

“New Methods to Nourish the People”: Late Qing Encyclopaedic Writings on Political Economy

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The chapter on “Political Economy,” *Jingji* 經濟, in *Explorations into the Origins of Western Learning*, *Xixue tanyuan* 西學探源, written in Chinese by the Japanese official-turned-educator and political writer Okamoto Kansuke 岡本監輔 (1839–1904) and published in 1901 by the Commercial Press in Shanghai, offers a curious explanation of the importance of this new scientific discipline.¹ It begins with a straightforward definition:

The gist of political economy is about the investigation of the common wealth of all people with the aim to increase it, so that the people can have land and property and live decent lives.²

經濟要旨。在於察生人公益。而增殖之。使民有恆產。養生喪死而無憾。

It goes on with a statement about the relative value of work and an observation on the injustice that seems to be apparent in the working of economic systems:

Without the merit of their work, people cannot make a profit and become rich. Moreover, because everybody’s work is different, the distribution of wealth is not equal. *But when the work is the same and there still is a difference between rich and poor, whose fault is this?*³

人無勞功。則不能興利致富。而勞功不同。所以貧富不均也。勞功既同而猶有貧富不同者。是誰之過也。

¹ Okamoto Kansuke 岡本監輔, “Jingji di shiyi” 經濟第十一 [Ch. 11: Political economy], in Okamoto Kansuke, *Xixue tanyuan* 西學探源 [Explorations into the origins of Western learning] (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1901), j.3: 12b–24b. On the trajectory of the term *jingji* with the meaning of “political economy” or “economy,” see Huang Ren’s comment translated in the study by Milena Doleželová-Velingerová in this volume.

² Literally: “. . . and fulfill their duties to their parents while they are alive and give them a proper burial when they have died, so that they have nothing to regret.” This and all further translations are mine. Punctuation in the Chinese text follows the original publication.

³ The part in italics has emphatic punctuation in the original.

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No answer to this question is provided. Instead, the principle of Western liberalism is introduced, together with the Smithian axiom that private gains were not just legitimate but even contributed to the common good; alternative economic models are acknowledged but regarded skeptically:

Westerners advocate liberty. If one engages in nongovernmental trade, even if one makes hundreds of millions, nobody will question it. They say the wealth of a single person is the wealth of an entire township; the wealth of a single family is the wealth of an entire nation. There may be people who think this is wrong and wish to make everything common property, but I have never seen that they had a feasible strategy.

泰西人主張自由。在政府外貨殖。雖至億萬。莫誰何者。謂一人之富。即一鄉之富。一家之富。即一國之富也。人或非之。欲使天下人共有財產。未見其有必濟之策也。

This principle of the public benefit of private wealth is illustrated by the success story of Cornelius Vanderbilt (1794–1877). He is introduced as an American merchant who, though from a poor family, made a fortune in the transport business. It is not ruthlessness, as we might assume, but diligence and perseverance that is described as the key to his success. At the end of his career he administered the nation's railways and was the richest man in the world. But most importantly, his wealth enabled him to become a benefactor of the public and a highly honored man. The donation of a ship worth 800,000 dollars to his government was acknowledged by thank-you speeches in parliament and brought him broad recognition. This is a textbook story of the “from rags to riches and from there to philanthropy” theme. A comparison with the private wealth accumulated by the lords of the feudal age and withheld from the public, is meant to demonstrate how much better Vanderbilt was than those and how wealth could bring social prestige:

He was like a feudal lord with his private landholdings and “private people” [i.e. serfs], but much better than those. I do not know whether this peace lasted forever and whether the common people were regretful about it or not. *The relationship between wealth and honor is such that they need each other, not a single hair is tolerated between them.*⁴

是猶封建大諸侯有私土私民而尤優者也。未審永世太平庶民無憾否。富之與貴相須。其間不容一髮。

The paragraph ends with a slightly opaque reference to Qin Shihuang, the First Emperor of Qin, indicating the political implications of these ruminations.

I am afraid that people in later generations may put forth the case of Qin Shihuang, who usurped the Six Kingdoms, [and wonder] why people today could not do the same. [In view of this] how could one possibly neglect the theories of political economy?

吾恐後世或呈秦皇并吞六王之狀。而今之人不能如之何也。經濟之說。其可不熟講乎哉。⁵

How might we understand this strange comment on Western liberalism that mentions Vanderbilt and the First Emperor of Qin in the same breath? Wealth was the key to conquering the world, wealth was even the key to gaining honor, and

⁴ Italics reflect emphatic punctuation in the original.

⁵ Okamoto Kansuke, “Jingji di shiyi,” 12b–13a.

poverty was no longer considered a virtue. Moreover, a positive relationship between commercial wealth and state power was crucial in the aim to achieve “the common wealth of all people.” However, there is also a clear sense of resentment against the injustice manifest in the uneven distribution of wealth and the usurpatory behavior of the imperialist West—and in the decided commitment to study the secrets of its success.

Okamoto’s *Explorations* was just one of nearly a dozen new compilations of “Western,” “new” or “current” knowledge that appeared in the year 1901 during the period of acute crisis that came immediately after the Boxer debacle.⁶ As private publications they were society’s response to changing knowledge regimes and to new examination demands, though the initial move clearly came from the official side in the form of the proclamation of a new series of reform measures known as the Reform of Governance, *Xin zheng* 新政. The proliferation of publications, evident in the large number of titles and also the number of reprints and sequels, reflects the existence of a growing market for books on current affairs. The post-1895 reforms had brought a first peak in the demand for “new knowledge.”⁷ In 1901, as in the earlier Western affairs, *Yangwu* 洋務, reforms and the reform efforts of the late 1890s, the ultimate aim of this vigorous pursuit of knowledge was quite straightforward: the quest for national wealth and power as expressed in the ubiquitous formula “enrich the state and strengthen the army,” *fuguo qiangbing* 富國強兵.⁸ This handy formula provided the rationale and the guideline for the study of the new knowledge—much to the dissatisfaction of some, as we shall see. The fact that Japan acted as a mediator between China and the West further complicates the story. Around the turn of the century Japan became a kind of facilitator in the process of knowledge acquisition and China’s fellow fighter against imperialism. But at the same time, Japan also became a serious rival of the Western powers and was striving for economic and territorial hegemony in its own right; Okamoto’s study is an early manifestation of this.

This chapter follows a twofold approach in examining this knowledge project designed to lead China towards a more glorious future. On the one hand it shows how, in terms of content, the Western affairs discourse with its emphasis on

⁶Rudolf Wagner, “Chinese Encyclopedic Works 1840–1937, their Japanese and Western Models and Sources. Continuously updated Metadata for the Database HEIDENC,” lists 25 new publications and reprints for the year 1901 against 3 in 1900.

⁷On publication peaks see Rudolf Wagner, “Wan Qing xinzheng yu xixue baike quanshu” 晚清新政與西學百科全書 [The late Qing ‘Reform of Governance’ and encyclopaedias of Western knowledge], in *Jindai Zhongguo de baike quanshu* 近代中國的百科全書 [Early modern Chinese encyclopaedias], eds. Chen Pingyuan 陳平原, Miliena 米列娜 [= Milena Doleželová-Velingerová] (Beijing: Beijing daxue, 2007), 33–56. See also the graphic presentation in the “Introduction” for the present volume.

⁸“Nation” rather than “state” would perhaps be more to the point as a translation of the term *guo* 國, though some ambiguity remains that reflects the unsettled nature of the idea of the modern “nation-state.”

industry and trade became increasingly imbued with ideas of public welfare or “nourishing the people,” *yang min* 養民, and how both were finally integrated within the new scientific discourse of political economy. On the other hand it also examines how this process is situated within the formal context of the expansion and transformation of examination knowledge as it is revealed in the development of the encyclopaedia as a genre. This involves the transition from reference works for exam preparation, which were aimed at a relatively small group of people belonging to the scholarly elite, to compendia of general and even everyday knowledge, which were aimed at a broad urban citizenry.⁹ One of the key issues in this inquiry is the question of the role of the state in relation to the economy and its renegotiation in the process. One of the late Qing translations of the English term “political economy”, that is to say “the science of how to enrich the state,” *fuguo xue* 富國學, clearly shows that the state—in the sense of the modern nation-state—was meant to be a central force in the national economy. However, due to the abolition of the civil service examination system in 1905, which coincided with the sudden end of the production of this type of encyclopaedia and the demise of the dynasty in 1911, this renegotiation remained inconclusive. One could also argue that with the rise of a Chinese nationalist agenda the Manchu state itself had become a highly ambiguous issue, and that the Qing efforts towards a stronger state presence in the economy therefore became futile after the turn of the century.

New Examination Knowledge Vs. General Knowledge

Leafing through the voluminous compendia of Western or “new” knowledge, which were so popular during the last two decades of the Qing dynasty, the Shanxi scholar Liu Dapeng 劉大鵬 (1857–1942) might have had a point when he complained in 1908 that “it [discussions about Current Affairs in the newly established schools] is all about wealth and power and they do not speak about the proper relationships or principles at all. The whole aim of the system is to glorify the state and harm the people, and every aspect involves using the barbarian learning and changing China. It is terrible.”¹⁰ Reform policies and the ensuing changes in the educational system had created a huge market for publications that provided the “new knowledge” that

⁹ On this last point see Barbara Mittler and Catherine Yeh in this volume. The emphasis on examination knowledge here is not to suggest that there were no encyclopaedias of everyday knowledge in early modern China. But it seems that these represented a sphere of knowledge that was decidedly separated from the political knowledge discussed here. See, for example, Wu Huifang 吳蕙芳, *Wanbao quanshu: Ming Qing shiqi de minjian shenghuo shilu* 萬寶全書:明清時期的民間生活實錄 [Wanbao quanshu: a truthful record of everyday life in the Ming and Qing periods] (Taipei: Guoli zhengzhi daxue lishixi, 2001).

¹⁰ Henrietta Harrison, *The Man Awakened from Dream: One Man's Life in a North China Village 1857–1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 88, quoting Liu Dapeng's diary (*Tuixiangzhai riji*, ms., 1908/3/27).

was then required for the imperial examinations.¹¹ A wave of what one could call encyclopaedic writing began and drew on both indigenous and foreign models. *Bianleishu* 編類書 or “reference books arranged in categories” was the generic term the Chinese compilers and preface writers used to refer to the resulting compilations—variously called “complete compendium,” *daquan* 大全, “collected writings,” *congshu* 叢書, “general compendium,” *tongdian* 通典, “compendium arranged in categories,” *leidian* 類典, “comprehensive investigation,” *tongkao* 通考, and the like, following ancient usage. This was different from their Japanese predecessors who had given the name *Complete Compendium of the Hundred Branches of Knowledge*, *Hyakka zensho* 百科全書, to a translation project from the early 1870s and thereby coined a new term for the genre of encyclopaedia, which, as Douglas Reynolds has demonstrated, was not entirely new in the Japanese context.¹² The Chinese compilations were indeed somewhat different from their Japanese and English counterparts in the sense that they were meant to assemble exactly that particular kind of “new” or “Western” learning that was perceived to be the key to strengthening the nation. Therefore, the new knowledge was essentially perceived as political knowledge, and its importance was most evident in the civil service examinations. Well-known early works included the *Collection of Books of Western Learning [to Make the State] Rich and Powerful*, *Xixue fuqiang congshu* 西學富強叢書 (1896), and the *Comprehensive Examination of Current Affairs*, *Shiwu tongkao* 時務通考 (1897).¹³

Thus, the first purpose of these new compilations was to provide examination knowledge—that is, uncontested and shared knowledge. Liu Dapeng, for example, even though he strongly disapproved of these books, he still was interested in them because at that time he still sat the examinations.¹⁴ These compilations were produced by astute private publishers who had a good sense for the market although few of them were as alert as the Commercial Press when it came to reacting to and even anticipating quickly shifting market needs.¹⁵ This rather

¹¹ Lobbying for the introduction of Western learning into the classical curriculum began in the late 1860s after the Qing victory over the Taiping. Cf. Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 578–605.

¹² Cf. Douglas Reynolds in this volume. See also Zhong Shaohua 鍾少華, “Chulun Riben jindai baikequanshu” 初論日本近代百科全書 [A preliminary discussion on modern Japanese encyclopaedias], in *Riben yanjiu* 3(1995): 85–91.

¹³ Qilu zhuren 杞廬主人, the compiler of the *Shiwu tongkao* (Shanghai: Dianzhizhai, 1897), followed the older model of statecraft essay, *jingshiwen* 經世文, compilations, insofar as he assembled existing texts rather than commissioned new articles, while the *Xixue fuqiang congshu* seems to consist only of translations of Western textbooks.

¹⁴ Another telling example is a passage in a novel by Li Boyuan (1867–1906) that speaks of the importance of the “new knowledge” for exam preparation. Li Boyuan 李伯元, *Wenming xiaoshi* 文明小史 [A short history of civilization], in *Li Boyuan quanji* 李伯元全集, ed. Xue Zhengxing 薛正興, 1: 236–263. (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji, 1997).

¹⁵ In 1904, after the educational reforms, the Commercial Press shifted to textbooks for the new schools. Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876–1937* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), 211–12 and passim.

ephemeral character meant that they were decidedly different from both the time-honored English encyclopaedias that were already well established and had a long publishing history reaching back into the early eighteenth century and from the Japanese encyclopaedias that had an equally long history. Up to 1911 when Huang Moxi's 黃摩西 encyclopaedic dictionary appeared,¹⁶ Timothy Richard's (1854–1919) *Handy Cyclopaedia*, Guangxue leibian 廣學類編 (1901), was perhaps the only attempt to produce a popular encyclopaedia of Western—in the sense of “general”—knowledge that would diverge from the exam aid model.¹⁷ It might have been roughly modeled on *Chambers's Information for the People*, which was probably the most popular English encyclopaedia of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ At least the inclusion of a variety of subjects that belong to a quite practical level of general knowledge might suggest this (e.g. household knowledge including how to wash bottles, get rid of ants and flies, and pull rings from one's finger, or leisure-related knowledge including horse races, hunting and fishing, and pets) although it was far from reaching the latter's quality and scope. In this sense the time-honored compendium of general knowledge called the *Collection of Texts and Illustrations. Old and New*, Gujin tushu jicheng 古今圖書集成 (1726), despite its disqualification by people like Yan Fu 嚴復 (1853–1921) who regarded it as inferior to the “modern” Western encyclopaedias,¹⁹ was probably nearer the Western model of an encyclopaedia than the new examination literature of Western knowledge. While the *Handy Cyclopaedia* was but a faint emulation of *Chambers's Information for the People*, the *Collection of Texts and Illustrations. Old and New* was perhaps the closest Chinese equivalent to *Chambers's Cyclopaedia* (1728) and other famous eighteenth-century encyclopaedia projects.²⁰ At least in one respect the new

¹⁶ See Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Chen Pingyuan in this volume.

¹⁷ This work was originally published by the Society for the Distribution of Christian and General Knowledge among the Chinese, Guangxuehui 廣學會. Unfortunately, the 1903 Commercial Press reprint of Richard's work that was available to me does not have a preface.

¹⁸ *Chambers's Information for the People* was first published in 1835 in two volumes. It included chapters on a wealth of topics such as gardening and animal husbandry, the “preparation of food” and the “preservation of health,” “out-of-door recreations” and “indoor amusements,” history and religion, the arts, and the natural sciences. For further information on the publication history, see Douglas Reynolds' contribution to this volume.

¹⁹ Cf. Zhong Shaohua's discussion of Yan Fu's 1907 essay on encyclopaedias in his *Renlei zhishi de xin gongju: Zhong-Ri jindai baike quanshu yanjiu* 人類知識的新工具: 中日近代百科全書研究 [A new tool of human knowledge: A study of early modern encyclopaedias in China and Japan] (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan, 1995), 17, 21. On this and other essays on the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, see also the study by Chen Pingyuan in the present volume.

²⁰ The full title of the two volume publication by Ephraim Chambers was: *Cyclopaedia: Or an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences; Containing the Definitions of the Terms, and Accounts of the Things Signified thereby, in the Several Arts, Both Liberal and Mechanical, and the Several Sciences, Human and Divine: The Figures, Kinds, Properties, and Uses, of Things Natural and Artificial: The Rise, Progress and State of Things Ecclesiastical, Civil, Military, and Commercial: With the Several Systems, Sects, Opinions, etc., among Philosophers, Divines, Mathematicians, Physicians, Antiquaries, Criticks, etc. The Whole Intended as a Course of Antient and Modern Learning. Compiled from the best Authors, Dictionaries, Journals, Memoirs, Transactions, Ephe-merides, etc. in Several Languages.*

Chinese compilations were quite similar to their Western counterparts: they were generally not the place for debates over new contested knowledge. Their purpose was to assemble standard knowledge and to make it available for convenient reference—even to provide commonplaces.²¹ The method of compilation was often simply to put together what had already been published in the periodical press, translations, and other publications, or what was discussed in scholarly circles.²² Although here again the English encyclopaedias would have had the advantage of being more firmly established and thus more frequently and competently updated.

In the case of the economic thought of late nineteenth-century England, the free trade ideas of the Smithian variant and its derivatives were doubtless the dominating theory, and this is also what we most commonly find in the Chinese literature on the topic. New ideas continued to be discussed in the periodical press. Here the introduction of socialist theories is a good example. The flexible and quickly reacting newspapers and magazines were the place where the crucial things happened.²³ In monograph publications and encyclopaedias the discussion of socialist ideas remained the rare exception. Thus, while the earlier modern English encyclopaedias were aimed at the “general advancement” of an educated, affluent middle class, Chinese encyclopaedic writing around the turn of the twentieth century was creating and catering to a new examination elite. The popularization of knowledge was also involved to a certain extent, but I would suggest that before the successful implementation of a modern school system, which finally brought about the demise of the old examination elite, and the subsequent publication of the new encyclopaedic dictionaries and new types of encyclopaedias like the *Encyclopaedia for Daily Use*, *Rirong baike quanshu* 日用百科全書, during the Republican period,²⁴ this effect remained relatively limited.

Political Economy in English Encyclopaedias

Ephraim Chambers’s *Cyclopaedia* might be considered the father of the early modern English encyclopaedias; it was firmly anchored within England’s high society. The first edition included a list of approximately 400 subscribers who represented a good part of the national elite, and was very properly dedicated to

²¹ Richard Yeo, “Ephraim Chambers’s *Cyclopaedia* (1728) and the tradition of commonplaces,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57, no. 1 (1996): 157–175.

²² See Rudolf Wagner in this volume.

²³ See Martin Bernal, *Chinese Socialism to 1907* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976).

²⁴ The *Rirong baike quanshu* 日用百科全書 [Parallel title: *Cyclopaedia for Daily Use*] was first published by the Commercial Press in 1919. In Japan, such works were already available earlier (*Nichiyō hyakka zensho* 日用百科全書 (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1895–1900). See <http://kindai.ndl.go.jp/>). For the Chinese work, see the contributions by Catherine Yeh and Barbara Mittler in this volume.

the king. Numerous editions followed throughout the eighteenth century. The project, however, seems to have been discontinued after 1820.²⁵ Instead, by the early nineteenth century there was a demand for a shorter and more popular compendium of knowledge, which appeared in 1834 as *Chambers's Information for the People* in 2 volumes. This work, the first English encyclopaedia that was made available in a Japanese translation,²⁶ was in its fifth and substantially revised edition in 1874. The preface declares:

The cheapness of the work, its novelty, and the varied mass of useful knowledge which was embraced rendered it a popular favourite. . . . everything is given that is requisite for a *generally well informed man* in the less highly educated portions of society, and nothing omitted appertaining to intellectual cultivation, excepting subjects of professional or local interest. It will be understood, then, that the INFORMATION FOR THE PEOPLE is not an encyclopaedia, in the comprehensive meaning of the word, but rather one embracing only the more important departments of general knowledge. The ruling object, indeed, has been to afford the means of *self-education*, and to introduce into the mind, thus liberated and expanded, a craving after still further advancement.²⁷

Thus, the typical nineteenth-century English encyclopaedia—or at least the one that was most favorably received in Japan—was explicitly aimed at the “*generally well informed man* in the less highly educated portions of society,” it was meant to educate the people and thus, implicitly, to improve the state of the polity and enhance the English nation.²⁸

Nevertheless, the distinction between what is “for the people” and “not an encyclopaedia, in the comprehensive meaning of the word” and the real thing for the truly educated somehow remained. Though quality is writ large in *Information for the People*, it is even more emphasized in its full-fledged counterpart, *Chambers's Encyclopaedia: A Dictionary of Universal Knowledge* (1860–1868).²⁹

²⁵ The first edition of Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopaedia* appeared in two huge volumes (London, 1728). Revised and amended editions were published in 1738, 1741, 1751–2, all in two volumes. Later editions in 5 volumes were compiled by Abraham Rees between 1778 and 1891, and a final edition in 39 volumes was published in 1819–1820. My sincere thanks to Douglas Reynolds who alerted me to the fact that the eighteenth-century *Cyclopaedia* and the nineteenth-century *Chambers's Encyclopaedia* are two distinct publications.

²⁶ This was the translation project of the 1870s mentioned above. See the study by Douglas Reynolds in this volume.

²⁷ “Preface,” in *Chambers's Information for the People* (London: W&R. Chambers, 1874). Italics and small capitals in the original.

²⁸ The table of contents reflects this general outlook quite well. It has a bit of everything, including a wealth of everyday knowledge like cooking and gardening—markedly practical aspects, which the earlier more elitist compendia lacked. It might also be worth noting that in the *Cyclopaedia* as well as in *Chambers's Encyclopaedia* (see footnote 29 below) the material is organized in an alphabetical order; whereas *Chambers's Information for the People* is presented in topically arranged chapters.

²⁹ The full title of the first edition prepared by Andrew Findlater is *Chambers's Encyclopaedia: a Dictionary of Universal Knowledge for the People, Illustrated with Maps and Numerous Wood Engravings*. It was compiled “on the basis of the latest edition of the German Conversations Lexicon.” This referred to the “Brockhaus,” the *Allgemeine deutsche Real-Encyklopädie für die*

The editor is eager to inform his readers that “nearly a 1,000 authors—many of them of the first eminence, and all specially qualified for their work—have contributed,” and he seeks to educate his readers about what an encyclopaedia is:

An encyclopaedia is by no means, as has been frequently assumed ever since the name or the thing was known, a dry and formless catalogue of disjointed or chaotic facts, whose sole claim to existence lies in its being handy for reference and moderately correct. On the contrary, a well arranged encyclopaedia is a microcosm, a conspectus of the universe, a more or less effective view of ‘the proficience and advancement of learning divine and human,’ to use Bacon’s ambitious phrase. It is a stocktaking in almost every department of science, and should be even less remarkable for its multifariousness and fullness than for the proportion, interdependence, and due subordination of parts.³⁰

The most conspicuous marker of this “interdependence” is the many internal references that are nearly completely absent in the corresponding Chinese publications. As opposed to the *Information for the People*, this encyclopaedia is alphabetically arranged. Each of the ten volumes starts with a one-page list of the more important articles, indicating the respective authors (e.g. Professor James Legge of Oxford for articles on “Peking,” “China,” “Confucianism,” etc.). At the end of volume 10 is an “Index of subjects which have no special articles, or on which further information is given under other headings” (e.g. cowpox => vaccination; economics => political economy; exorcism => witchcraft; vulcanists => geology). But there is more internal referencing that allows for a reading strategy that reminds one of the functions of hyperlinks in electronic documents. The article “political economy” for example (vol. 8, 287–291) refers to other articles that are relevant to the subject, to wit “Banking, Bounty, Capital, Communism, Consumption, Cooperation, Corn Laws, Division of Labour, Exchange, Free Trade, Labour, Land Laws, Money, Monopoly, Protection, Rent, Socialism [‘The competitive system is the latest form of the struggle for existence, and socialism is the latest theory for its regulation.’], Tax, Trade-Unions, and Wages, and the articles on the more important economic thinkers Smith, Malthus, Ricardo, Mill, Carey, Lasalle, Marx, etc.” If we then go to the article on “Socialism” (vol. 9, 541–546) we are further referred to “Communism, Cooperation, Evolution, Friendly Societies, George (Henry), International, Knights of Labour, Lasalle, Marx, Nihilism, Peasant Proprietorship, Profit-Sharing, Trade-Unions etc.” Apart from this, each article has a substantial list of bibliographical references.³¹ Moreover, the legitimate existence of contradicting views is occasionally emphasized. The article on “Protection” refers to the article on “Free trade” indicating that this is “written from the opposite

gebildeten Stände that was first published in Leipzig in 1796–1806 as *Conversations-Lexicon mit vorzüglicher Rücksicht auf die gegenwärtigen Zeiten*.

³⁰ David Patrick, “Editorial note,” in *Chambers’s encyclopaedia: A dictionary of universal knowledge*, new edition, 10 vols. (London and Edinburgh: W&R. Chambers, 1901), vol. 10.

³¹ In the case of “political economy” the list starts with Adam Smith’s *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. It includes the most important English, German, and French titles of the time on the subject like J.S. Mill’s *Principles of Political Economy*, but also “manuals and smaller works,” such as Henry Fawcett’s *Manual of Political Economy* and Mrs. Millicent Fawcett’s *Political Economy for Beginners*. These observations are based on the 1901 edition.

point of view.” All these characteristics are conspicuously absent from the *Information for the People*.

The article on political economy in *Information for the People*, which was available in a Japanese translation in 1882,³² gives a concise summary of the state of the new discipline by the mid-nineteenth century. It begins with a definition (“Political economy is a social science, having for its subject the laws of wealth, and more especially, the laws of the production, exchange, and distinction of commodities possessing exchangeable value.”), then gives a “General view of the subject” (explaining the central concepts of value and exchangeable values, products of nature, labor, and capital), and then deals in detail with “Consumption,” “Production,” “Exchange,” and “Distribution.”³³ The approach of the full-fledged *Encyclopaedia* is quite different. It is pronouncedly more historically minded, and even though—like the former, though more explicitly—it is effectively a praise of Adam Smith (“... there was no real science of political economy until it was constructed by Adam Smith and his forerunners in France in the eighteenth century”),³⁴ it is much more profound, giving an overview of the state of the art that includes competing views and points to the problems that need to be addressed. Instead of giving one valid definition, it starts off with definitions in the plural from whence we learn that the definition above is no more and no less than “the definition most generally accepted in England.” This is followed by evidence for the first use of the term in the present meaning (in 1615 in a French treatise on political economy). Then the new discipline is situated within the general system of knowledge (“The science of political economy is a branch of the study of man.”). Finally, this is followed by a survey of the history of the discipline, covering the ancient (Greek and Rome, with the perennial classics Plato, Aristotle, and Xenophon, and the Romans attested as having “no special interest or originality,” though they are credited with having given “legal form to the prevalent ideas of property”), medieval (nothing that could be called “scientific,” though the influence of the Christian teaching is highly valued, as it is thought to have brought a “correction of the harsh and cruel ideas of property of the Roman world by the spiritual ethics of Christianity”), and modern periods (centralized monarchies, monetization of the economy, rise of the colonial system, expansion of commerce, growth of manufacture, development of the banking system, etc.). The latter saw freedom as the “keynote to a new way of thinking in France and England.” The next sections are on the

³² The article, translated as *Keizairon* 経済論, appeared in 1882 in two single volumes. It is accessible on the National Diet Library website. <http://kindai.ndl.go.jp/>. A three-volume commercial reprint of the *Encyclopaedia* appeared 2 years later prepared by the Maruzen shōsha 丸善商社. The article on political economy is in volume 3. For the table of contents, see the National Diet Library website.

³³ “Political Economy,” in *Chambers’s Information for the People*, 5th ed., 1874, 2: 465–480. The definition of the subject in the 4th edition was perhaps more vivid: “Political economy is the science which teaches the manner in which nations and individuals acquire wealth.”

³⁴ T. Kirkup on “Political Economy,” in *Chambers’s Encyclopaedia*, new ed., 1901, 8: 287–291. The related article on “Socialism” was written by the same author.

important schools: Adam Smith and his idea of “natural liberty,” and the Historical School of political economy, the present condition of the subject (“unsettled and unsatisfactory”), and a conclusion, followed by the bibliographical references mentioned above. Rousseau, Malthus, Ricardo, Mill, and (for the importance of the “national character”) the German List and the American Carey are discussed in some detail. In addition, five reasons for the present unsatisfactory state of affairs are given: (1) The “greatly improved study of history,” including the comparative study of institutions, that “has thrown entirely new light on the growth and working of economic forces;” (2) The “general acceptance of the theory of evolution,” which enhanced the understanding of what Smith’s ideas “really meant” (here the opposition between the English competitive system and the continental protective systems are discussed.); (3) The Industrial Revolution, pointing out that *The Wealth of Nations* was published in the very year when Watt produced the first effective steam-engine (1776); (4) The growth of democracy; and (5) The increasing prominence of the social question.

How was this knowledge received in China and how did it fit into the Chinese environment? How was the new discipline dealt with in Chinese encyclopaedic writing? We will deal with these questions in the reverse order.

“Enrich the Nation and Nourish the People”: The Recategorization of Knowledge

Liu Dapeng was right when he felt that “to enrich the state and strengthen the army” were the notions that occupied the minds of those who had authored these publications. The prefaces clearly reveal this. In his preface to the *Collection of Books of Western Learning [to Make the State] Rich and Powerful*, Xixue fuqiang congshu 西學富強叢書 (1896), Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 (1823–1901), who was full of praise for the political institutions of the West that “do not stick to the ancient [Chinese] ways to the letter but still are in accord with their spirit” 不泥於古而暗合於古, sees the natural sciences and mathematics as the key fields of knowledge that have enabled the Western nations to achieve wealth and power.³⁵ After China’s traumatic defeat by Japan he hoped to use these new Western arts to help the emperor wash away the humiliation. However, his vision seems to have been limited to the introduction of technological innovations. It implies not much more than a continuation of the earlier Western affairs talk about official publishing houses, railways, the modernization of the mining industry, new military

³⁵ He is as straightforward as one possibly could be: “The Western countries have achieved their wealth and power with the help of the natural sciences and mathematics” (泰西諸國以格致算學致富強). “Xu” 序 [Preface], in *Xixue fuqiang congshu* 西學富強叢書, comp. Zhang Yinhan 張蔭桓 (Shanghai: Hongwen, 1896).

academies, and language schools.³⁶ Lesser preface writers like Qilu zhuren 杞廬主人 were more careful to situate their projects within a tradition of reference books for affairs of government that reached back to the thirteenth-century *Comprehensive Reference on Records and Documents*, Wenxian tongkao 文獻通考, and clearly regarded his work as an aid for government in the art of “ordering the world and saving the people” (*jingji* 經濟 used in the old sense of *jingshi jimin* 經世濟民).³⁷ In terms of content, however, it is very much akin to Li Hongzhang’s project. A couple of years later in his preface to the *Great Book Collection of New Knowledge*, Xinxue da congshu 新學大叢書 (1903), Yu Yue 俞樾 (1821–1906), who had also written the calligraphy on the title page of the *Collection of Books of Western Learning [to Make the Nation] Rich and Powerful*, belittled these earlier flagships of the new examination literature as excessively voluminous and of questionable quality. He considered their contents to be carelessly chosen and their translations to be inferior. His intention was, of course, to praise the new publication, but regardless of the actual contents of the compilation of “new learning”, *xinxue* 新學, its outlook, at least insofar as the preface is an accurate depiction thereof, had not really changed. The concern was still centered on cultivating talent for the public service and on achieving wealth and power, although it is unclear whether this was for the Qing state or the Chinese nation.³⁸

In actuality, by the time Liu Dapeng wrote his diary entry deploring the utilitarianism of Western learning as opposed to the moral unity of government and the Confucian teachings in China, the emphasis had long since shifted from the “enrich the state and strengthen the army” slogan of the Western affairs era to the “enrich the nation and nourish the people”, *fuguo yangmin* 富國養民, formula that had accompanied the introduction of the Western notion of political economy into the Chinese political discourse since the late 1870s. Political economy was a new branch of knowledge that operated on a much broader basis than any version of the late nineteenth-century “wealth and power” discourse. Moreover, even though it was not a moral teaching, political economists were perfectly aware of the ethical

³⁶ However, Zhang Yinhan in his “Fanli” 凡例 [Editorial principles] has a slightly different emphasis, pointing to the importance of the people as the basis of a nation’s wealth: “They have to be taught the [necessary] technical knowledge, so that they are able to make a living on their own” (必教之藝,使各有自主謀生之權). The preface to the *Wanguo jinzheng kaolue* 萬國近政考略 [An investigation of the recent policies of all nations] written in the same year is equally unambiguous about its intention to achieve wealth and power, and there are more examples.

³⁷ Qilu zhuren 杞廬主人, “Xu” 序 [Preface], in *Shiwu tongkao* 時務通考, comp. Qilu zhuren (Shanghai: Dianshizhai, 1897), 1b.

³⁸ “If those who are aspiring to the new learning get this [book] to strive for it, so that they can, on the basis of self cultivation and the establishment of their character, expand to include the strategies to enrich the state and strengthen the army, and splendidly become useful talents for the state, in order to support the Son of Heaven above in his good intention to strive for the reform of government, how could then the benefit of this book be meager!” (有志新學者,得此以擴求之,庶能以修身立品之基,擴為富國強兵之策,蔚為國家有用之才,以上副聖天子求治維新之至意,則是書獲益豈淺鮮哉). Yu Yue 俞樾, “Xu” 序 [Preface], in *Xinxue da congshu* 新學大叢書 (Shanghai: Jishan qiaoji shuju, 1903), 1b.

dimension of their subject. Long before Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* appeared (1776), he had published his *Moral Sentiment* (1759), the operative concept of which, according to Himmelfarb, was “sympathy,” and Smith had fought a lifelong struggle to reconcile the one with the other.³⁹ In nineteenth-century Chinese discussions on the subject, however, this dimension was entirely left out. After it was brought back in the form of a new discourse on “nourishing the people” during the North-China Famine of 1876–1879, even the mind of a scholar like Yu Yue was so steeped in his habitual rhetoric that he did not acknowledge this shift towards a much more comprehensive system of knowledge.⁴⁰ This new emphasis on the old issue of nourishing the people (which is but one example showing this new trend) is important insofar as it redirected public attention from the abstract humiliation by a foreign army (abstract in the sense that comparatively few people had directly experienced it) to the quite real and pervasive economic plight of a large part of China’s population.

People like Liu Dapeng could have seen the singular fixation on wealth and power as a Western affairs aberration from former virtues. It is true that even though more sophisticated theories had been available since the late 1870s, the major turning point came about only around the year 1900 during the period of the Boxer debacle and the subsequent announcement of the Reform of Governance. Only then could the new discipline become a part of the established body of knowledge and become more visible through a reorganization of the system of knowledge and the use of new terms imported from Japan. The terms *fuguo* and *yangmin* probably appeared together for the first time in a book title in 1878 when a Chinese translation of William Stanley Jevons’ *The Theory of Political Economy* (1871) was published as *A Plan to Enrich the Nation and Nourish the People*, *Fuguo yangmin ce* 富國養民策, by the Maritime Customs under the auspices of Robert Hart and Joseph Edkins.⁴¹ The book was reprinted and thus became more

³⁹ Gertrude Himmelfarb, “Adam Smith: Political Economy as Moral Philosophy,” in *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1984), 42–63, 48.

⁴⁰ While the *Xixue fuqiang congshu* deals only with mathematics and the natural sciences as the means to achieve wealth and power, the *Xinxue da congshu* covers a much broader range of knowledge. It includes the following main categories: “Politics and Law,” Zhengfa 政法 (including chapters on politics, law, government, parliament, local self-government, international law and sovereignty), “Finances,” Licai 理財 (political economy, government finances, budgeting, currency, trade, and taxes), “Military Science,” Bingxue 兵學, “Culture,” Wenxue 文學 (history, chronology, geography, literature and language), “Philosophy,” Zhexue 哲學 (religion, doctrine, psychology, ethics, etc.), “Natural sciences,” Gezhi 格致 (mathematics, astronomy, meteorology, physics, chemistry, biology, etc.), “Education,” Jiaoyu 教育, “Trade,” Shangye 商業, “Agriculture,” Nongxue 農學, and “Industry,” Gongyi 工藝.

⁴¹ William Stanley Jevons, *The Theory of Political Economy* (London: Macmillan, 1871); translated as Zhe-fen-si 哲分斯 (Jevons), *Fuguo yangmin ce* 富國養民策 (1878). At about the same time final-year students at the Language Institute Tongwenguan 通文館 in Beijing, under the auspices of W.A.P. Martin, trained their translation skills with Henry Fawcett’s *Manual of Political Economy* (London: Macmillan, 1863). See Xiong Yuezhi 熊月之, *Xixue dongjian yu wan Qing shehui* 西學東漸與晚清社會 [English title: Dissemination of Western Knowledge and the Late Qing Society] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin, 1994), 305. The translation by Wang Fengzao 汪鳳藻 was published as *Fuguo ce* 富國策 [Strategies to enrich the nation] first by the

easily accessible in 1885 as part of Edkins's *Sixteen Works of Basic Western Learning*, *Xixue qimeng shiliu zhong* 西學啓蒙十六種; finally, it was made part of the new canon of Western learning when it was included in the *Collection of Works on Western Governance*, *Xizheng congshu* 西政叢書, in 1897.⁴²

In the various compilations of statecraft writings, *jingshi wenbian* 經世文編 (now available as searchable databases on the Academia Sinica website) the compound *fuguo yangmin* only appears in writings from the reform period of the late 1890s by authors like Kang Youwei 康有爲 (1858–1927), Wen Tingshi 文廷式 (1856–1904), and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929). All were in close contact with Timothy Richard, the Baptist missionary famous for his famine relief work and subsequent commitment to China's reform politics.⁴³ The early promotion of this formula can be attributed to him. He saw the alleviation of poverty and the end of the recurring famines, which subjected China's population to immense suffering, as the solution to the nation's problems. He was tireless in writing articles and publishing his views in the periodical press that reached a much wider audience than the translated books. The use of the term *yangmin* is most conspicuous in his *New Essays on Current Affairs*, *Shishi xinlun* 時事新論 (1894), a collection of articles, most of which had first appeared in the periodical press.⁴⁴ He propagated vigorously what he called the “new learning to enrich the people,” *fumin xinxue* 富民新學, though in an attempt to make his views acceptable for a scholar-official audience he also emphasized that “when Kongzi discussed the essence of government he said essentially the same.”⁴⁵ 孔子論政要亦不外乎此也

While only one chapter in this collection is explicitly called “Nourishing the people”—it explains how “Western methods” 西法 can improve the people's

Tongwenguan (1880) and then by the American Presbyterian Mission Press 美華書館 in Shanghai (1882). Chen Chi's 陳熾 *Xu fuguoce* 續富國策 [Sequel to *Strategies to Enrich the Nation*] was published in 1897 in *Qiuziqiang zhai zhuren* 求自強齋主人, comp., *Xizheng congshu* 西政叢書 [Collection of works on Western governance], (Shanghai: Shenji shuzhuang, 1897).

⁴² Ai Yuese 艾約瑟 [Joseph Edkins], trans., *Xixue qimeng shiliu zhong* 西學啓蒙十六種 (Shanghai: Tushu jicheng, 1895). *Qiuziqiang zhai zhuren* 求自強齋主人, comp., *Xizheng congshu* 西政叢書 [Collection of works on Western governance], (Shanghai: Shenji shuzhuang, 1897).

⁴³ *Scripta Serica*, Hanji dianzi wenxian 漢籍電子文獻, <http://www.sinica.edu.tw/%7Etdbproj/handy1/> (8.9.2007).

⁴⁴ In this respect it is similar to the *Jiwen leibian* 記聞類編 [A Record of News Arranged in Categories], a collection of *Shenbao* 申報 editorials published in 1877, but without the poetry and anecdotal materials. For a description of the contents of that collection see my “Preparing the Ground for Revolutionary Discourse.” For further analysis, see the study by Natascha Gentz in this volume. Richard had propagated his ideas ever since his experience of the North-China Famine in the late 1870s, as editor-in-chief of the *Tianjin Times*, *Shibao* 時報 (1890–1891), as contributor to the *Review of the Times*, *Wanguo gongbao* 萬國公報, and finally as secretary of the Society for the Distribution of Christian and General Knowledge among the Chinese.

⁴⁵ See the prefaces to the first and second printing of Li Timotai 李提摩泰 [=Timothy Richard], comp. *Shishi xinlun* 時事新論 [New essays on current affairs], 12 j. (Shanghai: Guangxuehui, 1894). I would like to thank Ivo Amelung for providing a copy of this text. Richard's compilation also included all the maps and charts that were originally published in the *Tianjin Times*. These are not included in the copy that was made available to me, although the table of contents lists them all.

livelihood⁴⁶—many articles in the other chapters are also related to that same issue, and its importance for the overall aim to achieve wealth and power is quite clear. For example, the chapter on “Foreign Countries,” Waiguo 外國, deals with the “opening of Africa” by the Western nations 歐洲各國開闢非洲考, and why Africa’s failure to nourish her people led to the loss of her territory; the chapter on “Railway-Building,” Zhu lu 築路, explains why the railways were absolutely crucial for famine relief, even more important than granaries; and the chapter on “The New Sciences,” Xinxue 新學, is actually about the “new science to nourish the people,” yangmin xinxue 養民新學, which should be examined by scholars and was therefore a special subject in Western studies that should be introduced into the classical curriculum. There seems to have been a substantial amount of interest in this volume, as a second printing appeared within one year. The defeat by Japan certainly contributed to this success. In Richard’s case there is ample evidence that he believed the way to strengthen the nation was not by equipping the army and wiping out the shame of military defeat, but by giving the people the means to subsist, and still more, to live in dignity and wipe out the shame of hunger and starvation. This seems to have made an impression on the literati and officials with whom he was acquainted.⁴⁷ Two years later, after the Chinese defeat in the Sino-Japanese war, Richard published his ideas again, this time under the title *Proposals for a Reform of Governance*, Xinzheng ce 新政策. This might have been the first time that the term xinzheng 新政—Reform of Governance—appeared in a Chinese book title in this period; once again, “to nurture the people” stood out as a primary aim.⁴⁸

Given the prominence of texts on the “administration of famine,” huangzheng 荒政, in Qing statecraft literature—five chapters in Wei Yuan’s 魏源 (1794–1857) *Comprehensive Collection of Statecraft Essays of our August*

⁴⁶ The categories in *Shishi xinlun* are: “National Politics,” Guozheng 國政 (with articles on the rise of Manchuria, and why Korea should seek China’s protection, etc.), “Foreign Countries,” Waiguo 外國 (why Asian peoples should not yield to Russian dominance, articles on Russia and Korea, Germany, France and England, Burma, Annam, and on a trip to Tibet), “Sciences,” Gexue 格學, “Mining,” Kuangwu 礦務 (Shanxi), “Trade,” Tongshang 通商 (the importance of transport infrastructure), “Railway-Building,” Zhu lu 築路, “Nourishing the People,” Yangmin 養民, “New Learning,” Xinxue 新學, “Sources of Profit,” Liyuan 利源 (e.g. banking and finance, and the postal service), “Military Affairs,” Junwu 軍務 (mainly on the marine), “Religion,” Jiaowu 教務 (how to save the world by Christianity), “Miscellaneous Learning,” Zaxue 雜學 (on balloons, electricity, fossil fuels, cement, sai-men-de-tu 塞門德土, steel production, medicine, and taxes).

⁴⁷ Timothy Richard, *Forty-five Years in China: Reminiscences* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1916), 232–235. Obviously there is quite a deal of self-righteousness in Richard’s presentation of his achievements. Other publishers did similar things though their impact is generally less well known since they received less publicity. The work of the Guangxuehui made a huge difference. One important alternative example is the *Yishibao* [English title: Social Welfare] published by the Jesuit press in Xujiahui. Cf. Kurtz, “Messenger of the Sacred Heart: Li Wenyu (1840–1911) and Jesuit Publishing in Late Qing Shanghai,” in *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Print and Publishing Culture in Transition*, eds. Cynthia J. Brockaw and Christopher A. Reed (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 81–110.

⁴⁸ Li Timotai 李提摩泰 [=Timothy Richard], *Xinzheng ce* 新政策 [Proposals for a reform of governance] (Shanghai: Guangxuehui, 1896). I am again most grateful to Douglas Reynolds, who brought this publication to my attention.

Dynasty, Huangchao jingshi wenbian 皇朝經世文編 (1827), are devoted to famine relief—the emphasis on “nourishing the people” hardly seems to have been something new. Economic politics in the eighteenth century were dominated by the “assumption that the state and its agents should take an activist approach in working for the people’s economic well-being.”⁴⁹ Thus, “nourishing the people” was not just a prominent feature of political rhetoric, it also was a prime concern of political practice and has even been called the “single most important policy area in Qing China.”⁵⁰ Yet this explanation is a simple one: First, it might be true to a certain extent that the preoccupation with famine relief had been pushed into the background, especially during the period of Western affairs politics in the latter half of the nineteenth century. But more importantly, famine relief measures were different from the new version of “nourishing the people” that occupied the minds of reformers. Relief policies had always been described as an “inferior strategy,” *xiaoc* 下策, an indication of the failure of preventive measures. The “administration of famine” was an emergency policy, designed to avoid widespread unrest and make reconstruction possible, rather than a positive and long-term approach designed to promote production and create value in a more fundamental and sustainable way. For Richard and his peers (the people close to the Society for the Distribution of Christian and General Knowledge) “nourishing the people” was a means to help the people help themselves. The most crucial point in this was probably the fundamentally changed role of the state. This new approach was informed by the experience of Western modernity and underpinned by recent theories developed by Western economic thinkers. In their usage it was a translation of the new term “political economy,” as the translation of Jevons’ textbook shows, and had little to do with famine relief measures.

Consequently, the “administration of famine” lost its importance in post-1900 political discourse. According to the new theory, famine relief would no longer exist because it would no longer be necessary. *Statecraft Essays from Our August Dynasty. Third Collection*, Huangchao jingshiwen san bian 皇朝經世文三編 (1898),⁵¹ does not have a chapter on famine relief, but many of Richard’s writings appear instead under the chapter heading “Nourishing the people.” The category “Famine Relief,” *Jiuhuang* 救荒, has entirely disappeared from the *New Collection of Statecraft Essays from our August Dynasty*, Huangchao jingshiwen xinbian 皇朝經世文新編 (1898/1901),⁵² the *Collection of Statecraft Essays from our*

⁴⁹ Helen Dunstan, *Conflicting Counsels to Confuse the Age: A Documentary Study of the Political Economy in Qing China, 1644–1840* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1996), 19.

⁵⁰ The quoted sentence continues: “. . .at least prior to the unprecedented military and cultural threat presented by the West.” William T. Rowe, *Saving the World: Chen Hongmou and Elite Consciousness in Eighteenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 155.

⁵¹ Chen Zhongyi 陳忠倚, *Huangchao jingshi wen san bian* 皇朝經世文三編 (Shanghai: Baowen shuju, 1898).

⁵² Mai Zhonghua 麥仲華, *Huangchao jingshiwen xinbian* 皇朝經世文新編 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuju, 1898).

August Dynasty. Fifth Set, Wu ji 五集 (1902),⁵³ and from the *Sequel to the New Collection*, Xinbian xuji 新編續集 (1902).⁵⁴ A search for writings on famine relief in the various new encyclopaedias equally results only in a relatively small number of relevant texts compared with the large number of publications.⁵⁵ Some of them simply reproduced earlier writings on famine relief similar to what we can find in the statecraft compilations. The *Comprehensive Classified Compilation on Contemporary Affairs*, Fenlei shiwu tongzuan 分類時務通纂 (1902), for example, has chapters on yangmin as well as on huangzheng. Like the statecraft compilations these belong to the “Revenue Department,” Hubu 戶部, and their contents are in no way different because they reprint many of the same texts including memorials and regulations of welfare institutions and some of the standard handbook texts on famine relief.⁵⁶ The same applies to the *Comprehensive Compilation of Governance and Technical Learning of the World*, Wuzhou zhengyi congbian 五洲政藝叢編 (1902), which in addition includes some of Richard’s writings.⁵⁷ Others follow the trend of the times and discuss the “new methods to nourish the people,” or straightforwardly engage with the theory of political economy and Western expansionism that looms behind it. We will return to these later.

When the first encyclopaedias of Western knowledge appeared they were quite close in spirit to the existing statecraft compilations and were clearly meant as an aid for government rather than for the general advancement of the modestly educated middle class as was the case, for example, with *Chambers’s Information for the People*. Liu Dapeng complained that the obsession with the search for national wealth and power and the lack of a striving for kingly rule and personal cultivation was the driving force behind both the later compilations of statecraft literature and the publication of the new encyclopaedic works of Western knowledge during the same years. Although published privately they were well within the

⁵³ Qiushizhai 求是齋, *Huangchao jingshi wenbian wu ji* 皇朝經世文編五集 (Shanghai: Yijin shi, 1902).

⁵⁴ Gan Han 甘韓, *Huangchao jingshi wen xinbian xuji* 皇朝經世文新編續集 (Shanghai: (?), 1902).

⁵⁵ The strategy was to identify publications that included chapters with more general arguments on how to “enrich the state and nourish the people,” (i.e. chapters with titles such as *huangzheng*, *yangmin*, and *jingji*) while ignoring more specific articles in chapters on trade, monetary policies, taxation, monopolies, etc.

⁵⁶ The 300 *juan* of the *Fenlei shiwu tongzuan* are organized into the following six sections: (1) “Domestic Affairs,” Neizheng 內政, (2) “Diplomacy,” Waijiao 外交, (3) “Finances,” Licai 理財, (4) “Military Affairs,” Jingwu 經武, (5) “Natural Sciences,” Gewu 格物, and (6) “Industry,” Kaogong 考工. The first section includes a general category called “Political system,” Zhengti 政體 and then six further categories organized according to the Six Boards of the Qing government, like the *Huangchao jingshi wenbian*.

⁵⁷ *Wuzhou zhengyi congbian* 五洲政藝叢編 (Shanghai: Hongbao shuju, 1902). Here the chapters *yangmin* (*juan*73) and *huangzheng* (*juan* 102) are part of the category “Domestic Affairs,” Neizheng 內政.

scope of the official reform policies carried out during the last decade of Qing rule.⁵⁸

After 1900 the term *yangmin* was largely replaced by the neologism *jingji* imported from Japan. By that time the new term not only appeared in Chinese translations of Japanese encyclopaedias like *Outline of Political Economy*, *Jingji fanlun* 經濟汎論 (1902),⁵⁹ but also in the titles of updated compilations of statecraft writings, such as the *Compilation of Writings on Political Economy from our August Dynasty*, *Huangchao jingji wenbian* 皇朝經濟文編 (1901).⁶⁰ But perhaps most conspicuously it appeared in Okamoto Kansuke's *Explorations into the Origins of Western Learning* (mentioned above) and in the *Encyclopaedia of New Learning*, now definitely carrying this new meaning. Like these new encyclopaedic works, the later statecraft compilations adopted an entirely new classification of knowledge. One of the most obvious characteristics is that the issues that were formerly neatly assembled under the heading "Revenue and Population Politics," *Huzheng* 戶政, were now scattered throughout different sections. One of the purposes of the *Comprehensive Compilation of Writings on Statecraft from our Dynasty*, *Huangchao jingshiwen tongbian* 皇朝經世文統編 (1901),⁶¹ for example, seems to have been to reorganize the old material into new categories. Everything related to agriculture now appeared under the category "Geography," *Diyu* 地輿, "Nourishing the People," *Yangmin* 養民, and "Relieving Famine," *Jiuhuang* 救荒, belonged to "Domestic Affairs," *Neizheng* 內政; "Tribute Grain Transport," *Caoyun* 漕運, and "Granaries," *Cangchu* 倉儲, belonged to "Finances," *Licai* 理財. All of these would have formerly been categorized under "Revenue and Population Politics"—the branch of government concerned with state income—in He Changling's and subsequent "old-style" statecraft compilations. To some extent this re-categorization of knowledge reflects the changes that came with the

⁵⁸ In this respect it seems debatable whether Zhong Shaohua's neat separation of the *jingshi* literature and the encyclopaedias of Western knowledge can be maintained. See his "Lun Qing mo 'xin xue'" 論清末'新學' [On the 'new learning' of the late Qing period], in *Jinqu ji: Zhong Shaohua wencun* 進取集: 鍾少華文存 [Forging ahead: Collected works by Zhong Shaohua] (Beijing: Guoji guangbo, 1998), 171–184. For a juxtaposition of the characteristics of *jingshiwen* and *baiké quanshu* see Zhong Shaohua, *Renlei zhishi de xin gongju*, 96–104. There is also an overlap regarding the people involved: the *Taixi yixue tongkao* 泰西藝學通考 [Comprehensive examination of Western technical learning] (Shanghai: Hongbao, 1901), for example, was compiled by He Liangdong 何良棟, the same man who had also published the *Huangchao jingshi wenbian wu ji* 皇朝經世文編五集 (1902). Liang Qichao, who was one of the major figures behind the *Great Encyclopaedia of New Learning* in 1903, also wrote a preface to the *Huangchao jingshi wen xin bian* 皇朝經世文新編 in 1898.

⁵⁹ Ikebukuro Hidetarō 池袋秀太郎, *Jingji fanlun* 經濟汎論, translated as *juan 43* in *Bian yi putong jiaoyu baiké quanshu* 編譯普通教育百科全書, eds. trans. Fan Diji 范迪吉 *et al.* (Shanghai: Huiwen xueshe, 1903).

⁶⁰ Qiuziqiangzhai zhuren 求自彊齋主人, ed., *Huangchao jingji wenbian* 皇朝經濟文編 (Shanghai: Shenji shuzhuang, 1901).

⁶¹ Shao Zhitang 邵之棠, comp., *Huangchao jingshi wen tongbian* 皇朝經世文統編 (Shanghai: Baoshanzhai, 1901).

examination reforms in 1902⁶² and even the reorganization of the government that came together with the Reform of Governance. Trade (relevant chapters both under “Finances,” Licai 理財 and “Diplomacy,” Waijiao 外交) and industry (relevant subheadings under “Finances” and “Industry,” Kaogong 考工) are the crucial newcomers here. Texts in these categories were likely to have appeared under the heading “Western Affairs” in earlier publications. Thus, this re-categorization could even be viewed as an attempt to wipe out the border between “them” and “us” and to make trade and industry an integral part of state activities. Tang Zhenzhe’s 湯震蟄 preface to the *Comprehensive Classified Compilation on Contemporary Affairs* (1902), for example, explicitly talks of the need to “amalgamate” 融會貫通 Chinese and Western learning in order to achieve the ultimate goal of enriching the country, “in order to truly order the world and relieve the people, absolutely truly establish the institutional foundations [for a modern nation]” 以真經濟, 以真設施 (with *jingji* here still meaning *jingshi jimin* 經世濟民, but already implying the new meaning of “political economy”).⁶³

One could also say that in this process of re-categorizing knowledge, which was a crucial part of China’s quest for wealth and power, the “administration of famine” was absorbed by the new science of political economy. In this scenario the more comprehensive notion of political economy appears as one of the state’s central concerns, just as famine relief had been before. According to Bin Wong the dual goals of generating state revenue and securing the welfare of the people were in conflict during most of the imperial period, but this tension was muted in the late nineteenth century for the following reasons:

First, the new axis of tension was between China (both state and society) and the West. Second, efforts were focused more on increasing production than on the distribution of wealth between government and people. Chinese thinking was influenced by Western ideas of political economy, especially the general idea of enriching society and the state either as complementary goals or as separate and noncompetitive goals.⁶⁴

This is exactly the process that we can observe in the encyclopaedic writings of this period. If one is to believe the trend in this literature, famine relief ceased to be the prime concern of the state and gave way to a more activist state involvement in the economy at large. But rather than developing a symbiotic relationship with the national economy, the Qing state itself became a contested authority after the turn of the century. In addition, voices appeared in very different quarters bemoaning the neglect of moral issues as expressed in the phrase “ordering the world and saving the people,” *jingshi jimin*, in favor of the sole preoccupation with wealth and power as espoused by the new “scientific” approach to the economy and expressed in the

⁶² Cf. the list of 32 categories of policy questions compiled in 1903 in Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 601.

⁶³ Tang Zhenzhe 湯震蟄, “Xu” 序 [Preface], in *Fenlei shiwu tongzuan*, comp. Chen Changshen 陳昌紳, 1b. (Shanghai: Wenlan shuju, 1902).

⁶⁴ Pierre-Étienne Will and R. Bin Wong, *Nourish the People: The State Civilian Granary System in China 1650–1850* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1991), 7.

new term “political economy” *jingji* 經濟. The Pan-Asianism of people like Okamoto belonged to these voices as did as the moralist response by Liu Dapeng.

While a simple look at the tables of contents and publication data might serve as evidence for some of the aspects described above, it is still necessary to have a closer look at the texts themselves. Here we will move from analysis of form to content.

A New Role for the State?

Among the earlier publications, including chapters on relief policies and political economy, two seem particularly noteworthy because they appear to be newly written rather than reprints of earlier standard texts. The first is the *Comprehensive Summary of the Imperial Library*, *Cefu tongzong* 策府統宗 (1889), which is an early example of a newly compiled encyclopaedia of well-established exam knowledge. Even though it is based on an earlier publication,⁶⁵ the editorial efforts put into this new version must have been substantial—or at least this is what the publisher wants his readers to believe since 3 years were needed to complete the work. The way it was compiled is even reminiscent of the English encyclopaedias of the time. According to the publisher’s preface, many highly competent people were involved in the process of compilation, and thus the result was deemed authoritative.⁶⁶ However, the names of these specialists remain unknown; instead, a long bibliography follows the prefatory matters. The second is *A Comprehensive Summary of Current Affairs by Category and for All Nations*, *Wanguo fenlei shiwu dacheng* 萬國分類時務大成 (1897), compiled by Qian Feng 錢豐,⁶⁷ which is again presented as a tool for exam

⁶⁵ Liu Changling’s 劉昌齡 preface (written in Guangzhou) states that the many shortcomings of the *Cexue dacheng* 策學大成 [A complete compendium of policy studies] compiled in 1877 by Cai Mei’an 蔡梅庵 had prompted Cai to take on this new project. Liu equally emphasizes the rigorous editorial guidelines, requiring, for example, that the sources of quoted texts be indicated. However, I looked in vain for the illustrations that are mentioned in the “Editorial Guidelines,” *liyan* 例言, in the copy available to me. Liu Changling, “Xu” 序, in Cai Mei’an 蔡梅庵 comp., *Cefu tongzong* 策府統宗 (Shanghai: Hongwen shuji 1889). The publication of an expanded edition of the *Cefu tongzong* in 1895 suggests that this project met the needs of the market. Cf. Wagner, “Bibliography of Chinese Encyclopaedic Works 1840–1937, their Japanese and Western Models and Sources.”

⁶⁶ “We have enlisted the services of numerous erudite scholars and assigned the tasks to them according to their specialization.” 廣延博雅。就專長而分。 “Xin zuan cefu tongzong xu” 新纂策府統宗序 [Preface to the newly compiled *Cefu tongzong*], in *Cefu tongzong*, 1a.

⁶⁷ Qian Feng 錢豐, comp., *Wanguo fenlei shiwu dacheng* 萬國分類時務大成 (Shanghai: Xiuhai shanfang 袖海山房, 1897). The material is arranged in the following categories: (1) “Astronomy,” *Tianwen lei* 天文類, (2) “Geography,” *Dili lei* 地理類, (3) “The Countries of the World,” *Bangguo lei* 邦國類, (4) “Monarchs,” *Guojun lei* 國君類, (5) “Civil Service System,” *Guanzhi lei* 官制類, (6) “Government posts,” *Guanzhi lei* 官職類, (7) “Recruitment,” *Xuanju lei* 選舉類, (8) “Politics,” *Zhengzhi lei* 政治類, (9) “Trade,” *Shangwu lei* 商務類, (10) “International Law,” *Gongfa lei* 公法類, (11) “Treaties,” *Huimeng lei* 會盟類, (12) “Diplomacy,” *Bangjiao lei* 邦交類, (13) “Civilization Sciences,” *Wenxue lei* 文學類 (on schools and writing systems, but also mathematics and physics), (14) “Military Preparedness,” *Wubei lei* 武備類, (15) “Minerals,”

preparation, this time specializing in the Western knowledge that had become an important part of the curriculum by the late 1890s.⁶⁸ Although once again the preface writer spares no pains to link this work with achievements in the distant past, he also aligns it with two famous Ming scholars whom he credits with having reestablished the link to the ancient “practical scholarship”, *shixue* 實學, reaching back to the Han dynasty.⁶⁹ From the Guidelines we learn that the compilation was based on 10 years’ collection of materials, which certainly included many newspaper cuttings. This might also explain why much of it reads like a cut-and-paste exercise. The scope of its contents is quite broad: “From geography and nations to aquatic animals and insects” 自地輿邦國以至水族昆蟲, everything that is discussed in the West is included. But although the contents are Western, the form “follows our Chinese scholarly standards” 體裁取法我中華藝林典則.⁷⁰ To begin with, the categories “Astronomy,” Tianwen 天文, and “Geography,” Dili 地理, seem to have satisfied this requirement. The warning that the book was registered with the proper authorities and that unauthorized reprints would be prosecuted suggests that pirated copies were a problem and that the work was quite popular.⁷¹

The *Comprehensive Summary of the Imperial Library* has a chapter on “Famine relief” in the section on “Revenue and Population.”⁷² The topic is dealt with in a highly systematic manner, giving a concise account of famine relief policies through the ages from the Zhou to the Ming but no further. This is interesting in itself as it is not about the West, or even about the present. Most entries start with a

Kuangwu lei 礦物類, (16) “Agriculture,” Nongzheng lei 農政類, (17) “Manufacture,” Zhizao lei 製造類, (18) “Human Affairs,” Renshi lei 人事類 (social customs, food, entertainment), (19) “Talents,” Rencai lei 人材類, (20) “People,” Renwu lei 人物類, (21) “Western Religion,” Xijiao lei 西教類, (22) “Palaces,” Gongshi lei 宮室類, (23) “Instruments,” Qiju lei 器具類, (24) “Fauna,” Dongwu lei 動物類, (25) “Flora,” Zhiwu lei 植物類.

⁶⁸ “The scope of the spring and autumn examinations has been broadened in order to enlarge the basis on which to recruit scholars [for government service]. It seems that only to draw on the models of the ancients and not broadly gather the facts about Western countries and bring them together in one book is not enough.” 春秋兩闈亦寬其格以廣取士,似非博采泰西各國事實彙編成書而僅此先民矩矱不足以資參攷也。Zhang Yunyu 張韞玉, “Xu” 敘 [Preface], in Qian Feng, *Wanguo fenlei shiwu dacheng*, 1b.

⁶⁹ The preface refers to Luo Hongxian 羅洪先 (Wengong 文恭) (1504–1564) and Fang Xiaoru 方孝孺 (Wenzheng 文正) (1357–1402) with statements emphasizing the duty of Confucian scholars to also excel in practical learning. The preface writer singles out their dedication to the “country” and “people,” which is also said to be the spirit of the present compilation. Zhang Yunyu, “Xu”, in Qian Feng, *Wanguo fenlei shiwu dacheng*, 1a.

⁷⁰ Qian Feng, “Fanli” 凡例 [Editorial guidelines], in *Wanguo fenlei shiwu dacheng*, 1a.

⁷¹ The official printing permit added to the title page is dated Guangxu 24 (1898), 7th month, exactly 1 year after the first printing in the summer of 1897, according to the imprint and the date of the preface.

⁷² *Cefu tongzong*, juan 49: 8b–12b. The 65 *juan* are organized into 12 categories, the first four representing the classical categorization of literature, the next six the Six Boards of the Qing government, and finally astronomy and geography (Jing 經, Shi 史, Zi 子, Ji 集, Li 吏, Hu 戶, Li 禮, Bing 兵, Xing 刑, Gong 工, Tianwen 天文, Dili 地理).

quotation from the *General Outline of a Broad [Range of Knowledge on] Government*, *Guangzhi pinglüe* 廣治平略, an older, popular exam aid written by Cai Fangbing 蔡方炳 (1626–1709).⁷³ The general introductory paragraph gives a normative outline of famine relief measures. Information is much more abundant on the Zhou, Han, Tang, but in particular on the Song and Ming dynasties, whereas all the other minor and non-Chinese dynasties are covered by only one to two lines, although the Yuan gets four lines. The message is a moral one: with the right attitude on the part of the ruler, the people will not suffer from scarcity. The responsibility for the welfare of the people lies entirely with the state, which has to secure the correct balance between grain storage and distribution.

On closer examination, however, the first section, which is a general introduction to the topic, can also be read as a critique of the current condition of famine relief. The first point is that, as opposed to the ideal of the past, in later ages state extraction of resources from the people was harming the people to the state's benefit (Wong's 'tension', see p. 343 above).⁷⁴ Liu Dapeng's comment sounds like an echo of this statement. All the malpractices of late Qing famine relief are listed: the cumbersome investigation and reporting system, the practice of concealing famine conditions, and the insistence on bureaucratic procedures even in most urgent cases. The good methods of old had become empty formulas, and the consequences were clear:

If [the ruler] sees the suffering of the people and does not come to their rescue, then the people will say in desperation: How comes that this one is ruling over us. Therefore those being destitute under the Zhou did not fear the lack of surplus wealth; they only feared the lack of the right attitude. If there was this attitude why should one fear not having enough? You benevolent gentlemen should keep this in mind.⁷⁵

苟視其困乏而不之救。民將憊然曰。惡在其為我上也。故周窮乏者。不患無餘財。惟患無是心。能推其心何憂不足。仁人君子其加意焉。

In short, the authors of this text still held the state ultimately responsible for famine relief, and this task was seen as a largely isolated policy field concerned with questions of redistribution of resources, not the generation of wealth. It is entirely located within a moral as opposed to a larger political economic context.

This is dealt with quite differently in the chapter on "How the Different Countries Care for Their People," *Geguo aimin* 各國愛民, in *A Comprehensive Summary of Current Affairs by Category and for All Nations*.⁷⁶ The chapter takes

⁷³ Cai Fangbing 蔡方炳, *Guangzhi pinglüe* 廣治平略 (China, 1724).

⁷⁴ "In ancient times [the ruler] bestowed his favors on the people. In later ages they harvested the returns of all their privileges to benefit the state. Thereupon every single thread of silk and every single grain of millet ended up on the roll of the Imperial Treasury. When people then met with natural disasters, they were condemned to death and those above did not care." 上世施其恩以及民者。後世收其權以利國。於是寸絲粒粟皆入天府之籍。將遇天災流行。且民陷於死亡。而上之人莫之着憂。 *Cefu tongzong*, *juan* 49: 8b.

⁷⁵ *Cefu tongzong*, *juan* 49: 9a.

⁷⁶ Qian Feng, *Wanguo fenlei shiwu dacheng*, *juan* 12: 14a–22a, under the category "Politics," *Zhengzhi lei* 政治類.

the form of an unwieldy 17-page article and is written in the style of dialogical persuasion that is familiar to contemporary newspaper readers.⁷⁷ The major part is devoted to a discussion of the Western European experience with both economic liberalism and protectionism and welfare policies. The main question pursued in these ten pages of consecutive text is the role of the state in the economy. As one would expect, the first statement includes the gist of the message—namely, that the state should not and cannot possibly be in charge of everything:

If we look at the situation of the people in the different European countries, they differentiate between rights and duties. If everything would be left to the state to take care of, then not only would the state be unable to catch up with everything, but it would also be bad for the people. If all the people without income, all the poor and suffering, who have nothing to eke out an existence, would rely on the state to care for them, then the cost would be enormous, and would eventually again have to be taken from the people.⁷⁸

查歐洲各國百姓分所當得分所當為之事，若俱歸國家管理，不特國家有所不逮，且必有害於衆人，如百姓無生意可做，或窮苦無以度日者，俱要國家撫養，則經費浩繁，仍不得不取之於民。

What follows is a discussion of the early nineteenth-century debates over the English Poor Laws and the “social question,” and the protectionist experiments carried out in Britain and France. The dominance of what was considered to be Smithian principles (liberalism, a laissez-faire capitalism, and the idea of the “invisible hand”) clearly shines through this part of the text. In general, it argues for economic liberalism and a non-interventionist state as well as for the self-regulating forces of the market. Examples include the French reforms after the 1848 revolution, when the state experimented with fixed salaries. The result was that people were discouraged from doing more than absolutely necessary, and nobody had the chance to earn more by producing more. The conclusion [由上節法國案內觀之可見 . . . based on what emerges from the inspection of the French case sketched above, one can see . . .] was that the policy was not only without benefit for the state, it was even harmful for the people. The second case is an ill-fated English attempt at protectionism. At first when the government banned the import of wool, domestic production was quite profitable, but this ended quickly when everybody abandoned his original trade and turned to wool manufacturing instead. The unprecedented increase in the number of workers led to falling wages, which ultimately left the textile workers in misery. Poverty increased and in the end protectionist politics turned out to be more harmful for the people. Here the reader is cross-referenced to the chapter on “trade” where the underlying mechanisms are discussed. When it comes to questions of public welfare and issues such as urban infrastructure and education, however, state intervention is judged quite differently.

⁷⁷ See Chap. 5 in my *Nur leere Reden: Politischer Diskurs und die Shanghaier Presse im China des späten neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003).

⁷⁸ Qian Feng, “Geguo aimin” 各國愛民 [How the different countries care for their people], in *Wanguo fenlei shiwu dacheng*, juan 12: 14a.

Much of what is presented here does resonate with the situation in China, even though the causes of poverty in early industrial England and of famine in agrarian China were quite different. The relationship between self-reliance and personal autonomy is addressed, as is the need for autonomous and responsible individuals as the basis of communities. But more fundamentally, the entire discussion of welfare policies reflects the Smithian idea of an intimate relationship between *Moral Sentiment* and the *Wealth of Nations* and the mercantilist arguments against which he was fighting.⁷⁹ The discussion starts by postulating a causal link between the state of civilization of a nation and the welfare and prosperity of its people—in a civilized environment, there would naturally be a constant drive for improvement. “Barbarian places” serve as evidence for this:

As to the barbarian places, their land is allowed to lie waste, the people are in a miserable condition, and even lack the most basic everyday necessities. If one travels through the different barbarian places one will know what the hardships of lacking civilization are.⁸⁰

至若野人之處，其土地荒蕪，人民墊隘，日用應需之項皆不能有。若遊覽各野人地方便知無文教之苦處矣。

In England this idea dated back to the late sixteenth century when the condition of the poor had become the touchstone of civilization and concern for the image of the state rather than genuine compassion for human misery was the driving force behind the first promulgation of the Poor Laws.⁸¹ The task of caring “for the poor, the existence of whom was unavoidable even in an affluent country,” as the Chinese encyclopaedist put it, was delegated to the state. With the onset of industrialization in the late eighteenth century the tensions between the rich and the poor increased. Fear of abuse and the detrimental effects on the labor market resulted in the reform of the Poor Laws in the early nineteenth century. A charitable approach was no longer considered adequate for state policy, and even private charity was not well received by the reformers. In their view the state had to care for people in need, but idleness was not to be rewarded. The result was deterrence by humiliation and the stigmatization of the poor, which did not appeal to the Chinese encyclopaedist. He seems to have read his Tocqueville, who preferred private charity to public relief. The former alleviated misery quietly and spontaneously, whereas the latter “publicized and legalized” the inferiority of those who were entitled to it.⁸² The poor houses were one of the most obvious examples of this. In these places people were humiliated and deprived of their most basic liberties and only those who were utterly desperate and had probably already lost their last bit of self-respect would go there. For the English critics of the Poor Laws and for the Chinese encyclopaedist, this seemed to be the wrong approach. Although the encyclopaedist admitted that the

⁷⁹ Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty*, 46–53.

⁸⁰ Qian Feng, *Wanguo fenlei shiwu dacheng*, “How the different countries care for their people,” *juan* 12: 14b.

⁸¹ Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty*, 3.

⁸² Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty*, 147–76, referring to Tocqueville and Beaumont on social reform.

state could not possibly have enough resources to care for all the poor, he still insisted that the honest among them must be protected, “so that they are not humiliated by others,” 令不受別人欺侮。The English practice of “accommodating the poor,” *anzhi qiongren* 安置窮人—that is, appeasing them, making them invisible to prevent their becoming a threat to public security—was, however, quite opposed to the notion of compassion and, more importantly, to human dignity.

The article introduces a more intelligent way of dealing with the obviously difficult problem of caring for the poor and of helping them to stand on their own feet: state-sponsored saving schemes that would ideally encourage the poor to work harder and accumulate modest savings. This strong interest in saving and credit schemes seems to imply that a more positive role of the state and its involvement in the economy was desired. Accordingly, the rest of this section is devoted to the theme of “enlightened modernity” through a discussion of the following: the establishment of a fair legal system that would not disadvantage the poor; the entire set of facilities and institutions governing the modern city, from the disposal of waste and sewage to ensure a high standard of public hygiene in order to prevent infectious diseases, to traffic regulations and gas and water supply, which should be under public management so that the poor could also enjoy the advantages of tap water; and modern education, not least by the establishment of public libraries, museums, and botanic and zoological gardens. The author seems to have had particular enthusiasm for fossils and geology and the need to physically experience everything as opposed to just reading about these things in books. It was the state’s responsibility to provide education and thus to teach people to distinguish between good and bad. Everything centers on becoming a “civilized country,” *wenjiao zhi guo* 文教之國, rather than following “the way of a tyrannical government,” *nüe zheng* 虐政 (17b).⁸³ Moreover, education was seen as a means to make people receptive to innovative technologies and thus work against the threat of famine: “When the poor people were not educated then they would be without understanding of the resources accumulated over many years, would only know to enjoy the present, and would not be willing to accumulate provisions for unforeseen events in the future, and once there is a famine or they are sick, they are helpless and would be entirely dependent on state relief.” 窮民既不讀書，遂無見識其歷年工作所得之資，第知為目前快樂，不肯有留積為將來不虞之備，一旦猝遇荒歉並疾病等，事便束手無策，坐待國家賑恤。(18a)

If Western countries would promote education with some of the huge funds they now use to nourish the poor and contain crime, then poverty and crime could be greatly diminished. Here again the role of the state is seen as pre-eminent and justified against an objecting voice (“some may say . . . but they are ignorant of . . .” 或有謂 . . . 不知). Interestingly, although this is a discussion of the English experience it could easily be applied to the situation in China.

The remaining seven pages are divided into five shorter, independent paragraphs that explicitly address China’s problems. None of these, however, goes beyond

⁸³ These and the following numbers in brackets refer to the page in *juan* 12 of Qian Feng, *Wanguo fenlei shiwu dacheng*, “How the different countries care for their people.”

the reform proposals widely discussed in the periodical press during the late 1890s, as they were also advocated by well-known Western affairs officials like Li Hongzhang and Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837–1909). The first of these shorter pieces introduces different forms of the promotion of industry and trade.⁸⁴ These are called “New Methods to Nourish the People,” Yangmin xinfa 養民新法, and include: (1) the mechanization of production, (2) the reduction of transport costs, (3) the establishment of telegraph offices and newspapers, (4) treaty trade, (5) consular representations, (6) an international system of post offices, (7) state support for merchants, (8) merchant associations, (9) international commercial exhibitions, (10) merchant schools, (11) engineering schools, and (12) maritime taxes. These innovations are said to have solved the problem of land scarcity and population pressure from which Europe suffered 100 years ago, at a time when “there were the disasters of flood and drought, so that it was unavoidable that people left their homes and starved to death, just like the situation we now have in China.” The question of the welfare of the people and of alleviating famine is clearly the core concern here. What differs from the earlier text (*Comprehensive Summary of the Imperial Library*) is that now the nation’s wealth is seen as being closely linked to the wellbeing of its people. Therefore, the promotion of industry and trade—as opposed to a mere redistribution of existing resources—would automatically solve the problem of famine.

China’s poverty continued to be the main issue. A Western expert was even consulted for an outside opinion. When asked what he considered to be the “greatest defect,” *dabi* 大弊, of China, an “American scholar” said to have resided in China for more than 20 years, replied: “The poverty of the nation,” *guokun* 國困, which he attributes to overpopulation (19b). The reader learns that the introduction of “new methods to nourish the people” had led to an unprecedented multiplication of production in France (by the factor of 3), England (by the factor of 6), and in America (by the factor of 43). (20a) Even though this obviously helped a small number of people to become super rich, the wages of the working people also increased somewhat so that they no longer had to suffer existential crises. This was very different in China, which was manifest in the ubiquitous floods and droughts and the misery of the millions waiting to be fed. In the 30 years since the opening of the treaty ports, China not only failed to become richer and stronger, but people became even more miserable and poor. (20b) The author exclusively blames those in positions of power “who have not mastered the new methods to nourish the people” 未克舉養民新法. The heroes who could bring about the necessary changes in the author’s view are still Li Hongzhang, Zhang Zhidong, and Liu Kunyi 劉坤一 (1830–1902). However, the scope of the envisioned changes still does not really go beyond a piecemeal adoption of Western technologies and institutions, and the paragraph ends with the familiar final phrase of political editorials: those in positions of power should take this into consideration. (20a)

⁸⁴ The others are on demography (19b–20a), “How to achieve wealth” (20a), the diffusion of innovations via newspapers (20b), and finally the benefits of mining, land reclamation, and migration policies (21a–22a).

All of this may have left the reader puzzled not only because at times the text reads like a patchwork, especially towards the end of the chapter, or because it paints an overly bleak and passive picture of China's people, but probably also because conditions were not easily compatible. Whereas in England the growing gap between the rich and the poor could be seen as a consequence of the rise of capitalist industries, China's poverty was still largely a function of a pre-modern agrarian economy that had to cope with the added pressure from a growing world market. The era when agriculture was no longer considered the basis of wealth, but industrial workers (工人之於國家即生財之源致富之本 “the workers are the source for a state's wealth and the root of its achieving prosperity”) (22a), or perhaps more accurately, when economic thought conceiving of wealth primarily in terms of capital and labor rather than land, had not yet arrived. On the one hand, the entire discussion on the Poor Laws could only be read in an allegorical way, drawing attention to issues of autonomy and dignity on a national rather than on a personal level, but on the other hand it was the awareness of the plight of the working class in the capitalist West that inspired radical, socialist reformers like Sun Yatsen or, in a different way, Okamoto Kansuke, to develop their own ideas and strategies to avoid this unpleasant phase in the development of modern Asian societies. For the compiler of our encyclopaedia, however, the lure of Western industrial modernity seemed to have been much bigger than its implied dangers, and it was clear that the state had to play a decisive role in the game.

A New Science for the Chinese Nation

After the high tide of the scramble for concessions and the settlement of the Boxer Protocol the situation changed entirely. Even though the Qing state had endorsed a comprehensive reform program along the lines outlined above, the rise of both nationalism and pan-Asianism thwarted its success. Now there was a clear sense of the need for a strong centralized state that would be able to confront the imperialist powers. At the same time, however, it had become unacceptable to many that the Manchu state should represent the Chinese nation in this international competition. At that time *keizai* 經濟, the Japanese translation for the English term “political economy,” was adopted into the Chinese language. It appears in Okamoto's *Explorations*,⁸⁵ which includes a whole chapter on political economy, and a little

⁸⁵ See footnote 1 above. Okamoto was also the author of the well-known *Record of International History*, *Wanguo Shiji* 萬國史記 (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1879). This book went through many reprints, and according to one estimate reached a circulation number of 300,000 (including pirated copies). Zhou Jianguo 周建高, “Jindai Zhong Ri shijie shixue jiaoliu yanjiu: Yi *Wan guo shiji* wei zhongxin” 近代中日世界史學交流研究:以《萬國史記》為中心. [A Study of the Sino-Japanese exchange of world historical knowledge in the modern period: With a focus on the *Record of International History*]. URL: <http://www.ch.zju.edu.cn/rwxy/rbs/shuoshilunwenZHOUJIANGAO.htm> (8.9.2007).

later in “Outline of Political Economy” (1902), a Chinese translation of the volume on political economy in a late-nineteenth century Japanese encyclopaedia,⁸⁶ and finally in the *Great Encyclopaedia of New Learning* (1903),⁸⁷ which has a section on *jingji* that is included in the broad category of “State Finances 理財.” All of these—each in a very distinct way—clearly outline the rules of the game of global capitalism. None of them is concerned with famine relief, but all are meant to provide knowledge that would help to survive in the “struggle of existence.”

The translated Japanese article, most likely based on an English encyclopaedia article, is a systematic, “scientific” introduction to the topic. It provides a clearly structured and punctuated text that starts off with concise definitions of basic terms such as demand, growth and value, production, exchange and distribution, societal progress, and economic development, outlining the system of economic knowledge and introducing different schools of economic thought. It is crucial to establish a link between the development, *fada* 發達, of the national economy and the progress of civilization, *wenhua zhi jinbu* 文化之進步, as the English literature on political economy does. Equally important is a decidedly materialist outlook, which is evident in the definition of the subject:

It (i.e. the science of political economy) sets man apart and specializes on material value as its central concept of research.

It explains the production, distribution and exchange of material value, and its impact on man. The concept of ownership of material value occupies the first place, the concept of man the second.

The main idea involving people is that it is the branch of learning that makes people each own private property.

置人於度外。專就財以立觀念為研究者。
講財之生產分配交易。以關係於人占財之觀念。為主位人之觀念在第二位。⁸⁸
主關於人之觀念。使人各有財之問學。⁸⁹

Although Okamoto Kansuke’s chapter on political economy is rather different, it seems likely that he took much of his knowledge from this Japanese encyclopaedia, as well as from the available translated English encyclopaedias and other Western literature. Indeed, as he claimed in the introduction, the book was based on years

⁸⁶ Ikebukuro Hidetarō, *Keizai hanron* 經濟汎論 [Outline of political economy], volume 70 of the Japanese *Teikoku hyakka zensho* 帝國百科全書 (Tokyo: Hakubunkan 博文館, 1898–1908). This part of the Japanese encyclopaedia was translated by the Donghua yishushe 東華譯書社 under the title *Jingji fanlun* 經濟汎論 as vol. 43 of the *Bianyi putong jiaoyu baike quanshu*, Li Diji et al., eds. Cf. Wagner, “Bibliography,” year 1903.

⁸⁷ The editorial guidelines of the *Xinxue da congshu* emphasize that here the most famous writings on the essentials of government (*jing guo zhi zhizhe* 經國之旨者) from Japan and China were put together. Only most recent translations and most recent editions were chosen and there is no overlap with the content of other encyclopaedic works. “Liyan” 例言 [Editorial guidelines], in *Xinxue da congshu*, 1.

⁸⁸ Punctuation as in the original text!

⁸⁹ Ikebukuro Hidetarō, *Jingji fanlun*, 1a.

of intensive readings.⁹⁰ The motivation for his studies, as well as the development of his own worldview, seems to have originated from a journey to the locations of China’s past glory earlier in his career during the years 1874–1875. As Kawase Gitarō 河瀨儀太郎 (a translator for the *Shangwu bao* 商務報 in Wuchang, where Okamoto visited in 1900), the author of the preface, recounts, Okamoto went to see the Great Wall, the Taishan, the remains of the old home of Confucius, and the old capital Luoyang and returned with a sigh of regret that the present could not compare with the past. When he travelled to Shanghai and Hankou again during the 1890s, he noticed China’s increasing poverty and weakness. He tried to meet Zhang Zhidong, who was then governor of Hubei, in order to present his strategy to save the nation, but this meeting did not come about.⁹¹ While “practical learning,” *shixue* 實學, as opposed to China’s empty literary refinement, is seen as the cause of Western wealth and power, Okamoto emphasizes the contrast between what may be called “East-Asian values” (for example filial piety) and the materialist outlook evident in the English literature on political economy. Thus, apart from its brief discussion of socialism,⁹² *Explorations into the Origins of Western Learning* is perhaps most remarkable for its advocacy of pan-Asian ideas.

Okamoto’s chapter starts with a concise *tour de force* explanation of the main theories of political economy, beginning with the three pillars of the English school: Adam Smith 斯密士 (1723–1790), stressing what he considered to be Smith’s belief that individual profit and free competition were beneficial for the general good; Thomas Malthus 末爾薩士 (1766–1834), who explored the principles of societal progress and human reproduction; and David Ricardo 黎甲爾突 (1772–1823), who maintained that “man pursues profit as water flows downwards, or he avoids hardship and seeks pleasure and is only anxious about his own profit” (emphatic punctuation). Then came the pioneers of French and American socialist thought: Henri de Saint-Simon 倉志門 (1760–1825), “the unionist who advocated that property belonged to all and should be distributed equally”; Henry Carey 顯理開黎 (1793–1879), author of a book on sociology, “in which he opposed the views of the evangelical philanthropist Hannah More (1745–1833)” 反末爾等; Henry George 顯理若治 (1839–1897), the famous author of *Progress and Poverty*, who also argued against More and advocated the theory of “national ownership of land”; Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen 雷福森 (1818–1888) and his credit societies; and the German protectionist Friedrich List 黎斯篤 (1789–1846) and his theory of the stages of economic development in societies. According to these stages, progress is

⁹⁰ “Xuyan” 緒言 [Introduction], in Okamoto Kansuke, *Xixue tanyuan*, 1.

⁹¹ Kawase Gitarō 河瀨儀太郎, “Xixue tanyuan xu” 西學探源序 [Preface the *Xixue tanyuan*], in Okamoto Kansuke, *Xixue tanyuan*, 1a–2a.

⁹² The first comprehensive and systematic attempt to introduce socialist ideas to a Chinese public was probably *Modern Socialism*, *Jinshi shehui zhuyi* 近世社會主義, translated from the Japanese and published by the Guangzhi shuju in 1903. Zou Zhenhuan 鄒振環, *Yingxiang Zhongguo jindai shehui de yibai zhong yizuo* 影響中國近代社會的一百種譯作 [100 translations that have influenced modern Chinese society] (Beijing: Zhongguo duiwai fanyi chubanshe, 1996), 179. At least some of the ideas were already present in Okamoto’s *Explorations*.

characterized by the transition from fishing and hunting, to livestock farming, agriculture, industry, and finally, trade. Each stage is accompanied by adequate policies of protection and liberalism in order to ensure societal progress. In Okamoto's view, only England had achieved the fifth stage, which explained why other European countries, such as France and Germany, were more receptive to protectionist and socialist ideas. They needed a far-sighted strategy that considered the long-term benefit of all the people in a country—rather than Smith's short-sighted profiteering—in order to be prepared for competition in the world of trade and empire at the fifth stage.⁹³

However, this did not mean that Okamoto was a protectionist; he simply sifted through everything he could get hold of in order to identify useful information. His message was that different and even contradicting theories could exist alongside each other. He spoke of German protectionism, which rose in response to the adoption of Smithian liberalism, and even about the historicists who then mediated between the two, claiming that it depended on the circumstances of a particular time and place whether or not one should adopt liberal or protectionist ideas. (This part is again marked with emphatic punctuation.) The same occurred with English individualists and French socialists who were engaged in endless debates and then joined by the theory of the “speakers' platform society,” *jiangtan shehui* 講壇社會, which examined the views of both and was not biased towards any of them. In his view it was the competition of ideas that brought about progress, *jinhua* 進化. Okamoto seemed to be intrigued by the idea of competition within a well-integrated society, 乃保合中有競爭而競爭又皈保合者也 (again with emphatic punctuation).⁹⁴ He was also interested in the best strategy with which to rule colonized territories (and reviews British, Russian, and Dutch practice), and goes from there to Columbus and his discoveries to later expeditions to the poles and to the unknown territories of Africa, observing that “the occupation of land has to be conducted under the name of a state and under international law.” Colonialism is clearly seen as one of the major sources of Western wealth, with the other important source being industry. In fact, the lack of industry is cited as the reason why Spain and Portugal did not achieve wealth and power despite their rich colonies.

Okamoto's message was that China should not follow the West in everything, and he played his part in propagating the concept of “East Asia.” In his view, despite a pluralism of ideas in the Western countries, they were all the same in so far as they only believed in their own ideas. Most crucial, however, was that everything of importance could already be found in Chinese economic thought since the time of Confucius. None of the Western thinkers knew about the Confucian dictum that “there is no need to fear that there is little, but one has to fear that it is not equally distributed; there is no need to fear poverty, but one has to fear unrest,” 不患寡而患不均, 不患貧而患不安. Also, the basic problem of the causes of economic inequality had already been identified in the *Great Learning*, *Daxue* 大學, which stated that “the producers [of food] are many, but the consumers few; those who are

⁹³ Okamoto Kansuke, *Xixue tanyuan*, *juan* 3: 14b.

⁹⁴ Okamoto Kansuke, *Xixue tanyuan*, *juan* 3: 15a.

manufacturing [goods] are suffering, but those who are using them are at ease,” 生之者眾，食之者寡，為之者疾，用之者舒。⁹⁵ We can also assume that he was familiar with the *Supplement to the Elaborations of the Meaning of the Great Learning*, *Daxue yanyi bu* 大學衍義補, one of the most successful compendia of “encyclopaedic materials” on practical statesmanship, assembling “reliable and applicable knowledge” of the Ming that was frequently reprinted throughout the late imperial period, including in Korea and Japan.⁹⁶ These references indicate unease with the injustice implied in the way the modern economy worked when unrestrained by state intervention. But who should intervene in the economic behavior of nations? Okamoto’s critique of an unquestioned imitation of the West is also implicit in other chapters of his work as, for example, when he writes about ethical issues (“When Europeans and Americans talk about human relations they exclusively talk about rights and duties, rarely do they mention filial respect.” 歐美之人，其於人倫，專論權利義務，言及孝敬者甚少），⁹⁷ women’s rights, and national values. There also seemed to be a problem not so much with economic practice, as with adopting an ideology that put material value before everything. The problems were identified; but were there solutions?

The *Great Book Collection of New Knowledge* (1903) is probably best known as forming a part of Liang Qichao’s project to popularize knowledge, as is his Bookshop for the Distribution of Knowledge that was established in Shanghai in the same year.⁹⁸ According to Zhong Shaohua, the *Great Book Collection* is based on articles that had first appeared in the *Miscellany for Reforming the People*, *Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報 (1902–1904). It assembles many contributions by the most famous Chinese and Japanese scholars of the time, as well as many articles by unidentified authors.⁹⁹ This collection can easily be perceived as part of Liang Qichao’s nation-building project with its intention to educate modern citizens and make them active participants in the great task to achieve national wealth and power (cf. the preface by Yu Yue quoted earlier). “Political Economy,” *Jingji* 經濟, is the first sub-category in the section “State Finances.” The first article by a certain Yuchenzi 雨塵子 reflects the predominance of social-Darwinist ideas in the political discourse of the time, “The Theory of Economic Competition,” *Jingji jingzheng lun* 經濟競爭論. Even though he does not really go beyond the familiar idea of the survival of the fittest and mentions neither socialist nor pan-Asian ideas, it is hardly

⁹⁵ Okamoto Kansuke, *Xixue tanyuan*, *juan* 3: 14a, quoting from *The Analects*, Lunyu 論語 16.1 and the *Great Learning*, *Daxue* 大學 10.

⁹⁶ Chu Hung-lam, “Ch’iu Chun (1421–1495) and the ‘Ta-hsueh yen-i pu’: Statecraft Thought in Fifteenth-Century China” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1984), 76–77. Welfare policies as well as state finances were prominent themes in this book. See the list of topics on pages 408–419. I am grateful to Benjamin Elman for drawing my attention to this dissertation. The prevalence of these quotes from the classics is also manifest in the fact that both statements are also frequently quoted in Richard’s writings.

⁹⁷ Okamoto Kansuke, *Xixue tanyuan*, *juan* 1: 11b.

⁹⁸ Bernal, *Chinese Socialism*, 94.

⁹⁹ Zhong Shaohua, *Jinquji*, 447.

less radical. The most noteworthy feature here is that in the end the Qing state is discarded altogether—though at first sight this is not at all obvious.¹⁰⁰

The author paints a pretty disillusioning picture of the human condition, explaining imperialism as the direct product of the competitive, liberal capitalist economy, which again is seen as the direct consequence of man's love for life, freedom, and property. The subtitles might suffice to give one a basic gist of the article: "The Reason why Economic Competition is Growing Daily" 經濟競爭日巨之故 was the need to create more demand and open new markets in order to satisfy growing production. The effects of this ideology of growth were aggravated by the fact that nation-states, including Japan, were behaving like capitalists, which was "The Origin of Imperialism," 帝國主義之由來 although its proponents liked to portray it as a civilizing mission. That one of the major aims of warfare was the stimulation of trade and industry is explained in "The Relationship Between the Military and Trade and Industry," 軍備與商工業之關係. A similar point is made in "The Core of Economic Competition," 經濟競爭中心點, which states that the Boxer Protocol and the preservation of China's territorial integrity were highly beneficial for Western trade. "The Impact on China," 中國所受之影響, points out that even though the Chinese were a strong people, they were doomed to decay because their nation was weak. The example of Chinese immigrants in America and Australia who became victims of racial discrimination served as a powerful illustration of this. And finally, "The Way to Survive," 自存之道, and to achieve national strength was to abandon the dependence on the government, which was, of course, the Manchu government, and to "use the strength of our own race to protect our inherited territorial rights," 以自族之力保固有之土地權利.

This final conclusion was obviously the crucial point and it must have been a persuasive one for contemporary Chinese readers who were confronted with the power of the modern nation-states. The rationale for the rising anti-Manchuism was that whereas the strength of foreign nations lay in the fact that their governments protected their trade and industry and vice versa, the Qing government extracted money from trade and commerce and used the *likin* tax 釐稅 to drain the economy: "They use 100 methods to destroy the industries and do not care. Therefore if our people want to develop industry relying on the government is completely out of the way," 百端摧折實業而不顧。故我國民欲振興實業而依賴政府則萬無可興之道。 Moreover, it was because of the "the historical grudge linked to the racial problem," 以人種之關係歷史之仇怨, that under no circumstances could the Manchu government and Chinese trade and industry rely on each other. It is telling that the author had to distort a phrase from the *Mengzi* 孟子 in order to justify this second point: "There is a passage in the *Mengzi* saying: I love my younger brother, but I do not love the younger brother of a man of Qin." 孟子有言'吾弟則愛之。秦人之弟則不愛。 However, in the original text this is part of a philosophical argument, and has nothing to do with ethnic difference.¹⁰¹ The author fails to produce any convincing

¹⁰⁰ *Xinxue da congshu*, juan 27: 1a–8a.

¹⁰¹ *Mengzi* 61.4. Cf. James Legge, trans., *The Works of Mencius* (New York: Dover, 1970), 398.

arguments for his racial nationalism, apart from some vague references to a reinvigorated Germany and Italy whom he claims have both built their state on the basis of one and the same nation:

If the Europeans had not built up the power of their nation-states in the nineteenth century, then the economic competition of the twentieth century could not possibly be so rude and unreasonable. Those who fight for their existence in the world of economic competition all must do the same.

歐人不於十九世紀中大振民族國家之勢力，則二十世紀中經濟競爭必不能強橫至此，於經濟競爭世界中爭自存者皆宜如此也。¹⁰²

The economy effectively ceased to have an existence outside of politics. In the twentieth century, politics had become economic politics and “there is no politics outside of the economy” 捨經濟外更無所謂政治也。¹⁰³ The rules of the game had effectively changed.

Conclusion

According to the old worldview the relationship between the state and the people was a moral one, not an economic one. The Qing state was never seen as an interested player in the game. The state’s role was not to generate profit, it was seen rather as a regulative and redistributive one. As Rowe observed in his study of the eighteenth-century model official Chen Hongmou, “[t]he wise official seeks to enter the marketplace and turn its operations to the benefit of the public and the state.”¹⁰⁴ One could even say that the official as the representative of the state played the role of the highly visible “invisible hand.” In the nineteenth century, however, this image—and it was probably rarely more than that—could no longer be maintained. Instead, state-society relations were regarded in terms of a struggle for resources. The gist of the “new methods of nourishing the people” was to bring the two together again in order to be able to compete on a higher level of the game. The solution was a much more economically activist state, committing itself vigorously to the project of modernity and engaging the forces of the market in a positive way, while leaving them their independence. In order to be an equal player in the international game of industry and empire the state had to be in charge. The state had to act as a promoter, protector, and regulator of industry and trade. This message was absolutely unambiguous, but at the same time it was highly problematic.

Here some of the issues introduced earlier come back into our discussion, most importantly the call for a symbiotic relationship between the national economy and the nation-state as a means to gain wealth and power.¹⁰⁵ Aware of the danger of

¹⁰² *Xinxue da congshu*, juan 27: 7b.

¹⁰³ *Xinxue da congshu*, juan 27: 7b.

¹⁰⁴ Rowe, *Saving the World*, 163.

¹⁰⁵ An interesting case of how this was realized in Japan much earlier in a rather different way is studied by Najita Tetsuo. See Najita Tetsuo, *Visions of Virtue in Tokugawa Japan: the Kaitokudō Merchant Academy of Osaka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

unduly simplifying the image, I have come to the following conclusion: In the minds of people like Liu Dapeng the Qing economy very much conformed to the ideal image of a “moral economy” with minimal government interference, as expressed in the formula “storing wealth among the people,” *cang fu yu min* 藏富於民, and expounded in important compendia of theoretical and practical statecraft knowledge.¹⁰⁶ Even though the compilation of these was meant to provide proposals and constructive remedies for the government’s “lack of benevolence toward and affection for the people”¹⁰⁷ (revealing that the reality was different from the ideal image), in the desirable form of government the virtuous ruler had “the role of a mediator or coordinator” rather than that of an active participant in the economy. Although this was doubtless an ideal that generously glossed over the many ways in which the Qing state drew on both economic and military power, it was still very much alive in people’s minds until the late nineteenth century. The nineteenth-century financial crisis, together with the infinite obligations to pay indemnities, created the need to generate substantive amounts of capital. New methods of collaboration between the state and the economy—methods that went well beyond state intervention in the economy in the form of the redistribution of resources via the state granary system—became necessary. The old model did not work anymore. Less and more was needed at the same time: less patronizing authoritarianism and more involvement in the private economy. When the Qing state was well on its way to tackle the problems of the new age, the rising tide of ethnic nationalism simply left it without any legitimacy to rule China.

The Qing government resumed its reform efforts with the promulgation of the Reform of Governance in 1901. The large number of encyclopaedic works of Western knowledge that were published at the same time can be seen as a positive social response to that. At the same time the great disillusionment of some sectors of Chinese society with the Qing government thwarted the reforms from the start. Moreover, the rise of pan-Asian thought and the anti-imperialism its early proponents associated with it, also worked against this effort to adopt Western institutions. People started to explore and experiment with alternative models. Here we return to Okamoto’s views on Vanderbilt and the first emperor of Qin and see whether we now are able to make some sense of the passage introduced at the beginning of this chapter.

Vanderbilt was a private entrepreneur. The more successful he was the more important he became for the state and vice versa; both became increasingly dependent on each other. The first emperor of Qin was the unifier of the Middle

¹⁰⁶ The *Daxue yanyi bu* (first printed in 1488) is perhaps the earliest example, which remained influential up until the late nineteenth century. Famous officials such as Chen Hongmou produced abbreviated versions (1737, reprinted in 1866). Chu Hung-lam, “Ch’iu Chun (1421–1495) and the ‘Ta-hsueh yen-i pu’: Statecraft Thought in Fifteenth-Century China,” 17–20, 40. Though again, when we read William Rowe, in practice the difference between the role of the state in the “moral economy” of the eighteenth century and in the ideas of late nineteenth-century political economy was not that big after all. Cf. part II: “Creating Prosperity,” in his *Saving the World*, 155–287.

¹⁰⁷ Chu Hung-lam, “Ch’iu Chun (1421–1495) and the ‘Ta-hsueh yen-i pu’,” 278.

Kingdoms and the first ruler over a Chinese empire. He is stereotypically depicted as ruthless and violent in his quest for wealth and power. At the time nobody was strong enough to oppose Qin, but later he was censured for his brutal tyranny. I would suggest that Vanderbilt serves as a viable alternative example for the same achievement as Qin Shihuang—making the country/nation wealthy and powerful—, but in a way that was somehow more acceptable to everybody. The search for a solution that makes greater equality possible lingers in the background. Further, in order to avoid suffering the fate of the other central kingdoms that were swallowed up by Qin, the study of political economy was necessary, either in order to be able to do the same or to be better equipped to respond adequately to this new situation. The encyclopaedias of the early twentieth century looked much more “scientific” than those of the late nineteenth century. They covered a much broader scope of knowledge than the earlier ones. Nevertheless, this knowledge remained decidedly political.

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