Leadership and East Asian Modernity:

So Chae-p'il (Philip Jaisohn) in a Regional Comparative Perspective

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Noted French Sociologist Gustave Lebon once wrote:

To respect tradition is a condition of existence for a people; to know how to disengage from it, a condition of progress.[1)]

These words encapsulate the dilemma that change-oriented leaders and groups face in all societies with deep historical roots. The dilemma is rendered especially acute if such a society finds itself confronting challenges to its very survival. From mid-to-late-19th-century, China, Japan, and Korea all experienced this challenge in varying degrees of intensity and tried to develop responses that would them help move toward what came to be called variously as "advancement," "civilization," "enlightenment," "power and prosperity," and "progress." At the same time, they

1) Quoted in Claude E. Welch, Jr., Comparative Study of Political Modernization," in Claude E. Welch, Jr., ed., *Political Modernization* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1967), p. 9.

groped for ways that would preserve their independence, territorial integrity and distinctive identity.

The full story of these responses is beyond the scope of this essay, which is limited to the years 1895-1905. Suffice it to say here that in the years leading up to 1895 and even more rapidly afterwards, it was Japan that attained the greatest, albeit troublesome success in the pursuit of its goals. China and Korea, despite some notable reforms, found themselves in increasingly precarious situations, caused both by external and domestic factors, complicated in particular by the rising power and aggressive ambition of Japan itself. This paper will take the year 1895 as its point of departure and will offer a comparative East Asian context for the contributions of So Chae-p'il(Philip Jaisohn) to Korea's transformation during the subsequent ten years.[2] I will attempt to meet this overall objective by breaking it down into three sub-objectives. First, I will examine and evaluate the new thinkers and activists who tried to shape events in China toward the desired goals of national survival, strength, prosperity and reform. The ideas and actions of K'ang Yu-wei, T'an Ssu-t'ung, Liang Ch'i-chao, Yen Fu and Ch'iu Chin will form the chief focus of this endeavor. The aim here is not to give an exhaustive narrative but an illustrative one.

I have chosen to exclude Tsou Jung and Sun Yat-sen, two very important figures who also emerged in this period, for my essay on the whole seeks to examine the ideas and work of reformists, not revolutionaries. Tsou and Sun were committed to the overthrow of the Ch'ing throne, the abolition of monarchy as an institution, and the establishment of a republic. The figures included in this essay largely remained, despite some revolutionary utterances and some rare—and marginal—flirtations with violent moves against perceived enemies, reformists within the existing order, even if one attaches the adjective "radical" to their brand of reformism. The one true exception to this standard in my essay is Ch'iu Chin, who was executed in 1907 for her involvement in a violent anti-Ch'ing conspiracy. However, she is included not because of that role but for her passionate voice on women's issues. It is imperative for today's scholars to broaden and enrich historical understanding by adding the less conventional perspectives of women and other neglected groups, wherever possible.

Next, this paper will present the visions that shaped the public discourse and events in Japan during the same period. Again, this will be done with the help of a few representative examples. Ito Hirobumi from the government, Okuma Shigenobu from the mainstream opposition, the Christian reformist Uchimura Kanzo, leaders of the suppressed Social Democratic Party, the radical socialist Kotoku Shusui and the celebrated feminist writer and activist Yosano Akiko will provide a cross-section of the Japanese views. There were, of course, numerous other voices, male and female in this period—some carryovers from previous decades and some new to the late 1890s and early 1900s. They should certainly be

2) In this essay I have used the McCure-Reischauer system of romanization for Korean, the Wade-Giles system for Chinese and the Hepburn system for Japanese. Spellings outside these systems are retained only for places and names long familiar to all East Asianists: Tokyo, Seoul, Peking, Sun Yat-sen, Fukien, Chekiang, Kiangsu, Canton, Foochow, etc.

part of a more comprehensive analysis.[3] To reiterate, however, this essay does not aim for such comprehensiveness; it only seeks careful illustrations for comparative purposes. It should also be mentioned here that during this period even the most vehement critics of the Japanese state in our sample preferred the printed and spoken word over violent radicalism to propagate their concepts of change. (Kotoku Shusui did eventually turn toward revolutionary anarchism, but that shift occurred only after 1910.)

Finally, this paper will highlight the main ideas and activities of So Chaep'il—and, where relevant, his chief associates, especially Yun Ch'iho—and offer comparisons between him and the Chinese and Japanese figures. Since my fellow contributors in this volume thoroughly examine many specific dimensions of So Chae-pil's role in Korea, I propose to use broad strokes rather than meticulous detail for my comparative observations.

CHINA: MODERNIZATION and ADICAL REFORMISM

Perhaps no other event in late 19th-century China caused as much a sense of national crisis and anguish among the country's patriots as the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Shimonoseki Treaty that brought it to a conclusion. All prior national humiliations since the First Opium War (1839-1842) in the form of unequal treaties, loss of territory, and indemnities paled in comparison to the stunning impact of this war. As the victor, Japan gained Taiwan and the Pescadores as a colony and a 200-million tael indemnity. At first, Japan also obtained the Liaotung Peninsula of southern Manchuria, but then, in a further demonstration of the raw imperialism of the era, Russia, Germany and France forced Japan to return the area to Chinese sovereignty. (During the next four years these European powers would proceed, by intimidation and blandishments, to wrest yet more concessions from China in areas "vital" to their "interests." This predatory imperialist scramble for concessions and "spheres of influence" to many Chinese patriots would become an ominous portent of their country's remaining power and dignity being soon "cut up like a melon.")[4]

Clearly, the much-heralded program of "self-strengthening" (*tzu-ch'iang*) of the years 1861-1894, that had sought to wed traditional Chinese cultural values and socio-political institutions to selected aspects of modern Western science, technology, industry and commerce, had failed to protect China from the naked designs of imperialism. That a small, developed, well-organized, expansionist and determined neighbor like Japan would join this sordid hunt and impudently make China prostrate before Tokyo's newly-acquired military might was an unprecedented insult to

3) For two very good sources, among many, on other thinkers and activists, see Sharon L. Sievers, *Flowers in Salt: The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983); and Joseph Pittau, S.J., *Political Thought in Early Meiji Japan, 1869-1889* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).

4) For details, see Immanuel C.Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, Fifth Edition (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 344-350.

Chinese sensibilities. After all, wasn't Japan an ancient beneficiary of China's gifts of high culture?

While high Ch'ing officials such as Chang Chih-tung continued to assert that the existing self-strengthening formula of *t'i-yung* ("Chinese learning for [moral] fundamentals, Western learning for [utilitarian] application") was still a sound and workable solution to China's ills,[5] several new men emerged with the conviction that more thoroughgoing reforms were urgently called for, under which the country's age-old moral tenets and socio-political institutions would also have to be reexamined, altered or abandoned in emulation of the models of "success" such as Japan and the Western nations. To be sure, the new men were eager to salvage from traditional Chinese civilization assets that gave China its distinctive identity and pride, but choosing them and reconciling them with reform was not easy. Still, this quest did produce some radically fresh visions and actions for national survival. K'ang Yu-wei (1858-1927), T'an Ssu-t'ung (1865-98), Liang Ch'i-chao (1873-1929), Yen Fu (1853-1921), and Ch'iu Chin (1875-1907) represented this trend, marking a departure from the superficial and failed version of self-strengthening.

K'ang had been born into a well-to-do and prominent gentry-official family of Nanhai, Kwangt'ung, and underwent the usual classical education to prepare for a traditional bureaucratic career. Several events, however, put him on a life-altering course. After much study and reflection K'ang early on developed the notion that he was destined to be a new "sage" and savior of China. The poverty and degradation of the common people and the corruption, incompetence and weakness of the state, already evident, became more vivid for him by his visits to Hong Kong, Peking and Shanghai, especially Shanghai's foreign-governed districts. The foreign-controlled areas had organized and effective municipal institutions, neatness, prosperity and a constant movement toward further betterment. After deeper exposure to Western ideas through a Peking study group called *Society for the Study of Self-Strengthening* (*Ch'iang-hsueh hui*) with Christian missionary connections, K'ang began to develop his own concepts of reform.[6] The Society's Christian leaders, such as Rev. Young J. Allen and Rev. Timothy Richard, had moved away from a strictly religious mission to a more secular one of disseminating knowledge about the broader western civilization. As Rev. Richard once humorously remarked, whereas formerly the emphasis had been on "saving the heathen from the sufferings of hell," the new concern was "to save the heathen from the hell of suffering in the world."[7] K'ang's intellectual and

5) On Chang Chih-tung, see Wm. Theodore DeBary, Wing-Tsit Chan, and Chester Tan, ed. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vo. 2 (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 81-87.

6) I am indebted to the following works for drawing my portrait of K'ang: Immanual C.Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*; Jonathan D. Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace: The Chinese and Their Revolutions, 1895-1980* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981); and DeBary, Chan and Tan, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 2. Also see, Jean Chesneaux, Marianne Bastid, and Marie-Claire Bergère, *China: From the Opium Wars to the 1911 Revolution* (New York: 1976), pp. 309-315.

7) Quoted in Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, p. 357.

political growth was fast, and he soon became a founder or co-founder of several study societies, schools and newspapers of his own in Hunan, Kiangsu, Kwangt'ung and Peking. K'ang also became a prolific speaker and writer through these and other forums. His sharp mind and personal charisma inspired many bright young men, notably T'an and Liang, to seek his mentorship.

K'ang articulated his own vision of "progress" through a series of provocative writings beginning with the tract, *Confucius as a Reformer* (*K'ung-tzu kai-chih kao*)—a work that he had begun in 1886 but finished and published in 1897. In it he showed the fundamental problem of China being a distorted and historically inauthentic understanding of Confucianism as an ideology opposed to progress. This false grasp of the teachings of Confucius was what led to a fear of, and hostility to, change in the name of venerating the way of the sages, even when change was a categorical imperative for strength and survival. Through a close reading of what K'ang insisted was the "correct," as opposed to the prevailing counterfeit, version of Confucian texts, he presented Confucius as a progress-oriented teacher who wanted ideas and institutions to evolve in accord with the distinct context and needs of each era. K'ang argued that instead of clinging to some hackneyed and putatively immutable interpretation of Confucianism, China should listen to the true, dynamic intent of Confucius that he had reconstructed. This true "way" of Confucius had envisioned three ages in a sequential fashion: The Age of Disorder, the Age of Order and Ascending Peace, and the Age of Great Community

and Grand Peace (*t'aip'ing*). The course of humanity progresses through this fixed process. Tribes lead to nations and nations will inevitably lead to a universal order of unity, happiness and tranquility. Similarly, forms of government—autocracy, constitutionalism and republicanism—inexorably follow from each other, and human relationships show an identical pattern. Unbridled individualism leads to a structured hierarchy, which itself leads to better, more spontaneous individual relationships informed by universal benevolence (*jen*) in the Age of Great Unity and Universal Peace. Evolution is the law of nature, which can be perceived even in such simple reality as a child growing into adulthood and old age, or a sprout becoming a tree.

Confucius, according to K'ang, celebrated this law of evolution. Born in the Age of Disorder, he naturally extolled those rules and institutions that would assist the advent of order. They were specific to a chaotic society, not meant to be valid for the present age, which, due to advancing communications, was rapidly moving toward order and would eventually create a global commonwealth of fraternity and friendship. K'ang asserted that, logically, the methods and institutions appropriate for the Age of Great Community and Grand Peace would have done as much harm in the Age of Disorder as those meant for the Age of Disorder were doing to the present Age of Order. Independence, self-rule, constitutional government and reformed laws were a proper response to the present age and would be in consonance with the far-sighted wisdom of Confucius. This "true" Confucianism should make China a strong and prosperous state; it even deserved to be formally pro-

claimed as the national "religion" of the country.[8)]

In a more private, tightly guarded work titled *Ta-t'ung shu* ("The Book of Great Community"), which was begun in 1886 but completed in 1902 during K'ang's pleasant sojourn in the salubrious Himalayan city of Darjeeling, India, he fleshed out the specifies of the Great Community and Grand Peace. In this utopian world of the future "there would be no national, provincial and [racial] barriers. Government would virtually cease to exist except in local units fixed arbitrarily on the basis of square degrees of longitude and latitude. Within these units life would be completely communal and completely egalitarian…[and] in place of the differentiated loyalties, i.e., the hierarchical duties and obligations of Confucian orthodoxy which had bound men to their particular social group, there would be only an undifferentiated feeling of human kindness or love [i.e., the preeminent Confucian virtue of *jen*]"[9)]

This cosmopolitan order, for which K'ang claimed he drew his ideas from a "deep" study of the intellectual heritage of his homeland as well as India, Greece, Persia, Rome, and modern England, France, Germany and America, would end all suffering and sorrow, especially those stemming from oppressive human practices such as caste differences, the existing marriage and family arrangements, slavery, rigid gender roles, and similar

8) Quoted in Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, pp. 364-365; DeBary, Chan, and Tan, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 2, pp. 60-73; Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, pp. 29-78.
9) DeBary, Chan and Tan, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 2, pp. 66-67.

other autocratic and feudal customs. A democratic parliament would lightly oversee a global federation of self-governing units bound by a common language designed by musicians and philosophers. Living in an arms-free world, all people would have conception-to-death care under a localized socialist dispensation that would leave no room for anyone to fall through the cracks, so to speak. K'ang's views on the maltreatment of women and his proposals on marriage and human sexuality merit extended citation here because of his impassioned critique and astonishing liberalism.[10)] As Jonathan Spence in his absorbing study of China's search for a modern identity points out, there is "no finer passage" on women in the *Ta-t'ung shu* than the following:

> In the more than ten thousand years of human history, taking all nations of the whole earth together, incalculable, inconceivable numbers of people have had human form and human intelligence; moreover, each man has had some woman with whom he was most intimate, whom he loved the most. Yet men have callously and unscrupulously repressed women, restrained them, deceived them, shut them up, imprisoned them, bound them. Men have prevented them from being independent, from holding public office, from being officials, from living as citizens, from enjoying participation in public meetings. Still worse, men have not let them study, or hold discussions, or make a name for themselves, or have free social intercourse, or enjoy entertainments, or go out sightseeing, or leave the house. And worse even than that, men have forced them to distort and

10) Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, pp. 67-71.

bind their waists, veil their faces, compress their feet, and tattoo their bodies. The guiltless have been universally oppressed, the innocent universally punished. Such actions have been worse than the worst inhumanity. And yet throughout the world, past and present, for thousands of years, those whom we call good men, righteous men, have been accustomed to the sight of such things, have sat and looked and considered them to be matters of course, have not demanded justice for the victims or offered to help them. This is the most appalling, unjust, and unequal thing, the most inexplicable theory under heaven.

I now have a task: to cry out the natural grievances of the incalculable numbers of women in the past. I now have one great desire: to save the eight hundred million women of my own time from drowning in the sea of suffering. I now have a great longing: to bring the incalculable inconceivable numbers of women of the future the happiness of equality, of the Great Community and of independence.[11)]

As for marriage and sexuality, K'ang makes even the most progressive 21st-century social reformists look like bashful and timid tinkerers. To quote Spence again:

To achieve the equality that K'ang saw as the ultimate goal, the Great Community would insist on everyone's having absolute equality before the law in elections, in education, and in holding office-though women must have served in the Human Roots Institution, in the child-rearing institutions, or in one of the old-age institutions before holding office. Men and women would dress identically at all public functions, to avoid unnatural discriminations. When education was completed, at the age of twenty, any man or woman could undertake a marriage contract-such contracts could not be for less than a month or for more than a year, though they could be renewed. Homosexuals would also be permitted to sign such contracts with one another. Aware that highly educated and happily employed women might choose not to have children, thus threatening the eventual survival of the species, K'ang urged that everything possible be done to make their pregnancies pleasant and fulfilling: as well as having a beautiful environment they might have lovers in the early stages of pregnancy and use mechanical pleasure devices after delivery if they so chose. In the Great Community, the universality of desire would be recognized.[12)]

It wasn't K'ang's utopian vision, however, that drew Chinese patriots toward him. It was his apprehension about the prospect of China's imminent fall under the weight of marauding foreign powers (inexplicably, in the Age of Order and Ascending Peace!) that built the critical bridge between him and them. K'ang expressed this apprehension with an eloquence that relied on vivid and cascading metaphors. In a speech given in 1897 to a group of fellow intellectuals, he thundered:

We live in a house that is about to collapse, a boat which, leaking badly, is about to topple over. We are on a pile of firewood which has already caught fire; indeed our position is no better than that of a bird in a cage, a

11) *Ibid.*, p. 72

12) *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73

fish in a frying pan, or a prisoner in a cell. We are treated like slaves; no, we are treated [as] worse than slaves. We are treated like horses and cattle or dogs and sheep that are to be pushed around as our masters please, or cut into pieces whenever they so choose. … The decline of our sage's teachings and the impending extermination of the very life of the nation - how can any tragedy be more painful than this one?

K'ang warned that the tragic path of Burma [now Myanmar], Annam [now Vietnam], India and Poland would be China's unless "you and me, the intellectuals who have not expressed our righteous anger and who in fact have remained undisturbed" stand up and "arouse and enhance our will power … [for] a prairie fire begins with the striking of a single match, and every river originates from a trickle."[13)]

K'ang's spirited nationalism was shared in full measure by both T'an and Liang, although each also contributed his own distinctive voice to the reformist discourse of the period. The fate of each became inextricably tied to that of K'ang, T'an's more tragically than Liang's. The non-conformist son of a high state official, T'an was born in the province of Hunan, known both for its general conservatism and its role as a hotbed of fiery rebelliousness. (In 1893, Hunan gave birth to Mao Tse-tung, and in the late 1920s it was to be the testing ground of his "a revolution-is-no-tea-party"-type violent activism). As a young man T'an is said to have loved independent study; his eclectic interests covered Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, Christianity, Western civilization, poetry, mathematics, the martial arts, and China's modernization. An articulate analyst, T'an displayed a hot-tempered, almost reckless courage and zeal for change by openly calling for an end to Manchu rule, the monarchy and the orthodox Confucian ethics, and for the establishment of a republic. In his most important work, *The Study of Humanity* (*Jen-hsueh*), published in 1898, the concept of *jen* is less evocative of Confucius than of another ancient philosopher, Mo Tzu, who advocated universal love as the highest virtue. T'an's views are also closer to those of Buddhist "compassion" and Christian "charity" as well as the French Revolution's slogan of "liberty, equality and fraternity."

13) Quoted in Ranbir Vohra, ed., *The Chinese Revolution: 1900-1950* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974), pp. 2-3, 11.

T'an completely repudiated the four hierarchical Confucian relationships of father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, and ruler-subject on grounds of being oppressive and inhumane, and wished to retain only the fifth one, the friend-friend tie, as a model for all human interactions. Distinctions of high and low among human beings, all "children of Heaven and Earth," were unnatural and based on a deliberate misrepresentation by self-serving men of the teaching of Confucius. Like K'ang, T'an asserted that hierarchical ties were fit, to an extent, only for the Age of Disorder, but successive Chinese rulers, especially of "barbarian" Manchu and Mongol stock, had turned them into tools of tyranny. Looking back to "the beginning of the human race," when all human beings were equal and only for the sake of convenience chose one from

amongst themselves to perform the function of a ruler, T'an stressed that the ruler was a creation of the people, not of Heaven. Hence he was accountable to them and could be unseated by them. The ties between a ruler and the people should be informed by mutual loyalty and mutual care, not by inequality that enslaved the people's bodies and souls. A typical illustration of this oppressive inequality, T'an pointed out, was the set of Confucian rules about the husband-wife relationship, in which the former lorded over the latter with unfair, one-sided and "absurd" rules of duty, chastity and divorce governing female conduct.[14] The only relationship worth salvaging from Confucianism was that between friends, for it was based on "equality, liberty and mutual feelings." While the relationship between brothers was potentially closer to friendship, it too had become darkened by the "three bonds" like "hell." Friendship should, therefore, be the model for all human relationships.

The typhoon and volcano-like impact on educated Chinese that Liang once attributed to K'ang could just as well characterize the social and political egalitarianism of T'an.[15] Still, despite his anti-Manchu animus and his republican bent, T'an gravitated toward K'ang's more restrained approach for immediate goals. The mutual accord and collaboration between them seems to have cemented their resolve for reform from "within the system," as it were.

To this resolve Liang added his own youthful enthusiasm and budding intellect. This youngest and closest associate of K'ang also was the scion of a scholarly Kwangt'ung family, and after a classical education became interested in Western political theories and practices. He worked with K'ang in the Peking activities of the afore-mentioned Society for the Study of Self-Strengthening. He also traveled to Hunan, studied its reformist trends, met T'an, and for a short time served as an instructor at Changsha's School of Current Affairs (*Shih-wu Hsüeh-t'ang*). Moving to Shanghai, he became the editor of *Current Affairs Gazette* (*Shih-wu Pao*).[16] Still, during 1896-1898 Liang's association with K'ang and T'an was perhaps more that of an acolyte than of a peer. It was only after 1898 that Liang blossomed as a leading reformist in his own right (We shall return to Liang soon).

Yen Fu seems to have had no direct connection to K'ang, T'an or Liang, but as a much older writer on Western civilization, he no doubt played an indirect role in shaping their ideas, especially Liang's. Son of a Fukien gentry family, he first enrolled at the naval academy of the Foochow Dockyard, from where he was sent to England in 1876 for a two-year study of Western civilization. Upon his return he served for many years as a junior official in the well-known statesman Li Hung-

14) DeBary, Chan, and Tan, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 2, pp. 87-91. Here T'an was clearly also alluding to the infamous seven grounds—adultery, insubordination to in-laws, jealousy, disease, theft, gossipy nature, and inability to produce a male heir—on which a wife could be divorced, and the practice of honoring a widow's self-immolation as a mark of "virtue."

15) *Ibid.*, p. 91.

16) Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, p. 368; Chesneaux, Bastid, and Bergere, *China: From the Opium Wars to the 1911 Revolution*, p. 317.

chang's Peiyang Academy in T'ientsin, but never quite felt his qualifications fully recognized by his boss. The Sino-Japanese War disturbed and galvanized his mind in the same way it did those of other patriots, and he decided to move to the independent world of scholarship and journalism aimed at awakening his readers to what he believed was the "real" secret of Western wealth and power. He was convinced that without that key China would not be able to save itself. An avid student of the writings of Adam Smith, Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, J.S. Mill, T.H. Huxley, Edward Jenk, and Baron de Montesquieu, he first introduced their views to China through his essays in the prestigious T'eintsin journal *Kuo-wen Pao* ("National Review") when he assumed its editorship in 1897. Between 1898-1909, he also published his book-length translations of their major works.[17)]

Yen's examination of such works and the Western world in general led him to conclude that there was an all-encompassing difference between Chinese and Western world-views. He saw thought, morality and institutions as inseparable parts of an organic whole, and in the absence of adopting this holistic approach to change over the fallacious *t'i-yung* formula, China's search for wealth, power and survival would remain a will-o'-the-wisp or a wild-goose chase. A brand new, Western-type conceptualization of the relationship between the individual and the community would have to be integrated into the Chinese psyche, replacing the established values of passivity, conformity and control. As Benjamin Schwartz, in his seminal study, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West*, points out, Yen attributed China's weakness to the lack of the "Faustian-Promethean character of the West." He became convinced that the energies which account for the West's development "are stored up in the individual and that these energies can be realized only in an environment favorable to individual interests. He believed that the West has exalted human energy in all its manifestations—intellectual, moral and physical. It has identified spirit not with passivity and withdrawal but with energy and assertion. The West has discovered the unlimited nature of human capacities and has fearlessly proceeded to actualize human potentialities undreamed of in traditional Chinese culture. ⋯ [Dynamism], struggle, [competition, evolution], purposive action, energy, assertiveness, and the realization of all potentialities [are the salient marks of Western civilization]." To Yen, Western industrialism, political and legal systems, and military organization were "merely the more obvious manifestations of these values." They were "products of a culture that through liberty, equality (above all, equality of opportunity), and democracy provides the environment within which the individual's energy ⋯ is finally liberated."

Despite his heavy stress on the Social Darwinian aspects of the West in conjunction with liberty, equality and democracy, Yen, like K'ang and Darwin himself, envisioned a future global state of peace in which all struggle would cease to exist and "welfare, freedom, and every other value

17) Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, pp. 421-425.

will prevail in a state of utopian equilibrium." Before that dreamland could arrive, however, individual nations would have to harness the untapped energy of all their citizens for their own society's collective strength, growth and development.[18] K'ang's own 1897 speech, cited earlier, echoed this theme of seeking and utilizing the latent human energy, but by drawing an analogy from the physical "heat" of life. "Heat alone," K'ang argued, "generates growth, luxuriance, expansion, and mobility, while coldness causes shrinkage, weathering, decay, and finally, extinction."[19]

There was, thus, an intellectual kinship between Yen and K'ang. Yen, in addition to being older, spoke from direct personal experiences in England. K'ang and his disciples, on the other hand, had not yet traveled to the West, and so probably found Yen's voice compelling, as did many other reformists and revolutionists of China. Yet, with all his celebration of Western liberalism, Yen extolled individual energy and rights less as an end than as a means for enlarging the state's power and wealth. "Energy" was to be actualized more for the purpose of contributing to the "community" and less for the sake of individual fulfillment as such. Thus, Yen's patriotic concerns paradoxically shifted the Western liberal tradition from its original aim toward a collectivist end.[20]

It was in this kind of milieu of doom and gloom combined with the heady wine of faith in the efficacy of new ideas that K'ang took action to "save" China. A relentless writer of communications to the throne, in 1895 he had already created a stir in Peking when he and Liang mobilized between six hundred and a thousand fellow metropolitan examination candidates to co-sign an emotional memorial of almost 18,000 characters unsuccessfully requesting the rejection of the Shimonoseki Treaty.[21] Yet K'ang kept sending memorials to Emperor Kuang-hsu on the urgent need for reform. In early and mid-1898, with the help of a "progressive" high official, K'ang finally gained two direct audiences with the Emperor, who had earlier shown an interest in K'ang's ideas. "May [Your Majesty] adopt the heart of Peter the Great of Russia and the administration of Meiji Japan," K'ang had pleaded in the memorial leading up to these meetings.[22] In the second of these meetings, K'ang drove home to the Emperor his idea of reform as a multi-sided yet inter-connected and systemic enterprise. K'ang likened the endeavor to "a large building that, because its timbers have decayed, is about to fall down. If some patches are made to cover up the cracks, then as soon as there is a storm the building will collapse. It is therefore necessary to dismantle the building and build anew if we want something strong and dependable. To lay a foundation, the area of the land, the height of the building to be constructed,

18) This summary of Schwartz's study is drawn from Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell, ed., *Imperial China* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), pp. 282-292.
19) Vohra, *the Chinese Revolution*, p. 10.
20) See Schwartz in Schurmann and Schell, *Imperial China*, p. 292.

21) Jonathan Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, p. 36; and Immanuel C-Y Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 367. The two sources give different figures for those co-signing the memorial.
22) Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, p. 369.

the number of bricks and tiles, the sizes of windows, doors, and balustrades, the amount of plaster, nails, bamboo, and other items must all be planned and estimated as parts of the overall design before purchasing the materials and hiring the laborers···. If any one part of the general plan is neglected, the building ··· cannot resist a storm."[23)]

Carrying his penchant for vividness further, K'ang argued that in the absence of widespread changes in government personnel attempts at reform would fail, for that would be like "climbing a tree to catch fish."[24)] At the Emperor's request, K'ang also gave him his essays on reform in Germany, France, and England and on the partition of Poland. Impressed by K'ang's acumen and passionate patriotism, the Emperor appointed him as a secretary in the Tsungli Yamen (the Foreign Office). Through further communications K'ang then laid out a concrete plan for the political bureaucratic, military, economic and educational modernization of the country. The plan included proposals for the founding of a parliament and a national assembly, for the separation of powers among the three branches of government, and for the bureaucratic, economic, military, and educational modernization of the country. Impressed even more, the Emperor now decided to lend his support to K'ang and proclaim, in the words of historian Immanual Hsu, China's own "New Deal" (*hsin-cheng*) through a spate of edicts reminiscent of many of the Meiji reforms and Korea's Kabo-Ulmi (1894-1895) reforms.[25)]

To prepare for the implementation of reforms, Liang was made head of a translation bureau, and T'an and Lin Tsü, another K'ang disciple, were appointed as high-level secretaries to the Grand Council. Bypassing the Grand Councilors, K'ang and his associates drafted all decrees and presented them as being in accord with the best Chinese and Western principles of serving the well-being of the people; they were specifically designed to introduce the "rich and varied contents" of Western political systems toward this end. From June 11 through September, 1898, Emperor Kuang-hsu issued between 40 and 50 reform decrees, earning this flood the nickname "A Hundred Days of Reform." The traditional "eight-legged" essay in the civil-service examinations was replaced by essays on current affairs, an Imperial University on modern lines was ordered established in Peking, the provinces were to have modern schools for both Chinese and Western learning, and traditional and privately-run Confucian academies and local religious temples were to be transformed into a system of modern colleges, high schools and elementary schools. A modern medical school under the Imperial University, an official newspaper , a special examination in political economy, and the sending of students and officials abroad for study were the other components of the educational reform package. Presumably because of their educational role, Christian missions were to be given state protection.

23) Spence, *the Gate of Heavenly Peace*, p. 49.
24) *Ibid*.
25) Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, p. 372-374.

The decrees also abolished those well-established government offices that were now deemed superfluous and dysfunctional in the multiplicity of their duties and their padded compensations. "Progressives" were to be appointed to important positions, and private individuals were invited to suggest improvements in administration. The law codes were to be simplified, and a modern budget system was to be instituted for national financial management. The capital was to be beautified, inventions were to be encouraged, railway construction was to be accelerated, and new government bureaus were to be set up to promote modern agriculture, industry and commerce. The armed forces, including the navy, were to be revitalized by modern equipment and training methods. Eventually, local assemblies and a national parliament were to be created for wider popular participation in government.[26] Thus, the reforms sought to build a modern state by greatly redesigning and rebuilding the ill-conceived existing edifice of self-strengthening.

Neither the Emperor nor the K'ang group were, however, fully aware of their vulnerability to the anti-reformist elements in the government. Before the ink was dry on the reform edicts, Empress Dowager Tzu-hsi, the power behind the throne, mobilized both Manchu and Chinese officials with a vested interest in the established order and struck back. The Emperor was cut off from any contact with the reformists, most of the decrees were quashed, and K'ang and his colleagues were

26) *Ibid.*, 375-376.

ordered arrested. K'ang and Liang escaped to Hong Kong and Japan, respectively, but T'an, K'ang's younger brother Kuang-jen, and four other reformist officials were captured and executed. T'an, in fact, refused to flee when he had a chance by declaring that one should be willing to sacrifice one's life for the lofty cause of "revolution." Many other reformist officials were stripped of their ranks or posts, imprisoned or sent into banishment. Most of the reforms were thus over in a flash.[27]

The fundamental weakness of K'ang's approach to reform was its exclusive reliance on a rather precarious throne and a coterie of reformists. There was neither broad bureaucratic or military support nor any well-cultivated popular constituency behind this enterprise. The passionate idealism of K'ang's writings notwithstanding, nowhere in his words does one find a resounding testament of faith in the inherent capacity of ordinary Chinese to take charge of their own destiny. They were only to be the beneficiaries of a top-down method of change, which, remarkably, showed little interest in developing a national land reform and the ending of excessive rents and usurious money-lending practices. Yet, they were the most pressing problems of China's peasantry. As a result, K'ang and Liang were now reduced to living their lives in exile; they now spoke and wrote from their safe havens on foreign soils, although both also toyed with poorly-hatched violent schemes against reactionary Ch'ing officials.

K'ang now became a restless, inveterate explorer of the world.

27) *Ibid.*

Supported in his global peregrinations by the largesse of overseas admirers, he took on the role of a peripatetic champion of constitutional monarchy.[28] Liang moved along a more zigzag path. The Boxer Rebellion of 1899-1900, which reconfirmed the ineptness of the Chinese government, the folly of the patriotic yet obscurantist and destructive groups like the Boxers, the continued predatory and vindictive behavior of foreign powers in the wake of the Rebellion, and another victory on the part of modernized Japan, this time over Russia, all obviously had an impact on Liang. Earlier, a visit to Canada and America had opened for him yet new perspectives on both collective and individual human behavior. From all this stimulation and from further study, Liang fashioned new and uncertain personal responses to China's unending crisis. He shifted his position from a guarded espousal of constitutional monarchy to a vague hope for a "Cromwell-like" autocrat to change the nation. But then, after the revolutionists under Sun Yat-sen's inspiration toppled the Ch'ing Dynasty and the monarchy and established the Chinese Republic in 1912, Liang accepted the Republic as an unalterable fact and argued against further revolutions; he championed gradual reform, for, as he pointed out, while "the path of progress leads to more progress, the path of revolution only leads to more revolution."[29]

28) See Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, pp. 94-108.
In 1917 he even took part in a futile plot to restore the Ch'ing monarch under the deposed boy emperor Puyi.

29) Schurmann and Schell, *Imperial China*, p. 298.

During 1902-1905, however, Liang devoted most of his time to editing and publishing a fortnightly journal from Yokohama titled *The New People's Miscellany* (*Hsin-min T'sung-pao*). Addressing mostly expatriate Chinese, Liang dedicated himself to revitalizing China by suggesting ways of "renovating the people." He wrote on the rise and fall of nations, the lives and careers of Cromwell, Voltaire, Kant, and the broad institutions, values and practices of the West. To prevent undue infatuation with the West, he reminded his readers of the racism and the great inequalities of wealth in America, but he also admiringly cited the American people's organizational skills, efficiency, civic mindedness, nationalist spirit, neatness, individualism, dignity, independence, purposiveness, competitiveness, and enterprising outlook. The Western tendency to seek healthy compromises, their commitment to education and to democratic institutions also received praise from Liang. He bluntly asserted that, by contrast, the Chinese people were not yet ready for freedom, constitutionalism and republicanism. A new kind of Chinese personality would first have to be developed, free from narrow clannishness, inefficiency, disorder, pomposity, and the habit of bowing and scraping to authority figures, and a new national solidarity would have to replace local and sectarian loyalties. The Chinese, Liang suggested, would thus have to develop the values and sensibilities of "citizenship" under a new national awareness of collective destiny. Otherwise, democratic concepts like freedom, constitutionalism and republicanism would lead to a "national suicide," for that would be "as ill-suited as hampen clothes in

the winter and furs in the summer."[30] He never really offered a concrete plan about the hows of reorienting the people's character, but the theme itself remained Liang's chief focus in the pre-Republican years.

Meanwhile, the spotlight had been stolen from K'ang and Liang by the revolutionists, as noted above. Belatedly, the Ch'ing government tried to stem the tide of revolutionary trends by an about-face on the reforms of 1898. Between 1905-1911 it offered a reform package to the country that even went beyond those of the K'ang group.[31] The republican stirrings were gathering momentum, however, and they would not be satisfied by anything less than the destruction of the Imperial system. While the revolutionary actions for a republic are not part of this paper's focus, the ideas of at least one woman involved in those efforts are relevant to our discussion, not only to expose another blind spot in the vision field of K'ang but also to introduce the incipient feminism of China in an era of great upheavals. That remarkable woman was Ch'iu Chin.

In spite of K'ang's role in organizing the anti-footbinding movement and his fervent words for women's emancipation and gender equality—words that were echoed, if less eloquently, by both T'an and Liang—he saw no inconsistency in having a concubine when his first wife was still with him, nor in taking a 17-year old consort when he was 49![32] Thus,

30) DeBary, Chan, and Tan, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 2, pp. 91-99, and Patricia B. Ebrey, *Chinese Civilization and Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), pp. 335-340.
31) See Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, pp. 408-412.
32) Spence, *the Gate of Heavenly Peace*, p. 96, p. 108.

one might see in the public and personal aspects of K'ang's life the same kind of gap that Mao Tse-tung later displayed between his own early public feminism and later private sexual exploitation of even younger women. Hence, authentic concepts of male-female equality could emerge only with the joining of women's own voices to men's. The voice of Ch'iu Chin was an anguished, fearless and full-throated expression of such authenticity.

A Chekiang native who was forced to marry a Hunanese merchant, intellectually Ch'iu Chin was a product of one of the growing but still small number of modern girls schools in the coastal provinces and of new books, magazines and newspapers covering issues central to women's lives. Well-acquainted with the life stories of Mme. Roland, Sofya Perovskaya, and Catherine Beecher as well as with those of many heroic women from China's own past, Ch'iu Chin experienced her own "the-personal-becomes-political" transformation. Maltreatment by a tyrannical husband and observations of women's plight in general turned her into a scathing critic of China's misogynist family and social structure.[33] She also linked this critique, like many other progressives, to China's desperate national situation. Thus, her feminism and nationalism were the twin products of her modern consciousness. In a 1904 essay Ch'iu gave vent to this consciousness with courageous candor, pain and anger:

33) *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

We, the two hundred million women of China, are the most unfairly treated objects on this earth. If we have a decent father, then we will be all right at the time of our birth; but if he is crude by nature, or an unreasonable man, he will immediately start spewing out phrases like "Oh what an ill-omened day, here's another useless one." If only he could, he would dash us to the ground. He keeps repeating "She will be in someone else's family later on," and looks at us with cold or disdainful eyes.

Before many years have passed, without anyone's bothering to ask if it's right or wrong, they take out a pair of snow-white bands and bind them around our feet, tightening them with strips of white cotton; even when we go to bed at night we are not allowed to loosen them the least bit, with the result that the flesh peels away and the bones buckle under. The sole purpose of all this is just to ensure that our relatives, friends, and neighbors will all say, "At the so-and so's the girls have small feet." Not only that, when it comes time to pick a son-in-law, they rely on the advice of a couple of shameless matchmakers, caring only that the man's family have some money or influence; they don't bother to find out if his family background is murky or good, or what his character is like, or whether he's bright or stupid-they just go along with the arrangement. When it's time to get married and move to the new house, they hire the bride a sedan chair all decked out with multicolored embroidery, but sitting shut up inside it one can barely breathe. And once you get there, whatever your husband is like, as long as he's a family man they will tell you you were blessed in a previous existence and are being rewarded in this one. If he turns out no good, they will tell you it's "retribution for that earlier existence" or "the aura was all wrong"[34]

34) *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Ch'iu called on Chinese women to rise up from their passivity and resignation to dependence on men and be "resurrected as complete human beings" through education, independence, self-reliance and commitment to progress, not only for their own sake but also for halting the destruction of China.[35]

In the same year, this dual interest in women's liberation and national survival led her to abandon her husband and two young children, scrape together some personal resources and go to Japan for study. Enrolling in the Aoyama Vocational Girls School in Tokyo, she soon became involved in the anti-Ch'ing activities of Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Alliance (*T'ung-meng hui*), and also contributed articles to a progressive journal run by expatriate Chinese students. To make a visible point about her commitment to gender equality she often dressed in male western attire. The 1905 Japanese victory over Russia exhilarated her like many other Asians and she determined to return home to throw herself into anti-Manchu revolutionary activity. In the guise of a school teacher in Shaoshing, Chekiang, from early 1906 on she participated with other radical elements in a plot for an armed uprising against the Ch'ing regime. Exposed and arrested, Ch'iu was beheaded on July 15, 1907. Thus, a promising young female voice was stilled by her reckless idealism's aphyxiation at the hands of a brutally vengeful state.[36]

35) Ebrey, *Chinese Civilization and Society*, p. 344.

36) Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, pp. 84-93. Could the adoption, for a time, of male attire by Ichikawa Fusae, a feminist politician of postwar Japan, and by Kim Okson, a female lawmaker of South Korea during the Park Chung-Hee regime have been inspired by Ch'iu Chin?

Though none of the critics, visionaries and activists covered above accomplished their immediate goal of transforming China into a strong and modern nation-there was even an element of naivete in their plans-all carved out a permanent place in the history of China's modernization through the freshness of their ideas, their patriotism, their bold and pioneering activism and their larger-than-life personalities. They helped raise Chinese awareness of the need for fundamental reforms. In manifold ways, other reformists, even revolutionists, built their work on the intellectual foundations laid by them, even when the revolutionists charted a different course and used different methods. The short-lived state-sponsored reforms of 1905-1911, the New Culture Movement of the late 1910s and early 1920s, with its own sharp attacks on debilitating traditions, warlordism, national paralysis, imperialism, and its own multiple agendas of social and political change, all took roots in the fertile soil created by the earlier reformist thought. Indeed, the ripple effects of that era are still being felt today in contemporary China's unfinished business of social and political democratization.

JAPAN: STATISM, DISSENT AND ALTERNATIVE VISIONS

For examining those who shaped Japan's development during 1895-1905 one must first recognize a fundamental difference in context from both China and Korea. Already by 1895 Japan had accomplished such rapid modernization of its political, social, military, industrial, commercial, financial, transport, communication and education systems that it had become the envy of the rest of Asia and also drew occasional accolades from Westerners. Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850-1935), a long-term writer and teacher in Meiji Japan, captured this transformation with a compelling image. Japan's swift place of change, he said, "makes a man feel preternaturally old; for here his is in modern times, ··· and yet he can himself distinctly remember the Middle Ages ···. Thus does it come about that ··· we ourselves feel well-nigh four hundred years old."[37)]

Further, as we have seen, Japan had become a colonial empire at the expense of China. It had also renegotiated its "unequal" treaty with England toward mutual equality and was on its way to regaining its full political and economic sovereignty and "national honor" through similar parleys with other western powers. Japan was determined to speedily get rid of the entire unequal treaty system imposed on it by the West during the years after its forced "opening" in 1854. Through its own 1876 "opening" of Korea through intimidation and through its subsequent aggressive interventions in Korean affairs, it had in fact "moved up," so to speak, from being a victim of Western highhandedness to its somewhat clumsy practitioner, and was now one of the causes of instability and anxiety in both China and Korea. Japan had not only neutralized China as a

37) Quoted in Kenneth B. Pyle, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 2nd Ed. (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1996), pp. viii-ix. For a recent summary of the early to mid-Meiji era reforms see W.G. Beasley, *The Japanese Experience: A Short History of Japan* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1999), pp. 21-235.

rival but was now preparing to confront Russia, the other potential adversary in East Asia, in a drive to gain control of Northeast Asia. The events of 1899-1905 only enhanced Japan's power, "glory" and "status" by enabling it to join the hitherto exclusive Western club of imperialism. Its participation with Western powers in military action against the Boxers in 1899-1900, its strategic alliance in 1902 with Britain, its defeat of Russia in the war of 1904-1905, and its imposition of a protectorate over Korea in the midst of it as a step toward the inexorable annexation of the peninsula, all put Japan in a radically distinct category during this period. Naturally, efforts for the further modernization of Japan became connected to different motives, purposes, plans, nuances, actions and consequences than those in China and Korea. Depending on whether one is looking at these efforts from the perspective of the governing elites or of the down-trodden, disenfranchised, neglected and alienated segments of society, one sees both advancement and repression, progress as well as tyranny.

The leading figures in Japanese government during 1895-1905 were Ito Hirobumi (1841-1909), Yamagata Aritomo (1838-1922), Kuroda Kiyotaka (1840-1900), Saigo Tsugumichi (1847-1902), Oyama Iwao (1842-1916), Inoue Kaoru (1835-1915), and Matsukata Masayoshi (1840-1924). Collectively known as the *genro* ("elder statesmen"), this group's two most prominent names were Ito and Yamagata, each an important samurai leader of the Meiji Restoration and subsequent reforms: Ito, from the former Choshu domain, through his skillful play at the game of domestic and international politics, and Yamagata, from the former Satsuma domain, through his no-nonsense build-up of Japanese armed forces for action abroad and a bureaucratic, police-state style of governance at home. Between them, these two men, despite their occasional feuds, carried out a statist consensus representing all the *genro*, whether they were doing things themselves or were acting through their proteges, Saionji Kimmochi and Katsura Taro. At the top of the Satsuma-Choshu (*Sat-cho*) clique, Ito and Yamagata manipulated, more than others, the levers of state power and used them to lend their own direction to Japan's modernization. In this section, the role of Ito will serve as an illustration of their shared statist vision. Discussion of the alternative visions and actions will follow later.

Ito was the creator of Japan's modern cabinet system in 1885, the supra-cabinet Privy Council in 1888, and the marginally representative bicameral Diet under a semi-modern Prussian-style Constitution in 1889, and he wrapped it all up in the family-state concept of *kokutai*. This concept, using the Shinto language of reverence for the exalted throne, presented the Emperor as a father-figure and repository of national sovereignty who embodied the *kokutai* in his person and sanctified it in his religio-moral capacity as the heir to a lineage deemed "sacred" and "unbroken for ages eternal" and extending all the way back to the mythical "Sun Goddess" (*Amaterasu Omikami*). The initial limit on participation in elections to the Diet's House of Representatives set at less than 1.25% of the population, the restriction of suffrage to men, the creation of a new system of 5-rank nobility, the powerful place given to the aristocratic House of

Peers, the designation of the Emperor as the law-giver and maker of war and peace, the subservient position of the prime minister, the cabinet and the Diet to the Emperor , the blanket limits imposed by the "peace-preservation" laws of the 1880s and 1890s on the newly-awarded liberties such as freedom of speech, press, organization, and movement, and the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education-all bore the imprint of Ito and the *Sat-cho* oligarchy behind him.[38] The Rescript reaffirmed the Confucian virtues of filial piety at home and unflinching loyalty and service to the throne "coeval with heaven and earth," and thus turned the Meiji statism into a warm and fuzzy dispensation.[39]

During 1895-1905 Ito and his associates did their best, through draconian thought-control laws, to ensure that this emphasis on the ultra-nationalistic primacy of the state would not be questioned with impunity. He also made it clear through his writings and speeches that the people should not harbor the notion that they had "wrested" the new "participatory" constitutional system from the Emperor through an unseemly and "ominous" struggle, in the manner of the British Magna Carta; they should rather remember that they received the new system as a "gift" from a benevolent and "enlightened" Emperor who had bestowed it on them

38) For details see Edwin O. Reischauer and Albert M. Craig, *Japan: Tradition and Transformation* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1989), pp. 166-178.
39) Ryusaku Tsunoda, Wm. Theodore DeBary and Donald Keene, ed., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. 2 (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 139-140.

out of his own concern for the "welfare and happiness of the nation."[40] In 1899, during a speech in Hagi, his hometown, Ito exhorted his audience to assist the government in carrying out "the affairs of the nation" for the "nation's aims, the nation's prestige and the nation's honor." "The aim of our country has been from the very beginning," he said, "to attain among the nations of the world the status of a civilized nation and become a member of the comity of European and American nations which occupy the position of civilized nations." National power and national glory were the paths to such "civilized status."[41] All subjects were to act as enablers toward that end by assisting both the military and economic actions taken in its pursuit.

If in quest of this aim, a government-controlled political party and a slight expansion of the electorate became necessary, then Ito was not above accommodating both. In 1900 Ito became instrumental in the creation of the *Seiyukai* ("Friends of Constitutional Government") and it soon became one of the two major parties, the other successively called *Kaishinto*, *Shimpoto* or *Kenseito* ("The Progressive Party").[42] Ito and his associates at the same time slightly expanded the electorate to 2.18% with a view to blunting the rising public criticism of their oligarchic rule. Still, the overall statism of the aligarchs remained unaltered. The expansion of

40) *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164.
41) *Ibid.*, p. 172.
42) This party would undergo many realignments and name changes later, eventually ending up with the name *Minseito* ("Popular Rule Party").

education, with virtually full elementary school enrollment by 1910, was also accomplished with the statist objective of creating literate subjects who could be effectively enlisted in the numerous state-building endeavors, military and civil, public and private. The further growth of industry and commerce under the state's patronage of the *zaibatsu* ("financial cliques") became connected with military conquests and other empire-building actions, and the literate subjects of Japan were constantly harnessed and mobilized in the service of both.

When one shifts one's gaze toward those outside the government, a more complex picture emerges. Hyper-patriotism, jingoism and expansionism were not confined to government leaders. In fact, such sentiments were remarkably common in the populace, both in a generalized way and in the form of organized prowar campaigns.[43] Yet there were also countervailing currents-a rich mixture of ideas, ranging from temperate patriotism and alternative forms of public service to militant dissent from statism and the active espousal of those whom the state had left behind or simply held in contempt, those who in effect became Japan's human "cannon fodder."

Okuma Shigenobu (1838-1922) stood astride the world of government and opposition in the Meiji Period, although on balance he was more a "mainstream" dissenter than a collaborator of the *Sat-cho* oligarchs. His views on the meaning of "progress" were inevitably influenced by this ambiguity. A Hizen samurai who participated in the Meiji Restoration, Okuma thereafter became a quick study in finance and foreign affairs. He served as minister of finance in the early 1870's. Despite this insider" status, Okuma never quite fit in with the *Sat-cho* oligarchs, especially because of his pronounced Anglophilia. As early as 1881 he had petitioned the throne for the speedy establishment of a British-type, representative and "responsible" form of government with competing political parties and the principle of majority rule. This "rash" action angered the *Sat-cho* oligarchs enough to force his outster from the government. After that, for many years Okuma led the Progressive Party that he had helped found. The party catered heavily to urban elements—businessmen, educators and journalists. With Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834-1901), an early advocate of "enlightenment and civilization" whose private academy would later grow into the prestigious Keio University, Okuma established a school that, with much help from the Mitsubishi combine, in his own lifetime blossomed into the highly regarded Waseda University. While he served as foreign minister twice during the late 1880s and the late 1890s and was even prime minister for a paltry four months during 1898, from 1895 until 1915 it's best to see him as a "mainstream" opponent of the government (Not until 1915 would Okuma be chosen as prime minister for a truly substantive tenure).

Through this "outsider" status Okuma strengthened two ideas in the Japanese quest of modernity. One was that private higher educa-

43) On this theme see Donald Keene's articles on war and Japanese intellectuals in his book *Landscapes and Portraits* (Tokyo, Japan: Kodansha Inernation, 1971); and Ienaga Saburo, *The Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976).

tion was as important as state-funded and state-controlled education. For cultivating independence, individuality, truthful investigations and an open-minded pursuit of knowledge, private education was even more crucial. In addition, he argued that a nation consisted of both state and society, and the state could not always be counted upon to represent the true intentions and interests of the society. Waseda, to Okuma, would be one of the instrumentalities for producing graduates who would serve the nation in the non-state sectors of society. They would be model citizens of Japan but would also have a world-affairs awareness. Secondly, through his continued engagement with the task of expanding and refining the main opposition party, Okuma worked hard to challenge the *Sat-cho* group's monopoly of power and helped lead Japan's nascent constitutional order toward what in essence became a two-party system (with marginal groups operating on the periphery). Okuma's methods in this role remained eminently gradualist and reformist, and he also remained wedded to the notion of serving the "dignity of the Imperial Household."[44]

In his goals, thus, Okuma was not radically different from the *Sat-cho* group but simply wanted to inject elements of pluralism and accountability into a system that bordered on a "control-freak" form of patriotism and conformity. Okuma otherwise never deviated from the pursuit of

44) Tsunoda, DeBary and Keene, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. 2, pp. 172-176, 183-187.

national power and territorial expansion. There is no evidence that he questioned the Sino-Japanese War, the colonization of Taiwan, the Ruse-Japanese War, the Japanese protectorate over Korea, the acquisition of "rights" in Manchuria, and the annexation of Korea. Okuma's idea of progress included no concept of justice toward non-Japanese and no pacifism. In keeping with this mind-set it was Okuma who, as prime minister in 1915, imposed the infamous 21 Demands on China. If accepted in their entirety they would have reduced China to a colony of Japan with only a fig leaf as a cover (It is a paradox of history that the "militarist" Yamagata actually opposed these demands).[45] Despite his progressive ideas about educated citizenship and expanded political participation, Okuma thus remained defined by the statist ethos of his time.

It fell to elements unconnected to mainstream institutions and processes of politics to articulate visions of modernity that addressed the needs and aspirations of those who were being manipulated as helpless cogs in the iniquitous Meiji juggernaut of "advancement." In what follows I shall present glimpses of the challenge to Meiji statism mounted by Christian humanism, socialism, and feminism in behalf of democratic inclusiveness.

Movements for inclusiveness were not without precedents. The People's Rights Movement (*jiyu minken undo*) of the late 1870s and early 1880s, inspired by Rousseau, Locke, Bentham, Mill, and the U.S.

45) *Ibid*., pp. 209-210.

Declaration of Independence had been a lively campaign through both the press and organized political agitation. Prominent intellectuals and activists, including some female figures, had lent their weight to the movement. Fukuzawa Yukichi, Itagaki Taisuke, Nakae Chomin, Ueki Emori, Fukuda Hideko and many others were involved in raising consciousness about people's rights (*minken*) as opposed to state's rights (*kokken*).[46] Yet, by mid-1890s their voices had either been silenced by apostasy and conversion to statism or stilled through old age, death or draconian laws against freedom of expression and political activity. Nevertheless, the continuing growth of higher education, journalism and foreign travel produced a brand new crop of analysts and activists who looked at the increasing injustices of a repressive state and a "dual economy" with profound concern, even outrage. Large segments of both rural and urban Japan seemed hopelessly trapped in abysmal poverty while the *zaibatsu* and their statist patrons flourished amid war and imperialism.[47] The new voices of protest and reform picked up the thread that the People's Rights Movement had spun and endeavored to weave a fresh fabric of modernity, with democracy, egalitarianism, pacifism and ethical behavior as its central pattern.

Uchimura Kanzo (1861-1930), a Christian convert of samurai background who had been educated as an agriculturist at Amherst, became well-known for his championship of an individualistic, "no-church" faith in Christ, modernization and pacifism. Using journalism as a vehicle for his ideas, Uchimura relentlessly reiterated his calls for Japan's Christianization. In a 1903 essay, he lambasted the shallow modernity of Meiji Japan, arguing that Japan had borrowed only the outer trappings of Western civilization without understanding its Christian fundamentals. Unless the Christian faith became the faith of Japan, neither its people as individuals nor it as a nation would ever be able to equal the strength and virtues of the West. It was no so much the Greco-Roman heritage of the West as the ideas of men like Milton, Cromwell, Washington and Lincoln that created the western concept of "freedom," and it had its roots in the power of their faith in Christ. Individual rights in the West grew because they were paralleled by an abiding sense of responsibility embedded in a "spiritual relationship to God and Nature." Western philosophy and science, with their love of knowledge and their restless search for "truth" in depth were not adversaries but products of this spiritual connection. Japan, by contrast, had achieved only a superficial degree of progress, marked by a total lack of freshness in discourse and scientific creativity. Uchimura also attributed the "depravity and corruption in Japanese politics and education," characterized by a lavish use of "money, wine [and] women," to the absence of God in society. Neither true knowledge nor a truly representative government could ever emerge from a Godless, Christ-less culture. Japan's salvation clearly lay in adopting "the very essence of Western civilization, which is Christianity," insisted

46) See the works of Pittau and Sievers cited above.
47) On this subject see Mikiso Hane, *Peasants, Rebels and Outcasts: The Underside of Modern Japan* (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

Uchimura.[48)]

No one before had given this kind of shrill and categorical clarion call for the total conversion of Japan to Christianity in the interest of "true" progress. In an era when "emperorism" was being intensively propagated by the state as the core of Japan's political and cultural identity, Uchimura's bugle was an audacious defiance of, if not a reckless affront to, the guardians of kokutai, though he, too, marshalled the prevailing patriotic sentiments in his own way. In his 1895 autobiography Uchimara asserted that he loved "Two J's" equally: Jesus and Japan. He left instructions to have the following epitaph inscribed on his tomb:

> I for Japan;
> Japan for the world;
> The world for Christ;
> and all for God.[49)]

Uchimura's exuberant nationalism helped in mitigating the threat of his Christian individualism to the oligarchs' statism. This cushion was not, however, available to the radical socialist and feminist voices of the era, for they were more frontally opposed to Meiji policies. In spite of the state's mobilization of many thought-control laws, variants of socialist ideology had crept into the consciousness of many educated Japanese. A year before

48) David John Lu, ed., *Japan: A Documentary History*, vol.2, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), pp. 360-365.
49) Tsunoda, DeBary and Keene, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. 2, pp. 347-350.

his assassination in 1909, Ito had publicly expressed his apprehension about the "threatening advance of socialistic ideas" during the previous years.[50)] Radical versions of socialism brooked no patriotism and were concentrating their energies on arousing the weak, exploited and voiceless segments of society against those identifiable institutions, structures and policies that caused economic inequity, social oppression, political repression, and imperialist wars. In 1901, for example, noted socialists Abe Iso (185-1949), Katayama Sen (1859-1933), and Kotoku Shusui (1871-1911) joined other activists to form the Social Democratic Party in Tokyo. Though Abe's Christian humanism was an ingredient of his personal inspiration, the party's platform was unmistakably socialist in its thrust. The platform called economic equality a precondition of political equality, and vowed to work for the abolition of wealth disparities. It pointed to the corrupt collusion among landlords, capitalists, aristocrats and the established political parties in the Diet as being responsible for the disenfranchisement of the propertyless rural and urban workers, "the majority of the nation."

The party called for full public ownership of land, capital, industry, all means of transportation, electricity, gas operations and insurance, and for an equitable distribution of wealth. It demanded limits on rents, prohibition of child labor and of the "immoral," health-impairing work and night shifts for women workers. It planned to campaign for an eight-hour workday with Sundays off, labor's right to unionize, the abrogation of all

50) *Ibid*., p. 167.

repressive laws, the abolition of the House of Peers, full adult suffrage, direct and secret elections for all offices, elimination of the death penalty, state-supported education for all, extension of compulsory education to the eighth grade, complete disarmament in the interest of peace among nations, and a whole lot more. Recognizing that all these goals were not easily achievable, the party was willing to settle for more realistic targets as a start. Calling itself a party of "democracy and socialism," it declared the provision of sufficient food, clothing, housing, and "sympathetic cure in sickness and old age" as its immediate objective, and pledged to work for it through peaceful means.

Mobilizing the Peace Preservation Law of 1900, the government banned the Social Democratic Party immediately after its emergence, forcing its leaders to voice their views as individuals, though in that capacity too they did so in defiance of the state.[51] In 1908, Kotoku Shusui wrote a scathing newspaper article denouncing taxation for war goals, saying that "for the sake of war" had become a powerful narcotic in the hands of government to dull the rational judgment of all parties in the Diet. International wars, he argued, benefited only "a small number of [ambitious] people" but they "disturb peace, prevent progress, and create a host of miseries for the common people." He wondered about the wisdom of having a "state, a government or taxes," and called for efforts to change the "government of politicians, war profiteers, soldiers and their families" into a "government

51) Lu, *Japan: A Documentary History*, Vol. 2, pp. 365-371.

of the people," and "for peace." Only socialism, Kotoku concluded, would bring about such a political system. Then there would be genuine happiness in society, as illustrated by an ancient Chinese poem:

> I dig a well to drink its water,
> I cultivate a field to produce food.
> At sunrise I go to the field,
> At sunset I return to my shelter
> The power of the Emperor
> Reacheth me not.[52]

Frustrated by the state's police power in their attempts to cultivate popular support through peaceful means, after the Russo-Japanese War some socialists, including Kotoku, turned toward clandestine anarchism. In 1911, along with eleven others—a roster that included Japan's first female anarchist, Kanno Sugako—Kotoku was executed for his alleged complicity in a plot to assassinate the Meiji Emperor. Thus, Christianity and socialism both failed to weaken, let alone dislodge, Japanese statism from its secure perch. The punitive power and propaganda machinery of the state rendered even the most fearless brand of anti-government radicalism puny in effect. Yet, as in China, the stones that these men threw into the pond of Japanese society and politics created ever-widening ripples in national consciousness during later decades. While Christianity

52) *Ibid*., pp. 371-373.

never took hold in Japan except as an extremely marginal religion, many of the Social Democratic Party's ideas found fulfillment after World War II under the U.S. Occupation. Paradoxically, the Americans would use the machinery of state to dismantle the structures of statism and to lay the groundwork for a democratic, egalitarian and peace-oriented Japan.[53)]

Toward this evolution early Japanese feminism made its own notable contributions. Of all the feminist voices of the late 19th-and early 20th-century Japan none was more eloquent, more soul-stirring and more charged with potency than that of Yosano Akiko (1878-1942). Before examining role in defining Meiji Japan's modernity one needs to understand the specific constraints and circumstances of women's lives. They stemmed from traditional Confucian notions regarding proper female behavior, the Meiji era's "work opportunities" for women, and the 1898 Civil Code's provisions governing marriage, divorce, inheritance, and the like.

The statist philosophy of Meiji oligarchs defined women's proper roles in two ways. Harnessing the traditional "Three Obediences" of women-in childhood to father, in marriage to husband, and in old age to son —the oligarchs formulated a dual policy: Married women were to serve the state from within the confines of the family by being "good wives and wise mothers" (*ryosai kenbo*), thus providing domestic support to men's public roles. Teenage girls and unmarried women of workable age were to take up

53) For a summary of the U.S. Occupation's reforms see Reischauer and Craig, *Japan: Tradition and Transformation*, pp. 277-287.

either physical work in mines and factories, especially textile plants, or menial work in hospitals and government and business offices. Education for most women was designed to cultivate the pliant personality necessary for subservience to male superiors in all settings and for giving women the basic skills for efficient household management and productive performance in the workplace. Any form of political participation for women was out of the question, and the Meiji Civil Code gave state sanction to women's status as "minors under law." The Code gave few rights to, and put many constraints on, women. For example, Meiji women could be subject to both civil and criminal penalties if convicted of adultery, but a woman could not get a divorce from an adulterous husband. A wife's contracts, to be valid, were required to be approved by the husband. A wife could inherit her husband's property only if there were no lineal heirs. A daughter's inheritance of family property likewise followed that of male heirs, and a widow needed her in-laws' permission to remarry. The groom's family also had the right not to register a marriage until a year later so that they might test the bride's subservience to the in-laws and also be sure of her ability to bear on heir.[54)]

Young women were employed in such massive numbers in light industries, notably textile mills, that by 1890 they constituted 60% to 90% of

54) See Sharon H. Nolte and Sally Ann Hastings, "The Meiji State's Policy Toward Women, 1890-1910," in Gail Lee Bernstein, ed., *Recreating Japanese Women* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991). See also Joy Paulson, "Evolution of the Feminine Ideal," in Joyce Lebra, Joy Paulson, and Elizabeth Powers, ed., *Women in Changing Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976) pp. 14-15.

their workforce, and are estimated to have contributed 40% of the GNP and 60% of the foreign-exchange earnings of Japan during the late 19th-century.[55] Yet the treatment of such inestimable employees was typical of the "sweat-shop" management practices of the era. Often sold into bonded servitude by their poor parents, these girls and women frequently worked 12-hour shifts in unhealthy physical conditions, lived packed like sardines in company dormitories under male supervisors, were ill-paid and ill-nourished, were often subjected to verbal and physical abuse by their male bosses, and not infrequently succumbed to the dread disease of tuberculosis or ended up as suicides. In addition, hard pressed rural parents sometimes sold their young daughters to brothels to alleviate their penury, causing yet another experience of exploitation and degradation.[56] This dark "underside" of Meiji Japan scarcely drew the care of the state. The problems of women in fact could be seen as a direct by—product of the state's mad dash toward modern industrialism and national power and "glory," with the mantra of "self-sacrifice" incessantly shoved into the people's ears.

Yosano Akiko joined her formidable talents and energy to those of other men and women of conscience who were outraged at these injustices. This essentially self-taught woman was nothing if not a multi-faceted genius. Born into a merchant family of Sakai (Osaka Prefecture), Akiko married the eminent poet Yosano Tekkan. A gifted poet, essayist,

55) *Ibid*., p. 153.
56) See Hane, *Peasants, Rebels and Outcasts*, cited in f.n. 47 above.

educator, critic, translator of classical Japanese literature, and public speaker, Akiko developed into a tireless campaigner for the improvement of women's social, political, legal and economic uplift and empowerment. She was also an unabashed advocate of women's right to express their sexuality and be independent, self-reliant individuals. Above all, she became known early in her life for her anti-war feelings. A mother of ten well-raised children, "super mom" Akiko could not but evoke feelings of awe and personal inadequacy in ordinary mortals. It was especially through her beautiful and poignant poetry that Akiko created the biggest commotion in society. As early as 1901 she published a volume of verses titled *Midaregami* ("Tangled Hair") whose suggestive sensuality, beckoned the readers to venture into the intimate world of Akiko's fervent celebration of female sexuality.[57] Her poetic creativity in fact went beyond that. In the words of two of her translators:

> Hers was a poetry of protest, of love, of emancipation for women, of the glorification of ··· flesh. She sympathized with the down-trodden—the lonely prostitute, the woman kept waiting, the isolated traveler ···. She was the first to glorify the female body.[58]

Midaregami was the harbinger of Akiko's later militancy on

57) See Laurel Resplica Rodd, "Yosano Akiko and the Taisho Debate Over the 'New Woman'," in Bernstein, ed., *Recreating Japanese Women*.
58) Quoted in Patricia Morley, *The Mountain is Moving: Japanese Women's Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), p. 147.

women's suffrage and social and economic rights. The poem that she contributed to the inaugural issue of Seito ("Blue-Stockings), a late Meiji-early Taisho feminist journal, became the inspirational hymn for generations of female activists not only in Japan but also all over the word:

> The day the mountains move has come.
> I speak, but no one believes me.
> For a time the mountains have been asleep,
> But long ago they all danced with fire.
> It doesn't matter if you believe this,
> My friends, as long as you believe:
> All the sleeping women
> Are now awake and moving.[59)]

Nothing from Akiko's active pen, however, drew as much attention and ire from the "patriots" of Japan as her eloquent and moving poem of attack on the Russo-Japanese War. In Jay Rubin's elegant translation, she calls upon her younger brother not to enlist for war:

> O my little brother
> I beg you: do not die in battle.
> To add to mother's grief
> When she lost father this autumn past,
> They took her son

59) Rodd, "Yosano Akiko and the Taisho Debate," in Bernstein, ed., *Recreating Japanese Women*, p. 180.

> And left her to protect the house.
> I hear of "peace" in this great Emperor's reign,
> And yet our mother's hair grows ever
> whiter.
>
> Your pliant, young bride crouches
> weeping
> In the shadows of the shop curtains.
> Do you think of her, or have you
> forgotten?
> Imagine the heart of this sweet girl—
> Not ten months were you together!
> Who else has she in all the world
> To care for her but you?
> I beg you, brother: do not die.
> Oh my little brother, I weep for you
> And beg you: do not die—
> You, last-born and most beloved.
> Did our parents
> Put a blade into your hand
> And teach you to kill men?
> "Kill men and die in battle," did they say
> And raise you so 'til twenty-four?
>
> It is you who are to carry on the name
> You who are to be master of
> This proud, old merchant house.
> I beg you: do not die.

What concern is it of yours
If the Russian fortress falls or stands?
Of this, the merchant household code
Says nothing.

I beg you: do not die.
His Imperial Majesty—he himself—
Enters not the field of battle.
So vast and deep his sacred heart.
He cannot wish for you to spill
Your own blood and another's
To die the death of beasts,
To think such death is glory![60]

In this touching expression of an affectionate sister's anguish at her younger brother's conscription into the war, Akiko focused the readers' attention on the primacy of marriage and family, the pursuit of normal economic life undisturbed by war-mongers, and the hypocritical personal abstinence from the battlefront by a "sacred" emperor who, behind the pompous drivel of his apologists on the "samurai-like" "benevolence" of the throne, was disengaged from the loss of precious young lives. In addition, by bluntly, though exquisitely, affirming peace and life against war

60) Jay Rubin, *Injurious to Public Morals: Writers in the Meiji State* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1984), pp. 56-57. It should be noted here that the same Akiko later supported Janpan's role in the Pacific War; she too eventually underwent a "change of heart."

and death when most subjects were numbed and cowed by statist propaganda, Akiko seemed to have shown the hypernationalits as both mindless and craven in their incapacity to confront the injustice and horror of imperialist expansionism. Is it any wonder that this "traitor," as many "patriots" called her, had to endure threats to her life and the pelting of her dwelling with stones from irate passersby?

By pointing to the warped character of Meiji Japan's modernity as a result of imperialism and war, and to the arrested development of women and other abused or silenced groups, Akiko added her weight to the legacy of her politically aware older sisters from the People's Rights Movement, shared that legacy with her peers, and passed it on to her successors. To be sure, their cherished hopes remained unfulfilled—despite some progress during the relatively liberal period of "Taisho Democracy (1912-1926)—due to the overwhelming forces of militarism that rose to run Japan after 1933. Women, like other repressed groups, were able to breath the fresh air of freedom, equality and dignity only as a result of the postwar reforms enacted by the U.S. Occupation. Akiko's message remained alive through most of the turbulent decades before those reforms, and is still heard today in Japan's on-going efforts toward social and political modernization.

SO CHAE-P L IN EAST ASIAN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

When examining So Chae-p'il's contributions to Korea's modern

transformation during the late 1890s, what is first noteworthy is that of all the figures discussed in this essay he was the only one who legally was a U.S. citizen, he was the only one with an American medical degree, and he was the only one with a sustained, ten-year long series of direct experiences with Western civilization through both higher education and a professional medical career. He was steeped both in the rigorous principles of medicine and in the general scientific culture of looking at things with clinical detachment, combined with optimism in the curative and progress-oriented efficacy of truth, knowledge and enterprise. So had not only read works of Western philosophy, history and politics, he had personally witnessed and savored Western prosperity, political behavior, ways of thinking and expression, organization and human relationships in a way that can only be called deep cultural immersion. He had Americanized his name to Philip Jaisohn, converted to Christianity, married a woman from a "respectable" American family, and practiced medicine at a premier U.S. government hospital before heading back to Korea at the end of 1895. None of the other figures who form the focus of this article had anything close to this *combination* of features to set them apart from their compatriots.[61)]

All this indubitably played a role in shaping So's intellectual and

61) In this section, I have relied heavily upon my own previous work and on the writings of Young Ick Lew, Shin Yong-Ha, Chong-Sik Lee, Yu Yong-yol, Kenneth Wells, and many others. I am keeping citations minimal here as they have all been extensively given in my monograph, *Imperialism, Resistance and Reform in Late 19th-Century Korea: Enlightenment and the Independence Club, 1896-1898* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1988).

moral visions and his work in Korea. In many ways, he was no longer a man of Korean "soil" but was in the distinctive position of someone "looking in" from the outside, with eyes that could combine affection and devotion to his former homeland with a stern, even reproachful critique of Korea when the circumstances called for it. In what follows I will show how So's nationalism and reformism mirrored as well as differed from those of his Chinese and Japanese counterparts. It is, of course, well-known that So's ideas found their context in Korea's international and domestic situation, which in some respects was similar to China's but had far less in common with that of Japan.

To those contemplating its future in 1895, Korea presented a picture of both hope and apprehension. The hope stemmed from the reforms in the political, legal, social, economic, educational and military systems that had taken place since the "opening" of the country in 1876. Despite the violent upheavals that occurred during that period—the 1882 mutiny, the short-lived 1884 coup, the Tonghak Uprising of 1893-1894, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 (fought heavily on Korean soil), and the temporary yet iron-fisted control of the peninsula by Tokyo during the war—Korea now had bilateral relations with many nations, including Western ones. There was now legitimate interaction between Koreans and foreigners, including Christian missionaries. Increasing numbers of Koreans, if still modest as a group, were beginning to require both direct and indirect knowledge of the wider world through education and travel. Important reforms had been promulgated both under the Min hegemony and under

the pro-Japanese Korean groups. Though imposed under Japanese aegis, the *Kabo-Ulmi* (1894-95) reforms had introduced a Meiji-type rationality into government organization, outlawed the class system, the old, anachronistic bureaucratic examinations and the remnants of private slavery, banned discrimination against widows and "illegitimate" children (*soja*), instituted the western calendar, and inaugurated modern judicial, police and educational institutions. These and other innovations, though implemented fitfully because of the government's perpetual in-fighting and reshuffles, were all part of a new social and political vocabulary and discourse. Inspired by both Western and Japanese examples, Korean reformists, notably Kim Ok-kyun, Pak Yong-hyo, and Yu Kil-chun had popularized such Meiji-type slogans as "Civilization and Enlightenment" (*munmyong kaehwa*) and "A Strong and Prosperous State Under Civilized and Enlightened Conditions" (*munmyong kaehwa ui puguk kangbyong*) through their writings and memorials and through such short-lived but pioneering journalistic forums as *Hansong sunbo* and *Hansong chubo.* A small but growing group of educated Koreans, some products of the new Christian schools, were becoming aware of and interested in such notions as popular sovereignty, rule of law, political parties, representative assemblies, modern medicine, science and technology, and economic and military modernization, Western religious beliefs, and Western social practices. Korea's legal independence from China had been reaffirmed through the Shimonoseki Treaty and the sentiment of national independence had also been ardently reiterated in the writings of Korean reformists mentioned above. Only die-hard Confucianists continued to insist on the sacrosanctity of the old Sino-Korean tributary relationship.[62]

Yet Korea was also now more vulnerable due to its geo-political and military weaknesses, unending bureaucratic factionalism and the disarray at the top epitomized by the irresolute personality and policies of King Kojong. He could make and abrogate policies, laws and appointments with bewildering rapidity as he responded to the conflicting and often self-serving counsel of whoever had his ear at any given time. Covetous foreign powers were eager to exploit such weaknesses in their hunt for "concessions" designed to develop and exploit Korea's natural resources and potential market for their products and services. While the pro-China party of Korea was now in eclipse and the pro-Japan group was temporarily out of favor due to Tokyo's high-handed actions during 1894-1895, other factions emerged, this time with Russian or Anglo-American leanings. None of this augured well for Korea's fledgling and fragile independence and future development. This situation was broadly akin to China's when the K'ang group swung into action to cope with it. Likewise, So's self-chosen challenge was to preserve Korean independence by reinforcing its defenses against the gathering dangers, and to transform the country into a modern nation-state. That was what shaped his new career in Korea.

In light of the foregoing it is easy to see why the word "independence" became the flying standard of So's vision for Korea. *The Independent*

62) *Ibid*., Chapters 2-4.

(*Tongnip sinmun*) *The Independence Club* (*Tongnip hyophoe*), *The Independence Gate, The Independence Hall* (*Tongnip hoegwan*), and the unfinished *Independence Park* (*Tongnip kongwon*)—every project that So started or inspired made it loud and clear to Koreans and foreigners alike that Korea should be a land only for Koreans standing proudly as free citizens of a free state. The Independence Gate and its twin, the Independence Hall, were deliberately constructed at the site of the old *Yongun-mun* ("Gate of Welcome and Blessing") and *Mohwa-gwan* ("Hall of Cherishing China"), both symbols of Korea's age-old subservience to China, but as the *Independent* said in its inaugural issue, the new symbols were to stand not just for "independence from China alone but from Japan, from Russia and all European powers…" The same emphasis was reflected in the ceremonies sponsored by the Independence Club to commemorate the royal birthdays and the founding of the Choson Dynasty. The Club-inspired change in the name of the country from *Choson wangguk* ("The Kingdom of Korea") to *Taehan cheguk* ("The Empire of Taehan") and in the title of the ruler from king to emperor (*hwangje*) rounded out this series of independence and dignity-oriented symbols.

These actions were accompanied by moves to wean Koreans away from *Hanmun* (the Chinese script) and to lead them toward Korea's own script, then called *Onmun* ("vulgar writing") but much later given the more respectable name *Han'gul* ("Korean Writing"). So's disciple Chu Si-gyong called language "the essence of independence" (*tongnip chi song*) and was later to dedicate his life to establishing Han'gul as the centerpiece of Korean national identity. *Onmun* of course had the additional virtue of being a far simpler medium compared to *Hanmun*; it could thus serve as a matchless tool for So's public enlightenment campaign.[63] In this endeavor So and his followers were far ahead of K'ang, T'an, Liang, Yen and other contemporary Chinese patriots. It was only in the late 1910s and early 1920s that Chinese reformists like Lu Hsun, Ch'en Tu-hsiu and Hu Shih began to propagate the use of the vernacular (*paihua*) for literature, journalism and higher education (Until then, the elitist classical Chinese remained the dominant means of intellectual discourse. This factor accounted in part for the slow progress of China's national integration during the early 20th-century).

In focusing the people's loyalty to the throne as the symbol of a modern national identity, So and his associates were being both safe and clever, despite the private frustration that they sometimes expressed with Kojong's unsteady personality. The ruler was, after all, the visible head of the nation, and, under the right circumstances, could conceivably be used, like China's Emperor Kuang-hsu and Japan's Emperor Meiji, to goad his subjects toward new goals. Yet there were also differences among them. K'ang and Liang had to contend with the anti-Ch'ing (anti Manchu), anti-monarchist and pro-Republican elements gathering momentum, and T'an had to subdue his own anti-Manchu animus to work with the throne for reform. So and the Independence Club were much better positioned in

63) *Ibid.*, Chapter 5.

this respect, for there was no "alien" monarchy in Korea, and the mild-mannered Kojong was held in much popular affection. So and his associates were, in actuality, more like mainstream Meiji reformists in this regard. Yet, this analogy with Japan cannot be carried too far. The So group was completely non-aggressive and non-expansionist in its espousal of nationalism. Despite the fact that any expression of nationalism carries a statist dimension and despite So's hope that the "power and glory" of the Korean throne would someday be "equal to Queen Victoria, the Russian Czar, and the American President,"[64] the So group harbored no empire-building dreams in its schemes, and there was no Meiji-style jingoism in its idiom. Its sole objective was to defend Korean territory and honor and to develop Korea as an independent, modern, strong and prosperous nation with friendly and equitable relations between itself and other nations. The patriotic songs that the *Independent* sometimes published from its readers along with its own editorials vividly convey the amity-oriented thrust of its nationalism. This mildness of tone was also struck by the *Independent*'s frequent calls to celebrate Korea's own historical "heroes" such as Yi Sun-sin, Cho Chung-bong, and Im Kyong-op, but combine such celebrations with learning freely and openly from the developed world's inspiring figures regardless of their nationality. This, to the paper, meant categorically rejecting the "unprogressive" Confucian heritage of both China and Korea, and casting an admiring gaze toward

64) *Ibid*., p. 108.

the Christian West. In this regard So and his chief disciple Yun Ch'i-ho were one part Fukuzawa Yukichi and one part Uchimara Kanzo.[65]

This harsh attitude toward the Confucian heritage of Korea, combined with a fawning cordiality toward the West, was nevertheless paralleled by a vehement denunciation of, and fierce resistance to, any outside attempts to undermine Korea's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Both the *Independent* and the Independence Club sharply rebuked foreigners and their corrupt Korean collaborators who were engaged in self-serving "concession hunting," though they did not question honest, prudent and mutually beneficial dealings between Koreans and foreigners. Through both word and deed the paper and the Club led a successful popular campaign to foil the egregious Russian attempts, aided by unscrupulous Koreans, to establish bases on Korean soil and control the country's finances, communications and military instruction and training. If allowed to succeed, the Russian moves would have reduced Korea to a semi-appendage of its northern neighbor. Similarly, the paper and the Club thwarted the ill-conceived attempt by the Korean court to hire a multi-national guard to protect the throne; they called this plan on affront to national dignity.[66] In these efforts, So and his associates showed an identity of aims with the K'ang group of China but with greater short-term success than what was achieved by the latter. The strength of the Club led-

65) *Ibid*., pp. 136-140.
66) *Ibid*., Chapter 7.

mass agitation of 1897-1898 was the principal factor accounting for this difference.

The blind spots in this nationalism sprang from the Christian connection of So and his chief ally, Yun Ch'i-ho, who, despite his later ill-repute as a "collaborator" of Japan, was a fervent patriot during the Club's existence. So and Yun both were unapologetic champions of the need to Westernize and Christianize Korea. Like Yen Fu and Uchimura Kanzo they saw an integral connection between Western culture and Western energy, progress and creativity; at the same time like Uchimura but unlike Yen, they saw Eastern civilization very simply as Christian civilization. The energy, power, wealth and the progressive spirit of the West were all rooted in Christianity. While the evil that Christian governments and groups had done to other societies was recognized, it was attributed not to their faith but to the distorted or false perceptions that they brought to bear upon it. The best of that faith, to So and Yun, was to be found in its moral teachings and in the secular assets of the West—its emphasis on human dignity, its egalitarianism, its democratic ethos, its education, its sciences, its technology, its enterprising spirit, and the like. So expressed his admiration for the Christian West succinctly:

> When [the] young generation absorbs the new ideas and trains itself in Christian civilization, nobody knows what blessings are in store for Korea and what blossoms may bloom in the national life of this cheerless country.[67]

67) *Ibid*., p. 105, p. 140.

Yun's praise for Western Christianity, due no doubt to his theological training in America, was even more exuberant, bordering on fulsome in the manner of a zealot. References to God and Christ suffused his writings during the period.[68] The Club also made certain to associate eminent American missionaries such as Henry Appenzeller and Horace Underwood with the patriotic celebrations mentioned earlier. *The Independent* was published by the Trilingual Press, a missionary enterprise, and the *Korean Repository*, a missionary magazine, and Paejae, the Christian school for boys in Seoul, provided forums to both So and Yun to spread both the secular and religious message of Western civilization. This nexus between the So-Yun team and the Christian missionaries was qualitatively different from the earlier, superficial admiration for the Christian faith that Kim Ok-Kyun and Pak Yong-hyo had once expressed; neither of them personally converted to Christianity. It was also radically different from the K'ang group's approach in China. That group, while learning from missionaries and extending state protection for their activities, not only refrained from personal conversion, as we have seen, but also sought to accommodate progress within a reinterpreted Confucianism; it did not seek to overthrow Confucianism but elevate it to a modern force through reinterpretation.

The difference of So and Yun from the K'ang group could not be

68) *Ibid*., pp. 90-93.

clearer on this point. So poured scorn on the "boasted classics that have plunged [Korea] deeper and deeper into the mire."[69] Yun, in a more strident vein, asked the rhetorical question, "What has Confucianism done for Korea?" and offered this answer:

> With diffidence yet conviction I dare say that it has done very little, if anything, for Korea….
> Behold Korea, with her oppressed masses, her general poverty, [her] treacherous and cruel officers, her dirt and filth, her degraded women, her blighted families—behold all this and judge for yourselves what Confucianism has done for Korea.[70]

This kind of unforgiving assault on Confucianism and extremist advocacy of "Christian civilization" was fraught with much potential tension. If carried to its logical conclusion, would this transformation not reduce Korea to a mere copy of the West, bereft of its own national moorings? At the end of the process, would Westernization via Christianization still leave some deeper Korean cultural identity, not merely something consisting of land, "race," language, music, and food? Would the pre-Christian "memory" of Korea not run the risk of being seen merely as "good riddance" even though it might be delivered through landscape painting, poetry, porcelain, *p'ansori and samulnori*? So and Yun never appeared to have let such

69) *Ibid*., p. 138.
70) *Ibid*., pp. 94-95.

questions cross their minds. Yet even in Japan, where modernity was proceeding within the prophylactic armor of state Shinto showing scarcely a dent from Christianity, there was profound concern about the possible loss of national identity amid the feverish rush toward Westernization.[71]

Looking at the specifics of the reform agenda espoused by So and his associates, it should be noted first that there was hardly an aspect of national life that did not get scrutinized by their inquisitive and analytical pens. Through the *Independent*, through the Club's short-lived but lively monthly report (*Tongnip hyophoe hoebo*), through the Club-sponsored Debating Society (*T'oron-hoe*), and through his lecture program at the Paejae School, So and his associates launched a lively campaign for consciousness-raising on the need for introducing a modern political and legal system, for modernizing agriculture, sericulture, horticulture, and fisheries, for the expansion of modern industrial, banking, transportation, communication, commercial, mining and shipping enterprises, for the training of a modern army and modern navy, and for the teaching of modern hygiene and sanitation practices.[72] In this multi-dimensional endeavor So and his group were at one with the K'ang team in the conceptualization of national reform as a systemic undertaking, under which

71) On this topic see Kenneth B. Pyle, *The New Generation of Meiji Japan: Problems of Cultural Identity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969).
72) A much fuller range of topics was examined in the Club's Monthly Report than in the *Independent*. For a summary see Han Hung-su, "Tongnip hyophoe hoebo ui naeyong punsok, in *Sahoe kwahagwon nonch'ong* [Occasional Papers on Social Sciences], no. 6 (Seoul, Korea: Yonsei University Press, 1973).

various facets of the body-politic and individual conduct were organically linked. Here we shall simply look at So's contribution to the political aspects of this package, for he appears to have assumed that a modern, responsible and responsive political system was critical to the success of all other efforts for reform. Apart from the cultivation of nationalism this was the single most important issue to engage the attention of So and his supporters.

If "enlightenment" celebrates egalitarianism, human dignity, individual freedoms, popular sovereignty and popular political participation, then Yi Kwang-nin's designation of So as the Voltaire of the Choson Dynasty[73] is quite apt. No one in late 19th-century Korea did more to popularize such concepts than So, even though Yu Kil-chun and Pak Yong-hyo had previously written about them. Mainly through the editorials of the *Independent* but also using other forums So, joined by Yun, explained the Western theory of social contract and limited government, popular sovereignty, electoral politics, the functions and responsibilities of political parties, elected officials and representative assemblies, the rule of law, democratic procedures for conducting public bodies and public meetings, and the value of open and fair discussion of issues. In this regard So and Yun were more akin to the leaders of Japan's People's Rights Movement than to the K'ang group of China or to the Meiji oligarchs. Even the "outsider" Okuma's ideas do not show the depth of conviction that marked the political philosophy of So and Yun. When So, for example, described individual rights as "people's birth rights as citizens of this commonwealth," *paeksong ui kwolli* ("people's rights"), *ch'onbu ui kwolli* ("Heaven-endowed rights"), *ch'onsaeng ui kwolli* ("rights pre-ordained by Heaven"), and *hanunimi chusin kwolli* ("rights bestowed by God"), and when he asserted that "the government exists for the people, not the people for the government," and that "the ruler derives his authority from the people," he was reaffirming more than the hoary Mencian populism; he was restating the classic liberal concepts of Rousseau, Locke, and Jefferson.

73) Yi Kwang-nin, *Han'guk kaehwa sasang yon'gu* (Seoul, Korea: Ilchogak, 1979), p. 93.

When taking So's lead Yun extolled dissent as the root of progress, he was introducing J.S. Mill's view on the role of intellectual conflict in clarifying truth. When So spoke of human dignity, he sounded like Spinoza. When he and Yun argued for a representative assembly elected with the help of competing political parties bound by separate political platforms, they were reaffirming the tenets of Edmund Burke. When So wrote about the "greatest happiness of the greatest number" as the standard of sound policy and sound laws, he was echoing not so much Confucian populism as the Benthamite concept of "felicific calculus." When So and Yun argued for transforming the Korean political system from an "absolutist politics" (*chonje chongch'i*) to "constitutional politics" (*iphon chongchi*), they were asking Koreans to help change the Korean monarchy to a more participatory polity, though not immediately but through gradual steps. And they asserted, like Yen Fu, that such a system would make Korea a stronger

nation by creating among the people a better spirit of national solidarity and unity with the state.[74)]

In addition, by showing to his followers how to run the Club and the Debating Society with the help of established parliamentary procedures such as quorum, motion, discussion, amendment , adoption or rejection of a resolution or report by vote and the like, So enabled a sizeable number of Koreans to experience and relish "democracy" rather than merely listen to abstract lectures on it. It was this taste that led the Club to campaign for and gain, albeit temporarily, the royal assent for a partially elected deliberative and legislative assembly with a cabinet—like council of ministers responsible to it.

The emphasis that such democratic rights and popular participation would strengthen state power, though laudable under the prevailing circumstances, did come laden with the potential of rendering individual rights weak, if not precarious, as Benjamin Schwartz argued in his study of Yen Fu, but unencumbered by anything akin to the statism of the Meiji oligarchs, the So-Yun philosophy posed no immediate risk of this kind. And that philosophy also embraced a measure of social egalitarianism. All men, without any class recognition, were to be equal actors on the new political stage. So in particular hammered home this theme through all his forums. Beyond that, the Club included among its members, at least one

74) For details on the So-Yun theme of popular sovereignty and popular participation, see Chandra, *Imperialism, Resistance and Reform*, Chapter 8, esp. pp. 174-178.

known representative of the *paekchong*, a pariah group. The *Ch'anyang-hoe*, a somewhat obscure women's association, also was welcomed as an ally of the Club.[75)]

On the question of women's roles, though, So and Yun took a 19th-Century Christian rather than a radical modernist stand. Deploring what they called the "degraded" and "barbarous" treatment of Korean women, and encouraging women to elevate their status through modern education, they sought women's emancipation from the traditional Confucian confines. However, they did not suggest the upgrading of women's place beyond that of informed and dignified partners of men in marriage and family. In this they seemed to echo the *ryosai kenbo* ("good wives, wise mothers") slogan of the Meiji oligarchs but mediated by their own Christian sensibilities. Their writings not even remotely resemble the feminist consciousness of Ch'iu Chin or Yosano Akiko. It could hardly have been otherwise. As in China and Japan, the authentic voices about what it meant for a woman to be part of the modern world could only have come from women themselves. In this regard, the intellectual and social consciousness of Chinese and Japanese women was far ahead of Korean women due to greater opportunities for new female education in China and Japan, even though neither Chinese nor Japanese women yet enjoyed any political rights or meaningful economic rights. Nevertheless, Chinese and Japanese women's own voices did emerge, as we have been, through books, magazines and newspapers,

75) *Ibid*., Chapters 7-8.

and they persistently sought the power to shape the national agenda of change from their own perspectives. The less developed circumstances of Korean women considerably slowed their progress toward the acquisition of modern means of assertive self-expression.

By the same token, despite the assumption by So and his group of the role of reformists, they showed no recognition of modern socialist ideas of the kind visible in contemporary Japan. One does not find any articulate and specific concern in the ideas of So and his associates for the plight of either the urban poor or the tillers of the soil. There was, to be sure, nothing in Korea that could yet be called modern industrialism—that in Japan, for example, gave birth to the modern sweatshops and their horrors. Yet Japanese socialism was a response to both urban distress and rural poverty, and Korea definitely had its pre-industrial urban poverty and squalor as well as rural penury. The reason why So and Yun, in particular, did not feel any socialist stirrings under those conditions must therefore be sough in their Christian faith. They could talk of compassion but could not embrace the weaponry of Marxist questioning. The reformist Confucianists who sometimes joined hands with them could also not develop a truly wide-angled view of reform because of their own limitations. In their concept of change, thus, the So-Yun group remained in part trapped by the same blind-spots that afflicted the K'ang group's top-down vision for China.

In late 1898, So's Independence Club was suppressed by the credulous King Kojong, as is well known, due to false rumors planted by its conservative foes that it was planning to overthrow the monarchy and establish a republic. Thus a promising stride toward modernity was crushed by the withdrawal of royal support. The national assembly was "dead on arrival." Earlier, So himself had to give up his crusade and to return to the U.S. under pressure from those domestic and foreign elements whose sectarian or personal interests were threatened by his nationalism and progressivism. Yet neither So nor the Club were turned into mere footnotes of history. So continued to speak for Korean causes, and many of his followers in Korea continued to express themselves, both before and after the Japanese annexation, in individual and collective capacities, for the agenda that he had set. Independence, reform and national strength continued to echo through other organizations, newspapers and other forums both at home and abroad.[76] Thus, the seeds that So had planted could not be eradicated; they could only be suppressed temporarily. They would continually sprout, like those of Chinese and Japanese reformists, for they got nourishment from deep inside the minds of Koreans. No repressive authority could reach those depths. In that ultimate sense, So and his Independence Club carved out a secure place in Korean history among the architects of Korean modernity.

76) For details on other organizations that followed the Independence Club see Yi Hyon-jong, "On Political, Journalistic, and Social Organizations in the Days of the Taehan Empire," in *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* (Seoul), nos. 28-29 (June and December 1966). Between 1897 and 1900 at least nine new newspapers were founded, clearly inspired by the example set by *The Independent*. See Chandra, *Imperialism, Resistance and Reform*, pp. 109-110.