Front. Hist. China 2017, 12(2): 350–355

BOOK REVIEWS

Luo, Zhitian. *Inheritance within Rupture-Culture and Scholarship in Early Twentieth Century China*. Lane J. Harris and Mei Chun Trans. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015. ISBN: 9789004247796. 451pp. $218.00 (hardcover)
DOI 10.3868/s020-006-017-0016-3

"Continuity" and "Change" are two of the fundamental concepts guiding historical inquiry. However, it is also true that, due to the overwhelming preferences of historians to understand the most significant driving forces behind historical transformations, they are generally inclined to approach the ruptures between different stages, unintentionally overlooking the role of inheritance. As a reflection on this trend, Professor Luo Zhitian's collected volume on the multi-layered bases of modern Chinese intellectual transformations from the post-Boxer Rebellion years to the May Fourth New Culture era, *Inheritance within Rupture: Culture and Scholarship in Early Twentieth Century*, makes an important contribution to English academia. First, this volume provides a specific lens through which historians can reconsider the entwined nature of inheritance and rupture in the modern world. Second, the author highlights a unique intellectual context of the continuous scholarly traditions in the late Qing and early Republican era for exploring the emergence of "new" cultures in China. As Luo says, although we tend to find significant ruptures in the anti-traditionalist trend of the "new," typically seen in the New Culture Movement in the late 1910s, its "intellectual arsenals" were indeed provided by late Qing scholars (p. xx). The so-called "new" cultures arose not only from the desires of the new intellectuals to create a new civilization for China, but also from the continuities of the conventional scholarship reformed to treat Chinese and Western learnings as two distinctive totalities in the first decade of the twentieth century.

This volume contains ten chapters, all written as independent articles fifteen years ago. Nevertheless, its central focus is not outdated. While historical research in English academia has been drifted away from public affairs, it continues to occupy the center of Chinese public life in envisioning their own unsettled future. For example, as a significant symbol of modernization, the New Culture Movement continues to provide contemporary Chinese with the intellectual resources to consider how they have interpreted their past and where they should go in the future. As Luo stresses, "the influence of the New Culture Movement is still being felt" today (p. 353), as contemporary Chinese continues to seek a locus for themselves between the conflicts of "cultural China" and "materialist West." If we are to understand how the Chinese historians examine the origins of this intellectual discourse, as claimed by the chief editor of this book series, this significant volume which delves into the deeper layers of the "new" cultures

should not be missed. Over ten chapters, the author explores how the rise of National Learning first initiated the elevation of Western thought in the late Qing for protecting the essence of Chinese nation. The intensified debates on the utility of spiritual or cultural scholarship that followed ultimately caused the marginalization of the Chinese tradition in the early Republican era for materializing a modern civilization, not for the past, but for the future. In the process, ruptures between the "old" and the "new" were not as clear as commonly believed but diverged and converged over multiple issues across time, making inheritance an indispensable part of the New Culture Movement as well as later events.

Luo's book can be divided into three parts. The first includes chapters one and two, which tackle the rise of National Learning during the late Qing in the discourse of maintaining the Chinese essences while adopting Western scientific knowledge. Although Chinese scholars once considered "science" to be identical with the "strange and supernatural" of the Boxers, Luo argues in chapter one that those pursuing the "new" began to adapt it to distinguish Chinese "national essence" from the negative dynastic "imperial learning," causing the beginning of the marginalization of Chinese culture and the elevation of Western thought. As Chinese scholars further sensed national crises over the Western intrusions, many attempted to discover utilities from the "true" national learning, without being warped by more mainstream imperial learning. As a result, we learn in chapter two that the non-canonical classical philosophers were restaged again in the late Qing as the core of Chinese national learning.

Chapters three to chapter seven, examines various intellectual continuities between the late Qing and early Republican era, when Chinese learning began to lose its centrality. Intellectuals hoped to find new ideas to revive China, but still relied on traditional scholarship as a mirror. For instance, as chapter three shows, an intellectual trend appeared in the late Qing to find similarities between the "true" national learning in China and the Renaissance in Western Europe, trying to validate the former by hailing the latter. Other intellectuals examining the Renaissance, reached a different conclusion, arguing that only by rejecting Chinese learning could the country be revived. For them, national learning was fit for display in a museum, not for dissemination to the public, a topic covered in chapter four.

Chapters five to seven illustrate the debates over the relationships between Chinese and Western learning. From the late Qing to the early Republic, some leading intellectuals realized that it was impossible to preserve the essence of the old without changing the way it was studied, which further legitimized the Europeanization of Chinese learning in the following era. With a strong sense of social development influenced by evolutionary theory, the same group also claimed to rejuvenate the old to find ways for better changes in the future.

However, this claim also reminded people of their own past as "barbaric," which they had to abandon for the future. Therefore, having arrived at this ambivalent intellectual crossroads, chapter seven demonstrates that as people increasingly utilized the standards of Western learning to evaluate national learning, they rejected the latter as unsuitable for the new era.

The third part of this book explores utilitarian challenges to Chinese cultural scholarship during the Republican era. Chapter eight turns to the origin of the May Fourth-New Culture discourse on the spirit and methods of "Mr. Science." Even though the new intellectuals rejected tradition, their emphasis on the spirit and methods of science actually derived from the Chinese tradition of prioritizing learning over technique. Therefore, when intellectuals infused the study of humanities with science, their intention was indeed to reorganize national heritage "scientifically" in a Chinese context. Yet, this school provided neither sources of power and wealth, nor a clear scholarly focus by the standards of Western learning it increasingly devalued later on. To be sure, as chapter nine discusses, the scholars who sought to reorganize Chinese national heritage were also utilitarian to a degree. For example, when Hu Shi discusses the use of the vernacular and the evidence-based research of the Dream of the Red Mansion, it was not about the beauty of literature itself, but rather something more essential for the revival of the Chinese nation (pp. 315–18). Yet, the utilitarian attempt to find China's cultural strengths still sounded too trivial for many in the midst of Western and Japanese intrusions in the Republican era. For them, when comparing cultural and material aspects of scientific knowledge, what China really needed was the latter, as Luo argues in chapter ten. The Communist government inherited this trend and popularized it.

In the latter half of the 20th Century, materialism overwhelmed culturalism in the Chinese discussions of science. However, this did not mean that the latter disappeared. Indeed, culturalism in China's modernization process was embedded in the intellectual discourse deep enough that even the turbulent socialist revolution could not dissipate it. When the time came, it re-emerged. Three decades after the end of revolution in the late 1970s, as social and spiritual degeneration is considered a serious result of the materialist development, threatening the Chinese national strength just as a century before, once again people have turned to culture as a useful tool. In this volume, Professor Luo has successfully shown from where the sources of the relevant discussion came. While ruptures always commanded attentions, inheritance never vanished, continuing to influence the Chinese intellectual discourse to this day.

This book is translated and published as part of the Brill's Humanities in China Library series for both experts in China Studies and general readers to understand how Chinese scholars understand their own history. Despite the often-nuanced usage in the original, the translators have made this book readable and intellectually

accessible in English. However, due to the author's multi-layered historiographical discussions from the late Qing to the early Republican era, this book is probably better suited for experts rather than general readers in the West. For better understanding this book, some familiarity with the general narratives of modern Chinese history as well as with some basic terms in sinology, such as "Han Learning," "Song Learning," and "New Text School" is recommended.

Nagatomi Hirayama
University of Nottingham Ningbo China
E-mail: nagatomi.hirayama@nottingham.edu.cn

Matten, Marc Andre. *Imagining a Postnational World: Hegemony and Space in Modern China*. Leiden: Brill, 2016. ISBN: 978900432714 (hardcover), 9789004327153 (e-book). 362pp.+8 illustrations. $162 (cloth).
DOI 10.3868/s020-006-017-0017-0

To some observers, the year 2016 signals the end of an era. Marked by two stunning events—Britain's decision to withdraw from the European Union in June and the election of Donald Trump as the new US president in November—the West appears to turn its back on globalism. After three decades of continuous efforts to dissolve national boundaries for a smooth circulation of capital, labor and products, the pendulum is swinging back to nationalism, if not nativism. Rather than promoting global connectivity, the new trend appears to focus on protecting the home market, domestic industry, and national sovereignty.

At this critical juncture when national interests and parochial concerns dominate political discourses around the world, it is refreshing and reinvigorating to read Marc Andre Matten's book, *Imagining a Postnationalism: Hegemony and Space in Modern China*. The book is refreshing because it reminds us that not too long ago, young and daring thinkers in East Asia tirelessly imagined "a postnational world" to promote international cooperation and transnational solidarity. Their proposed plans might be imperfect or impractical; but they were convinced that no nation could flourish in isolation, and that international cooperation must be achieved through compromise and negotiation. More importantly, Matten's book is reinvigorating because it calls attention to the limitations of the nation-state as a socio-political structure. It highlights an inner tension of this "political container" which is bound by a prescribed territory on the one hand, but is encouraged to expand beyond its borders on the other.