’s behavior and choices for absorbing information. From the Ming through the Qing eras, the artistic style and type of knowledge can be described, in Grieder’s words, as: “Artistic style and a cultivated knowledge of the approved canon of ancient works, the 'sweetness and light' of a classical love of letters--these, not specialized, 'useful' technical training, were tools of intellectual expression and the keys to social power.”⁴⁸ These were the qualities mainly tested in the state examinations, and these were important aspects of the gentry’s personalities. The past-oriented education was changed into future-oriented around 1900, requiring intellectuals to acquire new style and western knowledge to complete the requirement of teaching new schools and taking exams.

For discussing access to information, the relation between territoriality and identity is essential. Resources might not be plentiful enough to support all regions and societies to have a high level of modernization. Shanxi Province is famous for having various kinds of mines and natural

⁴⁶ Micheal Mulkey, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge*, (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1979), 1.

⁴⁷ Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China*, 18

⁴⁸ Joseph Richmond Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate; a trilogy*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 16.

resources. Due to the lack of improvement of traffic and expensive transportation expenses, the economic development of Shanxi and Henan was slower compared to coastal areas.

Gentry who entered officialdom were the representatives of imperial interests and the existing regime; therefore they had the strongest motive to support the regime. When the circumstances underwent dramatic change, the scholar-official's interest began to drift apart from imperial ideology. Liu Dapeng did not directly serve the Qing government; upward mobility was closed to him and many similar intellectuals. Yet he was still attached to the political system, and he still admired the importance of Confucian values and orders; all these interior attachment to traditional value made him dismissive of academic changes. Liu once stated that: "In recent years scholars have all been divided into two groups, called 'those who hold to the old' and 'those who hold to the new.' Those who hold to the old cleave to the way of Confucius and Mencius, while those who hold to the new seek only after Western methods."⁴⁹ Henrietta Harrison chooses to refer to "those who hold to the new" as modernizers and to their policies as modernization "because in our language any government policy can be new -- whereas what Liu saw was a particular political agenda, based on a Western-inspired vision of the future."⁵⁰ This agenda was opposed to Liu's own Confucianism.

The contents of the exams changed during 1890s to 1905. In 1894, on his sixth attempt, Liu finally passed the provincial examinations. How he did so tells us a lot about the changing nature of the examinations. New "policy essays" had been introduced, with the expectation that the candidates were to discuss recent news and political issues. He saw that his friend Hu Ying, who was good at mathematics, had new opportunities and had been entered for a new national examination in this subject. Harrison asserts that Liu realized that familiarity with statecraft texts

⁴⁹Harrison, *The Man Awakened from Dreams*, 6.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

and at least a smattering of Western learning was “no longer merely a matter of personal interest but would be essential for passing the examinations.”⁵¹ Liu asked one of his former pupils who was visiting Beijing to “buy him a copy of the most recent edition of the standard compilation of Qing dynasty statecraft texts, which he then spent the next year studying.”⁵² In 1896, Liu asked his friends to buy new textbooks for preparing for the exams, especially *huangchao jingshi wenbian* 皇朝经世文编, a series of books edited and compiled by Wei Yuan (魏源, 1794-1857) in 1825. These are a collection of various historical documents in politics, diplomatic, economic, and other current issues in 19th century.⁵³ It is obvious that Liu had the access to the proper training and educational facilities for mastering literati political and moral discourse. Liu had the opportunity to read about modern economic and international issues, but he learned this knowledge only according to new requirement of the exams. Liu Dapeng lacked the information about mastery of Western learning and practical needs of government.

The perspective of a lower-class gentry in a remote village opens a window for us to understand how national affairs affected everyday life and how these events influenced the lives and concepts of the general public (often counterintuitively). The influence of the civil service examinations on Liu Dapeng was similar to that of intellectuals in capital and port cities who had more methods to acquire information. Liu seems to be more conservative and was less influenced by western ideas. Due to changes in Chinese society and the failure of mobile channels, old literati such as Liu were abandoned, and the traditional social structure no longer

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 48. Also see Liu Dapeng, ed. Zhiqiang Qiao, *Tuixiangzhai riji*. (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1990), 143.

⁵³ Liu Qingjing, “The theories in *Huangchao jingshi wenbian*,” Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica (中央研究院近代史研究所集刊), 15 (1986): 33.

existed. At the same time, Wang Xitong had similar access to information, as he received similar traditional education and lived in a village.

In analyzing their conservative thoughts through their diaries, we can see how predecessors dominated Liu and Wang's emotions, imaginations and behaviors. "Composition, defined as the dual ability to write well about the Four Books and Five Classics using classical forms and also to compose poetry in regulated verse"⁵⁴ culminated the transition from childhood to young student. Historical readings were needed to handle policy questions given in different examinations, and Qing examinations still included policy questions dealing with "the statecraft issues of fiscal policy, military organization, or political institutions of the day."⁵⁵ Especially in early times around 1895, Liu and Wang placed much spiritual sustenance on the Confucian world. What they read was centered on traditional classics, which made them lack a "practical" and "realistic" understanding of their society as it moved through rapid transitions. The social world of Chinese literati is mainly located in the society of predecessors and thus lacks the spirit of political realism, which is the necessity of modern life. The transformation of Chinese ideas after 1895 was closely related to the expansion of contemporary society, which is where the political realism was mainly cultivated. Both Liu and Wang suffered from the impact of new information and new choices.

⁵⁴ Willard J. Peterson ed., *The Cambridge history of China Vol. 9*, 375.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 361.

Chapter two—Changes in Behavior

How did Liu and Wang, having been raised in a conservative Confucian world, react to the new understandings represented by Western knowledge? To trace their changes in behavior through the political change of China and the abolition of the civil service examinations can give us meaningful insights into their psychological world. The traditional Chinese intellectual community had always been the most solid carrier of apolitical and cultural systems. However, after the abolition of the examinations, the traditional path for scholars to pursue officialdom through learning was cut off. The open-minded ones made a successful transition. They pursued new goals such as setting up modern schools and subsidizing children to accept new-style education or even to study abroad, and became the facilitators of rural education reform. Another group of conservative gentry held that the western-style education reform disrupted the traditional concepts and social values, undermined the order of rural society, and blocked their road to officialdom. This led them to become full of frustration and criticism towards the education reform. Chinese traditional education successfully helped institutionalize the Confucian system, and further promoted political and cultural development. For intellectuals and scholars, a huge class differentiation happened: the traditional group of intellectuals increasingly declined.

Liu Dapeng's diaries clearly showed his attachment to "conservatism." The general senses of "conservatism" include conscious attachment to, and replication of, the customs and judgments of earlier generations.⁵⁶ According to Grieder, Karl Mannheim suggests that conservatism as an identifiable intellectual and cultural style is "in fact the product of a process of cultural

⁵⁶ Grieder, *Intellectuals and the States in Modern China*, 17.

disintegration.”⁵⁷ When the old culture seems to be fading, people tend to raise the old ways of life to the level of “conscious reflection, of deliberate ‘recollection’.”⁵⁸ Liu recorded his memory of and attachment to traditional Confucius ways in his diary. Due to changes in the social atmosphere and the difficulties to pass the civil service examinations, a different life orientation informed the village gentry. Liu clearly points out in 1898: “People do not want their children to study in school, but arrange these children to do commercial trade. Because they think that most people who dedicate to study cannot break away from poverty. The number of people who participated in the examinations is even less than the quota of admission in Shanxi Province.”⁵⁹ When the levels of production cannot support the local population, even though Shanxi province did not had large commercial networks, many people would leave to other places to engage commerce.

When the Qing court added new contents about Western studies in the examinations and encouraged the establishment of new-style schools, in Liu’s eyes, the traditional culture was in danger. He wrote in 1901: “The standard of the examinations changed to admit persons who know Western knowledge well to be officials, and the Confucian studies was not respected like before. The Qing court made exceptions to employ people who know foreign affairs. The degeneration of the gentry’s traditional studies is getting worse.”⁶⁰ The social change resulted in a gentry divided in their behaviors between learning in old-style academies and doing business, between learning Confucian knowledge and learning Western knowledge.

The intellectuals usually needed to do some teaching in private academies or become a private tutor; they would do teaching and studying at the same time, because they needed to prepare for

⁵⁷ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Liu, *tuixiangzhai riji*, 78.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 102.

the next exam. In 1891 Liu Dapeng left an academy and accepted a position as tutor to the sons of a rich family in the Taigu County. Wang Xitong also needed to become a tutor to feed himself.

The persistent research on local history and culture was another important perspective of daily lives. In January 1894, Liu heard that there was an opera, and went to see this activity with his father.⁶¹ This is just a common scene in Chinese village life; Liu consciously tried to protect such examples of countryside culture and participate in all celebrations actively. Jinci (晋祠) was originally built to commemorate kings of Jin of the Zhou dynasty. According to Prasenjit Duara's description, Jinci is possibly a "standard market"⁶² that was oriented in a larger marketing center. These markets were "most important for villagers as places to buy and sell products and to acquire credit."⁶³ Except for trade between villagers, the market also functioned as a medium for publicizing rural culture and rituals. Liu focused on various activities to protect the cultural order—for this reason he maintained detailed records for local celebrations, farm work, local customs, and anecdotes. He cherished the local customs and traditional culture, which was important preparation for his future work on the *Jinci Gazetteer* 晋祠志.

Besides his writings about local culture and history, in his diaries, Liu included descriptions of himself as a hermit who despised official position, insisted on Confucian philosophy and pursued a tranquil life. Harrison uses the word "Confucianism" as shorthand for the ideology promoted by the Qing government in the late nineteenth century, which "Liu Dapeng usually referred to as 'the principles of the sages and worthies' or 'the way of Confucius and Mencius.'"⁶⁴ In describing his attachment to Confucianism, it is suitable to summarize their philosophy as a

61 Liu, *tuixiangzhai riji*, 29.

62 Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State Rural North China*, 17.

63 *Ibid.*, 18.

64 Harrison, *The Man Awakened from Dreams*, 5.

Confucianism that represents the authentic teaching of Confucius and his disciples.⁶⁵ The understanding of Confucianism was depended on the learning of classics.

To a local teacher who continuously participated in the civil service exams, reading Confucian classics was an indispensable in an intellectual's life. Elman observes that:

Memorization to internalize exactly the required Confucian curriculum tested in examinations was a cultural act of great meaning for Han Chinese. As in early modern Europe, where stress on order and conformity ensured that rote learning (e.g., the catechism) played a fundamental role in the educational process, late imperial Chinese state educators prized orthodoxy and the rote reception of that orthodoxy.⁶⁶

Rulers, officials, and examiners instilled a fixed set of ideas and facts, and they all believed that “the pious recital of the Four Books and Five Classics by Han Chinese students represented an act of faith in Confucian moral values and submission to imperial political sovereignty.”⁶⁷ The learning and reciting of classics represents not only studying knowledge, but also attaching to a system of moral standard. With a traditional concept of Confucianism, Liu aimed at becoming an official to serve people, but after entering the Taiyuan Chongxiu Academy, he found that people paid more attention to the stereotypical test-taking skills than the teachings of the sages. In March 1893, Liu said: “Nowadays the social morality is experiencing dramatic decline. Some intellectuals just tend to read practical essays and different methods to write an eight-legged essay. They don't scan any Confucian classics and only put their energy in taking tests. They seem to forget traditional moral standards when they do not immerse themselves in Confucius' teaching.”⁶⁸ There is a lot of criticism about social moral standards in Liu's diary. Because people in Jinci tended to do business and only a small portion did farm work, the overall

⁶⁵ According to Harrison, she has used the term Confucianism “partly because it reflects Liu's opinions, but also because Song neo-Confucianism, like Qing orthodoxy, was itself merely a moment in the great philosophical stream.” 5. Wang Xitong and Liu Dapeng's minds should not be defined just as “Neo-Confucianism.”

⁶⁶ Elman, “Political, Social, and Cultural Reproduction,” 23.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Liu, *tuixiangzhai riji*, 20.

atmosphere in this town made Liu disappointed. His words disclose his attachment to Confucian knowledge, morality and rituals.

In Liu's diary of 1897, his words reflect his inability to easily possess an accurate image of information about this changing society. When he received word that the provincial capital merchants group built railways, did mine exploration and other alterations, he did not know if this was correct information and considered them to be rumors. In a word, Liu's conservative behavior to some extent was due to his lack of accurate and abundant access of information.⁶⁹ In addition, for him the authoritarian Confucian studies were more dependable and accurate than uncertain street rumors and newspapers. Rumors, as Philip Kuhn describes, are a kind of "back-alley news"⁷⁰ (*xiaodao xiaoxi*) that "Chinese of our day find so essential to supplement the government-controlled press was already well developed in late imperial times -- and there is plenty of evidence that China's 'back alleys' were, even then, linked to regional and national networks of information."⁷¹ Liu's attachment to Confucian moral standards, principles and rituals was not easy to change, and the intellectuals at that time hardly improved full capability to adjust themselves due to the change of current political regime and the corresponding institution. Liu Dapeng's daily life and daily reading did not incorporate notable modern knowledge resources.

For intellectuals who lived in the countryside, their reading and communication was mainly based on past cultural heritage and history: this was almost the same condition in large cities. Harrison points out that for Liu himself, the effort to behave like a Confucian gentleman was a crucial part of his identity, "one that marked his status even after his educational qualifications

⁶⁹ Ibid., 66.

⁷⁰ Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China*, 36.

⁷¹ Ibid.

became politically worthless.”⁷² For Liu, intellectual and ethical coherence demanded that he believe in practical learning and the study of classics and history as a way of passing the examinations. However, year after year he failed. He had spent ten years in the academy, attempting to improve his essay writing. Liu still sought to act in the public interest of all in the village, molded his character and actions, and took responsibility for repaying society. Liu was seen as a rigorous and high-yielding historian who put a lot of energy into discovering local history; he was also a local culture specialist who wrote the *Jinci Gazetteer*. Levenson illustrates the paramount importance of historical thinking in Chinese culture: “The study of history had been the most characteristic Confucian intellectual activity...But this thinking was concerned typically not with process but with permanence, with the illustration of the fixed ideals of the Confucian moral universe.”⁷³ Liu Dapeng’s writing of *Jinci Gazetteer* may not intend to provide an explanation of “the Confucian moral culture,” according to its preface.⁷⁴ However, his behavior can be seen as appreciation of the past cultural and historical legacy. His writing was also a method to cultivate in himself literature aesthetics. This lifestyle, which did not leave out classics, was devoted to making ubiquitous Confucian studies normalized and concrete.

When they encountered problems in daily life, they tended to ask for help in history, and they all respected the Confucian tradition of taking responsibilities of local affairs. Liu and Wang participated in local affairs through their own methods. As a kind of elite activism, they tried to make contribution to the management of villages as gentry. In addition, in the late Qing period, as the social status of merchants rose, the phenomenon of combining business with learning became increasingly visible. The Confucian emphasis on agriculture balanced Liu's sense of loss

⁷² Harrison, *The Man Awakened from Dreams*, 5.

⁷³ Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, 91.

⁷⁴ Liu Dapeng, *Jincizhi xu* (Preface of the *Jinci Gazetteer*), in *Liu Dapeng Zhuan* (Biography of Liu Dapeng), *Jinyang wen shi zi liao* (Historical and cultural documents of Jinyang).

to a certain extent, and the agricultural practices offered him a chance to realize his personal conviction. The rundown rural economy was also an important reason for Liu to participate in agricultural work. Even though he still cherished the tradition, those traditional morals had little significance to people around him.

Wang Xitong could be defined as a Confucian merchant, who shared a similar business ethic with his predecessors and formed a new tradition of helping bring Confucianism into business. More than just being a gentry-merchant or scholar-official, Wang Xitong was engaged in industrial, commercial, and political activities with Confucian social concern. In 1898, Wang and his friends established Jingzheng Academy (*Jingzheng Shushe* 经正书舍) to promote local education in his hometown Ji county. Wang bought newly translated foreign historical and mathematic books in addition to Confucian classics, and one of his aims was to cultivate students who could understand current affairs and new technology. He elaborated his goal as “learning both Chinese and Western knowledge and applying them in practice.”⁷⁵ This academy was still in operation until the 1930s, and many local intellectuals received education there, which made these students create a social network. In 1906, Wang participated in activities designed to gain control of the operation of a local coal mine that was controlled by Fu Company of England.⁷⁶ In 1907, Wang and other gentry held discussions about collecting funds for constructing new railways in Henan.⁷⁷ Wang always insisted on doing his duty to bring benefit for Henan province. However, his activity scope enlarged and overstepped his hometown he managed politics and business in Beijing after he had close communication with official Yuan Shikai.

⁷⁵ Wang, *yizhai zishu*, 59.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 146.

Chapter 3-- Changes in Attitude and Emotion

The changes in attitude and emotion of Liu Dapeng and Wang Xitong, and their differences, have a more comprehensive explanation beyond what was discussed in previous chapters. In this chapter, we will explore several factors that affected their psychological condition: the Confucian tradition that they bore, their communication network, and the region they were in should all be considered according to the corresponding historical environment.

Past-oriented or future-oriented

In Confucian tradition, learning was emphasized as a process of continuous study in one's lifetime. In addition to pass the exams, learning also served as a medium to personal cultivation, and understanding of cultural legacy. However, for a literati, the first layer of goals of learning is to be patient, and have the preparations for continuously taking the exams. Liu Dapeng and Wang Xitong were persistent in their study and their many diary entries reflect relevant emotions. When Wang Xitong's father died, some of his family friends wanted to send him to learn specialized knowledge about the salt trade. However, his mother was unhappy to see Wang abandon his studies and wanted him to ignore his relatives. With his mother's instruction and care, Wang continued his study, even though some relatives thought that Wang should do business because of his family condition: "It is nearly impossible to bring honor to your ancestors through taking examinations; doing salt trade can make you wealthy."⁷⁸ With this spirit to honor their ancestors and relatives' support, Liu and Wang kept trying many times on

⁷⁸ Ibid., 14.

examinations in their early ages. This kind of experience might improve their attachment to this system and relevant cultural capitals.

Liu Dapeng spent considerable time and energy discovering local history and culture. Liu Dapeng's emotion and passion was like that of an adherent of a former dynasty, *yimin* 遗民, even though he lived in the new republican country. Living in the shocking and unstable social conditions at the beginning of the 20th century, Liu began to discover the reign of ancient history more and had steady belief in traditional culture and value. The revolution in 1911 was different from changes between dynasties, but Liu's emotion shared characteristics with adherents of former feudal times. In his diary of 1913, Liu depicted his own society in classical terms of character: "Men of noble characters disappeared, but villains became unbridled. We do not have our emperor now, and we lost the ethics and orders."⁷⁹ It is not unreasonable to say that Liu truly supported the continuation of the Qing court, but the republic's administration left him disappointed and hopeless regarding the country's future. He described his observation in a diary of April 1915:

China has become extremely weak. During the end of the Qing period, China was nearly completely cut off by foreign emperors. This country suffered from the revolutionaries' reform, and it seemed good to become a republic, because the common people's life should be better and China's international position should be higher. Actually, people's lives were ruined by more taxes and became painful. The invasion and aggression from foreign powers was more powerful: China could not sustain and evade from these potential dangers.⁸⁰

This discourse was similar to Liu's negative arguments about the Qing court's series of reforms in education after the abolition of the examinations. In August 1917, Liu wrote: "Ethics and orders (*gangchang lunli*) were the most essential rules to administer the nation. After the Qing court put an end to the examinations and began to set up schools, people tended to create

⁷⁹ Liu, *Tuixiangzhai riji*, 199.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 225.

chaos and challenge upper governors. This is why the Qing court diminished.”⁸¹ In Liu’s inner mind, he still hoped that the world that he was familiar with would revitalize again. As an adherent of the former dynasty, when the order of the new republic was not yet established and Chinese people’s living standard had not risen, his personal experience was still limited to imagination of the former government and society.

Liu once discussed his sentiment on the exam system change:

Recently there were rumors about abolishing academies and the civil service examinations. I am not sure if these are true information, all I know is that people’s mind are full of uncertainty and insecurity. Because we intellectuals spent so much time in studying for years, once the old system was abrogated, we do not know what we can do next. I cannot prove if this information is accurate, so I am worried and uneasy.⁸²

It is obvious that Liu’s cognition of this world depended on rumors in some aspects; his feelings of reality are portrayed as disturbed and anxious. His conservative attitude to new technologies such as mine exploration, new style schools and railways was based on his understanding of the negative aspects of modernization at that time.

Wang Xitong’s conservatism was shown in a different level compared to Liu. Wang Xitong was employed by Yuzhou Sanfeng Coalmine Company (*Yuzhou Sanfeng Meikuang Gongsi*) and began his career in the commercial industry. He was still active in Henan society as a gentry; after 1909, he established industrial companies with the famous merchant Zhou Xuexi (周学熙, 1866-1947). In 1909, Wang began his career in the Peking Water Supply Company (*Jingshi Zilaishui Gongsi*). Wang ultimately became one of the most famous entrepreneurs in modern Henan province. Yuan Shikai supported the water supply company in its successful

⁸¹ Ibid., 270.

⁸² Ibid., 62.

establishment. Zhou Xuexi devoted much effort for its establishment and Wang Xitong was wise in the area of management.

Although Wang Xitong went into industry, he still desired to be a scholar focusing on Confucianism: in his inner mind, it was such a large pity to do business and not be a pure scholar and intellectual. In his diary, he was clearly confused about choosing the path of his life. To maintain a large family, his choices were limited outside of establishing his commercial career. Wang further pursued self-improvement in Confucianism after 60 years of living. At the beginning of his diary, he portrayed his life quest in the introduction: “When I was getting older, I began to do business. After I passed away, my sons and grandsons might depict my life exaggeratedly in epitaph and embellish my experiences in industry. I wish that my true voice would be heard.”⁸³ This emotion has deep connection with the traditional points of view on human talent: according to Paul Cohen, “in imperial China talent was defined as mastery of the theoretical principles and moral dicta found in the Confucian classics.”⁸⁴

The intellectuals who devoted most of their lives in preparing for the exams would naturally hold the idea that their human talent should be used to make contribution to the prosperity of classics. Around 1905 when the exam system was challenged and doomed, the past-oriented view was challenged at the same time due to the new international situation. In the past, people tended to think that if they understood the Confucian principles and had studied their applications, “as revealed in the dynastic histories, one would automatically be equipped to cope with any situations that might arise in one’s official career.”⁸⁵ For Wang Xitong’s industrial

⁸³ Wang, *Yizhai zishu*, 4.

⁸⁴ Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, 158.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

career, he was required to be a specialist more than a civil official, which did not require him to master specific castigations of knowledge.

Based on communication and contact between Yuan Shikai⁸⁶ and Wang Xitong, Wang's attitude and emotions changed a great deal through participating in politics. In 1909, Wang Xitong first met Yuan Shikai, who was one of the most powerful and famous politician, Wang was deeply impressed by Yuan: "Yuan was just 52 years old, but he looks like a man about 70 years old, because he is so concerned and worried about this nation."⁸⁷ From 1909 to 1912, Wang Xitong worked for Yuan Shikai, and Wang would have the opportunity to be a government official. However, Wang did not support Yuan to be the new emperor, and Yuan gradually lost his trust in Wang. Wang was not radical nor was he conservative: his attitude was relatively gentle and moderate. His second son Wang Zeban 王泽放 joined in the Chinese United League (*Tongmenghui*), and Wang Xitong always had communication with revolution groups.

When Wang was on a larger stage, such as his occupation in Beijing, his points of view towards the conditions of Chinese politics was complicated and beyond sympathetic for adherents of the Qing. He once talked about the appointment of old Qing intellectuals as new government officials: "The president [Yuan Shikai] searched for the former Qing gentry to occupy positions in parliament. Now some young and capable patriots died or fled away, and the central government did not deal with this problem. This former Qing gentry continued to serve for the new government, and some persons who only cared about wealth and position were

⁸⁶ Yuan Shikai, 1859-1916, was a Chinese general and politician. In January 1914, China's Parliament was dissolved, and Yuan had unlimited powers over China's government. See Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1990), 279.

⁸⁷ Wang, *Yizhai zishu*, 160.

employed. It is so hard for China to achieve good management.”⁸⁸ In March 1915, Yuan Shikai declared he would disassemble the parliament, and this event was reported by local newspapers. Wang Xitong thought that because Yuan still tried to use old gentry from the New Policies, his movement would fail. After Yuan Shikai’s plan of restoring the monarchy began, Wang kept his distance politically and focused on the establishment of industries. Wang absorbed the traditional Confucian thoughts in managing his occupation: in a time period and space that created a new condition that never happened in Chinese history, it was dangerous for some intellectuals participating in the construction of the republican government when the realistic society did not correspond to their expectation.

When Wang Xitong paid attention to the modern technologies, he felt the urgency of Chinese people to grasp the cultural and political capital of the Western countries. Describing the attitude of people who objected to the Western Calendar, Wang Xitong wrote in his diary: “It is a kind of obsolete and outmoded mind. The Western Calendar is easy to use and convenient, especially when this new nation wants to have diplomatic relations with other foreign countries.”⁸⁹ Considering Wang Xitong’s participation in politics following Yuan Shikai and his concern for the operation of the nation, Wang did not just identify himself with his family’s native place; his emotion disclosed an elite identification with the province and nation “emerged in the oft-stated concern for nation building.”⁹⁰ Specifically, this elite identification included remaining current with the times.

While Wang Xitong moved freely between different cities, Liu Dapeng expressed another kind of emotion when he was the chairman of the county council in 1913 and the manager of

⁸⁸ Ibid., 181.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 183.

⁹⁰ R. Keith. Schoppa, *Chinese Elites and Political Change*, 9.

Taiyuan Financial Bureau. He was deeply moved seeing several officials from the Qing began to work for the new republic: “Moral courage and integrity (*jiayi* 节义 and *qijie* 气节) was eminent and outstanding in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).”⁹¹ While Wang Xitong appreciated Yuan Shikai, Liu Dapeng referred to Yuan as a disobedient official when Yuan tried to establish his autocratic rule. In Liu's early years, he embraced the Confucian idea of loyalty to the emperor and kindness towards people, believing that a qualified official should be faithful to the country (emperor) and benevolent to the people. He rejected the Qing regime's new policy and regarded it as something detrimental to the country and people. Subsequently, the government of the Republic was founded. Although Liu detested the newborn Republic, he still believed he was a natural representative of the people. So he participated in the provincial parliament and became a member of it. With the changing times, Liu's identity and social impact were increasingly weakened. When it came to the repair of Jin Memorial Temple, the local bureaucratic attacked Liu by advocating that he was corrupt and his secular power gradually overwhelmed Liu's traditional identity and prestige. The weakening of Liu's prestige marked the decline of Confucian ideas in rural society. Despite this, Liu continued to maintain his identity as the people's representative by concerning himself with the suffering of local people and by criticizing the government's tax policy.

Their cultural capital, such as Confucian character of good faith, played an important role, especially in commercial activities. When Liu Dapeng became involved in the coal industry, Liu did not invest by capital, but by his identity and reputation, which attracted people's trust to invest and establish a partnership with him. As a leader in the Chamber of Commerce, Liu also acted as a mediator to deal with disputes among Chamber members or those between members

⁹¹ Liu, *Tuixiangzhai riji*, 320.

and local government. Such activities further perfected his image of a spiritual model. However, taxation mounted as the power struggle led by local warlords increased the people's burden to provide military supplies and the regime of Shanxi Province accelerated its pace of modernization. Moreover, the provincial government supported the development of large coal mines at the expense of small ones, which devastated Liu's investment in his coal mine, forcing him to withdraw from the coal industry and resign from his position as manager in 1930s. With a reduced profit from his investment in the coal industry, Liu gradually turned his attention to farming.

The Confucian emphasis on agriculture balanced Liu's sense of loss to a certain extent, and the agricultural practices offered him a chance to realize his personal conviction. He easily made his conversion between identities of a gentry and a farmer. The rundown rural economy was also an important reason for Liu to attend agricultural work. Even though he still cherished the tradition, those traditional morals had little significance to people around him.

Communication and its emotional effect

The intellectuals' communication with others had an important emotional effect, which assisted in soothing nervous minds and encouraging each other. This kind of communication was based on friendship shaped in a same school or hometown. When Wang Xitong was 23 (1888), he was confident that he could get a degree at this time; yet he still failed, leaving him extremely penitent. He was so disappointed that he wanted to burn all the books for his examinations. His friend Li Minxiu (李敏修) consoled him, stating that if could maintain self-cultivation, regardless of becoming a government official, he would always find a position to survive in this

society. Wang decided to change his attitude and did not just focus on the eight-legged essays. Aside from instructing his students, he spent a lot of time reading classics and history. He inherited the tradition from ancient scholars—doing self-reflection daily—which mirrored his pursuit of Confucianism.

In Liu Dapeng and Wang Xitong's diaries, a lot of information shows their public communication with other intellectuals and their unique community. Outside of daily reading and studying, the most important activity for intellectuals was communication with other gentry. Yet, analyzing and researching classics possessed most of their time. Especially in Henan province, Neo-Confucianism was prosperous in this area: a core collection of intellectuals consisted of a cultural circle to publicize Neo-Confucianism. The difference between Liu and Wang in interpersonal communication was related to region and space. Both of them were traditional rural intellectuals; they had important connection with family land. If the social reform and revolution did not happen, they might have remained local, focusing on protecting the family lineage and their homeland.

Wang Xitong behaved like an urban intellectual when he participated in politics and traveled through different cities. The traditional network that was based on blood relationships, geographical relationships and learning relationships (classmates in academies or those participating in the examinations in the same year) were challenged through the abolition of the exams. Modern networks were based more on common beliefs, common taste, learning and working relationships, knowledge background and cultural taste. Liu remained in Shanxi local region, but Wang left his homeland and expanded his network of communication. Wang Xitong recorded his condolence for one local friend, He Fangwu 何芳五. He expressed with deep emotion how intellectuals' lives can be so fragile and full of sudden changes. According to

Wang, He Fangwu died suddenly after he exhausted his energy on exams. He Fangwu wrote excellent articles but encountered many setbacks. Wang Xitong also mentioned his good friend Li Minxiu several times, recording the important events in their communication. When he was 36, Wang Xitong established Jingzheng Academy, and Wang used both classical knowledge and Western knowledge to instruct classics. These interactions based on the operation of the academy were a large part of the configuration of his psychological world. His early life, similar to that of Liu, portrayed a positive emotion towards seeking self-improvement. They also lamented their own and friends' unsuccessful exam trials.

Different regions and psychological condition

As we saw in the first chapter, intellectuals had different access to information depending on the region they lived in. In addition, the regions they spent time in for most of their lives shaped their psychological world further; even the different regions in one province shaped different behavior among the elites. In one example, R. Keith Schoppa analyzes the political and elite change in 19th century Zhejiang province, and discovers how broad contours of provincial politics were shaped by native place. The elite from core areas was positive in making a large contribution to public affairs, charity, education, and other areas. The elite from peripheral areas devoted themselves to acquiring political positions and having good relationships with county officials to keep their power. The Zhejiang elite can be seen as the lower Yangzi elite, who, in Esherick's words, "epitomized the gentry as degree holders and cultural leaders,"⁹² and also exemplified the gentry's involvement in trade. In contrary, gentry in Henan and Shanxi provinces were North China's elite, who had neither a strong economic base in land and

⁹² Esherick, *Chinese Local Elite and Patterns of Dominance*, 20-21.

commerce nor powerful networks to confront the imperial state. The mind of “village gentry” also has close relation with traditional culture: in the vast regions of Shanxi and Henan without convenient water transport, and hence little commerce, Esherick notes, “local elites seem to have preserved more of the traditional Confucian disdain for mercantile activity.”⁹³ This might explain both Liu and Wang’s behavior in commercial activities, because they did not choose to do mercantile activities spontaneously, and they spent as much as time they could in personal research on local history.

The difference between littoral and hinterland was also an important issue in discussing imbalance between different regions. Paul Cohen points out that “one of the great, unworked themes in modern Chinese history has been the polarity between littoral and hinterland.”⁹⁴ After 1842, the contrast between littoral and hinterland became increasingly pronounced, “the center of gravity of Chinese civilization remained firmly planted in the hinterland.”⁹⁵ Shanxi and Henan provinces are both located in the Northern hinterland, as the original places that produced Chinese civilization. Intellectuals who lived in these provinces were more susceptible to the Confucian culture, and the access of new information was limited. Kenneth Pomeranz’s *The Making of a Hinterland: state, society, and economy in inland North China, 1853-1937* provides comprehensive research and explanation about the economic features of North China.⁹⁶ To evade the mistake of overgeneralizing the situation of different regions in China, it is necessary to note that the economic condition between different cities and towns inside a province was also different. According to Xin Zhang, due to the construction of the railroads, Henan evolved into

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, 241.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 242.

⁹⁶ Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Making of a Hinterland: state, society, and economy in inland North China, 1853-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

“developed,” “underdeveloped,” and “degenerated” areas. In addition to the economic disparity, the rural communities differed: “the communities in developed areas were increasingly open to the outside, but those in underdeveloped or degenerated areas gradually became more isolated.”⁹⁷

The economic development of a town or a region affected the degree of isolation in the hinterland; the uneven development of inland North China created a unique social network pattern.

The unique social network pattern was obvious in these diaries, as anecdotes were a main part of spreading information in hinterland. Philip Kuhn depicts the social network in 18th century China: “Knowledge of regional and national events flowed with goods and people along the trade routes between villages and market towns, between local markets and regional entrepôts... News of opportunities elsewhere, as well as of dangers flowing from elsewhere, were the daily fare of the Chinese villager (to say nothing of the city dweller).”⁹⁸ The “black alley news” was not as clear and concrete as information from an official channel. This kind of social network and relevant economic situation was prevalent, not only in comparatively rich regions in Southeast China, but also in Northern China. Liu and Wang’s diaries include large numbers of descriptions of wars and important national issues. In October 1894, Liu did not know the exact reason that the Qing court frequently deployed military forces and mobilized troops: “Someone from Xugou told me that a lot of soldiers came through it everyday, from the southeast to northeast. The numbers of troops are so large and it is said that the court in Beijing deployed them.”⁹⁹ In November of the same year, he still heard different news of mobilizing troops, and local villagers preparing carriages and uniforms. In December 1894, he began to discern

⁹⁷ Zhang, *Social Transformation in Modern China*, 28.

⁹⁸ Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: the Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), 36.

⁹⁹ Liu, *Tuixiangzhai riji*, 36

uncertain news about the Japanese invasion: “Yesterday I went to the provincial capital, and I heard that the military situation was tense these days. Japanese soldiers went into Liaoning province, and the Qing court was defeated several times.”¹⁰⁰ In January 1895, Liu Dapeng went to Taiyuan County to visit his relatives, when they too mentioned the intense war situation.¹⁰¹ It is obvious that news about the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) was the center of discussion among commoners; however, people in the hinterland could not know the details of it.

Living in the “hinterland” shaped Liu and Wang’s understanding of the modernization process of China. Harrison asserts that “Mongolian independence, the Russian revolution, and the refocusing of both national security concerns and trade from inland northwest China to the southeast coast—together these developments turned Shanxi from a major trading corridor into an isolated and inaccessible province.”¹⁰² Living in isolated and inaccessible towns, it was hard for people to stay aware of the newest political trends in China; in recent times, intellectuals had become peripheral, and “modern political thoughts” became the basis to criticize and reconstruct society.¹⁰³ Even though it is hard to say the books and newspaper during the Hundred Days Reform and the New Policies included very specific and systematic modern political thoughts, the movement of criticizing by using “*dao*” turned to focusing on important and urgent issues. Liu Dapeng was not in the political center of China, and Wang Xitong once worked in Beijing and participated in commercial management; both of them cared for the social trends and news; however, they would not have a systematic philosophy to answer any new problems in China.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 37

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 38

¹⁰² Harrison, *The Man Awakened from dreams*, preface, 7.

¹⁰³ Yu Ying-shih, *Zhongguo zhi shi ren zhi shi de kao cha* (中国知识人之史的考察), (Guilin: Guangxi shi fan da xue chu ban she, 2004), 142.

Conclusion

From the perspective of social transformation, the abolition of the civil service examinations triggered multi-dimensional personal and cultural developments in China. The progress cannot just be defined as a new institution replacing an old one. Exploring personal behavior and emotion can help us better understand the unique cultural ecology of this environment.

The use of diaries was to show the vivid images of intellectual's lives and thoughts during this time period. The writing of diaries, was not more than just records of daily lives, but included their cultural capital. The diaries can be seen as a summary of their emotions and attachment of being traditional intellectuals. Following the genre of scholar-official's literature, they would naturally try to depict their own critics of the current society, and their ideal politics culture.

By studying the life of Liu Dapeng and Wang Xitong, we can map people's fluctuating lives and ideas during changing times. Delving into their personal records and stories allows us to accurately perceive the world of the Chinese gentry and their lives in the countryside. The difficulties and identity anxiety faced by intellectuals could be discussed as well as their spiritual pain and perseverance during China's turbulent transition from a traditional society to a modern one. The experience of one person can help us better understand the painful transformation of Chinese society and China's intellectual groups in the late Qing period.

Liu Dapeng and Wang Xitong's life experiences also prompt us to think about questions of Chinese modernization. How were they aware of the unprecedented challenges confronting China? People nowadays would easily believe that the significance of the abolition of the civil service exams lay in removing comprehensive obstacles from the road of modern transformation; the abolition can be seen as a successful reform that undoubtedly played a positive role in the process of modernization. This was not the perspective of the intellectuals of that time, and

people should not judge this historical change by our current understanding of social development.

Liu and Wang both experienced the changes in China when the nation's regime changed from the Qing court to the Republic. Both of men saw that the Republican government would not create an outcome that would please the intellectuals; but on the other hand, many aspects of society -- diplomatic relations, economic development, and living standards -- deteriorated instead of gaining long-term development. During this process, the Confucian ethics and orders in which Liu and Wang believed were challenged. One of the consequences of the abolition of the civil service examinations was that the composition and meaning of "gentleman" changed. After 1905, "gentleman" or gentry did not mainly represent intellectuals, and the behavior of the gentry changed when moral commitment and Confucian restrictions declined. In the Republican time, the gentry still had various opportunities to serve and blend into this society. From Liu and Wang's life experiences, it is obvious that they basically maintained their social status as gentry, and they were still a part of the local elite.

Liu Dapeng and Wang Xitong had already incorporated the plain view of reforming China, but unlike some intellectuals in the littoral, they were not "modern-spirited,"¹⁰⁴ which was due to their environment: they could not have quick access to the newest information and trends. Liu understood this particular political agenda as being opposed to his own Confucianism, which "looked back to the way of the ancient sages."¹⁰⁵ This means that the change of intellectuals' emotion and minds had close connection with their living conditions. At the same time, they were deeply impacted by Confucianism: the special attachment to Confucianism was one of the most important themes of their diaries.

¹⁰⁴ Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, 253.

¹⁰⁵ Harrison, *The Man Awakened from dreams*, preface, 6.

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