

## 1 Introduction

1949 was a point of no return. To some, the fresh start of a brand new China; to others, unprecedented chaos uprooting them indefinitely both geographically and psychologically. Few contemporary intellectuals considered it yet another dynastic change. Following the downfall of the KMT (Guomindang 國民黨) regime in 1948–1949, the People’s Liberation Army entered cities they took over, impressing people with their discipline and friendliness. Streets and gutters were cleaned, beggars, prostitutes and opium smokers were cleared – the social engineering and totalist control hidden under the idealist reform zeal would surface only years later. Although a new order began to emerge, the catastrophe that the photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson witnessed was in still process. The collapse of the currency forced everyone to scramble for gold. Hundreds of thousands of refugees flooded into the streets of Shanghai, collecting scraps of cotton, pieces of charcoal, and grains of rice to protect themselves from imminent death. Communist-led class struggles were undertaken in the countryside; more than one million landlords and their families were killed following organized attacks and public trials.

Xu Fuguan (Hsu Fu-kuan 徐復觀, 1904–1982), a second-generation modern Confucian (*xin rujia* 新儒家), grieved over the horror of the days:

I saw the self-styled dignity, pride and glory crumble on the ground like dust. I also witnessed numerous simple peasants and ignorant youngsters turned into scapegoats overnight waiting for the last trial, though they knew very little about the times and the world. My relatives and friends, my home and country, were all gone in a sudden, beyond my reach this life.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, Taiwan faced unprecedented intrusion. From Shanghai, Fuzhou, Xiamen, Shantou and Hong Kong, more than one million Nationalist officials, soldiers, landlords, entrepreneurs, merchants and students swarmed onto the island. Looting was widespread and inflation ran wild. The police were everywhere, arresting

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1 Xu Fuguan 1957, xi (written 1956).

suspected CCP-affiliates under martial law.<sup>2</sup> Ruled by Japan for 50 years, the Taiwanese still had a hard time adjusting to Chinese unification since 1945, not to mention the strain of 1949. But they had to bear it all – the Nationalists’ crackdown of the protests of 1947 was too frightening to be easily forgotten. Facing such great upheavals, Chinese intellectuals made different choices. The majority of them stayed in Mainland China, expecting the CCP to usher in a new epoch. Those who fled with Chiang Kai-shek’s 蔣介石 government were not necessarily part of the KMT establishment; many of them escaped to Taiwan simply because they considered the CCP more repellant. As for the independents who loathed both the CCP and KMT, most became destitute refugees in British-ruled Hong Kong; only a few who were well-connected were able to seek asylum in Japan or the USA. The turmoil and its ensuing outcome forced Xu Fuguan to flee first to Taiwan and twenty years later to Hong Kong. Such a “double exile” experience rendered his modern interpretation of traditional Chinese culture more sophisticated and fascinating.

Like his modern Confucian peers Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1909–1978) and Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1993), Xu considered contemporary Chinese societies disappointingly un-Chinese for their lack of Confucian ethos. Regardless of whether in exile or under Mao’s rule, “most Chinese are rootless,” lamented Xu.<sup>3</sup> It seems that “China” as a cultural category had been forced into exile, just as they had been. They therefore assigned themselves the role of the “rescuers of cultural China,” or even the “incarnation of cultural China,” out of a sense of mission. Under such conditions, conflicts continued between the visible fatherland and the invisible cultural heritage, as did tensions between exiles and their host societies. Quite different from Tang and Mou, Xu was a man much concerned with politics and scholarship, more of a public intellectual than an academic, because of his acute sense of reality. The controversies he provoked were hence more intriguing and spectacular. An examination of Xu’s life in Taiwan and Hong Kong can shed light on the exile experience in general and on post-1949 modern Confucianism in particular.

This essay will explore the following questions: How did the 1949 trauma impact on the intellectual life of Chinese exiles? How did they relate the predicament of contemporary China to that of the modern world? And what feedback did they receive from fellow refugees and native hosts? As we will see, Xu sensed that there was

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2 As if that was not enough, the new government launched its currency reform in June 1949, stripping all Taiwanese of their fortune with the new exchange rate, i. e. 40,000 (old dollar): 1 (new dollar). See Wu Zhuoliu 1987, 248–255.

3 Xu Fuguan 1984, 11 (1981).

an enormous "crisis of man" (*ren de weiji* 人的危機) in the 20th century. The reflections on the 1949 trauma caused Xu to believe that humanity (or human nature, *renxing* 人性) – understood in idealistic, Confucian terms – was in great danger around the world. Fighting Chiang Kai-shek's authoritarianism, Mao's totalitarianism and the liberals' iconoclasm, Xu was admired for his moral courage yet was controversial in his cultural conservatism. Despite the strong backlash, this Confucian democrat continued his enterprise unwaveringly, embodying in his exile an alternative Chinese way of life, critical of both communism and, presumably, Western social modernity. However, whether such new Confucianism could be universally appealing is a question still to be examined.

## 2 "Crisis of man"

### 2.1 Xu Fuguan's Life before 1949

There is no doubt that 1949 was a turning point in Xu Fuguan's life. Yet, if it had not been for what he had gone through before, the 1949 trauma would not have been so strong a catalyst in his intellectual metamorphosis. Xu was a talented, short-tempered man with a penchant for challenging authority. Born in 1904 into a poor family in a destitute village in the Hubei province, Xu's identification with the rural life distinguished him from most Chinese intellectuals' urbanity. He received Chinese classical education from age eight to twenty-four, but Lu Xun's iconoclastic works as well as the revolutionary air of the Northern Expedition<sup>4</sup> stirred his aversion to traditional Chinese culture. He was further converted to socialism by reading Kawakami Hajime 河上肇 (1879–1946),<sup>5</sup> though antipathy to the brutal class struggle kept him from joining the CCP. During a two-year period of study at a Japanese military academy, Japan's invasion of Manchuria as well as the school's discrimination against Chinese students intensified his nationalism. Having dropped out of the academy for leading a protest movement, he returned to China to start his 14-year military career. In spite of his ef-

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4 The Northern Expedition (1926–1927) was a military campaign led by the Nationalists and the Communists to fight imperial powers and their local warlord agents. Leftists in the campaign also tried to mobilize peasants and laborers to launch a social revolution at the same time. The socialist aspiration failed though, as the rightists overcame the leftists in 1927.

5 Kawakami Hajime was the first communist theoretician in Japan. He taught economics at Kyoto Imperial University but was expelled from the university and jailed for four years for his communist affiliation. His interpretation of Marxism had a great impact on Chinese and Taiwanese intellectuals.

forts, his public service was marked by a series of frustrations; the greatest foe he faced was not the force of Japanese, but the lax and factional nature of the KMT.<sup>6</sup>

In the last phase of the anti-Japanese war (1937–1945), Xu was sent for 5 months to Yan'an, the CCP's wartime capital, as a Nationalist liaison counselor. His insightful analysis of the CCP impressed Chiang Kai-shek so much that he soon became the Generalissimo's most trusted staff officer. His aspiration to "save China by reforming the KMT" failed however;<sup>7</sup> the KMT was too corrupt and factious to launch either land reform or party re-organization amid ceaseless warfare. As his political zeal dampened, he met the ingeniously eccentric Confucian master Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885–1968). Xu was uneasy with Xiong's metaphysical approach, yet Xiong's unconventional interpretation of Confucianism dissolved Xu's hostility to traditional Chinese culture over two decades. Xiong's promotion of socialism and democracy also accorded with the direction Xu desired for his country. But those potential inclinations – populism, nationalism, socialism, Confucianism, and democracy – would not have coalesced into a coherent set of ideas if not for the sea change of 1949. Xu had no choice in 1949. As Chiang Kai-shek's confidant in charge of collecting information about the CCP, he could not but follow Chiang in fleeing. The problem was that, although he disagreed with the CCP's violent class struggle, he was deeply sympathetic to the socialist cause.<sup>8</sup> More intriguingly, he withdrew from the KMT soon after he arrived in Taiwan, reinventing himself from a soldier/politician to a dissenting scholar/polemicist. Xu's case demonstrates that the 1949 quandary that confronted all Chinese was far more complicated than a simple "CCP vs. KMT" polarity.

## 2.2 Soul-searching about the 1949 Trauma

Ashamed and tormented, Xu started his examination of the 1949 sea change immediately after he left China. In great agony, Xu came to the conclusion that the nature of the 1949 catastrophe was essentially a "crisis of man".<sup>9</sup> Instead of explaining the trauma in social or economic terms as most analysts did, Xu gave the trauma a moralistic-intellectual interpretation, which contrasted with his early socialist belief. By stressing the ethical dimension of the disaster, he unwittingly gave the nationalist issue certain global, universalistic implications. He argued that the science-oriented modern European culture tended to objectify and materialize human existence, resulting in the preva-

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6 Xu Fuguan 1984, 396 (1981).

7 Xu Fuguan 1980c, 314 (1959).

8 Xu Fuguan 1984, 404–406 (1981).

9 Xu Fuguan 1984, 348–349 (1951), 391, 418 (1981).

lence of utilitarianism, realism, and unfortunately, communist materialism.<sup>10</sup> As the nature of modern warfare had shifted from national confrontation to cultural war, the Comintern tried to exterminate the history and culture of all countries it conquered, thus China became the greatest victim.<sup>11</sup> To invigorate China's spiritual life, he assigned himself a mission impossible in the following three decades: Interpret Confucianism in humanist terms and combine it with democracy, so that China could stand both as a humane society and a strong nation in the modern world.

To him, the culprit who had brought about this "crisis of man" was first and foremost communism. A secret admirer of the CCP's nationalistic and socialist causes, Xu nevertheless strongly condemned the slaughter they carried out in the name of the "class struggle". To begin with, the Communists defined each person solely in terms of their material background regardless their innate human value. They used primitive violence to deal with conflicts among different classes; no human interaction could exist except in mutual suspicion.<sup>12</sup> That is why after eradicating so many "class enemies" – former KMT officials, landlords, intellectuals, capitalists – Mao continued to launch "perpetual struggles" within the CCP.<sup>13</sup> Most chillingly, in order to wage the war on "counter-revolutionaries," Chinese Communists even encouraged people to attack their own families; cases of young people killing their parents in the mass trial were particularly appalling.<sup>14</sup> Xu could not but conclude that the Communists' denial of humanity was a crime against both the Chinese culture and human civilization.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, losing the battle with the CCP proved that there was also a fatal moral weakness in the anti-communist campaign. Xu's answer to the "who lost China" question was the ineptitude of the KMT regime itself. Xu knew well enough how the Nationalist Army lagged behind the People's Liberation Army in consolidating mass support, but he was even more upset by the spiritual laxity widespread among the military leadership. Despite superior weapons supplied by the USA, they lost the war due to the lack of a sense of public duty.<sup>16</sup> Xu's indictment of the KMT politicians was even

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10 Xu Fuguan 1984, 343–344 (1951).

11 Xu Fuguan 1980c, 264–269 (1949).

12 Xu Fuguan 1984, 346–351 (1951).

13 Xu Fuguan 2001a, vol. 5, 148 (1952).

14 For example, a girl asked the Government to execute her mother, because the latter was accused of being a spy; a young man fainted when he was ordered to kill his father, but a Communist cadre picked up his knife and killed them both. See Xu Fuguan 1984, 346–351 (1951).

15 Xu Fuguan 1984, 346–351 (1951).

16 Xu Fuguan 1957, 13–25 (1950).

harsher than his critique of the military. Led by Chiang Kai-shek's brothers-in-law, the KMT government allowed corporations to monopolize wartime finances and thus crushed the middle class with runaway inflation. Excluding any critique stemming from the sphere of society, the KMT factionalists used politics as an insider game for the purposes of looting. It is thus unsurprising that the middle class ended up siding with the CCP.<sup>17</sup>

What can be said then about Chiang Kai-shek's role in this tragedy? With some reluctance, Xu conceded that Chiang's strong leadership was indispensable to the demoralized exiles for the time being; yet he boldly claimed that Chiang was also to blame for the collapse of the Nationalist regime. In contrast to the corruption of his men, Chiang's most serious weakness was his egocentrism and his manipulation of *realpolitik*. Chiang viewed himself as the living embodiment of the revolutionary cause, which made his leadership biased and self-serving. Chiang's long-term incumbency also shaped his political style; self-interest and sophisticated calculation always prevailed over ideals and principles.<sup>18</sup> Xu reached this conclusion based on first-hand experience. To counter the KMT's factionalism before the retreat to Taiwan, Xu suggested that Chiang Kai-shek make concessions to the Vice President Li Zongren 李宗仁, the man who advocated peace talks with the CCP and who forced Chiang to relinquish the presidency early in 1949.<sup>19</sup> Xu regarded his non-partisan patriotism as the best expression of his loyalty to Chiang, yet Chiang deemed his men's personal fidelity to him as the only proof of their patriotism. Chiang had the uninformed Xu send a letter approving Li Zongren's nomination of a premier and, at the same time, ordered other confidants to bribe legislators to veto the nomination. The mutual trust between Xu and Chiang thus collapsed.<sup>20</sup> If the leader was not honest and sincere, then how could the people trust him, questioned Xu. As the great statesman Lu Zhi (754–805) of the Tang dynasty said, although the ordinary people seem to be simple-minded individually, they can make a wise judgment collectively. They know what the ruler tries to hide from them; they show their support only if the ruler is trustworthy.<sup>21</sup> Without the quality of benevolence, righteousness, civility and wisdom, a ruler will never win over the hearts of the people, least to say to call for solidarity.<sup>22</sup> Xu dared to suggest that Chiang resign his

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17 Xu Fuguan 1957, 251–258 (1949).

18 Xu Fuguan 2001a, vol. 6, 35–37 (1950).

19 Xu Fuguan 1980d, 44 (1976).

20 Lei Zhen 1972, 189.

21 Xu Fuguan 1957, 114–115 (1953).

22 Xu Fuguan 1980c, 277–281 (1954).

chairmanship of the KMT in order to be a non-partisan leader of all the people, but Chiang did not take his advice.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to the blunders of the KMT elite, Xu found an unlikely target to attack, namely Chinese intellectuals as a whole and liberals in particular. While most historians lamented the victimization of modern Chinese intellectuals by both the KMT and the CCP, Xu nevertheless insisted that they had their share of responsibility for the calamity of 1949,<sup>24</sup> and he even had the audacity to argue that they deserved the CCP's subsequent purge.<sup>25</sup> Himself being an intellectual, why did he make such strong indictments? Actually, given Xu's complicated background as a soldier/politician/intellectual, his harsh critique of the political and military leadership of the KMT establishment amounted to deep self-criticism, as did his negative appraisal of the intellectuals. To reach the heart of this issue, Xu began with a scrutiny of Chinese intellectuals' "historical character". He admitted that Confucian moral conviction had shaped the general outlook of Chinese men of letters, negatively as well as positively. For example, without a tradition of "knowledge for knowledge's sake," most traditional Chinese intellectuals were inclined to manipulate the standards of right and wrong, because they had no respect for objective knowledge and no training in conceptual abstraction. Besides, the Confucian optimistic assumption about human nature expects every-one to achieve moral autonomy through self-discipline, but people tended rather to lapse into self-indulgence. Xu argued that although Confucianism had its flaws, politics played a greater role than Confucianism in molding the toady trait of Chinese scholars, especially the examination system of imperial China. Since Chinese men of letters had no material foundation to make a living other than political parasitism, the monarchy could lure and deform the literati through officialdom, turning them into shameless beggars at the emperor's disposal. Thereby these parasitic literati ended up being society's greatest burden that doomed China to dynastic cycles.<sup>26</sup> It was not until the encounter with the West that China found feasible solutions to such quandaries. Science and democracy, the catchwords of the May Fourth Movement of 1919, promised to supplement the invisible, subjective Confucian morality with an objective rule of law and with tangible, measurable knowledge. In a more practical sense, science could expand the scope of social life to provide Chinese intellectuals with career options other than politics, while

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23 Xu Fuguan 2001a, vol. 6, 35–37 (1950).

24 Xu Fuguan 1980c, 268–269 (1949).

25 Xu Fuguan 1959, 274 (1963).

26 Xu Fuguan 1957, 178–190 (1954).

democracy was expected to bring about popular sovereignty and cure Chinese intellectuals of their spiritual paralysis.<sup>27</sup>

Disappointingly, power politics and endless wars left little room for democracy and science to fulfill their promise. Not only did the KMT – the majority group of intellectuals in modern China – betray the pursuit of science and democracy, even liberal leaders (such as Hu Shi 胡適) failed to mobilize themselves for those causes. As compromising spectators to contemporary politics and society, their brand of liberalism appeared to be an “attitude” without substance. They maintained a personal liberal lifestyle, rather than relate their liberalism to a public agenda – it is thus no wonder they could not compete with the Communists when it came to earning social popularity.<sup>28</sup> Xu’s judgment of the causes for the fall of Nationalist China is not always fair. But being a participant of a whimsical epoch, Xu could not afford to reflect on the 1949 trauma simply as a cool spectator or a detached historian. Rather than a balanced description of the past, his reflections served him as self-guided psychological therapy as he painstakingly groped for direction. This was not objective causation analysis aimed at nonchalant readers, but rather subjective, emotion-charged accounts designed to appeal to his fellow exiles. He inflicted upon liberal scholars an undue indictment simply because he chose as his final identity that of a non-partisan intellectual, aspiring to take up the goals they failed to achieve, i. e. promoting science and democracy and creating a “new world culture”.<sup>29</sup>

### 2.3 Faith in Humanity

So, if the nature of the 1949 calamity was the “crisis of man” as was revealed in the CCP’s negation of humanity, the KMT’s ineptitude and the liberals’ feebleness, then the most urgent challenge in the post-1949 era would be the affirmation of humanity in idealistic terms, i. e., improving human moral quality. Confucianism started to enchant him at exactly this point.<sup>30</sup> Amidst deep existential crisis, Confucius’ *Analects* gave his restless soul more consolation than anything else. In return, his experience also helped him to interpret the classic in a new light. He found in the *Analects* a dynamic process for man’s perpetual moral struggle. The seemingly inconsistent definition of *ren* 仁 actually denotes the various stages of one’s self-betterment. Triggered by silent anger or a strong sense of shame, the process starts with soul-searching introspection urging one

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27 Xu Fuguan 1957, 192 (1954).

28 Xu Fuguan 1957, 425 (1956).

29 Xu Fuguan 1984, 343 (1951).

30 Xu Fuguan 1984, 418 (1981).



to be a "real human being". Only when one attempts to fulfill his moral self can he gradually liberate himself from biological constraints and assume responsibility for helping others to achieve the same goal.<sup>31</sup> By stressing the ultimate "union of self and others," somehow the man of *ren* 仁 under Xu's description appears zealous and self-important, just as Xu himself felt.

A comparison between modern Confucian and existentialist responses to the turbulent times reveals interesting contrasts. Themes such as failure, dread, and death that preoccupied so many Western existentialists were real life experiences for Xu as well; it was he who coined the term "sense of predicament" (*youhuan yishi* 憂患意識) to depict the mentality of early Chinese thinkers. But whereas some existentialists (for example, Kierkegaard) confronted pessimistically the dark side of man's inner life<sup>32</sup>, modern Confucians appeared much more optimistic in times of chaos. Xu believed that the "sense of predicament" resulted from an awakening to his own responsibility towards the world, and he believed that he would eventually solve the quandary because he was morally autonomous.<sup>33</sup> Although it sounds naïve, Xu did indeed practice what he preached. The philanthropic impulse and other-regarding commitment continued to stimulate his concern for the public, in sharp contrast to the alienated, estranged reaction to society on the part of the individualistic-oriented existentialists (such as Kafka and Camus).

Time and again Xu stressed the word *xin* 信 – confidence in oneself and trust in each other – as the key to solidarity and survival. It never occurred to him that he might turn to religious belief – also a *xin* – to solve his restiveness. Unlike many of his fellow exiles, he never searched for religious grace to rid himself of painful uncertainty and achieve peace of mind. Rather, this "humanist" (*renxingzhuyizhe* 人性主義者)<sup>34</sup> always tried to achieve serenity by appealing to the inner moral vitality he believed was latent in each human being. Xu's Confucian – or more precisely, Mencian – belief in the innate goodness of human nature was systematically proposed in his work, *The History of the Chinese Philosophy of Human Nature* (*Zhongguo renxing lun shi*, 1963). He argued that the philosophy of human nature is both the start point and end point for an understanding of China as a nation. Drawing a comparison with the Christian idea of Original Sin, Xu agreed that human beings are indeed almost animal-like in terms of their instincts and desires; what distinguishes them from other creatures is nothing more

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31 Xu Fuguan 1957, 311–312.

32 Kaufmann 1957, 12.

33 Xu Fuguan 1963, 20–21, 31.

34 Xu Fuguan 1957, 421.

than an element of moral potential. But even such a minimal amount of potential for good matters a great deal. By cultivating and expanding this potential conscientiously, one can turn oneself into a “worthy man”.<sup>35</sup> Everyone is equal in regard to this moral capacity. This moral potential which is conferred by Heaven and is as divine as Heaven, should be realized in everyday social interactions rather than in seclusion or in an occult life.<sup>36</sup> For Xu, such philosophic anthropology “verifies” the dignity of human beings, making their mutual trust possible and providing them with infinite hope for “upward” moral advancement. Furthermore, while the stress on “sin” has created chasms between Christians and pagans, Catholics and Protestants, for example, often resulting in bloody purges in the name of God, the Confucian idea of “*ren*” (benevolence) is able to provide a basis for universal human love.<sup>37</sup> Although Xu’s contrast between the “history” of Christianity and the “theory” of Confucianism was inappropriate, his message was clear: Through his own moral effort, man can be confident in the meaning of this world; there is no need to look for an ultimate value elsewhere.<sup>38</sup> Man, not God, is in command of his moral life.

### 3 Multi-faceted “China” on Americanized Taiwan

#### 3.1 Rethinking National-Building: Three Alternatives

As Xu observed, exile intellectuals in Taiwan and Hong Kong were divided into three groups: the KMT, liberals, and cultural conservatives,<sup>39</sup> different politically, economically and culturally and in their ideas for nation-reconstruction. Initially both the liberal and cultural conservative campaigns were sponsored by the KMT as part of its anti-communist endeavor. Yet somehow the KMT ended up as the primary target of both the liberals and cultural conservatives, whereas mutual attacks between the liberals and cultural conservatives were just as fervent (the philosopher Yin Haiguan 殷海光 was Xu’s strongest rival).

Attributing the fall of the Mainland to intellectuals’ demand for democracy, the KMT reinforced authoritative leadership in Taiwan with a Leninist party re-organization.<sup>40</sup> Though it created an “economic miracle” with a mixture of planned

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35 Xu Fuguan 1963, ii, 165–169.

36 Xu Fuguan 1963, 117–121.

37 Xu Fuguan 1971, 27–28 (1961).

38 Xu Fuguan 1963, 118, 186.

39 Xu Fuguan 1957, 435–436 (1956).

40 Xu Fuguan 1957, 435 (1956).

economy, land reform and free market, it also inflicted widespread "white terror" on the island over four decades. Culturally speaking, it paid only lip service to the revival of traditional Chinese culture; what it really coveted was Western-style modernization.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, exiled liberals came together under the banner of the magazine *Free China* (*Ziyou Zhongguo* 自由中國) to demand freedom in both political and economic spheres. Led by Hu Shi and Lei Zhen 雷震, these individualists inherited the legacy of the May Fourth Movement by promoting science and democracy, and by denouncing traditional Chinese culture as an obstacle to the nation's modernization and westernization.<sup>42</sup>

The third campaign was represented by the magazine that Xu founded, *The Democratic Review* (*Minzhu Pinglun* 民主評論). Compared with the liberals' admiration of *laissez-faire*, they were inclined to democratic socialism because they cherished "equality" more than "freedom". Calling themselves humanists and idealists, Xu and other cultural conservatives identified with the May Fourth goals of science and democracy but opposed the movement's iconoclasm. Instead, they aspired to bridge the gap between China and the West and to base liberal democracy on a solid cultural ground.<sup>43</sup>

### 3.2 Multi-faceted "China"

Despite Xu's efforts, he won little sympathy from the people of the island. Many native Taiwanese secretly applauded Xu's criticism of the KMT, but they were suspicious of the feasibility of a Confucian democracy. Confucianism to them was almost the synonym of autocracy – the "Chinese culture" embodied by the KMT was proof. Xu and the *Democratic Review* failed to convince the Taiwanese public that "Chinese culture" and Confucianism could be understood differently. It is therefore little wonder that the popularity of the liberal and iconoclastic *Free China* was more evident among Taiwanese intellectuals. To understand the complicated interaction between expatriates and their hosts, we must look briefly at Taiwan's history. Doomed by its position as an in-

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41 Xu Fuguan 1980d, 146 (1962).

42 However, liberals of *Free China* were distinguished in their strategies in dealing with the KMT. Yin Haiguang (1919–1969) was harsh on the government's oppression of freedom, whereas Hu Shi (1891–1962) put more emphasis on "tolerance" than "freedom". Lei Zhen (1897–1979) was less sharp intellectually, yet he was broad-minded enough to attempt to incorporate both Chinese exiles and native Taiwanese in an opposition party, though this enterprise failed in 1960.

43 Xu Fuguan 1957, 435–436 (1956). Cultural conservatives of *The Democratic Review* did not always agree with each other either. Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895–1990) and Mou Zongsan, for instance, were more skeptical of democracy than Xu.

tersection between China and the Western Pacific, the history of Taiwan since the 17th century was full of abrupt disruptions. It had undergone various stages from an Austro-nesian tribal society, Dutch/Spanish settlements (1624–1661 and 1626–1642, respectively), a maritime kingdom of Koxinga (1661–1683), a frontier of the Qing Empire (1683–1895), the first colony of Japan (1895–1945), a recovered territory of the Republic of China (1945–1949), to an anti-communist bastion still called “Republic of China”. The mixture of various cultures made Taiwan both colorful and complicated. Waves of settlers from southern China (especially during the Qing era) characterized the island with the values of immigrant society, such as entrepreneurship, pragmatism, resilience, and lawlessness. They also brought to Taiwan traditions of agriculture, despotism, Confucianism, an examination system, patriarchal clans, rites and ceremonies, Buddhist-Daoist faith, foot-binding, opium-smoking, coloring this island with a strong Chinese tint. Although Western influences were minimally present, it was not until Japanese colonial rule that large-scale modern institutions and infrastructures appeared on the island. The Japanese launched major reforms in education, transportation, finance, industry, healthcare, city planning and hydraulic engineering, backed by an extensive police force. Despite ideals of efficiency and incorruptibility, the whole colonial enterprise was nevertheless exploitative in its purpose. Some Taiwanese intellectuals resisted colonial authoritarianism with Western-style nationalism, socialism, and liberalism, which they had learned from Japanese translations, but others considered a refined traditional Chinese culture as the best bulwark against Japanese colonialism.

However, when Taiwan was re-united with Nationalist China in 1945, the cultural gap between the modernized, “Japanized” natives and the war-worn Chinese newcomers was too evident to be ignored. Worse still, the carpet-beggar style of the take-over government reminded local people of the Japanese colonialists’ monopoly over resources.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, widespread anger stirred up by a police incident led to the outbreak of an island-wide insurrection in 1947. The KMT government sent troops from China to crush the rebellion and killed thousands of rebels, many of them intellectual elites. Thereafter nostalgia for Japanese rule and antagonism to traditional Chinese culture (especially Confucianism) became the common denominator among many Taiwanese intellectuals, although unconsciously Chinese customs and rituals continued to dominate their everyday life.

The arrival of Chinese exiles in 1949 further complicated the picture of “China” on this island. Although the KMT claimed that Taiwan was part of China and that Chiang Kai-shek’s government was its legitimate ruler, privately refugees clearly knew

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44 Lai, Myers and Wei 1993, 140–156.

they were outsiders, if not intruders. Compared with various diasporas of the 20th century caused by political purges, for example, the Jews fleeing from the Holocaust, the Cubans emigrating after Fidel Castro Ruz's rise, and the Southeast Asians escaping from communist rule, Chinese exile to Taiwan was unique in that it saw the exodus of an entire central government and its army, not just the emigration of dispersed individuals or organizations. This fact allowed the Nationalists to impose strong force on the Taiwanese natives to make minority rule possible. Against such a background, the "Chinese culture" that the exile intellectuals brought with them was complex and confusing. The KMT tried to manipulate the repressive elements of Confucianism to its own advantage. The liberals denounced traditional Chinese culture as backward and authoritarian.<sup>45</sup> Xu and his cultural conservatives attempted to kindle the humanist, idealist core of Chinese culture, trying to prove that it was more akin to democracy than to despotism or fascism;<sup>46</sup> but their efforts were dwarfed in a milieu which linked Confucians - whether old or new - with the conspirators of the ruling power. As a corollary, Xu's objective assessments of Confucianism in the 1950s gradually gave way to a more defensive stance in the 1960s. As the iconoclasts' attack on "Chinese culture as a whole" grew harsher, Xu insisted more and more that the "original" Confucianism had been distorted in the past and misunderstood in the present.

### 3.3 Americanized Taiwan

The dominance of American influence added complication to the cultural scene in Taiwan. Xu once complained: "In urban Taiwan where intellectuals gather, there exists only arrogant Americanism and stealthy Japanism. Scarcely can one find any trace of Chinese nationalism".<sup>47</sup> The universalistic claim of Xu's modern Confucianism was hence fused with nationalistic fervor.

The omnipresent American impact on Taiwan was the result of the Cold War. From 1951 to 1965 the US invested immense amounts of resources to secure Taiwan as a bastion in the Western Pacific to block the spread of communism. American aid for economic, military, and cultural programs was so successful that Taiwan became the first graduate among less developed countries to acquire economic independence through American assistance.<sup>48</sup> While the US and the ROC mutually benefited from this extensive cooperation, mixed feelings among the two sides also arose in the process.

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45 Xu Fuguan 1957, 534–536 (1957).

46 Xu Fuguan 1957, 436 (1956).

47 Xu Fuguan 1980c, 225 (1958).

48 Jacoby 1966, 10–11.

As the American historian Nancy B. Tucker complained, “manipulation of the United States” was fundamental to the Nationalist foreign policy, despite the American predominance in size, resources, population and power. The United States was able to set broad parameters for acceptable behavior in military, economic, and political arenas, but the Nationalist Chinese were exceedingly adept at maneuvering within these constraints to meet their needs.<sup>49</sup> In Xu’s eyes, however, America actually promoted dictatorship in Asia in the name of anti-communism in spite of its own democracy. Furthermore, its presence eclipsed Asian intellectuals’ nationalism; those who insisted on national independence would be charged as communists. But how could the pursuit of democracy in Asia take root in its own soil without the stimulation of nationalism?<sup>50</sup>

Younger generations of people in Taiwan disagreed with Xu. As Mark Mancall stated in *Formosa Today* in 1963, Taiwan was a deeply divided society ethnically and generationally. Younger “Mainlanders”<sup>51</sup> under thirty had experienced the anti-Japanese war and the civil war in China, but spent their formative years in Taiwan. Unlike their nostalgic fathers, they recognized the hollowness of the official “ideology of return” to the Chinese Mainland. Similarly, younger natives shared little cultural experience with older Taiwanese. They knew little about early intellectual traditions on the island, nor did they have the same nostalgia for Japanese rule as their elders did.<sup>52</sup> Under the essentially egalitarian educational system after 1949, both Mainlander and Taiwanese students were required to familiarize themselves with the geography and history of traditional China. But Confucian aphorisms, Sun Yat-senism and Chiang Kai-shek idolatry provided them with little intellectual inspiration. They were not allowed to identify with Taiwan either. Taiwan’s culture was considered lowbrow, provincial and marginal compared to that of the Mainland; the study of the island’s recent past – the period since the Japanese rule – was taboo. Self-imposed cultural breaches on the island forced most youngsters to look for intellectual input elsewhere. Similar to the Nationalist government’s dependence on US aid for its defense and economy, the literary youth of the 1950s–1960s also looked to the US for stimulation. Graduate study in the US provided an opportunity for the cream of the generation to flee from the politically repressive, culturally stifling and economically impoverished environment.<sup>53</sup> So important

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49 Tucker 1994, 3.

50 Xu Fuguan 1980c (1958), 210–216.

51 The term “Mainlanders” (*waishengren* 外省人) denotes “people from outer provinces,” i. e., the Chinese moving into Taiwan after 1945, as opposed to natives who were born in the province of Taiwan (*benshengren* 本省人).

52 Mancall 1963, 23–28.

53 Overseas travel was not allowed until 1979, let alone legal migration.

was this opportunity, that a young man committed suicide after failing the "studying abroad exam," leaving a request to have his ashes carried to America, the paradise of this world.<sup>54</sup> Understandably, despite the tough life that confronted them in the US, few came back to Taiwan after they finished their studies.<sup>55</sup>

Aside from physical departure, "inner migration" was another option. From time to time, intellectual trends in the US – most of them originating in Europe – were enthusiastically followed in Taiwan, with a time lag of one or two decades. Young elites with philosophical propensities shifted from the logical positivism of the 1950s to existentialism in the 1960s; in place of Bertrand Russell and A. J. Ayer, Nietzsche, Kafka, Camus and Sartre became the cultural heroes of the agonized youth. For those who devoted themselves to art and literature, modernism was the ethos of the day. Championing "horizontal implantation" rather than "vertical succession"<sup>56</sup>, new poets widely adopted images and techniques learned from Joyce, Yeats and T. S. Eliot; works of Thomas Wolfe, D. H. Lawrence, Faulkner, and Virginia Wolfe provided models for short story writers. In aesthetic circles, students of art quickly went through post-impressionism, fauvism, cubism and finally arrived at what a young painter Liu Guosong 劉國松 considered the climax of modern art, abstract painting, which was popular in the US in the 1950s.<sup>57</sup> The populism, humanitarianism or realism that preoccupied so many conscientious men of letters during the May Fourth Movement of 1919 and the "Taiwan Culture Association" of the 1920s found no echo in the younger generation.<sup>58</sup> Those causes had been tagged as "communist" and access to left-leaning writers was blocked by the authorities. Although social modernity was not fully developed in

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54 Xu Fuguan 1980d (1959), 231.

55 According to a statistics, less than 7% of them returned between 1950 and 1963: Mancall 1963, 32. An estimate from 1968 said that the students who left for the US constituted the top 15% to 20% of their graduating classes, and less than 5% of these ever returned to live in Taiwan. See Appleton 1970, 55.

56 Yang Zhao 1994, 102–103.

57 Ni Zaiqing 1994, 111–113.

58 Aiming at a cultural enlightenment movement under the Japanese rule, the "Taiwan Culture Association" gathered more than one thousand Taiwanese intellectuals when it was founded in 1921. Aside from publishing journals, organizing seminars and summer schools, it also established newspaper reading clubs, launched modern drama movements, showed educational motion pictures, and delivered lectures island-wide. However, its explicit Chinese/Taiwanese nationalist aspiration irritated the Japanese colonial government, whereas the collision of class backgrounds among its leaders led to its split in 1927. The organization was closed down by the police in 1931; see Lin Bowei 1993.

1950s Taiwan, somehow the obscurity of modernism suited the needs of the literary youth because it provided them with a form of cryptic protest. Turning the media or techniques of expression – color, lines, sounds and movement – into the aesthetic subject, modernism overawed general readers and confused the censor. What a shock to them when Xu claimed that modern art was a “symbol of destruction,” and communism its final destination (see below).

### 3.4 The Cultural Agenda of a Humanist/Nationalist

Xu's contemporary concerns were not limited to politics alone. After the KMT's arrest of Lei Zhen and the ban on *Free China* in 1960 because Lei had organized an opposition party, the pursuit of democracy became an impossible dream. The chilling effect forced Xu and other intellectuals to turn their attention from politics to culture, a less sensitive area. But the oppressive atmosphere pushed them to politicize most of the cultural issues they touched, as exemplified in the “debate on abstract painting” (*chouxianghua lunzhan* 抽象畫論戰) and the “controversy over the culture of China and the West” (*zhong xi wenhua lunzhan* 中西文化論戰). Once again, the Confucian perspective of this particular Nationalist, not to mention his over-assertive manner, made him more enemies than friends. But these polemics are interesting because they reveal Xu's ambivalence toward Western modernity.

Xu started the debate over abstract painting by accident after his visit to the Museum of Modern Art in Kyoto, Japan in 1960. He found the “dark, ugly and chaotic” expression of modern art horrible and disgusting. A great admirer of Chinese landscape painting and Western romanticism/realism, he was particularly upset by the “negation of the natural image” and “unleashing of irrationality” on the part of Dadaism and surrealism. Such a “symbol of destruction” was a manifestation of the illness of modern world and artists' reaction against it, he believed. Angry at the mechanical and materialistic manner of modern life, a few anguished, sensitive souls isolated themselves from the society, letting go of their primitive impulse to produce such art as a protest against science and capitalism, which led to the two world wars.<sup>59</sup> Although Xu was sympathetic to the agony of modern artists, he disagreed with the way they expressed their anger. He further maintained that there was certain connection between modern art and communism, as both were critical of social modernity. Not only did modern artists' denial of rationality and traditional values echoed that of communist materialism in theory, in reality it would pave the road for communism as well. To linger in darkness and chaos without any direction is, after all, too frustrating; this is why iconoclast mod-

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59 Xu Fuguan 1971, 265 (1960); Xu Fuguan 1966a, viii (1966).



ern artists would eventually tend towards communism because it promised a brave new world.<sup>60</sup> Xu indeed had no intention of accusing young artists of being "reds". When he wrote the article "Symbol of Destruction (*huimie de xiangzheng*)"<sup>61</sup> he was not even aware that there were young artists experimenting with modernist techniques in Taiwan. However, Xu's speculation that "modernist art will lead to communism" jeopardized young artists' lives in the period of white terror. It is unsurprising therefore that young artist Liu Guosong (1932–) immediately moved to defend the budding modernist adventures of his generation, and Xu's ignorance of the distinction between avant-garde and abstract painting became the target of ridicule.

To convince his readers, Xu spent more time studying art and later wrote *The Spirit of Chinese Art* (*Zhongguo yishu jingshen*, 1966). In his view, if the nihilism of modern art was symbolic of the "crisis of man" in the modern West, then Chinese moral aesthetics would provide a valuable remedy to it. He believed that the dichotomy of "individual vs. society" and "subjectivity vs. objectivity" characteristic of modern art could be balanced by Chinese spirit of art. In accord with the Confucian idea of human nature, what underlies a masterpiece is not the artist's conflict with the society, but his sympathy with people's suffering and his sense of social responsibility based on a universally shared humanity.<sup>62</sup> The problem of over-rationality in modern times must be rectified by virtue, not by overthrowing rationality and virtue altogether, as the Dadaists and surrealists did.<sup>63</sup> Or, through the Taoist practice of "fasting of the heart" (*xinzhai* 心齋) and "ridding of oneself" (*zuowang* 坐忘), one can dissolve bias and desire to achieve a "selfless" (*wuji* 無己) state of mind, integrating subjectivity with the object to produce incredible work of art. The Taoist union with nature can also alleviate the tensions generated by machines, corporate organizations and industrial rationalization.<sup>64</sup>

After much criticism of Western modern artists (such as Baudelaire, Breton and Picasso),<sup>65</sup> Xu turned to their Taiwanese counterparts. Intriguingly, whereas Confucian-style "virtue" was his prescription for the Western world, his advice to the Taiwanese was just the opposite. Rather than encourage them to be critical as he was of Western modernity, somehow he advised the younger generation in Taiwan of the 1960s to

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60 Xu Fuguan 1971, 217 (1961).

61 Xu Fuguan 1971, 261–266 (1960).

62 Xu Fuguan 1966b, 84–87 (1958).

63 Xu Fuguan 1971, 213, 265 (1960, 1961).

64 Xu Fuguan 1966a, viii, 70–75, 126–128 (1966).

65 Xu Fuguan 1971, 213 (1961); Xu Fuguan 1980e, 251, 256 (1961–1962).

embrace modernity instead. He argued that, in contrast with the modern West's trouble with over-rationalism and materialistic culture, the weakness of traditional Chinese culture is precisely a lack of scientific rationality and material civilization. To make up for these inadequacies, Chinese intellectuals need to uphold reason and science, rather than blindly imitate some modern Western artists' denunciation of rationality.<sup>66</sup> On the one hand, he was suspicious of modernity as well as its critics in the West; yet on the other hand, he was aware of the necessity of modernization in contemporary Taiwan. Such double standards were too complex for his contemporaries to understand. Needless to say, just as his formula for Confucian democracy, his moral aesthetics attracted little following.

Compared with the modern art controversy, another major contention in which Xu became involved was more far-fetched in appearance, yet more personal in essence. The decade-long "controversy over the culture of China and the West" was ignited in November 1961 by Xu's severe criticism of the liberal Hu Shi, then President of the Academia Sinica. Hu gave a speech at an international conference indicting the East for its lack of spirituality. Hu maintained that in order to pave the way for the development of science, his fellow Asians must throw away their unfounded pride in the supremacy of their spiritual civilization. Instead, with foot-binding customs and caste systems, they have to concede that there was little spirituality in the Oriental culture, and that the science and technology of Western civilization was by no means materialistic, but rather highly idealistic and spiritual.<sup>67</sup> In response to Hu's speech, Xu furiously declared that Hu was a shame of the Orientals and a shame of the Chinese who knew little about China and the West; Hu made such absurd statements in front of Westerners because he wanted to conceal his ignorance and secure his status.<sup>68</sup> Hu did not bother to read Xu's article, but his young followers in the *Literary Star* magazine (*Wenxing zazhi* 文星雜誌) quickly seized the challenge. When Hu suddenly passed away two months later, the line of battle extended even further. To defend Hu's position, young Mainlander Li Ao 李敖 (1935–), editor of the *Literary Star*, called for "wholesale Westernization" to cure China's malaises; anyone with the suggestion of a selective approach or cultural syncretism was charged as ultra-conservative or mentally retarded.<sup>69</sup> Li's radical attacks on the entire older generation provoked counter-attacks from both liberals and conservatives. No matter which stance they took in this debate, "Chinese culture" was

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66 Xu Fuguan 1971, 228 (1964).

67 Hu Shi 1962, 39–40.

68 Xu Fuguan 1982, 164 (1961).

69 Li Ao 1965, 3–16 (1962).

always interpreted in a holistic manner, whereas "the West" invariably implied the USA. Before long, the controversy turned into personal assaults, and then a series of lawsuits, and finally mutual accusation of communist connections.<sup>70</sup> Not surprisingly, the KMT became actively involved banning the *Literary Star* in 1965; the arrest of Li Ao was just a matter of time. In retrospect, Xu agreed with Yin Haiguang, his rival/friend and Li's mentor, that this controversy was "the greatest stupidity" in Taiwan. The few exile intellectuals who remained outspoken after Lei Zhen's arrest had all been seriously bruised by this battle. The prolonged name-calling war exhausted all the energy and social impact of these intellectuals, rendering them even more impotent under the KMT's authoritarian rule.<sup>71</sup>

Tagged as an emotional ultra-conservative or a sectarian "Boxer" by some,<sup>72</sup> Xu's attitude toward the West was not as xenophobic as it seemed. Before he fled to Taiwan and concentrated on the study of Chinese classics, he had spent almost twenty years extensively browsing Japanese translated Western works on economy, economic history, social ideas, philosophy, historiography, literature and art, even while he was still a soldier. He found those works as profound and inspiring as the Chinese classics; he even owed his research insights on Chinese literature and art to the reading of Western masterpieces. So, he did not oppose the West out of a sense of provincial nationalism.<sup>73</sup> What Xu found fault with was not "Western culture" as a whole, but the racial superiority of colonialism, and the irrational counter-culture movement of the sixties which worshiped the libido. Actually, Xu believed the "shadow of the West" that clouded Taiwan was not cast by Americans, but by the islanders themselves. Without devoting any time to the research of either Chinese or Western cul-

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70 Li Ao not only denounced Chinese culture as a whole, he also launched fervent attacks on political and academic establishments in Taiwan. Depicted by Li as an audacious person stealing the throne of the "orthodoxy," Xu was but one target among Li's many subjects for ridicule. Outraged by Li's wanton attacks, Xu called Li a "mad puppy". He thus got involved in a series of libel cases with Li, like many other intellectuals. Knowing they were common in the pursuit of liberal democracy, Xu and Li almost reconciled during the trial. Yet when the KMT authority ordered the ban of *Literary Star* magazine in late 1965, Li was even more antagonistic towards those "mad old dogs" (including Xu). Xu won the case in 1967, yet Li filed another suit against him. Eventually Xu was forced to leave Taiwan in 1969, and Li was jailed from 1971 to 1976. It seemed that the KMT took advantage of the mutual conflicts among intellectuals to tighten its control over the island. See Lee Su-san 1998, 422–428.

71 Xu Fuguan 1980d, 178 (1970).

72 Ju Haoran 1965, 7.

73 Xu Fuguan 1980c, 61–62 (1969).

ture, toady intellectuals tried to flatter Americans by denying their own culture. Those superficial Westernized fashionmongers actually obstructed Taiwan from absorbing genuine Western culture, just as those greedy rascals who gained advantage from a promotion of state Confucianism were in fact hampering the revival of Chinese culture.<sup>74</sup>

Xu's fellow countrymen did not heed his advice on how to deal critically with different components of "Chinese culture," neither did they pay attention to his analytical treatment of "Western culture". The logic of polarization widespread in the Cold War era made balanced judgment impossible. The tendency to personalized public discussion and publicized personal tension in Taiwan in the 1960s made things worse. Xu himself exemplified such tragic and ridiculous tendencies. In 1969 he was expelled from Tunghai University, an American Christian college where he had taught traditional Chinese literature and the history of ideas for 14 years. His tension with the Christian administration as well as his clash with a colleague Liang Rongruo 梁容若 (1904–1997) became so notorious that the university decided to fire him.<sup>75</sup> It turned out that the KMT was manipulating the politics at Tunghai behind the scenes; it even managed to block all job opportunities to force Xu to leave Taiwan.<sup>76</sup> With great fury and dismay, Xu headed for Hong Kong to begin his second exile. Not a collective tragedy as in 1949, exile this time was Xu's personal melodrama.

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74 Xu Fuguan 1980c, 62–63 (1969).

75 The friction between the two professors of Chinese literature started with departmental affairs. Due to Liang's continuous attacks via anonymous letters, tapes and pamphlets, Xu decided to fight back. Liang (also a Mainlander) won an official Japanese award for an essay criticizing China in favor of Japanese culture during the Sino-Japanese war. When Liang received another lucrative prize in 1967, Xu publicly denounced Liang as a traitor. Xu's Confucian identity had long made the Christian administration of Tunghai University uneasy; his Chinese nationalism also seemed to upset the American sponsors of the college. Xu's conflicts with Liang Rongruo gave the administration a good excuse to get rid of him (and Liang) in 1969. See Xu Fuguan 1980e, 331–333 (1969); Lee Su-san 1998, 400–406.

76 Xu Fuguan 1984, 15 (1980). After Xu was forced to retire, the Commercial Press, National Taiwan University and Fu Jen Catholic University contacted him to offer jobs, yet all offers were withdrawn because of some unknown intervention. See Xu Fuguan 1993, 285 (1969).

## 4 Double Exile: The Hong Kong Phase

### 4.1 In the British Colony

The first couple of years in Hong Kong were a period of difficult transition for Xu. Hong Kong was a Chinese society under the British rule. He was still an expatriate, yet he no longer belonged to the privileged ruling minority as he did in Taiwan. The political authority in Taiwan was obnoxious in its constant intervention in cultural activities, whereas the colonial government and businessmen in Hong Kong were completely indifferent to cultural activities. Through his teaching at the New Asia Institute (Xinya yanjiusuo 新亞研究所) and commentaries written for the *Overseas Chinese Daily* (*Huaqiao ribao* 華僑日報), his political and social influence on Hong Kong as such was much more limited than in Taiwan. But eventually the transition bore fruit. He had left Taiwan an impetuous man constantly engaged in all types of controversies, worthy and unworthy, but his quieter life in Hong Kong was conducive to his intellectual maturity. The openness of Hong Kong liberated him from the oppressive environment of Taiwan; the free circulation of information helped him to complete another major work, *The Intellectual History of the Han Dynasty* (*Liang Han sixiang shi*, 1974–1979). But the most important advantage that Hong Kong provided for Xu was not only freedom from the oppressive “Free China,” but re-attachment to the real China. Hong Kong was close to Chinese territory, yet British rule left ample space for independent thinkers to speak their mind. In the predominantly pro-CCP literary circles of Hong Kong, Xu took a less beaten path.<sup>77</sup> Writing in support of the well-being of billions of silenced Chinese, he established himself as the most daring critic of Mao Zedong 毛澤東 and the Gang of Four even while they were still in power. If it had not been for his exile in Hong Kong, these criticisms would not have reached China; and without his unquestionable Chinese patriotism and humanism, his harsh critique of the communist authority would not have been taken so seriously by Mainland Chinese people.<sup>78</sup>

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77 Xu Fuguan 1980a, iii-iv (1979).

78 According to a letter from a student of Xu, Chak Chi-shing (4/9/1980, unpublished), Mao intended to invite Xu to China for a talk after Zhou Enlai's death, but Xu declined. In 1980, Deng Xiaoping sent Liao Chengzhi to Hong Kong to invite him to China, yet Xu declined once again, because he did not want to discuss the issue of China's unification with Taiwan. When the study of Confucianism received official endorsement after 1987, Xu was listed as one of the ten modern Confucians who should be studied posthumously.

## 4.2 Critique of Maoism

Based on information he gained from propaganda films and documentaries, Xu was initially favorably impressed by the CCP's infrastructure construction, its populism and nationalism, and even by its thought reform program.<sup>79</sup> But as more facts about the Cultural Revolution emerged, this secret admirer of Mao became extremely shocked: "Directly or indirectly, this shock affects every aspect of my spiritual life. My conscience cannot bear it any longer".<sup>80</sup> The Confucian idea of human nature led him to criticize the Marxist class struggle around 1949; once again, it served for him as the major yardstick to renounce the "crisis of man" arising from Maoism after 1969. In Xu's analysis, Mao succeeded in the destruction stage due to his romantic vision and tactful manipulation of people. But Mao's romanticism led him to believe that, with the magic wand of coercion, he could speed up the transition from socialism to communism by building up the communist "relation of production" to boost "productivity," a formula in opposition to the orthodox Marxist assumption of "productivity decides relation of production". In order to carry out his radical line, Mao smashed his more moderate comrades – Peng Dehuai 彭德懷, Liu Shaoqi 劉少奇, Lin Biao 林彪 and Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平 – and brutalized the people by endless purges. The much-hated Jiang Qing 江青 was not the chief architect of the crime, but rather Mao's tool to implement this policy.<sup>81</sup> Most terrifying according to Xu was Mao's Cultural Revolution, which used all possible measures in the torture of Chinese people, crushing not only their bodies but also their self-respect and sense of dignity. By stripping the whole population of their basic virtues, destroying all Chinese cultural heritage and purging people of honesty, skills and knowledge, Mao had eradicated an entire culture from China.<sup>82</sup> Mao's aim was to break the Communist bureaucracy's dominance over the populace; he failed to realize, however, that only through democracy and the rule of law, not by violent mass movements, could people free themselves from the CCP's totalitarian rule and regain their spontaneity.<sup>83</sup>

When the devastating earthquake occurred in Tangshan, Hebei, in 1976, Xu commented on the suffering of the people with a reference to Han history. To counter the power of autocracy, rational-minded Han Confucians could not but resort to the superstitious correlative of cosmology to warn against the evils of rulers. Xu exclaimed

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79 Xu Fuguan 1993, 292–295 (1969).

80 Xu Fuguan 1980a, iv (1979).

81 Xu Fuguan 1980a, 111–118 (1976).

82 Xu Fuguan 1981, 145–146, 238, 251 (1979–1980).

83 Xu Fuguan 1981, 186–187 (1979).

that what China currently needed was not only geological science to predict earthquakes, but also something non-scientific to link natural disasters to the faults of the "son of Heaven": Mao should take this earthquake as a warning from Heaven to correct himself.<sup>84</sup> Coincidentally or not, Mao died forty-five days later and the Gang of Four was arrested soon after. But Maoism – or at least the worship of Mao – remained the ideological pillar to which his successor Hua Guofeng 華國峰 clung. The post-Mao CCP continued to praise Mao for bringing the party to power in 1949. Yet having evaluated Mao's subsequent destructive "state-building" enterprise, Xu insisted that eradicating Maoism was the first priority for the CCP to save China from chaos.<sup>85</sup>

Apart from Mao's personal eccentricity, was there no correlation between Maoism and traditional Chinese polity/society/culture? Was there no structural flaw inherent in Chinese culture to blame for the evils of the Cultural Revolution and the blunders of the Communist system? Yes; Xu admitted that the rural background of most Chinese Communists was to blame for their poor performance after the CCP took power. In Xu's view, most Western communists were urban-based and open to modern culture; one had to acknowledge their analytical depth, even if one did not approve of their radicalism. Thus the development of Western communist parties entailed a certain degree of stability. In contrast, the rural Chinese communists had to face constant life-and-death threats in the course of their expansion, so they valued the strategies of struggle more than any orthodox doctrines. Since such strategies tended to be ambiguous and unstable, they could not but resort to political purges to settle the problems caused by contradictory interpretations of the Marxist canon. Moreover, their village background seriously handicapped them in an understanding of the city and modern culture; hence they could not appreciate any form of culture other than science and technology.<sup>86</sup> In addition to the CCP's unique rural background, Xu also conceded that some faults within Confucianism may indeed have contributed to the current predicament. For instance, the long-lasting Confucian familism resulted in political feudalism and the abuse of power by the emperor's close associates, such as eunuchs then and the Gang of Four now. Furthermore, despite its people-oriented intentions, Confucianism created neither a political system forcing the ruler to be responsive to the will of people, nor a measure to guarantee the peaceful transition of political power.<sup>87</sup> So Confucianism did have its share of responsibility for the chaos in contemporary China. In general,

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84 Xu Fuguan 1980a, 128–130 (1976).

85 Xu Fuguan 1981, 183–184 (1979).

86 Xu Fuguan 1980a, 20–23 (1971).

87 Xu Fuguan 1980c, 243 (1972); Xu Fuguan 1980a, 147–148 (1976).

however, Xu insisted that the monstrous regime of Mao was unprecedented in Chinese history. Against the argument that traditional “feudal despotism” was accountable for contemporary calamities, Xu contended that the current “new feudal despotism” based on Marxist-Leninism was even worse than the old one; Communists inherited only the evils of the traditional society while destroying everything worthwhile in it.<sup>88</sup> If “feudalism” was defined as a system of “hereditary status” and its residues continued throughout imperial China, the “new feudal despotism” of Mao superseded the old one in cruelty. First, whereas traditional despotism had no solid theoretical basis, the new despotism was equipped with foreign-exported theory and organization. Second, yeomen and household businesses had enjoyed passive freedom and spontaneity in production in the past, but they were no longer allowed to survive under Mao’s regime. Third, the Imperial examination system, court supervision and the reclusive life helped reducing the repression of the old feudalism, yet the hereditary system of the new society was so pervasive that no one could escape from its control.<sup>89</sup> To attribute the evils of the Communist society to Confucianism or a traditional social structure was unfair. After all, Confucianism never advocated any theory of a differentiated human nature, and the traditional social structure had already been destroyed by the CCP.<sup>90</sup>

So, what gave Mao such great power, and what produced the new feudal despotism in China? “Marxist-Leninism” was Xu’s resolute reply.<sup>91</sup> The existence of social classes and the injustice thus involved were indeed undeniable facts worldwide. Yet while most social/political/cultural systems regarded the variance in wealth or power as something “external” to be solved by law, tax or democracy, Communists considered the class difference as something “intrinsic” to man to be eradicated by extinguishing entire members of the evil class. That was why CCP members enjoyed extensive privileges over laborers and peasants in the hereditary hierarchy of the Communist society, whereas the offspring of landlords, capitalists and former KMT men suffered greatly because of their blood. From the founding of the Communist regime through the Cultural Revolution, the purge and enslavement of class enemies had never stopped. Even in Deng’s reform era, CCP cadres and the working class still believed that they were entitled to life-long franchise due to their class background. The danger and chaos resulted from such new feudal despotism remained something that Deng reluctant to cope with.<sup>92</sup>

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88 Xu Fuguan 1980a, 181 (1977); Xu Fuguan 1981, 143–144 (1979).

89 Xu Fuguan 1981, 244–254 (1980).

90 Xu Fuguan 1984, 276 (1981).

91 Xu Fuguan 1984, 276 (1981).

92 Xu Fuguan 1981, 249–251 (1980).



### 4.3 Confucian Democracy as the Prescription for Post-Mao China

If Marxism-Leninism-Maoism proved to be disastrous for China, what was the feasible alternative to rescue China from the abyss? Just as he attempted to save China through saving the KMT in the mid-1940s, his patriotism made him speculate about the possibility of saving China by saving the CCP in the mid-1970s, making it “a strong Communist party without communism”.<sup>93</sup> Compared with the cultural conservative agenda of the 1950s in Taiwan, there were changes as well as continuity in Xu’s advice on China in the late 1970s.

First and foremost, the historian part of Xu denounced ideological politics of any sort. Anticipating Deng Xiaoping’s motto of “practice is the only criterion of truth” expressed in 1978, Xu suggested to the CCP leaders that they should temper their controversy over conceptual slogans immediately after Mao’s death and Jiang Qing’s arrest; instead, Xu advised them to be pragmatic and responsible for people’s welfare.<sup>94</sup> When some of his students suggested initiating a new “speculative system” to fill the spiritual void of post-Mao China, Xu insisted that no matter how brilliant they might be, all speculative theories are likely to bring about disaster when put into practice. History did not move as logic does; it has to compromise due to the limitations and distractions of reality. “Do not sacrifice man for God; do not sacrifice man for ideology,” he stressed again and again.<sup>95</sup> The post-1949 situation in China reinforced his belief in democracy and Confucianism. Rather than sets of ideological spell, to him both were practical and concrete ways of living essential for the alleviation of mass suffering. Echoing what he had said to the KMT leaders in Taiwan in the 1950s, his reiteration of Confucianism and democracy was aimed at the cadres of the CCP in China this time. He realized that the PRC would not turn into a Western liberal democracy overnight; yet he hoped that senior CCP cadres (including Deng Xiaoping himself), who had deeply impressed Xu by their devotion and who also underwent great humiliation in various political movements, would undergo some soul-searching and correct their party’s errors.<sup>96</sup> In his view, to fix the two most serious syndromes – that is, rampant bureaucracy and moral nihilism – in post-Mao China, two prescriptions were needed. Western democracy and the rule of law was the remedy for the first set of problems, whereas traditional Chinese values would be the key to curing the current “crisis of man”.<sup>97</sup> But the redressed senior cadres

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93 Xu Fuguan 1981, 92 (1980).

94 Xu Fuguan 1980a, 146 (1976).

95 Xu Fuguan 1984, 272 (1981).

96 Xu Fuguan 1980a, 261 (1979).

97 Xu Fuguan 1981, 87–91 (1980).

disappointed Xu greatly. After they came to power once again, they tried to compensate for the hardship they had endured in the village with terrible corruption in the city, and thus they turned out to be the most threatening enemy to Deng's reform and democracy movement. The reformer Deng Xiaoping let him down as well: Deng's suppression of the movement for democracy and his heavy punishment of Wei Jingsheng 魏京生 in 1979 "cut the only tie that the regime may have with the whole world". The "four principles" that Deng Xiaoping reiterated in 1980 – socialism, dictatorship of the proletariat, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and party leadership – were to Xu contradictory to Deng's own pragmatism. Nine years before the crackdown of the Tiananmen movement in 1989, Xu already felt uneasy about Deng's major failings, the failings shared by most modern Chinese politicians: No understanding of democracy and freedom of expression, no sense of history and culture.<sup>98</sup>

The CCP did try to tackle the "crisis of man". From Xu's point of view, however, the goals they set for establishing a "spiritual civilization" were either too superficial or too lofty. What was the inner coherence among the inventory of "civility, politeness, sanitation, order, and morality"? What sense did it make to advocate extraordinary altruism, which was impossible for most people to practice? To him the promotion of unusual virtue often lapsed into great lies and extreme selfishness, like the behavior of Mao Zedong himself. Instead of promoting sage conduct, Xu proposed the idea that "being normal is great" (*zhengchang ji weida* 正常即偉大). Rather than oscillate between the extremes of "exceptional virtue" and "extraordinary anomaly," the ethic of "being normal" provides the majority of people with a reliable way of life, a sensible starting point for further progress. "Being normal" may imply "inertia" or "conformity" to some; but Xu contended that one has to pass the test of "awakening" – this meant becoming aware of one's innate potential for good, recognizing the difference between man and animals – in order to begin a morally decent life. The path of life is never static, so the effort involved in being a normal man is always dynamic, as revealed in *The Analects* of Confucius.<sup>99</sup> But Xu realized that not everyone can achieve moral self-awakening as Confucians had wished. Therefore, to institutionalize Confucian values

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98 Xu Fuguan 1981, 193–197 (1979), 208–216 (1980).

99 "Being normal" is a starting point, from which one can choose to move upward infinitely until one ascends to sagehood, or he can move downward endlessly until he becomes the equivalent of a beast. For the upward trajectory, starting from the basic virtues of "being sincere and truthful in one's word" (*Analects* 15:6) and "being sincere toward others" (*Analects* 13:19), one can "aspire to be established himself, seek also to establish others" (*Analects* 6: 28), to "fulfill the virtue of benevolence as if it is his own duty" (*Analects* 8:7), and even to "deem the cosmos and all creatures as one unity". See: Xu Fuguan 1984, 242 (1981).

(e.g. benevolence, righteousness, civility and wisdom) for everyone to emulate in society, democracy would be the best political system, as he reiterated.<sup>100</sup>

It was hard for people in China to appreciate Xu's non-partisan patriotism, just as it was difficult for the people of Taiwan to understand Xu's conditional approval of Western modernity. Yet Xu found no ambiguity in his political or cultural stance. He cared more about the Chinese nation (*minzu* 民族) – its people, land and history – than any political power or regime (*zhengquan* 政權). All political powers and leaders are transitory in a nation's history.<sup>101</sup> The rights and wrongs of any party are to be judged by its contribution to the nation, not vice versa.<sup>102</sup> To applaud the current power regardless of its betrayal of the people's welfare is not "patriotic" at all.<sup>103</sup>

#### 4.4 Yearning for home

Finally, a China in the process of reform opened its door to the world once again. Many nostalgic Mainlanders who returned to the re-opening China in the 1980s were shocked by the miserable situation of their homeland after thirty years of communist revolution. Such heartbreaking experiences pushed them to re-consider the definition of "home". They found that the native soil they missed so much had changed beyond recognition, whereas the strange land – Taiwan, Hong Kong or the USA – in which they had resided for over three decades had now become home. They might maintain a cultural identity as "Chinese," yet politically they identified themselves as Taiwanese, people of Hong Kong, or American citizens.<sup>104</sup> This was not, however, the case with Xu Fuguan. The sense of rootlessness became more and more pervasive as he entered his late seventies. He never went back to China, although the CCP leaders issued invitations; the China which still worshiped Marx, Lenin and Mao was not the mother country he would identify with. His two-million-word works signaled his groping for a spiritual homeland. "I am a night traveler hoping to find my way home in the darkness, although in reality I do not have any home."<sup>105</sup>

More intensely than ever, he was concerned about the issue of where to spend the rest of his life. He knew very well that he would not be able to survive in Mainland China. Hong Kong was merely his temporary residence in spite of its freedom and

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100 Xu Fuguan 1984, 230–248, 263, 265 (1981).

101 Xu Fuguan 1980a, 264 (1979).

102 Xu Fuguan 1984, 253–254 (1981).

103 Xu Fuguan 1980d, 118 (1977).

104 On the issue of Mainlanders' gradual identification with Taiwan, see Corcuff 2004, 143.

105 Xu Fuguan 1980a, ii (1979).

convenience. He would like to live in Taiwan, but the KMT authorities made trouble whenever he applied for a visa. Needless to say, his freedom to read, write and publish would be seriously restricted on that island. Three of his children lived in the US, a place where most Confucian ideals were adhered to unwittingly, as a student once suggested;<sup>106</sup> but the traffic problem bothered him because he could not drive. Moreover, how could he address the issue of China as his perception of his country grew dimmer and dimmer after living in a foreign society?<sup>107</sup> Before he could come to any conclusion, he died of stomach cancer in Taiwan during a therapy trip in 1982. Several years later his ashes were carried back to be buried in his hometown of Hubei, China. After an odyssey of fifty years, the exile finally returned home.

## 5 Conclusion

After fleeing to Taiwan with the Nationalist government in 1949, Xu Fuguan had carried “China” with him ever since. Physically China was beyond his reach, yet intellectually and emotionally his attachment to it grew stronger still as time went by. To Xu and other cultural conservatives, the Communist takeover of China in 1949 not only created millions of refugees, but also put the “genuine Chinese cultural heritage” in exile. This opposition was more than simply political dissent; they rejected the Communist regime in 1949 on the grounds of the CCP’s denunciation of the traditional Chinese way of life. Consequently, the preservation of the endangered cultural heritage was what made their exile meaningful. As the distance of time increased, the exiles collectively created an idealized “cultural China”. Since such an imagined version of “China” was beyond anyone’s reach, themselves included, they could never recover from a perpetual sense of loss.

On the “who lost China” question, Xu blamed not only the corruption of the KMT, but also the impotence of the intellectuals. He closely examined the military and political aspects of the blunders, yet he considered the moral/intellectual dimensions to be more critical.<sup>108</sup> He concluded that underlying the sea change of 1949 was an unprecedented “crisis of man” affecting the whole of human civilization and, therefore, revitalization of humanity seemed a task of the utmost importance to him. “Confucianism” became appealing to this former iconoclast in the turmoil of 1949. Its faith in

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106 Cao Yongyang 1984, 272, 323.

107 Xu Fuguan 1984 (1981), 56, 99.

108 Xu Fuguan 1980c, 268–269 (1949).

innate human goodness stood in sharp contrast to Communist materialism and class struggle; its dynamic process of moral self-betterment could provide the destitute exiles with a spiritual guide to rebuild their lives from tatters. In the meantime, "democracy," defined by him as a belief in the potential of man for good, as well as a set of fair procedures to accommodate conflicting political ideas, was to him the best cure for the political chaos of modern China. However, Xu's proposal of a "Confucian democracy" met with strong opposition in Taiwan from his fellow exiles, the authoritarian KMT and the iconoclastic liberals as well. His cultural conservatism faced even more challenges from native Taiwanese ambivalence toward Chinese culture. Finally, the political and cultural dominance of the US compounded the difficulty of building a Confucian-style modern society in Taiwan. Xu's mixed feelings towards Western modernity were revealed in the debate about abstract art and the controversy over China and the West.

Leaving for British-ruled Hong Kong, Xu continued yet another chapter of his odyssey. This "double exile" made his émigré experiences even more intriguing. No longer an influential member of the privileged ruling minority as he was in Taiwan, the Hong Kong episode not only broadened his intellectual horizons but also strengthened his ties with the "real" China, though ironically through harsh critique of Maoism and the Cultural Revolution. Once again he considered the "crisis of man" to be the most serious problem confronting post-Mao China, and Confucian democracy most pertinent in treating the nation spiritually and politically.

Xu's life-long struggle shed light on the exile generation in general and on modern Confucianism in particular. In spite of clashes and maladjustment, exiles in both Taiwan and Hong Kong made the culture of the two islands richer and deeper. In contrast to the forced unanimity of Communist China under Mao's rule, the two islands offered alternative ways of life for Chinese all over the world. Those alternatives eventually provided clues for Communist China to help solve its quandary three decades later.

However, Xu always considered himself a loner fighting a losing cause. Indeed, Xu's project of Confucian democracy has not yet been fulfilled in any society. For example, though the popularity of Confucianism seems to be on the rise, capitalism and authoritarianism mark the public life of Mainland China. Chinese-controlled Hong Kong continues to enjoy freedom without democracy, as under the British rule. Taiwan is proud to be the first democratic society in Chinese history, but its democracy is based on the mobilization of Taiwanese nationalism, not on Confucianism. Still, by relating the predicaments of the 20th century to the "crisis of man" and prescribing the Confucian idea of human nature as its cure, Xu represented the modern Confucian response to the challenges of both Communism and Western modernity. As the contemporary Chinese intellectual historian He Zhaotian states, Xu is seen as a "canonized figure" (*jingdian renwu* 經典人物) widely respected today by Chinese intellectuals across different disciplines. He shows that Western-style modernization is not the only approach

to modernity; his critique of political radicalism and cultural iconoclasm is inspiring to a post-Cultural Revolution generation; his insight into the impact of politics on scholarship, and his call for academics to be diligent and innovative, and for statesmen to be morally and politically responsible, is fundamental to the pursuit of knowledge, democracy and moral autonomy.<sup>109</sup> With the revival of Confucianism in recent years, China may start to find its way toward what the modern Confucians may call “home,” albeit with another key element, democracy, still missing.

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109 He Zhaotian 2006, 203–208.

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