

## Seeking Solutions for China's Crisis: Ng Poon Chew, *Chung Sai Yat Po* and the Reform and Revolutionary Movements

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### Abstract:

The article examines how the ideologies propagated by Kang Youwei/Liang Qichao's Reform Movement and Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Movement were perceived, analyzed, debated, accepted and/or rejected in overseas Chinese societies through a case study of the opinions of *Chung Sai Yat Po*, a highly influential newspaper in the San Francisco Chinatown in the early twentieth century, as well as its founder, Reverend Dr Ng Poon Chew (1866-1931). Through this study, the author argues for a more subtle approach to gain a better understanding of the reception of Kang/Liang and Sun's respective political movements among the overseas Chinese, one that is sensitive to the agency and particular experiences of individuals and the variety of stimuli that shaped their thinking processes.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In discussing the reception of Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Movement in overseas Chinese societies, recent historical scholarship has attempted to move away from the patriotic, nationalistic narratives of the Kuomintang and PRC historiographies that had been magnifying the positive contributions made by the overseas Chinese.<sup>2</sup> There is little doubt that the Chinese migrant communities, particularly those in Colonial Southeast Asia and North America, provided crucial sources of funds, manpower and propaganda for Sun's movement and the Reform Movement of his rivals Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao. Where the responses to the movements were concerned, the scholarship has come to the view that majority of the overseas Chinese were inclined towards maintaining status quo under the Qing regime and those who sought after change were initially more supportive of Kang/Liang's Reform Movement, while the progress made by Sun's Revolutionary Movement in winning over the overseas Chinese was both slow and gradual.<sup>3</sup> However, in reconstructing this general picture of the political climate among the overseas Chinese with respect of Sun's and Kang/Liang's respective movements, the scholarship has made little effort to date to study the agency of the individuals in terms of how they perceived and analyzed the ideologies propagated by Sun and Kang.

The overseas Chinese were by no means passive receivers. This was especially the case with the educated intellectual-elites among them. While they unanimously desired a strong, prosperous and independent China free from foreign aggressions and incursions, questions over the best possible means to achieve such nationalistic vision gave rise to complex processes of thought. Within such processes, a variety of stimuli interacted and interplayed with one another. They consisted not only of the ideologies from Sun and Kang/Liang's respective movements, but also the values they were exposed to through their individual experience in their host societies. A close examination of the thinking processes through the opinions (as reflected in writings and journalistic venture) of a prominent individual who had direct interactions with Sun and Kang allows us to gain a better glimpse of how the ideologies promoted by Sun and Kang/Liang were debated, contested, accepted and/or rejected in overseas Chinese societies. The present article seeks to do so with a case study featuring the opinions of *Chung Sai Yat Po*, a highly influential Chinese-language newspaper<sup>4</sup> in the San Francisco Chinatown (one of the

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<sup>2</sup> The latest example is Huang Jianli, "Umbilical Ties: The Framing of the Overseas Chinese as the Mother of the Revolution", in Lee Lai To, Lee Hock Guan, eds. *Sun Yat-sen, Nanyang and the 1911 Revolution* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011), pp.75-129.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Prasenjit Duara, "Nationalists among Transnationals: Overseas Chinese and the Idea of China, 1900-1911," in Ong Aihwa and Nonini M Donald eds., *Ungrounded Empires, the Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 39-60.

<sup>4</sup> Plausible quantitative measures of CSYP's popularity in the San Francisco Chinatown came from N. W. Ayer & Son's *American Newspaper Annual and Directory*. In the years 1900-1911, CSYP enjoyed high annual circulation rates of 81% (1902), 60% (1905), 59% (1906), 30% (1907), 40% (1908), 54% (1909), 54% (1910) and 50% (1911) (No figures were available for the years 1900-1902, while CSYP was the only Chinese-language newspaper within the circulation data for 1903 and 1904, making the figures for those years problematic). See figures cited in Sun

most populous of its kind in the United States) and its founder and Managing Editor, Reverend Dr Ng Poon Chew (Wu Panzhao, 1866-1931).<sup>5</sup>

## 2. A PROMINENT OVERSEAS CHINESE INTELLECTUAL-ELITE AND HIS NEWSPAPER

Ng Poon Chew presents an interesting and illustrative case of an overseas Chinese intellectual-elite. He was a border-crossing figure whose life was inseparable from the cross currents of the histories of Modern China and the United States between the late nineteenth to the twentieth centuries. China was experiencing a particularly tumultuous and agonizing era under the rule of the Manchu Qing Dynasty, plagued by internal chaos, foreign incursions and severe economic difficulties. The turmoil led to questions over China's future and the rise of Kang Youwei and Sun Yat-sen's opposing movements. The Reform Movement, led by Kang and his disciple Liang Qichao, advocated for a constitutional monarchy under the Guangxu Emperor, whereas Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Movement clamoured for overthrowing the Manchu monarchical system of rule and replacing it with a democratic republic. As for the United States, it had by this time recovered from the social-economic disruptions of the Civil War and was well on its way to become one of the world's major industrial and political powers. The rapid development of its economy, in particular the opening of its Western region, induced large-scale immigration waves from both Europe and China, as well as the formation of migrant communities within its soil. Like many Chinese migrants who were affected by the economic difficulties in China and flocked to the United States to seek a living, Ng hailed from Canton in South China. He went to the United States at the age of fifteen. What distinguished his experience from those of the majority of his compatriots was that he had the rare opportunity, for a Chinese migrant, to

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Yumei, *From Isolation to Participation: Chung Sai Yat Po and San Francisco's Chinatown* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Maryland, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> In dealing with *CSYP*'s editorials, there is an issue that needs to be addressed i.e. whether the opinions of Ng Poon Chew and that of *CSYP* should be treated as synonymous. The issue arises due to the fact that *CSYP* never really identified the authors of its own editorials. Between 1900 and 1903, no names were given, whereas from 1904 onwards, the editorials started to use pseudonyms to indicate the authorship, but these hardly provide any clue as to whether the editorials were written by Ng himself or by other editors. As a key founder and managing editor of the paper, Ng undoubtedly had a predominant role to play in determining the standpoints of the editorials, yet he could also have consulted the opinions of his editorial staffs in regular meetings before generating the final output, which could either have been written by Ng personally, or another editor with ideas or thoughts by Ng. In consideration of these possibilities, as well as the aforementioned difficulties in identifying the true authorship of the editorials, the thesis will treat the editorials separately from Ng, while not discounting the likelihood that they might have Ng's inputs and contributions. While it is difficult to determine the authorship of the editorials, it is not impossible, in certain instances, to find out whether the editorials reflected Ng's personal opinions or views. In fact this could be achieved by comparing the ideas expressed in the editorials with those from extracts of Ng's public speeches in English published in the *New York Times*. Specific examples of this methodology will come about in the course of the thesis. No less important to this study are the writings and speeches by Sun Yat-sen, Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, which have been compiled and published. The study would compare and contrast the ideas, values or beliefs expressed in these materials with those found in the *CSYP* editorials and Ng's English speeches.

receive and be thoroughly groomed by a Western religious education,<sup>6</sup> one that opened him to the spirit and ideals of the American Society founded on the fundamental principles of freedom, equality and universal brotherhood originating from the French Revolution, as well as the Christian values of love, faith and compassion for all human kinds. Ng's theological studies in preparation for the Presbyterian Ministry happened to coincide with the so-called "Progressive Era" in the United States' history, a period that began in the 1880s and was characterized by widespread humanitarian concerns among American intellectuals and the religious communities over the social ills of rapid industrialization and the resultant strong emphasis on the need to assist the underprivileged in society.<sup>7</sup> On the part of the religious communities there arose the so-called "social gospel" that implored upon believers to move beyond merely ecclesiastical concerns and live and work according to "what Christ would do in a particular situation,"<sup>8</sup> thus fulfilling their "duty and capacity to purge the world of poverty and inequality."<sup>9</sup> These intellectual currents wrought a profound influence on Ng. The value of purging the world of poverty and inequality was to find an outlet of expression in Ng's championship of the civil rights of his fellow Chinese compatriots, whose sufferings from the discrimination and exclusion of the American mainstream society sparked off the budding nationalist sentiments within him.

Apart from his educational background, Ng Poon Chew could be considered as an "intellectual-elite"<sup>10</sup> because of his profound engagement in the affairs of his times and the significant role he played within the Chinese communities in the United States. In a large part of his life and career, Ng was caught in the dilemmas facing his homeland China and the Chinese communities in America. His own particular nationalist sentiments originated from his sense of belonging and commitments towards the Chinese communities. His indignation against the United States' discriminative practices and exclusionist policies against the Chinese immigrants made him a tireless, vocal champion of their civil rights. At the same time, the plights of his fellow compatriots gave rise to questions deep in his mind as to whether China's backwardness and weak international position had been the root cause of the humiliations his fellow compatriots had been subjected to and what could be done to save their motherland and brighten its future. These burning questions in turn became the motivating force behind his

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<sup>6</sup> See Corinne Hoexter, *From Canton to California: The Epic of Chinese Immigration* (New York: Four Winds Press, 1976), pp. 144-151.

<sup>7</sup> John Mack Farager, et al., *Out of Many: A History of the American People*, Brief Edition, Volume 11 (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), p. 407.

<sup>8</sup> Philip Jenkins, *A History of the United States* (London: Macmillan, 1997), p. 196.

<sup>9</sup> Farager, et al., p. 407.

<sup>10</sup> David and Julia Jary define "intellectuals" broadly as "persons, typically well educated, who engaged their intellect in work that they believe to be of cultural importance." As for the term "elite," the Jaries define it literally as "the best and most talented members of the society." The underlying assumption is that an "elite" is distinguished from the rest of his society by his abilities and talent. See David and Julia Jary, eds., *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Sociology* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), pp. 139 and 240. The term "intellectual-elite" combines the characteristics of the individual terms that make it up.

departure from the Presbyterian Ministry and subsequent foray into print journalism. In 1900, together with a number of close Chinese Christian associates, Ng founded the *Chung Sai Yat Po* (CSYP)<sup>11</sup>, through which he sought to bring the problems of his homeland closer to his fellow compatriots and express his own hopes and visions for China's salvation and modernization.

Ng's double roles as the owner of a significant mass media within the Chinese communities in the United States, as well as an active spokesman of the civil rights of his fellow compatriots placed him right in the midst of the cross currents between China and the Chinese communities in America, resulting in contacts, interactions and dialogues between him and the political movements led by Kang/Liang and Sun. Of the two key figures, it was Kang whom Ng and CSYP first came into touch with.

### 3. INTERACTION WITH KANG YOUWEI: DISAGREEMENTS AND CONSENSUS

In the immediate period before CSYP's inception in 1900, China's humiliating defeat by Japan in 1894-95 triggered off a frenzied scramble for concessions among European powers, bringing the country on the verge of dismemberment. The mounting external threats accentuated the intellectual ferment seeking a solution for China's crisis, which could be dated back to the 1840s after the Opium War.<sup>12</sup> This culminated in a radical reform movement aimed at a drastic institutional revamp for the country in 1898 led by Kang Youwei and his disciple Liang Qichao and supported by the Guangxu Emperor. The movement was however thrashed in *coup d'état* by the conservative elements in the Qing court under the Empress Dowager Cixi. Meanwhile, intensifying foreign incursions gave rise to strong xenophobic sentiments in the grassroots and resulted in the emergence of a secret society known as the *Boxers*, or Righteous Fists. Covertly encouraged by the conservatives in the Qing court, the Boxers launched a series of attacks on foreign legations and churches and many missionaries and diplomats were killed in the outbreak of violence. The atrocities sparked off an international crisis that reached its peak in the occupation of the imperial capital Beijing by allied troops of eight powers and the evacuation of the imperial court to West China.

At around the same time, Kang Youwei went into exile overseas following the 1898 *coup d'état*.<sup>13</sup> Undeterred by his failure, Kang attempted to keep his Reform Movement alive by appealing to the budding nationalist sentiments of the Chinese overseas. To achieve his goal, Kang founded a political party in 1899 in Victoria, British Columbia. Named as the *Pao-huang*

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<sup>11</sup> The name of the newspaper is henceforth abbreviated as CSYP.

<sup>12</sup> See Hao Chang, "Intellectual Change and the Reform Movement", in Denis Twitchett and John King Fairbank, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 11: Late Qing, 1900-1911, Part II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 275-283.

<sup>13</sup> See Tsai Shih-shan, *China and the Overseas Chinese in the United States, 1868-1911* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1983), p. 129.

*Hui*, or Protect the Emperor Society, the party sought to gain the moral and financial support of the overseas Chinese by using the imprisoned Guangxu emperor as the rallying figurehead.<sup>14</sup> Kang was unable to gain entry to the United States as the US Government, under strong pressure from the Qing Government, blocked his entry, but he was able to delegate his disciples to set up party branches within the Chinese communities in the country.<sup>15</sup>

It was against this background that Ng Poon Chew came into contact with Kang and his Reform Movement. In fact it was Kang himself who proactively courted Ng and his associates. Eager to gain the support of Chinese of different strata and beliefs in America, including the Chinese Christians, Kang began a correspondence with Ng, who was at that time preparing for his foray into journalism, and invited Ng to join the *Pao-huang Hui*. Kang even attached the charter of the party for Ng's perusal.<sup>16</sup>

The similarities and differences between Kang and Ng's ideas for the salvation of China became immediately apparent during this first contact. There were in fact both agreements and disagreements between the two sides. The core of Kang's Reform Movement comprised the three ideologies of protecting the State (*Pao-guo*), protecting the Religion (*Pao-chiao*, or protecting Confucianism), and protecting the Emperor (*Pao-huang*).<sup>17</sup> The ideology of protecting the State implied the making of a strong, prosperous and independent China resistant to western encroachment and expansion.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, the ideology of protecting the Religion underlined Kang's belief in Confucianism as the spiritual foundation and dominant faith of the Chinese civilization,<sup>19</sup> while that of protecting the Emperor implied the Guangxu Emperor as the spiritual leader of the Reform Movement and the party's political goal of overthrowing the Empress Dowager and restoring the Emperor to power.<sup>20</sup> Of these, Ng Poon Chew endorsed only the ideology of *Pao-guo* and rejected those of *Pao-chiao* and *Pao-huang*.<sup>21</sup> Ng's endorsement of the ideology of *Pao-guo* showed that he and Kang were of the same mind about the need to strengthen China and arrest it from further decline, while, his rejection of the other two ideologies demonstrated that in his correspondence with Kang, he did not accept Kang's ideas wholesale and as a matter of fact retained ideas of his own regarding the salvation of China. Having been immersed in a society founded on the principles of freedom, equality and universal brotherhood, Ng saw the idea of Confucianism as the dominant state religion of China contrary to the principle of religious and ideological freedom. Though

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 130.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> This episode is known to us from the recollection of Wu Yuyan, a kinsman of Ng Poon Chew and one of the key staff of the paper from its beginning. See Wu Yuyan, "Ben bao sishi nian lai zhi zongzhi," *Zhongxi ribao sishi zhounian jinian tekan* (San Francisco: Chung Sai Yat Po Publishing Company, 1940), pp. 1-4.

<sup>17</sup> Hao Chang, p. 285.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Tsai Shih-shan, p. 130.

<sup>21</sup> Wu Yuyan, "Ben bao sishi nian lai zhi zongzhi."

Ng was a devoted Christian and possessed the desire for the faith to spread in China, he respected differences and diversities in beliefs among his fellow human beings. He feared that if Confucianism were to assume a dominant role in the lives of the Chinese, it would inevitably lead to abuse of power by the ruling authorities in the name of Confucianism and consequently the persecution of people who practiced other religions and beliefs.<sup>22</sup> Ng's thinking was reflected in *CSYP*'s editorial on 15 September 1904 entitled "On Religious Freedom". The editorial stressed that religious freedom was human beings' "natural right from birth" and "it was not up to any authority or power to determine which religion is good and which is bad."<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, the reason behind Ng's rejection of the principle of *Pao-huang*, or protecting the Emperor had to do with his adoption of the principle of democracy in America exemplified by Abraham Lincoln's famous motto of "Government of the People, for the People and by the People." In Ng's mind, people, rather than the ruler, constituted the basis of a nation-state. In this regard, Ng explained to Kang why he could not accept the ideology of protecting the Emperor by mentioning that "classics and books in America talk only about protecting the rights of the people" and he had 'neither read nor heard anything about protecting the rights of the ruler.'<sup>24</sup> In order to obtain the support of Ng and his associates for his cause, Kang agreed to drop the language of Confucian veneration from *Pao-huang Hui*'s charter.

The episode between Kang and Ng indicated that Ng's support for Kang's Reform Movement was of a limited and selective nature. As such it is not very accurate to regard Ng as a *Pao-huang Hui* stalwart and *CSYP* as a pro-*Pao-huang Hui* newspaper, as L. Eve Armentrout Ma did in her book *Revolutionaries, Monarchists, and Chinatowns*.<sup>25</sup> As Wu Yuyan, a kinsman of Ng Poon Chew, affirmed in his account of *CSYP*'s history, Ng Poon Chew and his editorial staff did not join the *Pao-huang Hui*<sup>26</sup> and there was no evidence in *CSYP*'s editorials that it openly declared itself as a pro-*Pao-huang Hui* newspaper. Besides, if *CSYP* were to have done so, it would seriously violate its principle of non-affiliation with any political party or organization.<sup>27</sup> What brought Kang and Ng together was only their agreement over strengthening China and improving its position within the international community, not any empathy on Ng's part for the ill-fated Guangxu Emperor. In fact during the years between 1900 and 1904, in order to remain neutral and independent of any political association, *CSYP* hardly expressed any explicit opinion as to who should be the rightful ruler of China and it remained ambiguous as to whether China should be a constitutional monarchy or a democratic republic.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> "Zongjiao ziyou shuo," *CSYP*, 15 September 1904.

<sup>24</sup> Wu Yuyan, "Ben bao sishi nian lai zhi zongzhi."

<sup>25</sup> See L. Eve Armentrout Ma, *Revolutionaries, Monarchists, and Chinatowns* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), p. 58.

<sup>26</sup> Wu Yuyan, "Ben bao sishi nian lai zhi zongzhi."

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

What Ng and *CSYP* were much more concerned with was the improvement of the moral and intellectual capacity of the Chinese people and the maintenance of internal cohesion and unity among the Chinese population. Like Kang and Liang, Ng and *CSYP* felt that these were the linchpin upon which the salvation of China should be achieved. For Kang and Liang, the key to strengthening China lied with the creation of *Xin-min*<sup>28</sup> (“new people” as opposed to *Cheng-min* i.e. “subjects of a ruler”), which means more specifically a new, enlightened and educated citizenry. They believe that such a citizenry was crucial for national regeneration and the collective goal of achieving wealth and power for the country.<sup>29</sup> This would in turn require a comprehensive educational reform in China. The desired outcome would be the emergence of a nationwide modern school system, one capable of turning out people open to new ideas and thoughts. These people, according to Kang and Liang, were to form the basis of a political community that would be well-equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to protect the country and bring it onto the path of modernization and progress within an increasingly competitive and treacherous international environment.<sup>30</sup>

*CSYP*’s editorials and Ng Poon Chew’s own public lectures echoed Kang and Liang’s ideals and visions, but also raised their own voices over the issue of the characteristics that the new citizenry envisaged by Kang and Liang should possess. Indeed there were interplays between Kang and Liang’s ideas and the values of Christianity and the American Democracy embraced by Ng. In the editorial dated 30 September 1902, *CSYP* pointed out that a country would only thrive if it were to possess *Guo-min* or “nationals” (again as opposed to *Cheng-min*, or “subjects of a ruler”<sup>31</sup>) imbued with public spirit and a sense of responsibility for the country’s well-being. It appealed to the Chinese to forgo servility and acquire the spiritual qualities essential for becoming good citizens.<sup>32</sup> Similar ideas were found in Liang Qichao’s treatise entitled *Xin-min*, or *New People* written earlier in the same year. As for what constituted the spiritual qualities necessary for the rise of such a new citizenry, Ng Poon Chew and *CSYP* had their own unique thoughts. In his public lecture in Fifth Avenue Chinese Presbyterian Church in New York in January 1902, Ng attributed the internal causes of China’s weakness to pride, conservatism and resistance to new ideas and practices.<sup>33</sup> Seeing pride as a hindrance to China’s progress, Ng appealed to all Chinese to “throw it overboard as have the Japanese.”<sup>34</sup> Expressing similar sentiments, a *CSYP* editorial dated 31 October 1901 called upon the Chinese

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<sup>28</sup> Liang Qichao, “Xin min shuo” (1902), in *Liang Qichao xuanji* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1984), pp. 211-212.

<sup>29</sup> Kang Youwei, “Minzu zhuyi zhi jiaoyu” (1903), in *Xinhai geming qian shi nian jian shilun xuanji*, Vol. 1, Part I (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1960), p. 404.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 409. See also Liang Qichao, “Jiaoyu zhengce siyi” (1902), in *Liang Qichao quanji*, Vol. 1 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1999), p. 754.

<sup>31</sup> See “Xin Zhong pian (I): Guomin yu guoren you bie,” *CSYP*, 8 April 1902.

<sup>32</sup> “Lun jinri nai Zhongguoren tuo nuli wei guomin zhi hao shiji,” Part II, *CSYP*, 30 September 1902.

<sup>33</sup> “Chinaman on China’s Crisis,” *New York Times*, 4 January 1902.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*



to engage in a “psychological battle” to renew their hearts and minds by discarding pride, conservatism and lethargy and acquiring diligence, humility, thrift, righteousness, moral integrity, public spirit and kindness to one’s fellow human beings.<sup>35</sup> *CSYP* believed that these qualities constituted the basis for the strength and prosperity of the world’s major powers.<sup>36</sup> It is worth noting that righteousness, humility and kindness to one’s fellow human beings were important elements in the fundamental Christian value of love.

Like Kang and Liang, Ng firmly believed that the key to building up the enlightened citizenry necessary for China’s salvation lied with advancement in education. Ng lamented in his 1902 public lecture that:

We are behind times also in education. We do not send our girls to school at all and our boys study only the past, dead literature and philosophy 3000 years old. This makes us a weak nation.<sup>37</sup>

Ng’s lament about the backwardness of education in China partly originated from his own distasteful experience of the unthinking memorization of the Confucian classics he was subjected to in his youth.<sup>38</sup> This made him and *CSYP* ready supporters of Kang’s agenda for the gradual abolition of the centuries-old civil service examination system in China (one that placed a great deal of emphasis on rote-learning of the ancient classics and texts) and the introduction of learning and examinations of specialized western knowledge that would pave the way for the emergence of a modern, nationwide school system.<sup>39</sup> In the opinion of *CSYP*’s editorial on 30 October 1903 entitled “An Enlightened Citizenry Forms the Basis for Reviving the Country,” such system would be instrumental in cultivating minds that would develop the public spirit necessary to become true citizens of a modern nation-state.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the editorial stressed that equal emphasis should be given to moral, intellectual and physical education.<sup>41</sup> Within the framework of the nationwide modern school system, *CSYP* envisaged the emergence of a pool of educators equipped with modern knowledge and skills and prepared to pass on these to the younger generations. The editorial entitled “On Educators” dated 4 June 1903 appealed to aspiring young men to seriously consider a career in education and take up the burden to produce citizens with the spiritual and intellectual capacities beneficial for the country’s progress and modernization.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> “Xinzhān shuō,” *CSYP*, 31 October 1901.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> “Chinaman on China’s Crisis,” *New York Times*, 4 January 1902.

<sup>38</sup> From a report on Ng’s public lecture on 29 December 1901 in New York, “A Chinese Editor in the Pulpit,” *New York Times*, 30 December 1901.

<sup>39</sup> “Lun kejū dang fēi,” *CSYP*, 28 August 1902.

<sup>40</sup> “Lun mínzhì wéi xíngguó zhī běn,” *CSYP*, 30 October 1903.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> “Lun jiāoyùjiā,” *CSYP*, 4 June 1903.

Ng and CSYP's concerns for the issue of education in China made this a recurrent theme in a considerable number of the paper's editorials, which expressed its ideas and visions regarding the popularization of modern education among the masses, including women. On 16 July 1901, the paper argued that educational reform should begin in the grassroots by establishing schools in rural areas with a curriculum that would equip the young with linguistic skills as well as basic knowledge in the country's history and geography.<sup>43</sup> More importantly, the editorial felt that such schools should play a crucial role in enlightening the population and rooting out superstitions and ignorance,<sup>44</sup> which, in the opinion of the paper, gave rise to the emergence of the *Boxers* in 1899 and the resultant catastrophe for China.<sup>45</sup> As for the Chinese women, CSYP was in agreement with Kang Youwei that they should enjoy equality with men and therefore not be deprived of the opportunity for education. Kang had argued that "the pursuit of freedom and progress for human kinds requires women to be educated as well."<sup>46</sup> In a similar vein, two of CSYP's editorials dated 19 August 1901 and 4 March 1902 called for their emancipation and for school curriculum that would prepare them for more active roles in society.<sup>47</sup>

An overall analysis of the ideological intercourse between Ng/CSYP and Kang/Liang's Reform Movement reveals that the consensus among the two parties lay in the need for a psychological transformation of the people to become citizens with both intellectual and spiritual capacities fit for a modern nation-state and a crucial step to achieve this was through a thorough revamp of the education system. Concerning the contentious question of the political framework within which all these changes should take place, Ng/CSYP avoided taking any clear position. Yet the question never died away and the debates over the form of polity China should assume became more intense than ever. Such was the backdrop of Sun Yat-sen's second trip to the United States in April 1904.

#### 4. QUESTIONS OVER FEASIBILITY OF REVOLUTION

CSYP carried one of its first reports on Sun Yat-sen on 26 November 1900, when it reproduced a commentary from the Shanghai press *Shen Po*. It touched upon the recent armed uprising in Huichow organized by the Revolutionary Movement and provided a brief description of Sun's background. It introduced Sun as a "reform-minded figure who long harboured the ambition of revamping China's political system."<sup>48</sup> It also mentioned about the Western-style education that Sun received in his youth, his medical studies in Hong Kong and early career as a doctor, his aborted first attempt to stage an armed uprising in Canton in 1895 against the Qing regime,

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<sup>43</sup> "Lun Zhongguo neidi yi duo she xiangxue," CSYP, 16 July 1901.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> See Kang Youwei, "Datong shu," *Minguo Congshu*, Vol. 3 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, a facsimile of Zhonghua shudian's 1935 edition), p. 221.

<sup>47</sup> See "Xing nüxue yi," CSYP, 19 August 1901 and "Yu chang nüxue xu li nüquan lun," CSYP, 4 March 1902.

<sup>48</sup> "Lun Sanhehui dang zuoluan shi," CSYP, 26 November 1900.

his escape from China, queue-cutting and changing into Western attire.<sup>49</sup> The commentary also wrote about his fact-finding trips to Europe and the United States, as well as his abduction by the Qing legation in London in 1896 and subsequent rescue by his British friend, an incident that made him world famous.<sup>50</sup> What the commentary did not mention was that Sun's activities had by 1900 already gone beyond the soil of China. As early as 1894, Sun founded his revolutionary organization, the *Hsing-Chung hui*, or Revive China Society, in Honolulu, a place where he spent a significant part of his youth<sup>51</sup>. Though there is no direct documentary evidence so far to suggest that Ng Poon Chew and his associates in *CSYP* were well aware of the organization's presence, the paper's use of the *Shen Po* commentary for their front page at least indicated that they were taking an interest in Sun and his moves.

The revolutionary tenor of Sun's nationalism came from his overall aim of overthrowing the ruling Manchu imperial clan and replacing the centuries-old autocratic imperial institution with a democratic republic that would grant civil rights to the Chinese population.<sup>52</sup> His adoption of the ideals of democracy and freedom could be traced back to the formative years of his youth, which was largely spent among the overseas Chinese and in Western schools in Honolulu and Hong Kong.<sup>53</sup> He firmly believed that the people's civil rights were the source of a nation's strength, and a democratic republic, rather than the constitutional monarchy advocated by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, was *the* institution that would help China embark on the path to achieve wealth and power.<sup>54</sup> However, in his quest to oust the Qing regime from power during the 1900s, Sun tended to place strong emphasis on the superiority of the majority Han Chinese over all the other ethnic groups, thus giving his brand of nationalism a particularly racial and parochial outlook. In his public speeches and writings in the United States, as evident in an open appeal entitled *The True Solution of the Chinese Question* published in New York in 1904, Sun apparently did not make any attempt to clarify the real target of the Revolutionary Movement by demarcating the ruling imperial clan, and the Manchus in general. In the article, he pitted the Han Chinese against the Manchus and disparaged the Manchus as a peripheral, barbarian race that had stolen political power from the Han Chinese and subjugated the Han Chinese mercilessly to maintain its autocracy.<sup>55</sup>

The parochial appearance of Sun's nationalism made it a subject of the Reform Movement's attack. In a treatise written in 1902, Kang Youwei put forward a grand concept of a unified, multi-racial China as a paradigm in opposition to Sun's stress upon the political rights of the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Tsai Shih-shan, p. 136.

<sup>52</sup> See Sun Yat-sen, "Zhongguo wenti de zhen jie jue," in *Sun Zhongshan xuanji* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1981), p. 68.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Gasster, "The Republican Revolutionary Movement," in Twitchett and Fairbank, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 11: Late Qing, 1900-1911, Part II, pp. 465-466.

<sup>54</sup> Sun Yat-sen, "Zhongguo wenti de zhen jie jue."

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

majority Han Chinese.<sup>56</sup> Kang's concept envisaged peace and harmony among different ethnic groups within the entire China (inclusive of both the mainland and the peripheries) comprising the Han majority and other minority groups, including the Manchus.<sup>57</sup> Using India's pre-colonial division into various states based on different ethnicities and religious beliefs as an example, Kang argued that revolution and the complete removal of the Qing regime might lead to internal division and disunity and this could in turn weaken the country further, resulting in its further decline and eventual demise.<sup>58</sup> He pointed out that China's internal and external troubles should be attributed to the maladministration of the Empress Dowager and the conservative officials alone, rather than the entire Manchu race.<sup>59</sup> In his view, there was still hope for the Qing Government with the prospect of the restoration of the Guangxu Emperor to power and a constitutional monarchy under his aegis.<sup>60</sup>

Over the question of whether it was in China's interest to overthrow the Qing regime with a revolution, or to maintain Qing rule with the extensive institutional reform the regime had promised to carry out after the 1900 Boxers crisis, *CSYP*'s stand was ambiguous. There were a couple of reasons behind the paper's ambiguity. Firstly, it saw both positive and negative implications in reality for a revolution. Secondly, it still felt that the existence of the Qing regime was crucial to keep the country's fragile internal unity in balance despite the regime's crippling mandate. As strong advocates of civil rights for the Chinese people,<sup>61</sup> Ng and his associates in *CSYP* might have found the prospect of a democratic republic for China highly attractive and desirable. This did not however preclude the paper from viewing Sun's advocacy of an armed revolution with a certain degree of caution and reservation. In the final part of a series of editorials published between 13 and 16 October 1902 entitled "The Future of China," the paper took note of the historical tendency among Chinese to divide themselves along regional lines and expressed its fear that any attempt to topple the Qing regime might lead to the internal dismemberment of China into various regional powers fighting among one another.<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, the paper had a similarly ambiguous opinion towards the Qing Government. On one hand, the paper had been highly critical of the Qing Government. It had deplored the regime for yielding territories to foreign aggressors,<sup>63</sup> its inability to uphold the rights of the Chinese migrants in America on the negotiating table with the United States

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<sup>56</sup> See Kang Youwei, "Bian geming shu," in *Xinhai geming qian shi nian jian shilun xuanji*, Vol. 1, Part I (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1960), pp. 211-212.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 215-216.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 211-212.

<sup>59</sup> See Kang Youwei, "Da Nanbeimeizhou zhu Huashang lun Zhongguo zhi ke xing lixian bu ke xing geming," in *Kang Youwei zhenglun ji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), p. 478.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 479.

<sup>61</sup> Examples of the paper's advocacy of civil rights and liberty include "Lun jinri nai Zhongguoren tuo nuli wei guomin zhi hao shiji," Parts I & II, *CSYP*, 29 and 30 September 1902; "Lun guoquan yu renquan zhi guanxi," Parts I, II & III, *CSYP*, 2, 6 and 7 October 1902; "Shuo ziyou," Parts I & II, *CSYP*, 9 and 10 August 1904.

<sup>62</sup> "Zhongguo qiantu: Hanren ji guoshi qiantu," *CSYP*, 16 October 1902.

<sup>63</sup> "Lun Zhongguo yi fafen ziqiang," *CSYP*, 22 October 1903.

Government.<sup>64</sup> It also felt that the regime's attempt at institutional reforms was doomed from the start even if the Guangxu Emperor were to be restored to power, as the regime as a whole lacked the necessary will power and determination to push the reforms through, and the reforms were seriously hampered by the ongoing strife between the conservative elements in court and reform-minded officials.<sup>65</sup> Yet on the other hand, the paper, in agreement with Kang Youwei, recognized that the Qing regime still played a pivotal role in maintaining the internal cohesion of the country. This consideration was best expressed in the editorial dated 23 January 1904 that called for the eradication of suspicions and misunderstandings between the Han majority and the Manchus for the sake of the country's well-being. In the opinion of the editorial, progress for the country could only be achieved in a peaceful and harmonious environment. The editorial elaborated that "in times of prosperity, misunderstandings should be removed from top to bottom; in times of trouble, this is even more necessary."<sup>66</sup> It warned that if misunderstandings were to be sustained, the country would fall into endless chaos.<sup>67</sup> Harmony and peace between the Manchus and the Han Chinese and the preservation of internal cohesion, the editorial argued, were crucial for a strong and independent motherland.<sup>68</sup> The editorial came out three months before Sun Yat-sen's arrival in the United States in April 1904.

## 5. TURNING TOWARDS THE IDEA OF REVOLUTION

Like Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, Sun Yat-sen saw the Chinese communities in America as an important source of funds and fresh recruits for his cause. He first visited the United States in 1896 but that trip produced little results as majority of the Chinese migrants treated his idea of revolution with indifference.<sup>69</sup> Later, Sun joined the Triad Society and sought to use its widespread influence among the Chinese migrants in America to gain stronger support.<sup>70</sup> In April 1904, Sun embarked on his second trip to the United States. Sun's enemies in Kang's *Pao-huang Hui*, fearing that his presence in America might erode their support base, bribed the Qing Counsel-General in San Francisco to induce the US Custom officials to block Sun's entry. Consequently, Sun was detained by the US Immigration and placed on notice for deportation back to China.<sup>71</sup>

At this critical point, Ng Poon Chew came into the picture. According to Liu Po-chi in his book *Meiguo Huaqiaoshi*, Sun asked an American newspaper boy to deliver a note to Ng to inform

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<sup>64</sup> "Qing zhengfu zhi qi qiaomin," *CSYP*, 16 December 1904.

<sup>65</sup> "Zhongguo qiantu: Man Qing zhengzhi qiantu," *CSYP*, 14 October 1902.

<sup>66</sup> "Lun Man Han yi xiao caiji," *CSYP*, 23 January 1904.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> See "Autobiography of Dr. Sun Yat-sen," translated by Leonard S. Hsu, in "China Tomorrow," cited in Lyon Sharmon, *Sun Yat-sen: His Life and its Meaning* [Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1965 (c1934)], p. 44.

<sup>70</sup> Tsai Shih-shan, p. 137.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

Ng about his predicament.<sup>72</sup> After seeking the advice of Reverend Situ Nan-ta, a Triad member, Ng consulted Huang San-te, head of the *Chih-kung Tang* (Patriotic Rising Society), the powerful San Francisco branch of the Triad Society.<sup>73</sup> Both Ng and Huang hired an American attorney and raised the required five-thousand dollar bail to secure Sun's release.<sup>74</sup> During his stay in San Francisco, Sun frequented CSYP's office at Sacramento Street and this provided a good opportunity for Sun, Ng and the CSYP editorial staff to exchange ideas.<sup>75</sup> It is also worth noting that Ng sponsored the printing cost of Zou Rong's revolutionary pamphlet, *Ke-ming Chun*<sup>76</sup> (Revolutionary Army), a radical anti-Manchu treatise, for *Chih-kung Tang* to distribute to other Triad lodges in America.<sup>77</sup> In addition, CSYP carried significant and substantial reports on Sun's public speeches in San Francisco on 9 May and 16 May respectively.<sup>78</sup> Sun's trip lasted about nine months, during which he visited twenty-seven cities in the country with Huang San-te to promote his ideas of revolution in public speeches to the Chinese communities in these cities.<sup>79</sup>

Ng's role in Sun's second visit to the United States indicated a considerable degree of interest on his part in Sun's Revolutionary Movement. Sun's advocacy for a republican government in China might have struck a chord deep within Ng's heart to the extent that Ng was willing to sponsor the printing of the revolutionary pamphlet. Like Sun, Ng and CSYP believed that the Chinese people should be given the opportunity to express their wills freely and exercise their rights fully in the modern age, and such beliefs had been expressed in the editorials entitled "The Current Times Provide a Good Opportunity for the Chinese People to Forgo Servility and Become True Citizens," dated 29 and 30 September 1902, as well as "On the Relationship between Sovereignty and Human Rights," dated 6 and 7 October 1902. However, the shareholders and editorial staff avoided open and direct involvement in the activities of the Revolutionary Movement for fear of serious reprisal from the Qing authorities.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, the influence of Sun's anti-Qing ideas was to become more and more pronounced in CSYP during and in the aftermath of Sun's trip.

During his stays in CSYP's office in San Francisco, Sun Yat-sen had no doubt brought the issue of Qing's crumbling mandate as well as the Revolutionary Movement's ideals for a republican China closer to Ng and the paper's editorial staff, and induced them to re-think about the

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<sup>72</sup> See Liu Po-chi, *Meiguo Huaqiao shi* (Taipei: Liuming wenhua shiye gongsi, 1976), p. 431.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> There are at least two versions of this episode. See Huang San-te, *Hongmen geming shi* (San Francisco: N. P., 1925), and Wu Yuyan, "Ben bao sishi nian lai zhi jingguo lüeshu," in *Zhongxi ribao sishi zhounian jinian tekan* (San Francisco: Chung Sai Yat Po Publishing Company, 1940), pp. 5-9.

<sup>75</sup> See Wu Yuyan, "Ben bao sishi nian lai zhi jingguo lüeshu."

<sup>76</sup> See Michael Gasster, pp. 481-482.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. See also Tsai Shih-shan, p. 137.

<sup>78</sup> See "Yanshuo geming san zhi," CSYP, 9 May 1904, and "Yanshuo xuwen," CSYP, 16 May 1904.

<sup>79</sup> Tsai Shih-shan, p. 138.

<sup>80</sup> Wu Yuyan, "Ben bao sishi nian lai zhi jingguo lüeshu."

legitimacy of Qing rule and the feasibility of a republican revolution to resolve China's crisis. Ng and his editorial staffs' close contact with Sun produced a couple of observable impacts on *CSYP*'s opinions. One was the reinforcement of the paper's belief in democracy and freedom for the Chinese people. In a three-part editorial entitled "On Freedom" dated 9, 10 and 13 August 1904, the paper espoused the five basic freedoms, including freedom of speech, publication, organization, movements and religious beliefs. The editorial stressed that these freedoms were possible only in a democratic republic.<sup>81</sup>

The other impact, which was accumulative with the passage of time and development of events in China, was the reinforcement of the paper's negative views of the weakness and decadence of the Qing regime and positive views of the patriotism of the Revolutionaries. In the process, the paper became more critical of the Qing Government than ever before and more laudatory towards the Revolutionary Movement. In May 1904, during the Russo-Japanese War, the Qing Government issued a warning to both the Russian and Japanese Governments not to encroach on the imperial mausoleums in Fengtian.<sup>82</sup> *CSYP*'s editorial on 14 May let out its anger over the Qing Government's earlier acquiescence of Russian encroachment on China's North-eastern region in 1902.<sup>83</sup> The paper at the same time accused the Qing regime of caring only about the well-being of its imperial ancestors' remains rather than the lives of the people living in the region, and expressed serious doubts about the Qing Government's ability to protect China's 400 million people against foreign aggressors.<sup>84</sup> About seven months later, on 16 December 1904, the paper moved on to point out that the Qing Government's extreme weakness in the face of foreign aggressors was utterly unhelpful to the interest and well-being of the Chinese overseas:

The Qing Government is corrupt to the extreme. Given the fact that it has been failing to protect China from the encroachments of foreign aggressors, as well as the people living within the country from foreign humiliations, how could we expect it to be able to protect the interests of the Chinese abroad?<sup>85</sup>

Moving into the subsequent year, the paper's profound disappointments with the Qing Government grew into an all-out condemnation in three consecutive editorials published during the single month of April 1905 that attacked both the Qing imperial clan and officialdom. The first of these editorials, dated 8 April, lashed out against the scandal over an exposed affair between the Qing Commercial Affairs Minister<sup>86</sup> and an opera singer and uttered a vehement outcry against the degenerate ruling imperial clan, who wasted away at the expense of the

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<sup>81</sup> "Shuo ziyou," Parts I, II & III, *CSYP*, 9, 10 and 13 August 1904.

<sup>82</sup> "Man Qing zhengfu zhi langbei," *CSYP*, 21 May 1904.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> "Qing zhengfu zhi qi qiaomin," *CSYP*, 16 December 1904.

<sup>86</sup> Duke Zai Zheng, a son of the Prime Minister Prince Ching and a distant cousin of the Guangxu Emperor.

entire population.<sup>87</sup> Two editorials that lamented the corruption of the Qing officialdom followed on 12 April and 29 April respectively.<sup>88</sup> In one of these editorials, the paper even hoped for “a Washington or Napoleon-like figure to put everything right.”<sup>89</sup> With the appearance of commentaries of this kind, there was no doubt that the *CSYP* editorial staff was rapidly losing whatever faith they had in the Qing regime. In the following month, on 12 May 1905, the newspaper lamented the death of Zou Rong, the author of the pamphlet *Revolutionary Army*, in the hands of the Qing authorities. Having tacitly helped Sun Yat-sen to print copies of the pamphlet for distribution within the Chinese communities in the United States a year ago, the paper now openly mourned a radical revolutionary whom it called “a legend among the Han Chinese, a hero of the Chinese Society and a great man among Chinese students overseas”<sup>90</sup> and hoped for the day when his words would turn into reality.

From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that there was a noticeable transformation in *CSYP*’s opinions towards the Qing regime from January 1904 onwards. As discussed earlier, the paper’s editorial on 23 January 1904 argued for maintaining Qing rule for the sake of internal cohesion and multi-racial harmony, yet within a short span of time, the paper’s position underwent a dramatic change. A possible explanation could be that, with the decadence of the Qing regime becoming increasingly pronounced and evident, Ng and *CSYP*’s editorial staff might have adjusted within their system of thoughts the order priorities for China’s salvation, such that a drastic change of regime, and even political system, took precedence over the maintenance of internal cohesion and unity. Another possibility might be that, in the course of his interactions with Ng and the paper’s editorial staff, Sun was made to clarify that his revolutionary cause was not about excluding or discriminating the Manchus, but opposing the Manchus’ wresting of political powers from the majority Han Chinese.<sup>91</sup> This probably made Sun’s revolutionary cause sound more acceptable to Ng and his associates.

*CSYP* had initially attempted to maintain a neutral ground amidst the heated exchanges between the Reform and the Revolutionary Movements over the feasibility of their respective causes. This led to an ambiguous position on the paper’s part over the question of which among the two options of a republican revolution or a constitutional monarchy provided the better solution for China’s crisis. Sun Yat-sen’s second trip to the United States and his contacts with Ng and the editorial staff of *CSYP* brought the crippling mandate of the Qing regime as well as the ideals of the Revolutionary Movement closer to Ng and his associates. By doing so, Sun opened up the way for *CSYP* to gradually emerge from its ambiguity and adopt a clearer position towards

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<sup>87</sup> “Qing zongshi zhi fubai,” *CSYP*, 8 April 1905.

<sup>88</sup> “Man Qing guanchang louxi zhi nan chu,” *CSYP*, 12 April 1905; “Wuhu Qing guo zhi guanchang,” *CSYP*, 29 April 1905.

<sup>89</sup> The last sentence in “Man Qing guanchang louxi zhi nan chu,” *CSYP*, 12 April 1905.

<sup>90</sup> “Lun Zou Rong si Zou Rong bu si,” *CSYP*, 12 May 1905.

<sup>91</sup> In fact, Sun’s clarification about his cause was to make a concrete appearance in his address for the first anniversary of the founding of the revolutionary press *Minbao* on 2 December 1906. See *Sun Zhongshan xuanji*, pp. 80-89.



the option of a republican revolution as events unfolded gradually to reveal the Qing regime's corruption and ineptness despite the regime's professed aim in moving towards a constitutional government.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The opinions of Ng and his newspaper, *CSYP*, can be seen as a microcosm of nationalism among the overseas Chinese during a tumultuous period in China's history in the early twentieth century, as well as the different kinds of forces that shaped it. As the article has shown, there were various stimuli for Ng and the paper's nationalist sentiments and visions. One arose from Ng's deep sense of belonging to the Chinese communities in the United States, his concerns for his fellow compatriots' positions and well-beings in a hostile host society, and his belief that a strong and independent motherland would help to improve their positions in their host society. At the same time, Ng's adoption of the values of love for fellow human beings, freedom and democracy derived from the American Society went into his visions for China in the modern age as a democratic society in which people could express their wills openly and exercise their rights freely. External stimuli came from Kang Youwei and Sun Yat-sen. Despite their contrasting ideas about the salvation of China, both men brought China's crisis and problems closer to Ng and *CSYP* and to a certain extent reinforced the ideas already present in their nationalism. Furthermore, Sun paved the way for Ng and *CSYP* to the realization about the hopeless decadence of the Qing regime.

The stimuli did not just meet, but interplayed with each other in the shaping process of Ng and *CSYP*'s nationalist visions and aspirations. Ng's ideological intercourse with Kang Youwei was, on Ng's part, a process of evaluation and selection. Within this process, Ng endorsed Kang and Liang Qichao's ideas about an enlightened citizenry and a comprehensive education reform to achieve that end, while rejecting Kang's espousal of Confucianism as China's spiritual foundation and the idea of the Guangxu Emperor as the country's political and spiritual head. For the portion that they accepted from Kang's reform discourse, Ng and *CSYP* reinforced it with the values and beliefs they had adopted from Christianity and the American democracy. Later, Ng and the *CSYP*'s interactions with Sun Yat-sen, as circumstantial evidence suggests, not only fortified their belief in freedom and democracy as necessary remedies for China's revival, but also induced them to re-consider the feasibility of a complete revamp of the political system in China for its salvation.

Through the case of Ng Poon Chew and *CSYP*, the present article argues that the overseas Chinese were not unthinking receivers of the ideologies propagated by the respective political movements of Kang Youwei/Liang Qichao and Sun Yat-sen. A closer look into the opinions of individuals among the educated elites in overseas Chinese societies would reveal complex processes of thought that could be selective and prioritizing. The selection of what ideas to accept from the political movements and the prioritization of means in their belief towards China's salvation could be based on the values they adopted through their education and

personal experiences in their host societies. These processes could also be contingent to their perception and analysis of developing events, whether immediate or gradual. All these, taken together, point to need to take a more subtle approach when we study the responses and reactions of the overseas Chinese towards the political movements in China at the turn of the twentieth century, one that is sensitive to the agency and experiences of individuals.